Multicultural and Multilingual Employees: Bridging Activities, Cognitive Schemas, and Social Capital Formation

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1. Introduction

1.1 Relevance and Objectives

This PhD thesis is structured in five main chapters: the introduction, the three articles that constitute the main part of my thesis and the concluding remarks which explain overall contributions to the literature. The following introductory text intends to provide an overview of the three distinct but closely interrelated papers of my PhD thesis. More specifically, I will embed my PhD thesis articles into the current research in the field, deliver a summary of the key findings of the three articles, explain how they are interconnected, and describe my methodology. All three articles are meant to be published in top management journals with my supervisor, Professor Markus Pudelko. As he has already contributed to varying degrees to the current versions of the papers, I will also elaborate on the specifics of this collaboration for each article.

The three distinct articles of this paper-based dissertation all deal with multicultural and multilingual employees as related and overlapping but distinct groups in international workplaces. Multiculturals are individuals who have knowledge of, identify with and have internalized multiple cultures (Vora, Martin, Fitzsimmons, Pekerti, Lakshman, & Raheem, 2019). Multilinguals are individuals who speak more than one language fluently and regularly (Bialystock, 2016; Grosjean, 2014). While early research used both terms bi- and multi-cultural / -lingual, I follow today's norm of using the inclusive term of multi-cultural / -lingual to refer to an individual with two or more cultures / languages. Not least due to ever-increasing migration flows and the impact over generations, multicultural and multilingual employees become the norm rather than the exception (Fitzsimmons, Baggs, & Brannen, in press). Over the past 15 years, international migration has increased by about 50%, with the vast majority of migrants being of working age (IOM, 2018; UN, 2017). As such, it is estimated that by 2050 in the US, for example, over one third of the population will be an immigrant or the child of an

immigrant (Pew Research Centre, 2013), and will thus likely identify with multiple cultures and speak multiple languages. In Germany, which is the largest migrant receiving country within Europe (IOM, 2018), trends may become similar. Already nowadays, 65% of working-age adults in the EU know at least one foreign language, and about 25% of those indicate speaking their best foreign language on a proficient level (Eurostat, 2016). Due to the increasing importance of these employees, research in international business (IB) needs an in-depth and nuanced understanding about them.

More broadly, research on cultural differences and its impact on organizations has a relatively long history that started with the influential study "Culture's Consequences" that was published in 1980 by organizational behavior researcher Geert Hofstede. Research on language differences, in turn, started much later at the end of the 1990s with initial studies dealing with issues related to the implementation of English as the business lingua franca in organizations (Marschan-Piekkari, Welch, & Welch, 1999a, 1999b).

Cultural and language differences within individuals began to be examined much later. In 2010, starting with a special issue on *Bicultural Individuals in Organizations* in the *International Journal of Cross-Cultural Management* (Issue 1, 2010), business and management scholars began to explore multicultural individuals. This was followed by a Think Tank on multicultural employees at the *Academy of Management Annual Meeting* in Vancouver in 2015. While still a nascent stream, multiculturals have since been found to bring tremendous benefits to the organization, for example as boundary spanners (Kane & Levina, 2017), conflict mediators (Hong, 2010) and cultural brokers (Jang, 2017). Research has gone further to study their identity (Fitzsimmons, 2013), cognitive schemas (Martin & Shao, 2016; Martin, Shao, & Thomas, 2019) as well as social and personal outcomes (Fitzsimmons, Liao, & Thomas, 2017) as relevant to business. In separate studies about language differences, multilinguals have been mentioned as bridge individuals (Harzing & Feeley, 2003), also referred to as language nodes

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(Marchan-Piekkari et al., 1999a), intermediaries (Marschan-Piekkari et al., 1999b), or translation machines (Vaara, Tienari, Piekkari, & Saintti, 2005), because they speak the specific languages of multiple individuals involved in business encounters. Scholars broadly categorize them into native, non-native and rarely also professional speakers to study language barriers and other effects on multinational teams or organizations (Neeley & Dumas, 2016; Tenzer, Pudelko, & Harzing, 2014; Tenzer & Pudelko, 2017). Research on multilinguals has yet to reach the depth that research on multiculturals is achieving.

