



Biculturalism and attributional complexity: Cross-cultural leadership effectiveness

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Abstract

Although biculturals represent a growing demographic, the nascent literature on biculturals has not addressed their cross-cultural leadership capabilities or effectiveness. Attributional patterns and variations across cultures are crucial, and call for higher attributional complexity (AC) and attributional knowledge to reduce cultural distance. This study provides a systematic theoretical connection between biculturals and their higher levels of AC and attributional knowledge, which account for their cross-cultural competence. This connection is then linked to attributional processes, drawing from recent literature on attributional models of leadership. The proposed theoretical model posits that biculturals have higher levels of AC and attributional knowledge, which helps them make more accurate attributions, which are also less culturally biased. Managerial behaviors resulting from these attributions lead to cross-cultural leadership effectiveness, because they absorb uncertainty on the part of subordinates. The proposed model addresses both cognitive and emotional competency elements of cross-cultural leadership. We contribute to the international business literature by providing a theoretical model for examining factors critical to the cross-cultural leadership effectiveness of leaders who have more than one cultural profile. Managerial implications for selection and training of international executives are discussed in the context of *culture-specific* and *culture-general* capabilities. Contributions, limitations, and boundary conditions are also discussed.

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INTRODUCTION

The pace of globalization has been steadily increasing for a number of decades. This has contributed to a steady increase in the need for a cross-culturally skilled managerial workforce. Although biculturals represent a growing demographic, typical cross-cultural management research still considers managers and employees as having a single cultural profile (Thomas, Brannen, & Garcia, 2010). Several international business (IB) researchers have identified the increased need for a systematic examination of culture and its impact on success in IB contexts (e.g., Leung, Bhagat, Buchan, Erez, & Gibson, 2005). Researchers have also identified the lack of a systematic knowledge of culture among academics, and more importantly among practitioners, as one of the leading causes of failure for IB ventures and their managers (e.g., Johnson, Lenartowicz, & Apud, 2006). More importantly, some researchers have criticized IB

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research for a disproportionate focus on cultural distance, and have called for focusing on boundary-spanning mechanisms that facilitate bridging cultural distance, such as the use of biculturals (Shenkar, 2001; Yagi & Kleinberg, 2011). Concepts such as cultural knowledge, cultural training (e.g., Davidson, 1975), cultural intelligence (e.g., Thomas & Inkson, 2003), and cross-cultural competence (e.g., Johnson et al., 2006) have increasingly become buzzwords in IB circles.

In the midst of rapid globalization, the growing numbers of bicultural individuals in societies around the world constitute a trend that has been seriously under-examined in IB circles, although it is slowly receiving attention. Biculturals identify with two distinct cultures, and have internalized the two associated cultural schemata, which are knowledge structures comprising cultural values, norms, and beliefs (see Brannen & Thomas, 2010; Hong, 2010; Yagi & Kleinberg, 2011). Bicultural individuals can be found among immigrants, expatriates, international students, indigenous peoples, ethnic minorities, and mixed-ethnicity individuals, as well as in inter-ethnic relationships (see Nguyen & Benet-Martinez, 2007). In addition, IB research has identified the possibility of finding biculturals among host-country nationals (HCNs) employed in subsidiaries of multinational corporations (MNCs) (e.g., Caprar, 2011), perhaps as a result of the *emergent negotiated culture* in such establishments, where HCNs play a key role (e.g., Brannen & Salk, 2000). Contrary to the standard assumption in much IB research, these biculturals have complex social identities, with more than one cultural profile (Roccas & Brewer, 2002). According to recent research (e.g., Benet-Martinez, Lee, & Leu, 2006; Roccas & Brewer, 2002; Tadmor & Tetlock, 2006) they have high levels of (second-) cultural knowledge, and what has been termed *cross-cultural competence* (e.g., Hong, 2010; Johnson et al., 2006; Thomas et al., 2010).

The nascent but burgeoning literature on biculturals (Brannen & Thomas, 2010) has identified a number of qualities they share, such as superior levels of cultural metacognition (Thomas et al., 2010), higher intercultural effectiveness (e.g., Lee, 2010), and greater effectiveness on multicultural teams (Hong, 2010). Earlier research also identified evidence suggesting that bicultural individuals have higher levels of cognitive complexity (Benet-Martinez et al., 2006) and integrative complexity (Tadmor & Tetlock, 2006). However, the research on biculturals has not yet addressed their cross-cultural

leadership capabilities - that is, their ability to influence, motivate, and enable others in cross-cultural settings to contribute to an organization's success, and their effectiveness as leaders. We contribute to the literature by developing a theoretical model of the leadership effectiveness (composed of subordinate satisfaction, subordinate performance, and leader acceptance) of biculturals in cross-cultural situations. Like the previously mentioned cross-cultural management literature, even GLOBE (House, Hanges, Javidan, Dorfman, & Gupta, 2004), the largest multi-country leadership study, assumes that individuals in leadership positions have a single cultural profile. We thus contribute to this literature by providing a theoretical model for examining factors critical to cross-cultural leadership effectiveness when leaders have more than one cultural profile.

Although the cross-cultural psychology literature has examined the cognitive complexity, social identity complexity, and integrative complexity of biculturals, it has not paid much attention either to their attributional complexity (AC; Fletcher, Danilovics, Fernandez, & Reeder, 1986) or to its impact on cross-cultural leadership effectiveness. Yet, having identified *attribution theories of leadership* (e.g., Martinko, Harvey, & Douglas, 2007) as having the greatest potential for contributing to *diversity* (including cultural) *leadership*, Chen and Van Velsor (1996: 289) argued that attribution is often the key mediating process through which leaders and subordinates interpret and evaluate each other's behaviors. Chen and Van Velsor (1996: 289) further postulated that the success of cross-cultural leader-subordinate interactions, and hence leader effectiveness, depends greatly "on Triandis' (1975) notion of isomorphic attribution, or the extent to which a person from one culture makes accurate attributions about the behavior of a person from another culture." A link has recently been found between AC, which is the propensity of individuals to infer complex internal and external attributions in interpersonal situations, and the accuracy of the attributions made by these individuals, as well as their leadership effectiveness; the link has been identified both theoretically (e.g., Lakshman, 2008) and empirically (e.g., Sun & Anderson, 2012). Additionally, AC has been linked to typical characteristics of transformational leaders' charisma component (aka *idealized influence*; cf. Sun & Anderson, 2012; also Fast, Reimer, & Funder, 2008). There is also an established body of literature linking transformational leadership to multiple measures of leadership

effectiveness, including subordinates' satisfaction, motivation, leader acceptance, and performance (e.g., Gang, In-Sue, Courtright, & Colbert, 2011; Howell & Avolio, 1993; Judge & Bono, 2000; Lowe, Kroeck, & Sivasubramaniam, 1996), consistent with the definition of leadership effectiveness in the present study. AC has also been linked to globally appreciated leader behaviors identified by GLOBE (Den Hartog, House, Hanges, Ruiz-Quintanilla, & Dorfman, 1999) in the charismatic/transformational realm.

