

Bicultural Experience & Career Success: The Commonly Ignored Problem With Diversity Research

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Abstract

- The experience of minority ethnic professionals is often characterised by a perceived tension between their ethnic and workplace cultures.
- Variations can exist in how minority ethnic professionals manage the value systems of more than one cultural identity. Little is known about these differences or their impact on career outcomes.
- I posit that a developmental networks is a novel construct for exploring how differences in the bicultural experience of minority ethnic professionals can influence their career outcomes.

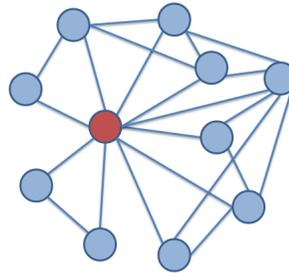
Why is this important?

- There is little research exploring the experiences of biculturals in organisations (Brannen & Thomas 2010).
- Little is known about how developmental networks can benefit minority ethnic professionals.
- This research is concerned with positive aspects of minority ethnic experience in the workplace as a distinct alternative to characterising minorities as inherently disadvantaged (Ramarajan & Thomas, 2010).
- This study acknowledges potential differences in workplace behaviour that exists within ethnic groups instead of considering them to be a homogenous group (Blake-Beard, Murrell, Thomas, 2007)

Key Terms Explained

- Biculturalism** refers to the experience of people with more than one cultural identity and the way that they manage the meaning systems associated with each of those identities (Benet-Martinez & Haritatos, 2005).
- A **Developmental Network** is the egocentric network of individuals who take an active interest in and perform actions towards advancing a protégé's career (Higgins, 2007). See **Figure 1**.
- A **Profession** is an organised body of experts with esoteric knowledge characterised by elaborate systems of instruction, training, entry examinations and an enforced code of ethics (Abbot, 1988).
- Ethnicity and Culture** are contested terms further explored in the study.

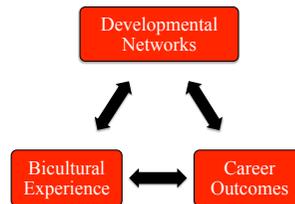
Figure 1: A Developmental Network



Research Questions

- To what extent does the bicultural experience of minority ethnic professionals affect the structure & content of their developmental networks?
- How does the structure & content of minority ethnic professionals' developmental network influence their career outcomes?

Figure 2: Proposed Model



Bicultural Identity Integration (BII)

- BII is a theoretical construct for investigating individual differences in bicultural experience concerned with two constructs cultural harmony and blendedness (Benet-Martinez & Haritatos, 2005).
- 1st : Harmony vs. Conflict
- 2nd : Blendedness vs. Compartmentalisation
- High BII implies high levels of Harmony and Blendedness
- Low BII implies high levels of Conflict and Compartmentalisation

Propositions

- P1:** High BII individuals will have more same ethnicity ties than Low BII individuals
- P2:** High BII individuals will have more developmental relationships outside of the organisation than low BII individuals.
- P3:** High BII individuals will have more sponsor-protégé relationships in the workplace than Low BII individuals

Methods

Participants

- Black African/Black-Caribbean accountants and lawyers
- Hold a recognised professional qualification in their field
- Based in the UK

Procedure

- Semi structured interviews
- Developmental Network Questionnaire (Higgins, 2004)
- Professional Cultural Identity Integration scale

Preliminary Results

A New Scale: Professional Cultural Identity Integration

- During the study evidence emerged of **four distinct psychological constructs regarding professional culture**: Harmony, Conflict, Blendedness and Compartmentalisation.
- This extends Benet-Martinez & Haritatos' (2005) work which identifies two distinct constructs

Practical Implications for Organisations

- Understanding how a developmental network supports career enhancement may present greater opportunities to engage minority groups
- Acknowledging different bicultural experiences can allow organisations to move beyond group based identities when negotiating diversity in the workplace
- Characterising minority ethnic employees as being talented, skilled and motivated individuals may assist recruitment and retention

Discussion

Limitations

- Difficult to find participants because they are underrepresented
- Individuals may have multicultural experiences that are salient.
- The focus on ethnicity does not consider potential moderators like class or gender

Future research should consider:

- Potential mediators:
 - Self monitoring, self efficacy
- Underrepresented groups:
 - Women,
 - Professionals with disabilities
 - LGBT individuals

Get In Touch

Please contact me at anytime:

- For more information
- To discuss this research
- To introduce individuals who are interested to participate in the study
- To request a detailed bibliography
- To discuss consulting requirements for your company

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