Generally and also specifically on the individual level, research on culture and language has been conducted either entirely separately or with language being subsumed under culture. However, while culture and language are two distinct concepts, they are interlinked, related and complementary (Barner-Rasmussen, Ehrnroot, Koveshnikov, & Mäkelä, 2014; Ringberg, Luna, Reihlen, & Peracchio, 2010; Sofietti, 1960; Grosjean, 2014). As such, an integrated examination can reveal the separate but also the interwoven aspects of this complex relationship between culture and language (Aichhorn & Puck, 2017a). In my dissertation, I therefore attempt to close this conceptually and practically relevant gap and study both multicultural and multilingual employees simultaneously to further examine the complex culture-language relationship within individuals. That way, I can show in what processes and outcomes the concepts are more intertwined and where they are rather distinct.

As generally common in IB research on culture and language, I draw on theories from fields outside of business and management, including social psychology, cognitive psychology, intercultural development, linguistics and language learning. Research on multiculturals in IB is heavily based on the psychological concepts of bicultural identity integration (BII), explaining how multicultural individuals integrate their multiple cultural identities on a continuum from seeing them in conflict (low BII) to seeing them as harmonious (high BII), and cultural frame switching (CFS), showing how multiculturals switch between their cultural

frames according to situational cues (Benet-Martinez, Leu, Lee, & Morris, 2002; Cheng, Lee, & Benet-Martinez, 2006). In my dissertation, I expand the perspective by bringing in the concept of cultural schema development from educational research on intercultural development (Nishida, 1999). Research on language diversity on the more micro levels draws primarily on theories from linguistics, showing how the lack of language proficiency in different areas such as, for example, lexis (vocabulary), syntax (sentence structure), speech pragmatics (the way of expressing a speech act) and prosodics (accent and speed) affects language barriers. In addition, I bring in research from language learning (L2 learning) to show how different stages in the learning process lead to different outcomes in fluency, proficiency and the impact thereof.

Specifically, the first article deals with multiculturals and multilinguals in their role as bridge individuals in helping to overcome cultural and language barriers. While previous research has assumed that multiculturals and multilinguals draw on their high language proficiency and excellent intercultural skills, I found that they draw on both their assets and their shortcomings when bridging barriers. I specify the specific assets and shortcomings of both multiculturals and multilinguals and show how they implement these in their bridging activities. As a result, I propose four different roles that they adopt as bridge individuals: cultural teacher and language interpreter for asset-based bridging, and cultural coach and language facilitator for shortcoming-based bridging.

The second article looks at the cognitive schemas (i.e. the knowledge and information they store in their minds) of multicultural and multilingual employees. Previous research on multiculturals and multilinguals has studied the structure and activation of the cultural schemas, while paying no attention to the language schemas. I develop a framework to propose a shift toward multicultural and multilingual schemas as opposed to multiple cultural and language schemas within these individuals. Specifically, I show that the content of the schemas is

comprised of two sub-schemas, one relating to the knowledge and skills, and one relating to the strategies in developing these. Additionally, the schemas mutually influence each other.

The third article shows how multiculturals and multilinguals form social capital (i.e. the resources embedded within, available through, and derived from, the network of relationships) and how the properties of the social capital outcome look like. Previous research has exclusively dealt with identity-related mechanisms for multiculturals' social capital formation and regarded language capital (the possession of foreign language skills) as a mechanism to social and human capital of multilinguals. I show that multilinguals form language-specific social capital, while multiculturals form both culture-specific and culture-general social capital. Specifically, I discuss how different mechanisms lead to a higher breadth and depth of their social capital.

The three articles are on the one hand connected through the methodological approach, using the same data set consisting of 154 semi-structured interviews with multicultural and / or multilingual individuals, all of them working in international settings. On the other hand, all articles follow an integrated approach in treating individual-level multiculturalism and multilingualism as distinct concepts, while allowing for overlap and mutual influence. That way, within each article, I can show the processes and outcomes of each concept, but also how they influence each other. In addition, while there is still a prevalent binary conceptualization of either monocultural or multicultural individuals, and monolingual or multilingual individuals, I follow a continuum approach to allow for varying degrees of multiculturalism and multilingualism. As a result, I generate mid-range theory with three new models that explain multiculturals' and multilinguals' roles as bridge individuals (article 1), their cognitive cultural and language schemas (article 2), and their social capital formation and properties (article 3). Consequently, the dissertation as a whole contributes to a better understanding of this specific workforce of multicultural and multilingual employees.