Drawing from demonstrations of *cultural frame switching* (the ability to select and apply one of several cultural frames for processing and reacting to a social situation) in the literature, we develop the link between biculturals and AC. This literature suggests that biculturals are able to correctly understand why people do what they do in the two cultures they represent, in addition to being able to internalize the value systems of the two cultures into a meaningful whole. Although the cultural frame switching exhibited by biculturals has been studied in the context of varying attributions based on cultural cues (e.g., Hong, Morris, Chiu, & Benet-Martinez, 2000), the literature has not examined the critical role of AC. IB literature focused on cross-cultural training of expatriates (e.g., Landis & Wasilewski, 1999) has long recognized that individuals' attributional patterns vary across cultures (e.g., Morris & Peng, 1994). In a review of two decades of research on the culture assimilator, a training tool designed to increase the accuracy of attributions, Landis and Wasilewski (1999) characterize this tool as one of the few training techniques derived directly from the theory of attributions (see also Tolbert & McLean, 1995). Landis and Wasilewski (1999) also find Triandis' concept of isomorphic attributions useful, because it dovetails with the conceptualization of cultures as sets of mutual expectations and reciprocal relationships. In addition to the long-held value of accurate attributions (*isomorphic attributions*) for cross-cultural competence, researchers (e.g., Johnson et al., 2006) have recently identified *attributional knowledge* as another crucial component of cultural knowledge and cross-cultural competence. All of this points to the general importance of attributions and attributional thinking patterns of individuals across cultures, and of biculturals in particular, for a deeper understanding of culture (beyond this study's more immediate focus on leadership effectiveness). This study therefore provides a crucial contribution to the literature by focusing on the link between

biculturalism and AC. This study also contributes to the literature by drawing on the psychological (e.g., Fast et al., 2008) and leader attribution literature (e.g., Lakshman, 2008; Lindsley, Brass, & Thomas, 1995; Martinko et al., 2007) to delineate the processes resulting from the information processing of attributionally complex individuals such as biculturals who use complex schemata, and then linking these processes to cross-cultural leadership.

The rest of this paper is organized as follows. First, it discusses the phenomenon of biculturalism, and its definition as it applies at the individual level of analysis. The discussion then moves to the unique characteristics, abilities, skills, and behavioral repertoires of bicultural individuals that have been identified in the literature to date. Pointing to the paucity of research on AC in this context, the next section of this paper describes the individual difference construct of AC, including its component dimensions. Following this, the paper draws on recent leadership literature to explicate the links between biculturalism, AC, and a proposed attributional model of leadership, with a specific focus on cross-cultural contexts. Finally, the last section of the paper discusses the implications of the proposed model for cross-cultural leadership research and practice.

BICULTURAL INDIVIDUALS AND BICULTURALISM

With the rapid increase in the pace of globalization, and also in migration and global travel, an increasing number of bicultural individuals have enough exposure to two different national cultures to operate as natives in both. For instance, one out of every four individuals in the United States has previously lived in another country, and likely possesses sufficient knowledge of that culture in addition to US culture (see Benet-Martinez et al., 2006). This same pattern of biculturals can also be found in Canada and Europe (see Verkuyten & Pouliasi, 2006). Biculturals are also being incubated by an increasing number of international joint ventures (e.g., Brannen & Salk, 2000) and subsidiaries of MNCs that employ significant numbers of HCNs (e.g., Caprar, 2011).

Bicultural individuals, generally speaking, identify themselves first and foremost as bicultural (e.g., "I am bicultural," "I am Mexican-American"). Introducing the concept of *bicultural identity integration* (BII), Benet-Martinez, Leu, Lee, and Morris (2002) distinguish biculturals who perceive their cultural identities as compatible and complementary from

those who perceive these identities as oppositional and contradictory. Despite the challenges of membership in dual cultures, research suggests that many biculturals succeed in developing compatible bicultural identities (e.g., *dual citizens* in Black & Gregersen, 1992; *reconciled* HCNs in Caprar, 2011) and identify themselves with both cultures, describing themselves as bicultural, e.g., Asian-, African-, or Mexican-American (Benet-Martinez et al., 2002). Initially, biculturals were shown to have the ability to switch between two cultural norms - cognitive schemata/scripts, values, and behavior patterns - in response to cultural cues drawn from the environment (*cultural frame switching*; e.g., Hong et al., 2000). However, although all biculturals identify with both their associated cultures, later research identified a group who perceive their cultural identities as incompatible, and kept them dissociated (Benet-Martinez et al., 2002). This group of low-BII individuals (e.g., *free agents* in Black & Gregersen, 1992; *conflicted* HCNs in Caprar, 2011) has been shown to engage in contrastive frame-switching responses, in comparison with the congruent (or assimilative) frame-switching responses of high-BII individuals (Benet-Martinez et al., 2002; Mok & Morris, 2010). Thus, although all biculturals engage in cultural frame switching, it is only the high-BII biculturals who engage in frame-switching responses that are congruent (isomorphic) with the cultural cues in the environment. This is consistent with the findings of later IB research (e.g., Yagi & Kleinberg, 2011), which recognizes the challenges of dual membership and biculturals' resulting cultural identity negotiation in which they develop the capability to draw on one cultural frame or the other, depending on contextual cultural cues. Our interest in this paper lies in isomorphic attributions and their consequences for leadership effectiveness, so for our purpose we define biculturals as those who perceive their two cultural identities as compatible and complementary, and either have already successfully integrated their identities or are still working at it. Biculturals in our sense internalize both cultures in their everyday lives, exhibit behavioral competency in both cultures, and switch behavior depending on the cultural situation (Benet-Martinez et al., 2002). All of these characteristics are key for successful leader-subordinate interactions and, consequently, for leader effectiveness.

Our definition of biculturals is guided by the key finding that high-BII Chinese-American individuals, for instance, make culturally congruent (i.e., isomorphic) attributions; they make external

attributions after being exposed to Chinese priming and internal attributions in response to American priming (Benet-Martinez et al., 2002). Mok and Morris (2009) reaffirmed these findings and extended them to non-attribution domains when they found that high-BII Asian-Americans judge themselves higher in uniqueness motivation and extraversion after American priming than after Asian priming (assimilative response), whereas low-BII Asian-Americans judge themselves lower in these respects after American priming than after Asian priming (contrastive response). Consistent with this trend, Mok and Morris (2010) subsequently found that high-BII (East) Asian-Americans produced more novel solutions on a divergent thinking task after being primed with American cues than with East Asian cues, with the reverse being true for low-BII individuals. In this latter study, using neutral cultural primes, Mok and Morris (2010) also showed that the underlying psychological mechanisms for these effects are based on identity-related motivation rather than on the perceived valences of the cultural primes. Thus high-BII individuals experience their Asian and American sides as compatible and blended, and are thus able to express either of these in response to a cultural cue without fear of letting go of (losing) the other side, in contrast to low-BII individuals, who develop a motivated resistance to situational cues to defend against identity loss. This identity-related motivation for congruence (isomorphism) is critical for successful leader-subordinate interactions, and thus for leadership effectiveness. We therefore choose to define biculturals as those who perceive their two cultures as blended and harmonious rather than the opposite, and our subsequent uses of the term "bicultural" will refer to high BIIs unless indicated otherwise.

We hasten to add that we do not mean to suggest that low BIIs have no leadership potential. Low BIIs do not seem to make isomorphic attributions in an assimilative manner, but rather make contrastive attributions (Mok & Morris, 2010), thereby demonstrating a maladaptive cultural reactance (Benet-Martinez et al., 2006). In contrast, isomorphic or accurate attributions are critical to the model we articulate. Mok and Morris (2010) note that the contrarian behavior of low BIIs is less helpful in roles where meshing with the expectations of others is necessary, such as in certain leadership roles. Nevertheless, low BIIs have the ability to resist incorrect group solutions, to avoid groupthink, and to aid in creative problem-solving by proposing

novel solutions in some cultural contexts while tempering excessive novelty in others (Mok & Morris, 2010), and all of these abilities are of great use to their organizations. Some of these abilities may potentially contribute to leadership emergence among low BIIs, but following a different process from the one outlined in this paper.

Researchers (e.g., Benet-Martinez & Haritatos, 2005) have also found that the low-BII and high-BII groups may not be mutually exclusive (under an alternative measurement approach, but one that is similar to the approach we recommend), and that the dimensions of compatibility and incompatibility may be independent of each other: biculturals may perceive that their cultures are compatible and blended (i.e., close rather than distant), while simultaneously perceiving some level of conflict between the two (Benet-Martinez & Haritatos, 2005). It would therefore be advisable to measure compatibility of the two cultural identities on a continuous scale, independent of any conflict that might simultaneously coexist, rather than dichotomously separating biculturals into low and high BIIs. Therefore, for empirical purposes, we would recommend and undertake a slightly different approach to measuring identity compatibility than that taken by the previously mentioned researchers (e.g., Benet-Martinez et al., 2002; Mok & Morris, 2009, 2010). These researchers use a single item to measure BII as a bipolar dimension, with low BII at the "incompatible" end and high BII at the "compatible" end of the scale. Our empirical conceptualization would be a unipolar scale of compatible identity integration, varying from low to high (as in Benet-Martinez & Haritatos, 2005; Cheng, Lee, & Benet-Martinez, 2006). In other words, our operational definition of biculturals would be the degree to which individuals perceive their two identities to be compatible, blended, and harmonious on a multi-item Likert scale that varies from low to high - regardless of what these individuals may perceive in terms of incompatibility or conflict. As we elaborate further, we define the concept in this manner mainly because biculturals who cognize compatible rather than conflicting identities are more likely to be effective as leaders.

CULTURAL EXPERTISE OF BICULTURALS

Bicultural individuals have been shown to have better psychological and sociocultural adjustment than monocultural individuals, and to be more successful in handling interpersonal conflicts in cross-cultural situations (see Nguyen & Benet-Martinez,

2007), in studies where biculturalism has been measured by taking into account both home- and host-country orientations (see also Lee, 2010). Biculturals' high degrees of involvement and adherence to two cultures may also be associated with higher levels of cognitive complexity (see Benet-Martinez et al., 2006). The individual difference construct of cognitive complexity concerns the nature of the understanding individuals have of people, objects, and ideas, with multidimensional perspectives being more common among cognitively complex individuals than among those who are cognitively simple (see Burlinson & Caplan, 1998). The broad construct of cognitive complexity measures the degree of differentiation, articulation, abstraction, and integration in an individual's cognitive system of meaning representation (see also Scott, Osgood, & Peterson, 1979). In the cultural context, cognitive complexity leads to a broader and more refined understanding of culture, which involves higher degrees of differentiation (capturing all of the nuances), articulation, abstraction, and integration (indicated by an overarching framework of how the nuances fit together). Biculturals who are more cognitively complex tend to be better adjusted psychologically (e.g., Chae & Foley, 2010) and socio-culturally within both home and host cultures, in addition to possessing the ability to handle cross-cultural conflicts because of their higher degree of understanding (Nguyen & Benet-Martinez, 2007) and the behavioral repertoires they have to draw upon in such situations.

Focusing on integrative complexity, a behavioral variation of cognitive complexity, Tadmor and Tetlock (2006) have shown that bicultural individuals have higher levels of integrative complexity because the process of acculturation involves high degrees of adherence to and involvement in both home and host culture. In a cultural context, integrative complexity refers to the degree to which an individual (typically a bicultural) believes in the reasonableness of multiple cultural perspectives on ways of living, at both the interpersonal and organizational levels, and is motivated to build integrative schemata/scripts to create knowledge structures that will guide future action in response to appropriate cultural-environmental scenarios. The increased integrative complexity of biculturals, which is a result of their increased cultural learning, is reflected in the differentiated cultural stimuli found among biculturals and their complex reasoning in highly diverse contexts (see Davidson, 1975; Tadmor & Tetlock, 2006; Triandis, 1975).

Biculturals and Behavioral Repertoires

As noted earlier, the literature on biculturals has identified their behavioral ability to access and implement two different cultural frames in response to cultural cues in the environment. This cultural frame switching includes their behavioral repertoires for non-attributional tasks as much as for attributional tasks (Cheng et al., 2006; Hong et al., 2000; Verkuyten & Pouliasi, 2006). Thus, biculturals potentially have the ability to engage in behaviors consistent with "low-power distance" as comfortably as they engage in behaviors consistent with "high-power distance" (see Carl, Gupta, & Javidan, 2004). Their repertoires may include similar types of skills and behaviors *vis-à-vis* other cultural value dimensions such as individualism/collectivism, uncertainty avoidance (UA), and masculinity/femininity. Additionally, biculturals' ability to engage in participative leadership as well as more autonomous leadership (Carl et al., 2004), depending on the situation, is consistent with the predominant number of culturally contingent leadership traits unearthed by GLOBE studies (House et al., 2004). GLOBE researchers identified 35 leadership traits as culturally contingent, compared with 22 universal traits - with the usual caution that even universal traits may be interpreted and perceived differently in different cultures (House et al., 2004). Thus, biculturals potentially possess the crucial ability to reduce cultural distance in organizations that span the relevant two cultures.

Although the cross-cultural psychology literature has examined the cognitive complexity, integrative complexity, and cultural frame-switching behaviors of biculturals, much more remains to be discovered. Additionally, this literature has not examined the related and crucial individual difference measure of AC (Fletcher et al., 1986), which can be particularly relevant in cross-cultural contexts. As we show, biculturals are likely to have higher levels of AC. Unlike the other correlates of biculturalism already discussed, it is important to study AC in the context of leadership, because it is related to effective leadership processes (e.g., Lakshman, 2007, 2008), to a highly successful style of transformational leadership (Sun & Anderson, 2012), and to strong leadership characteristics (e.g., Fast et al., 2008). Attributionally complex individuals often perform better at a variety of tasks involving judgments and decisions in social situations, and are prone to more thorough information processing (e.g., Lassiter, Munhall, Berger, Weiland, Handley, & Geers, 2005). They are less likely to be susceptible to

the fundamental attribution error (e.g., Blumberg & Silvera, 1998; Follett & Hess, 2002), and are therefore less punitive and less racist (e.g., Tam, Au, & Leung, 2008). Additionally, individuals who score high on AC exhibit better job performance, especially in socially complex situations (e.g., Townsend, Da Silva, Mueller, Curtin, & Tetrick, 2002), and they use relationship-building approaches for certain jobs (e.g., Porter & Inks, 2000). Attributional knowledge, a crucial subset of cultural knowledge (Johnson et al., 2006), has not been examined in the context of biculturals. However, as discussed in the next section, the connection between biculturalism and the broader complexity constructs provides evidence of a link to the more fine-grained construct of AC.

ATTRIBUTIONAL COMPLEXITY

Fletcher et al. (1986) developed the concept of AC drawing from cognitive complexity theory (e.g., Scott et al., 1979), pointing to a need for such complexity in the more specific cognitive domain of attributions. AC reflects high levels of differentiation, articulation, abstraction, and integration in individuals' causal reasoning. Fletcher et al. (1986) provided a well-developed and construct-validated scale (see also Flaherty, 1996) for AC, based on their postulation of seven different attributional constructs, ranging from simple to complex. The seven subconstructs, which were empirically validated as components of the overall individual difference measure for AC, are:

- (1) a certain level of interest in or motivation for causal reasoning;
- (2) a preference for complex rather than simple explanations of behavior;
- (3) the presence of metacognitions concerning explanations;
- (4) an awareness of external causes of behavior;
- (5) a tendency to infer complex internal attributions, such as distinguishing between beliefs, attitudes, and abilities;
- (6) a tendency to infer complex external attributions, such as distinguishing between the proximal and distal environments; and
- (7) a tendency to infer external temporal causes.

People who score higher on AC have a greater cognitive facility for assigning causes to the behavior of others by discriminating between potential causes and integrating them.

We believe that it is important to focus on AC in the context of biculturals and their cross-cultural leadership for several reasons. Studies have shown

that AC explains unique variance in the interpersonal social judgment domain that is not accounted for by the broader construct of cognitive complexity, in contexts such as racism (Reid & Foels, 2010) and punitiveness associated with racism (Tam et al., 2008), and in the use of relationship-based techniques in interpersonal work/business situations (Porter & Inks, 2000). Some researchers have drawn an interesting contrast between cognitive complexity as *thinking more* and AC as *thinking differently* (Reid & Foels, 2010), to suggest that AC provides people with more sophisticated reasoning in the context of social judgment and behaviors.