1.2 Methodology

I chose an explorative, inductive research design for my study, as it is best suited for the exploration of (a) topics that have not yet been systematically investigated (Morgan & Smircich, 1980), (b) micro-processes on the individual level (Birkinshaw, Brannen, & Tung, 2011), and (c) how and why questions that were the core of my study (Pratt, 2009). Specifically, I chose qualitative semi-structured interviews as the method of data collection, because they allow for comparability among the sample while remaining open to the emergence of new issues (Myers, 2008). Inspired by the principles of Grounded Theory (Glaser & Strauss, 1967), I approached the topic with a broad goal in mind: To understand multicultural and multilingual employees both as distinct groups, but with an integrated approach, to gain further insights into the complex relationship between culture and language within individuals and their contributions at the workplace. The iterative process between data collection and analysis allowed me to refine the data collection throughout, to specify my research questions and thus, to generate a rich data set to unleash the complexity of the resources, mechanisms, and outcomes of multicultural and multilingual employees. Consequently, I generated mid-range theories to three more specific topics, represented in the three articles.

In total, the data set consists of the 1950 pages of transcripts of the semi-structured interviews with 154 individuals that considered themselves as either multicultural or multilingual or both. While I initially sought to categorize them into the long-standing matrix of multiculturals-multilinguals, multiculturals-monolinguals and monoculturals-multilinguals (Sofietti, 1960), it soon became apparent that the categorization could not occur in such a clear cut way, because the large majority of interviewees had strong issues in clearly identifying with one of the extremes they belonged to (mono or multi). Thanks to the qualitative, inductive approach using semi-structured interviews, I was able to adjust the interview guideline so that

I could explore these (and other) issues in more depth and detect the interviewees' perceptions according to the levels of cultural and language fluency.

The interview guideline consisted of two parts. In the first part, respondents were asked to share their personal background with regards to their cultures and languages. They were asked to describe when, how and why they had acquired their multiple cultures and / or languages. If applicable for their multicultural background, they were asked how they had identified with their cultures throughout different stages of their life and in different domains. If applicable for their multilingual background, they were asked how proficient and fluent they acted in their languages throughout different stages of their life and in different domains, such as the professional and private ones. This part also included demographic facts and general information about their age, position, job responsibilities, firm and position tenure and cultural and language background of the people they worked with.

The second and main part consisted of questions directly related to their experience with their multiculturalism and / or multilingualism in different aspects of their work life. At the beginning, these included various topics around their roles, knowledge sharing, relationship building and conflict management. Each section started with broad, generic questions to allow respondents share their subjective views on the topic. Subsequently, we asked more specific questions and probed for concrete examples from the interviewee's experience. As common in inductive studies, I adjusted the interview guideline throughout the data collection to respond to most relevant or emerging themes and to incorporate new insights from the literature (Myers, 2008). As such, some topics were at some point excluded, for example conflict management, and some explored in more detail, for example respondents' roles and relationship building.

Between 2015 and 2017, I conducted 49 interviews, while 10 Master's students conducted the remaining 105 interviews under my close supervision. Each Master's student received the task to familiarize him- or herself with the topic, the most recent interview

guideline, and detailed instructions on interviewing techniques either in individual or group sessions. I extensively discussed the research questions and objectives of the study with all students before they started recruiting their interviewees. Throughout their interviews, we had regular meetings to discuss challenges and lessons learned of interviewing and transcribing as well as potentially new themes that were arising. I received access to my interviewees through personal contacts, HR departments and professional online platforms such as LinkedIn and Xing. The Master's students recruited their interviewees in the same way. We recorded the interviews and interviewed our participants in the language they felt most comfortable with, including German, English, Spanish, French and Vietnamese. Interviews were between 32 minutes and 1 hour and 58 minutes long, with the average being 59 minutes long. The interviews were then transcribed verbatim in the same language, except for the three in Vietnamese. Since I don't speak or understand Vietnamese, the student translated the interview transcripts to English. The transcripts comprise about 1950 double spaced pages that formed the basis of my data analysis. The interviewees represented 53 national cultures and 39 national languages and worked in a large variety of industries, including for example the automotive, aero-space, food, oil and pharmaceutical industries, consulting, banking, media, auditing, retail and IT. Respondents worked in a broad range of functional areas, for example marketing, sales, purchasing, HR, finance, accounting, controlling, research and development, and strategy. They held positions ranging from trainees, over regular employees, lower, middle and upper managers, to vice-presidents and CEOs. 88 of the interviewees were male and 66 female. Their age ranged from 19 to 65 with an average age of 32 (the age of 14 interviewees is unknown).