Perhaps most importantly, the combined strengths of high-AC individuals in information processing and relationships make them very effective in intercultural situations requiring such skills (see Thomas et al., 2010), among others. As noted earlier, AC fits well with the IB literature's long history of focusing on isomorphic attributions and culture-assimilator training (e.g., Landis & Wasilewski, 1999). AC also forms a critical part of leader attributional models (Lakshman, 2008) that are likely to make the greatest contributions to understanding cross-cultural leadership (Chen & Van Velsor, 1996). Additionally, the complexity-extremity effect (Linville & Jones, 1980) suggests that biculturals with higher AC and therefore more complex representations provide less extreme evaluations of out-group members (those of the opposite gender, other racial groups, etc.) than those with less complex cognitive representations (see also Linville, 1982). Thus, AC has a unique value in leader-subordinate relations in cross-cultural contexts by virtue of serving as a basis for accurate and unbiased attributions, in addition to its crucial role in absorbing uncertainty, as shown below. In developing our model, we draw from the growing body of research evidence that points to the

importance of AC for cross-cultural leadership effectiveness.

BICULTURALS AND AC: LEADERSHIP PROCESSES

Drawing from the IB, cross-cultural management, and AC literature, we suggest that biculturals are high in AC and in attributional knowledge of their two cultures. Additionally, drawing from the literature on attributional models of leadership (e.g., Lakshman, 2008; Lindsley et al., 1995; Lord & Smith, 1983; Martinko et al., 2007), we suggest that AC, interdependence in leader-subordinate contexts, and leader involvement (and/or motivation) in attributional processing are the foundations for accurate information processing and the resulting accuracy of attributions. These relationships are sketched in the model shown in Figure 1.

The model presented in Figure 1 identifies the relationship between biculturals and their AC and attributional knowledge. It then develops the subsequent relationships of AC and attributional knowledge to attributional accuracy, on the one hand, and to a non-susceptibility to attributional bias (a source of discrimination in cross-cultural contexts), on the other. Finally, drawing from the attributional and leadership literature, the model develops the relationship between these attributional process variables and cross-cultural leadership effectiveness through the mediating variable of uncertainty absorption.

Biculturals and AC

We have shown in the preceding sections that there is a clear connection between biculturals (those who identify with two cultures and see them as compatible) and cognitive complexity (e.g., Benet-Martinez et al., 2006; Thomas et al., 2010). We wish to emphasize that our choice of biculturals who view

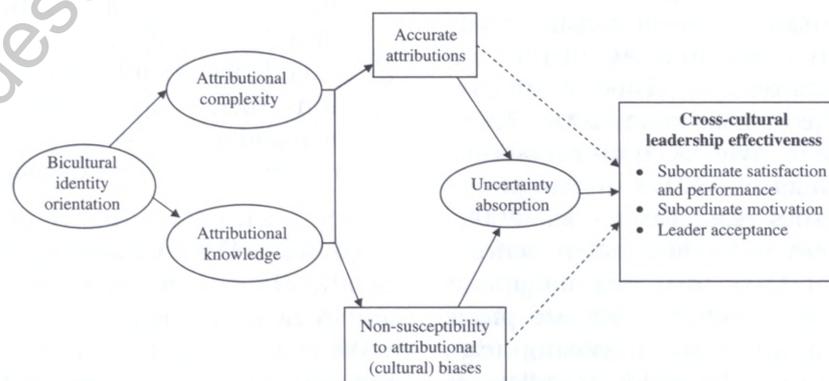


Figure 1 Biculturalism, AC, and cross-cultural leadership: A process model.

their two cultures as compatible and harmonious is based both on theory and on evidence suggesting that such individuals are more likely to make assimilative (or isomorphic) attributions consistent with the cultural situation at hand. Our choice is also related to our decision to examine AC rather than the other complexity constructs previously examined in the literature. AC has both cognitive and motivational foundations, much like the negotiated processes through which biculturals shape their own identities (e.g., Tadmor & Tetlock, 2006) and those of their work culture (Yagi & Kleinberg, 2011). The very fact that an individual has successfully internalized home and host cultures to arrive at a bicultural identity suggests that the individual has gone through a (negotiated) process involving initial ambiguity, subsequent cognitive demands on the self to understand the value differences between the new and old cultures, and then adaptive integration of these differences to help form coping responses (see Tadmor & Tetlock, 2006). Because biculturals have been successful in understanding why people do what they do in the host culture differently than in their home culture, and have subsequently internalized the two value systems into a meaningful whole, they are more attributionally complex in the end. We therefore argue that there is a significant relationship between being bicultural and AC. We formally state this as a proposition:

Proposition 1: Bicultural individuals have higher attributional complexity than monoculturals.

Biculturals and Attributional Knowledge of Cultures

It is now clear, as Hong et al. (2000) demonstrated both theoretically and empirically with their constructivist model of culture and cognition, that biculturals have two cultural frames in their cognitive possession, along with the associated cultural systems of meaning representation. Moreover, as later researchers (e.g., Cheng et al., 2006) have demonstrated, biculturals have the ability to draw on one of these cultural frames or the other and apply their meaning systems in appropriate responses to cultural cues - that is, they are capable of cultural frame switching. This ability has been demonstrated mainly in studies using an attributional task as the basic experimental paradigm, which thereby serves to illustrate the attributional knowledge that biculturals possess in their cognitive structures. Thus not only do biculturals know that attributions for similar behaviors vary as a function of culture; they are also able to correctly

make the different attributions in different cultural environments. Linville (1982) found that individuals have more complex cognitive representations (knowledge) of their own group than of other groups (e.g., those differing in gender, age, or race). This suggests that monoculturals are likely to have less attributional knowledge of their subordinates' behaviors in cross-cultural settings than do biculturals in settings involving at least the two cultures they represent. Johnson et al. (2006: 531) identified attributional knowledge as knowledge that "reflects a heightened awareness of appropriate behavior, building upon factual and conceptual culture knowledge, to correctly attribute the behavior of individuals in the target culture." They identify attributional knowledge as a type of *tacit* knowledge that is thus transferable only through socialization processes such as the sociocognitive route of knowledge management, especially in cross-cultural situations (see Lakshman & Parente, 2008). Drawing from this literature, we define attributional knowledge as largely tacit knowledge, but building on explicit factual and conceptual knowledge that facilitates understanding a broad range of individual behaviors in the target culture. What we know about bicultural individuals and their behaviors suggests that they are likely to have high levels of such attributional cultural knowledge, but this relationship has not hitherto been examined, either theoretically or empirically. By virtue of their ability to draw on one of two cultural frames, and to apply their meaning systems in response to cultural cues, biculturals possess a multifaceted knowledge (tacit and explicit, about multiple behaviors) of the two cultures (see Yagi & Kleinberg, 2011). This is consistent with Linville's (1982) finding that individuals provide more complex descriptions of people from similar groups (in-groups) than dissimilar groups (out-groups). Specifically, subjects in Linville's (1982) study sorted in-group members into a higher number of independent and non-redundant trait groups and thus received a higher score on complexity in the sorting task, compared with their scores for out-group members. This discussion leads us to the following proposition:

Proposition 2: Bicultural individuals have a more multifaceted attributional (cultural) knowledge than monoculturals.

Consequences of AC and Knowledge

We argue in this section that AC and attributional knowledge are likely to be important for processes that contribute to leader effectiveness. For leadership

and leader effectiveness, we use the implicit leadership theory (Lord & Maher, 1991) approach used by GLOBE researchers to identify which traits and behaviors are universally desirable, and which are culturally contingent. However, instead of focusing only on traits and behaviors, we also include the nature of attributions (e.g., isomorphic or accurate vs contrastive; culturally and racially unbiased vs biased) and the key boundary-spanning behaviors of biculturals in an attempt to theorize their desirability in cross-cultural contexts. First, following GLOBE, we define (cross-cultural) *leadership* as the "ability of an individual to influence, motivate, and enable others (in cross-cultural settings) to contribute toward the effectiveness and success of the organizations in which they are members" (House et al., 2004). Second, following both GLOBE (House et al., 2004) and the larger literature on leadership (e.g., Yukl, 2006), we define *leadership effectiveness* as a composite of subordinates' satisfaction, subordinates' performance, and leader acceptance understood as perceptions of leadership, thus capturing the degree to which subordinates consider their managers to be providing adequate leadership.

Our arguments for the importance of AC and attributional knowledge for leadership effectiveness are as follows. In arguing that attribution theories of leadership offer the greatest potential for contributing to diversity leadership (including cross-cultural), Chen and Van Velsor (1996) suggest that attribution is often the key mediating process through which managers and subordinates interpret and evaluate each others' behaviors in order to respond accordingly (Martinko et al., 2007). We suggest that such a mediation process includes: (1) attributions about behaviors due to cultural differences; and (2) attributions about performance outcomes (Chen & Van Velsor, 1996). Although attribution theories of leadership have focused predominantly on attributional biases of managers and subordinates (e.g., Martinko et al., 2007; Sun & Anderson, 2012), some researchers suggest that successful manager-subordinate interactions depend on the degree to which managers make isomorphic or accurate attributions of subordinates' behaviors (e.g., Chen & Van Velsor, 1996; Lakshman, 2007, 2008; Sun & Anderson, 2012). Chen and Van Velsor (1996) suggest that Triandis' (1975) concept of *isomorphic attribution*, or the extent to which managers from one culture make accurate attributions about subordinates from other cultures, is a key determinant of leader effectiveness. Other researchers have theoretically argued the relationship between AC and attributional

accuracy (e.g., Lakshman, 2008; Sun & Anderson, 2012), in addition to empirically demonstrating the relationship between attribution accuracy and leader effectiveness (Lakshman, 2007). Sun and Anderson (2012) find the neglect in leadership attribution studies of individual differences *vis-à-vis* AC puzzling, and they suggest that the failure to consider AC may be a significant problem in the literature on attribution theories of leadership. They (Sun & Anderson, 2012) argue theoretically for a strong relationship between AC and attribution accuracy, in addition to empirically demonstrating the relationship between AC and transformational leadership. Pointing to the many advantages of transformational leadership, such as subordinate satisfaction and motivation, higher leader effectiveness, improved job performance, and improved organizational performance (e.g., Howell & Avolio, 1993; Judge & Bono, 2000), Sun and Anderson (2012) show that managers who score higher on AC are seen as more transformational leaders by their immediate subordinates. Comprehensive meta-analyses, both old and new, confirm the effectiveness of transformational leaders (Gang et al., 2011; Lowe et al., 1996). Thus there seems to be a growing body of evidence suggesting a relationship between AC and more or less universally endorsed behaviors (see Den Hartog et al., 1999) that contribute to leader effectiveness.

Attributional Accuracy

The theory developed in this research focuses on leaders' information processing as the driving force behind bicultural leaders' formation of attributions and their subsequent behaviors that contribute to cross-cultural leadership effectiveness. The AC of biculturals acting as information-processing scientists, combined with their high level of attributional (cultural) knowledge, is a primary determinant of their attributional accuracy in cross-cultural interpersonal situations within organizations. AC has been identified as the source of more in-depth information processing and therefore accurate attributional processing (Fletcher et al., 1986; Lakshman, 2008). Most importantly, attributionally complex individuals, who are known to use complex cognitive schemata (see Fletcher et al., 1986), have been found to be more accurate and faster in judgments about social behaviors (e.g., Fletcher, Rosanowski, Rhodes, & Lange, 1993), and more accurate in judgments about attitudes (Fletcher, Reeder, & Bull, 1990). Thus, AC - and the associated higher levels of information processing on the part of bicultural

leaders - can lead to more accurate attributions in cross-cultural settings.

We conceptualize attribution accuracy on two fronts, following our earlier argument about the two types of attributions: attributions related to behaviors as a result of cultural differences, and attributions that are related to performance outcomes (see also Chen & Van Velsor, 1996). For behaviors related to cultural differences, we borrow the notion of isomorphic attributions from the culture-assimilator research (e.g., Landis & Wasilewski, 1999) as an indicator of the accuracy of attributions. For attributions related to performance outcomes, we focus on bicultural leaders' information processing, pursuing an analysis along the lines of searching for augmenting and discounting causal schemata (Kelley, 1972) that will lead to making accurate attributions for the behavior of subordinates of "other" cultures. Leader attribution studies have historically focused on either *internal* or *external* attributions (e.g., Sun & Anderson, 2012), but recent research (e.g., Eberly, Holley, Johnson, & Mitchell, 2011) has identified *relational attributions* as offering an addition viable option for behavior attributions. This literature has therefore begun to identify the complexity surrounding attributional processes (see Lakshman, 2008). In cross-cultural organizational situations, which are filled with complexity, what is required is a careful search of multiple plausible causes. Identification of augmenting and discounting causal schemata for each of the multiple plausible causes can lead to more accurate (or reasonable) attributions on the part of bicultural managers acting as information-processing scientists in cross-cultural contexts. For instance, every poor (or excellent) performance episode (of subordinates) is likely to have both subordinate dispositional causes and external system causes, at some level of analysis. Nevertheless, it is possible for bicultural managers to analyze these multiple plausible causes and arrive at more reasonable (or accurate) attributions.

Some researchers (e.g., Forsterling & Morgenstern, 2002) have defined attributional accuracy in the context of simple schemata based on Kelley's (1972) covariation principle as the level of congruence with the antecedent covariation information. Kelley's covariation principle identifies three major classes of information that can help a (bicultural) manager decipher the behavior of subordinates: distinctiveness, consistency, and consensus. Distinctiveness refers to the uniqueness of a behavior in response to a specific task, reflecting whether the subordinate performed similarly on all tasks or performed this

way only on the task in question. Consistency refers to the subordinate's unchanging pattern of behavior over time or across situations. Consensus refers to the similarity of the behavior of others to the behavior of the subordinate in question, reflecting whether many subordinates performed similarly in the task. However, even Kelley (1972) suggested that not all data patterns along the three covariation dimensions lead to clear attributions, because of the simplicity of these schemata. Thus, a slightly different definition of attributional accuracy is needed for the context of Kelley's (1972) complex schemata, such as augmenting and discounting causal schemata. For the model presented here, in the context of complex schemata, we thus follow Lakshman (2008) and define attributional accuracy as the level of congruence with the antecedent discounting and augmenting causal schemata, as explained below.

The perceived effect of a particular cause can either be enhanced (augmented) or diminished (discounted), depending upon the consistency of the alternative plausible causes with the observed outcome (Phillips & Lord, 1981). In situations of low complexity, there are few causes that are consistent with the observed outcome, and thus any one cause possesses an augmenting schema. In situations of higher complexity, there are multiple causes that are equally consistent with the outcome. In such a situation, a leader who wants to make more accurate attributions is faced with discounting those causes with less import for the observed outcome, thereby focusing on the cause with the most augmenting schema (or alternatively, with the least discounting schema). Therefore, attributionally complex individuals such as biculturals are likely to be more accurate and faster in their judgments of social behaviors, and more accurate in their judgments of attitudes in a performance domain in a cross-cultural setting. Similarly, attributional knowledge, comprising mostly tacit knowledge, contributes to cross-cultural competence (Johnson et al., 2006) and leadership effectiveness. Linville's (1982) theorizing and findings suggest that the complexity of (attributional) knowledge structure representations of stimuli is related to lower levels of variance in evaluations of those stimuli (i.e., narrower ranges, more precision, and more accuracy) as they vary from favorable to unfavorable. These findings were strengthened through a series of experiments with both *dispositional* and *manipulated* knowledge complexity (Linville, 1982; Linville & Jones, 1980), involving evaluatees of opposite genders, young and old people, and White and Black people. In all these instances, higher knowledge complexity

was related to lower variance in evaluations, indicating higher levels of precision. Thus, these findings suggest that the attributional knowledge (e.g., Johnson et al., 2006) of bicultural managers is likely to inform them about the most appropriate attributions for their subordinates' behavior (leading to isomorphic attributions) and for the tasks performed by their subordinates (implying accurate attributions in the performance domain; see Lakshman, 2008). Thus, both AC and attributional knowledge on the part of bicultural managers can lead to more accurate attributions. The preceding discussion leads to the following propositions:

Proposition 3a: Relative to monoculturals, the AC of bicultural managers is more strongly related to accurate (isomorphic) attributions for the behaviors and performances of subordinates of "other" cultures in cross-cultural settings.

Proposition 3b: Relative to monoculturals, the attributional knowledge of bicultural managers is more strongly related to accurate (isomorphic) attributions for the behaviors and performances of subordinates of "other" cultures in cross-cultural settings.

Non-Susceptibility to Attributional Biases

We treat non-susceptibility to attributional biases as a separate and parallel construct that operates more at the emotional and motivational level than at the cognitive level. First, attributional accuracy, discussed above, concerns specific behaviors and performance episodes of cross-cultural subordinates. In contrast, non-susceptibility to attributional bias concerns more general biased or discriminatory (or stereotypical) attributions or patterns of such attributions, which may trigger emotional responses that are not connected to specific interactions. Subordinates in cross-cultural settings are affected both by specific attributions and by general patterns of attribution on the part of bicultural managers. Therefore, in addition to the attributional accuracy discussed above, which operates at the cognitive level, we also focus on non-susceptibility to attributional biases such as gender, cultural, and racial stereotypes, which all operate at the emotional and motivational level in terms of their impact on leader effectiveness. Chen and Van Velsor (1996) propose that the emotional and motivational components of diversity (or cross-cultural) competency are as critical as the cognitive components, if not more so. Cross-cultural researchers (e.g., Triandis, 1994) have

warned us of the *ecological fallacy* of using national-level cultural concepts for interpreting individual behavior, that is, stereotyping. Additionally, Johnson et al. (2006) suggest that ethnocentrism, at either the individual or the institutional level, is likely to be negatively related to cross-cultural competence. Johnson et al.'s (2006) suggestion pertains to broad patterns of ethnocentric (biased) behavior not related to specific instances, and such interpretations are different from understanding *specific* behaviors of subordinates due to cultural differences as discussed in the previous section. However, in contrast to Johnson et al.'s (2006) focus on institution-level ethnocentrism, we focus on individual-level susceptibility to cultural biases. For the reasons discussed, we treat non-susceptibility to attributional biases as a separate and parallel construct.

Social identity complexity of bicultural individuals and bias

Recent research has theoretically and empirically explored the reasons for the greater cultural sensitivity of biculturals from a social identity perspective, which is closely linked to our definition of biculturals. Roccas and Brewer (2002) have developed a model of social identity complexity, suggesting that biculturals develop complex social identities with high degrees of differentiation and integration among the different sub-identities in their overall identity structure. Such complexity in the cognitive representation of social identity leads to higher levels of tolerance for out-group members, and thus higher levels of cultural sensitivity. The possibility of bias and discrimination toward out-group members by biculturals is low, because:

- (1) biculturals' complex identity representations reduce the magnitude of inter-group differences, thereby undermining the cognitive basis of bias;
- (2) their partially overlapping group memberships reduce the evaluative significance of inter-group differences, thereby reducing the motivational basis of bias; and
- (3) their multiple group memberships reduce the role which any one identity has in fulfilling social needs, which also reduces the motivational basis of bias.

Thus, based on principles of cognitive balance, Roccas and Brewer (2002) suggest and cite some empirical evidence that individuals with complex identity representations are more tolerant and sensitive, and thus less biased and discriminating toward out-group members.

Following social identity complexity arguments (e.g., Roccas & Brewer, 2002) in addition to AC arguments (see Lakshman, 2007; Linville, 1982), we suggest that biculturals' AC and attributional knowledge are likely to be associated with very low levels of bias and discrimination toward out-group members (subordinates of the "other" culture). Cross-cultural management situations are fraught with the challenge of deducing the causes of subordinate behavior, and especially the challenge of separating stereotypical behaviors from others. Referring to a hypothetical situation in which individuals are throwing empty cups and used food packages out of a restaurant window, Caprar (2011) identifies the danger of stereotyping individuals who dis-identify with their national culture and want to be seen as very different from others. Therefore, it is quite critical for cross-cultural managers not to succumb to cultural stereotypes in assessing the behaviors of subordinates. If it is in fact true that Western managers in general, and American managers in particular, are more likely than Eastern managers to make internal attributions for subordinate behaviors, as some researchers have found (Hong et al., 2000), it is quite possible that managers with a monocultural profile are more likely than biculturals to be susceptible to such cultural stereotypes. As noted by Linville in a series of experiments across two studies (Linville, 1982; Linville & Jones, 1980), monocultural people are more likely to have simpler knowledge representations of those in out-groups than those in their own groups. More importantly, these simple (or less complex) cognitive knowledge representations are likely to lead to more extreme (less precise) evaluations. Bicultural managers' AC, and their associated information processing along the lines of complex schemata, is likely to be one of the key determinants of the degree to which they are non-susceptible to counterproductive cultural (i.e., gender, cultural, and racial) attributional biases (see Fletcher et al., 1990). Green and Mitchell's (1979) model of leader attributions and a number of subsequent empirical examinations of this model focus, for instance, on gender, racial, and cultural biases in supervisory attributions of poor subordinate performance. All of these biases are likely to lead to heightened interpersonal conflict, and disrupt the processes of communication between managers and their subordinates who are affected by these biases (e.g., Ensari & Miller, 2005). These ideas suggest that, to be effective, managers need to avoid gender, racial, and cultural biases, especially in the context of cross-cultural interactions. Much

like the performance-efficacy spirals discussed by Lindsley et al. (1995), these biases can lead to attribution-conflict spirals in which biased attributions lead to more severe conflict, which in turn affect the attributions made in contexts of conflict, and also the choice and interpretation of communication strategies. Moreover, gender and racial biases can also lead to loss of trust, dissatisfaction, and turnover (e.g., Dobbins & Russell, 1986). Loss of trust can result in the erosion of leadership in the worst-case scenario, or in severely negative perceptions of leadership in the best-case scenario.

Bicultural managers, by virtue of their higher levels of AC and attributional knowledge, have a broader and more refined understanding of the "other" culture, are more capable of determining the appropriateness of behavior and the appropriate attributions for such behavior, and possess a complex identity that reduces bias toward out-group members. AC and the propensity to infer complex internal attributions (i.e., separating attitudes, beliefs, and efforts as causes) and complex external attributions (i.e., separating luck, task difficulty, and group-consistent behaviors) provide bicultural managers with the ability to avoid cultural stereotypes (see also Sun & Anderson, 2012). In fact, research on AC suggests that such individuals are less susceptible to the fundamental attribution error (e.g., Blumberg & Silvera, 1998; Devine, 1989; Follett & Hess, 2002). Attributionally complex individuals have also been shown to be less punitive as well as non-racist (Tam et al., 2008). The superior attributional knowledge (Johnson et al., 2006) of bicultural managers also provides them with the ability to develop complex (multifaceted) knowledge representations (e.g., Linville, 1982) that are consistent with subordinates' cultural profiles (e.g., Benet-Martinez et al., 2002; Hong et al., 2000). Therefore, bicultural managers have a greater tendency to avoid cultural (gender, racial, and self-serving) biases in attributions of performance, and are more likely to be effective and perceived as leaders.

Proposition 4a: Relative to monoculturals, bicultural managers who score higher on AC are less likely to be susceptible to gender, racial, and cultural biases in manager-subordinate interactions in cross-cultural settings.

Proposition 4b: Relative to monoculturals, bicultural managers with multifaceted attributional knowledge are less likely to be susceptible to gender, racial, and cultural biases in manager-subordinate interactions in cross-cultural settings.

Cross-Cultural Leadership Effectiveness

The preceding section identified the intermediate consequences of AC and attributional knowledge in the form of attributional accuracy and non-susceptibility to cultural (attributional) biases. Accurate and non-biased attributions are positively related to highly effective cross-cultural leadership behaviors that are better able to absorb uncertainty, thereby contributing to higher levels of cross-cultural leadership effectiveness. Years of research on uncertainty and its management have linked it to anxiety, stress, discomfort, feedback-seeking behaviors, and integrative communication (see Sully de Luque & Javidan, 2004). We note that bicultural leader behaviors based on accurate and unbiased attributions serve to manage and absorb uncertainty. Consistent with the huge literature on uncertainty at the interpersonal level of analysis (see Aldrich & Herker, 1977; Sully de Luque & Javidan, 2004; Yagi & Kleinberg, 2011), we define uncertainty absorption as a reduction in organizational members' degrees of stress, anxiety, apprehension, and discomfort and in their perceived inability to understand the direction in which the leader-subordinate relationship may be changing.

In what follows, we describe these relationships in detail, while noting the potential desirability (or lack thereof) of such behaviors in countries that vary along the cultural value dimension of UA. First, attributionally complex individuals (such as biculturals, more so than monoculturals) engaging in in-depth information processing may arrive at more accurate (isomorphic) attributions. Second, such assessments provide these individuals with more information and more confidence in that information, thereby minimizing the possibility of behaviors that can increase stress and uncertainty in the minds of subordinates, such as withdrawal and feedback latency. Sillars' (1981) theory and supporting evidence suggest that accurate attributions lead to:

- (1) positive interactive behaviors;
- (2) positive interpretation of subordinate behaviors; and
- (3) the formulation and implementation of integrative strategies to enhance performance.

Additionally, the ability to make isomorphic (or accurate) attributions is also related to the adoption of:

- (1) integrative strategies to evaluate behavior in its appropriate cultural context (e.g., Landis, 2008); and

- (2) integrative strategies to reduce (cultural) conflicts and enhance performance (Sillars, 1981).

Non-susceptibility to attributional (cultural) biases, an outcome of higher attributional knowledge, is also related to delivering performance-enhancement strategies to subordinates of the "other" culture (see Lakshman, 2007). Specifically, non-susceptibility to biases helps in providing feedback and performance-enhancement strategies by avoiding culturally offensive behavior in performance management situations. The literature on uncertainty suggests that these resulting behaviors are likely to alleviate stress and anxiety, thereby effectively absorbing uncertainty (see Sully de Luque & Javidan, 2004). Biculturals engaging in these behaviors are also likely to be seen as communicative, trustworthy, encouraging, positive, and confidence-building, which are all universally endorsed attributes, as identified by GLOBE studies (Den Hartog et al., 1999). Thus, the model predicts that these behaviors are likely to enhance cross-cultural leadership effectiveness by virtue of uncertainty absorption.

Recent interpretive ethnographic research in IB (Yagi & Kleinberg, 2011) has also emphasized the critical boundary-spanning behaviors (see also Hong, 2010) of biculturals, and the associated uncertainty absorption. More importantly, the ethnographic approach corroborates this study's emphasis on a social-psychology-driven analysis of information processing as a foundation for AC and attributional knowledge. Yagi and Kleinberg (2011) identify the crucial role that information processing plays for biculturals as they filter, summarize, interpret, infer, and store information in the performance of their boundary-spanning role. These researchers (Yagi & Kleinberg, 2011) characterize effective boundary spanners as those who possess the necessary explicit and tacit knowledge of how to do things and why some things are important, thereby making an implicit reference to attributional knowledge (Johnson et al., 2006) as a relevant antecedent of boundary spanning. Boundary spanning results in effective uncertainty absorption, which reassures and comforts the subordinates of biculturals, thereby contributing to leadership effectiveness.

Cultural context and desirability

Although our notion of uncertainty absorption may, at first glance, seem to be applicable only to high-UA countries, closer examination of the underlying

differences in the conceptualization and measurement of UA reveals that it is likely to be important in leader-subordinate interactions across a wide range of countries. Pointing to the controversy surrounding the measures of UA in Hofstede (1980) and GLOBE (House et al., 2004), Venaik and Brewer (2011) propose a two-component model of UA, with one component focusing on stress and the other focusing on rule orientation. UA stress is linked to a variety of negative outcomes, including persuasive influence (Venaik & Brewer, 2011), which is relevant to our discussion of leadership. Thus, we argue that leader behaviors/actions that reduce stress (such as culturally and racially unbiased attributions) are likely to be part of a shared system for evaluating leaders across cultures (Den Hartog et al., 1999). Additionally, based on motivational theory, Venaik and Brewer (2011) suggest that the rule-orientation (values) measure of UA found in rich countries is not indicative of UA practices in any absolute sense, and they therefore provide a relative perspective based on needs that are already met vs those that are not already met. This is clearly consistent with the strong negative correlation between UA practices and UA values reported by GLOBE, with countries reporting high levels of UA practices being low on UA values and vice versa (see Sully de Luque & Javidan, 2004). Thus, uncertainty absorption is likely to be important in leader-subordinate interactions across a wide range of countries.

Uncertainty absorption and leader effectiveness

Recent research has found that, perhaps as a result of the processes discussed above, attributionally complex individuals possess a host of characteristics commonly associated with transformational leaders, such as expressiveness of face, voice, and gestures; confidence and assertiveness; positive emotions and attitudes; charming and *arresting* personalities; and sympathy, warmth, and compassion (Fast et al., 2008). Unlike these personality researchers, we identify a set of behavioral and information-processing processes through which bicultural individuals use their AC and attributional knowledge to engage in effective boundary spanning and uncertainty absorption. We identify attributional accuracy and non-susceptibility to cultural biases as key outcomes of AC and attributional knowledge, and these lead to boundary-spanning and uncertainty-absorption behaviors identified through ethnographic epistemological foundations.

These behavioral outcomes - such as positive interactive behaviors, low feedback latency, and

development of performance-enhancement strategies - have as much significance for subordinate affect as they do for subordinate cognitive perceptions. It is worth noting that uncertainty is both a cognitive and an emotional (affective) experience (see Sully de Luque & Javidan, 2004). The behavioral outcomes of accurate and unbiased attributions are likely to help the *self-esteem-enhancing* tendencies of subordinates, and thereby to contribute positively to their levels of self-efficacy, satisfaction, and motivation. The organizational behavior literature on self-efficacy suggests that attributional analysis of experience is the central determinant of self-efficacy perceptions (see Gist & Mitchell, 1992). Positive levels of these subordinate attitudes are likely to enhance efficacy-performance spirals in the positive direction (Lindsley et al., 1995), thus enhancing subordinate and unit performance, in addition to strengthening perceptions of the manager's leadership. Thus crucial behaviors of bicultural managers with respect to attribution can positively influence the process that leads to subordinate well-being and higher unit performance and, consequently, cross-cultural leadership effectiveness.

Proposition 5a: Accurate (isomorphic) attributions of subordinate behaviors (by biculturals, more than monoculturals) are related to cross-cultural leader effectiveness through the mediating variable of uncertainty absorption.

Proposition 5b: Non-susceptibility to gender, racial, and cultural attributional biases (of biculturals, more than monoculturals) are related to cross-cultural leader effectiveness through the mediating variable of uncertainty absorption.

Proposition 6: Cross-cultural leadership effectiveness of bicultural managers (more than monoculturals) is a result of uncertainty absorption, which leads to enhanced levels of subordinate self-efficacy, motivation and performance, and higher leader acceptance.

CONCLUSION, AND IMPLICATIONS FOR RESEARCH AND PRACTICE

This study has reviewed IB, cross-cultural management, and psychology research on biculturals, and has identified relationships based on the high levels of cognitive complexity (e.g., Benet-Martinez et al., 2006) and cultural metacognition (Thomas et al., 2010) possessed by biculturals with compatible cultural identities (typically simply referred to as biculturals). Drawing from such research, and pointing

to the unfortunate dearth of research on AC, given its importance in leadership contexts, this paper develops the link between biculturalism and AC at the individual level. Affirming the growing evidence that biculturals have the ability to identify with and integrate two cultural frames, this study focuses on biculturals' AC based on the attributional contexts of cultural frame-switching studies (e.g., Hong et al., 2000; Mok & Morris, 2010). The evidence of frame switching on attributional tasks presented by these studies provides indirect evidence of the higher AC of biculturals. Moreover, one of the components of AC is metacognition (Fletcher et al., 1986), and this is consistent with evidence suggesting that biculturals have higher levels of cultural metacognition (Thomas et al., 2010) and greater cognitive complexity in cultural contexts (Benet-Martinez et al., 2002; Tadmor & Teflock, 2006).

This study simultaneously develops the relationship between biculturalism and attributional knowledge, drawing both from the literature on biculturals (e.g., Hong et al., 2000; Yagi & Kleinberg, 2011) and from the broader IB literature (e.g., Johnson et al., 2006). Previous work on biculturals (Yagi & Kleinberg, 2011) has suggested that these individuals have the necessary tacit and explicit knowledge of how to do things that are especially important (an implicit reference to attributional knowledge), in addition to noting the importance of their information processing in the forms of filtering, summarizing, interpreting, inferring, and storing information as they perform their boundary-spanning roles. In this study, we note the information-processing and relationship-building strengths (correlates) of individuals who score high on AC, which are critical for the intercultural effectiveness (e.g., Thomas et al., 2010) of biculturals and others.

We contribute to IB and cross-cultural management research by focusing on the cross-cultural leadership effectiveness of biculturals, whereas previous literature has focused predominantly on managers with single cultural profiles. Specifically, we integrate recent developments in the leadership attribution literature (e.g., Eberly et al., 2011; Lakshman, 2008), especially in cross-cultural situations (e.g., Lakshman, 2007), with the bicultural literature from cross-cultural psychology and management (e.g., Thomas et al., 2010) to develop a model connecting biculturals' higher levels of AC and knowledge to their information processing and attributional analyses. Recent literature has

identified such attributional analyses and the resulting behaviors as crucial determinants of leadership effectiveness across cultures. The result of this integration with recent leadership and attributional literature is a comprehensive process model identifying the links between the AC of bicultural managers, their attributional accuracy, and their non-susceptibility to cultural biases in cross-cultural managerial situations. These latter variables - attributional accuracy and non-susceptibility to cultural biases - are then linked via a process model to indicators of uncertainty absorption such as the interactive (boundary-spanning) behaviors of bicultural managers (e.g., Yagi & Kleinberg, 2011) *vis-à-vis* their subordinates of "other" cultures, their immediate feedback-giving behaviors, and their performance-enhancement strategies. Unlike personality researchers in psychology who have identified evidence linking AC to highly effective transformational leadership (Sun & Anderson, 2012) and leadership characteristics (e.g., Fast et al., 2008; Follett & Hess, 2002), we contribute to the IB and cross-cultural management literature by specifying a behavioral process that leads to effectiveness in such contexts. The underlying rationale for linking these behavioral variables to cross-cultural leadership effectiveness is provided by the (culturally consistent) process of enhancing subordinates' self-efficacy, satisfaction, and motivation through uncertainty absorption (e.g., Yagi & Kleinberg, 2011). Further, we contribute to IB research by identifying behaviors in the attribution domain that are related to universally endorsed leadership attributes such as communicativeness, trustworthiness, and positive and encouraging behaviors (Den Hartog et al., 1999). By focusing on isomorphic attributions, we also identify the process through which biculturals identify and respond to culturally contingent and unique ways of endorsing leadership attributes such as enthusiasm, sincerity, sensitivity, compassion, and willfulness (Den Hartog et al., 1999). In sum, we demonstrate the theoretical possibility of biculturals simultaneously engaging in behaviors that are culturally universal and behaviors that are contingent within specific cultural domains.

Overall, the model provides details about one of the more crucial processes involved in managing interpersonal situations in cross-cultural management, and about the suitability of strong biculturals for this process. Attributions and their variations across cultures are crucial to the examination of cultural differences, as evidenced in both the cross-cultural psychology literature (Benet-Martinez & Haritatos, 2005)

and the IB literature (Johnson et al., 2006; Landis, 2008). By focusing on this crucial source of cultural variation, this study contributes to a strong foundation for cross-cultural management knowledge, one that focuses on behavioral processes aimed at reducing crucial cultural distance (Shenkar, 2001). In contrast with GLOBE research (House et al., 2004), which has a restrictive focus on managers with single-culture profiles, we contribute to the cross-cultural leadership literature by focusing on the unique qualities and behaviors of biculturals that serve to bridge cultural distance.

Expatriates and other cross-cultural managers (e.g., third-country nationals or HCNs) can be trained to increase their AC, which can heighten their cultural sensitivity and make them more effective in IB ventures. In addition to their cultural sensitivity, their attributional knowledge and attributional accuracy can also be enhanced to tap into the crucial process through which they can gain the trust (e.g., Muethel & Bond, 2013) and acceptance of subordinates across cultures. Such trust and acceptance is likely only to lead to higher levels of self-efficacy and motivation for the subordinates, and to improved performance and cross-cultural leadership effectiveness for the bicultural managers and their organizations. AC training can help monoculturals and HCNs working in subsidiaries of MNCs to increase their attribution accuracy and strengthen their non-susceptibility to attribution biases, which is especially important in view of the fact that these individuals are more likely to engage in stereotyping. Biculturals, dual citizens (Black & Gregersen, 1992), and reconciled HCNs (Caprar, 2011) are likely to possess high levels of AC, but they can also benefit from such training by further enhancing their AC and perhaps shifting from culture-specific to culture-general capabilities (see Brislin, Landis, & Brandt, 1983; Tolbert & McLean, 1995). Future research can validate the links between biculturals and their levels of AC and attributional knowledge, thereby serving as the basis for managerial selection in international settings, which is fraught with high levels of failure (Johnson et al., 2006; Leung et al., 2005). Selecting international assignees for bicultural exposure, AC, and attributional knowledge would serve to minimize expensive attrition and assignee failure in such settings.

The model in this study is limited by some boundary conditions (e.g., Suddaby, 2010), because it focuses primarily on attributional processes and causal reasoning for managing subordinates across cultures. Although the communication and

interactive behaviors required in leadership processes and strategies for enhancing performance can exist without conscious attributional processing, these attributions are still likely to be made (unconsciously), and thus are still likely to affect subsequent behavior. Moreover, cross-cultural situations are high in complexity (see Brannen & Salk, 2000; Caprar, 2011; Yagi & Kleinberg, 2011), and therefore require high levels of AC in the individuals in such situations. Therefore, despite this limitation, focusing on AC and attributional accuracy is likely to be very important for IB and cross-cultural management. As noted earlier, our focus on biculturals as high BIIs in the context of this model is also limited, because low BIIs may have leadership potential by virtue of their ability to resist incorrect group solutions and avoid groupthink. But, consistent with our model, low BIIs may not be immediately appreciated (Mok & Morris, 2010), and their leadership potential may therefore emerge as a result of a process different from the one discussed here. A third limitation of this study and its constituent model is that it does not focus on factual knowledge of specific cultures (other than the two represented by biculturals), which is another component of cross-cultural competence (Johnson et al., 2006). Care must be taken to account for the factors of unique business environments and specific cultural knowledge, both in testing the model and in applying it in specific countries. However, it should be pointed out that the model described in this study would still apply in a variety of business environments and specific cultural contexts. Finally, although the conceptualization and operationalization of AC by Fletcher et al. (1986) does not indicate a Western bias, the measure of AC has not been validated in non-Western contexts. This needs to be addressed in empirical investigations.

The model developed in this study makes unique contributions to the IB, cross-cultural management, and leadership literature by focusing on critical components of cross-cultural competence, and by delineating the processes through which these components can result in effective leadership in such situations. This study adds to the growing volume of research and evidence linking biculturals and their higher levels of cognitive complexity (e.g., Benet-Martinez et al., 2006; Thomas et al., 2010), thereby moving away from the traditional assumption in IB research that most individuals have only one cultural profile. The study also contributes to the literature on bicultural individuals and their capabilities, which has been identified as a critical area for IB

research, especially research that does not treat culture as merely an individual difference variable. Instead, this research shifts the focus to individuals who have multiple cultures, perhaps more than two, integrated within their psyches and social identities, thereby advancing cross-cultural management research in an important respect.

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