I started the data analysis while interviews were still ongoing, as common in inductive studies, and used the qualitative research software Atlas.ti. In our individual or group sessions, I introduced the students to the Grounded Theory coding approach as outlined by Corbin and Strauss (2008). After the students had coded their interviews, I compared their and my codes.

While we generally agreed on the meaning of similar occurrences, the codes sometimes differed in their semantics. Without altering the interpretation of these, I integrated similar codes to ensure consistency.

Inspired by Grounded Theory's coding process (Corbin & Strauss, 2008), I first applied an open coding technique by going through each transcript line by line. By doing so, I labeled each passage with an initial first-order code. These codes either reflected verbatim what the respondents said (in-vivo codes) or referred to theoretical concepts in the literature. The next step was the so called axial coding. To ensure consistency, I applied the constant comparative method and compared different parts of each interview as well as different interviews with each other. From this complex process, new linkages between the first-order codes appeared which I then grouped under more abstract second-order codes. In an iterative process between the raw data, codes and the literature, the emergence of three themes crystallized which then formed the basis for the three articles: bridging activities, cognitive schemas, and social capital formation. For each of the three articles, I then returned to the respective first order codes and repeated the process of axial coding and the iteration with the literature until I could integrate the findings into a comprehensive model.

In the next section, I will provide a brief overview of the three articles.

1.3 Overview of the Articles

1.3.1 Overcoming cultural and language barriers: Multicultural and multilingual individuals' bridging activities

I presented an earlier version of this article as single author after it had been peer-reviewed and accepted at the *79th Academy of Management Annual Meeting* in Boston in August 2019. After that, Professor Pudelko and I worked on it together and submitted this version to the *Academy of International Business Annual Meeting 2020* (currently under peer-review). We are currently preparing it for submission at the *Academy of Management Journal* (Ranking according to the VHB Jourqual 3: A+, Ranking according to the Journal Quality Guide der Association of Business Schools: 4*).

The paper discusses the capabilities and their implementation of multiculturals and multilinguals when bridging cultural and language barriers. Cultural and language diversity has been predominantly found to lead to negative outcomes due to cultural and language barriers. In this vein, bridge individuals have been described to play a crucial role in overcoming these barriers. Bridge individuals are employees in a multinational context that connect individuals or groups that are separated by a cultural or language barrier. So far, research has proposed that individuals draw on excellent intercultural skills to bridge cultural barriers, and high language skills to bridge language barriers, suggesting that multiculturals are perfectly suited as bridge individuals for cultural barriers and multilinguals as bridge individuals for language barriers. Yet, research has not developed an understanding of the particular elements of the skills they need, nor what exactly they do to bridge these barriers. Additionally, multiculturals are often described as being multilingual at the same time, suggesting that they are automatically suited to bridge language barriers as well, although we know that they may not possess the necessary language skills. Therefore, the paper also separates conceptually the bridging abilities and effects of multiculturals and multilinguals, considering that they might often overlap. To open

up the black box of the culture- and language-related micro-processes which describe the bridging activities, this study is based on two research questions: 1) *What are the specific capabilities multicultural and / or multilingual individuals draw on when bridging cultural and language barriers?* and 2) *how do multicultural and / or multilingual individuals implement their particular capabilities when bridging cultural and language barriers?*

Through the analysis of the 154 semi-structured interviews, we came to understand that multiculturals and multilinguals distinguish between their capabilities and the implementation when bridging cultural and language barriers. We further found that individuals do not only draw on their culture- and language-related assets as previously assumed, but also on their perceived shortcomings. While it was not surprising that individuals see certain capabilities as assets which they then implement to bridge barriers, it was a counter-intuitive finding that they also make use of basically the opposite set of their characteristics (i.e. their shortcomings). Especially individuals who considered themselves as not fully multicultural or multilingual show a high self-reflection of their lack of cultural or language skills, which enables them to develop a high sensitivity about others who face cultural or language barriers. Consequently, they also find those shortcomings beneficial when bridging barriers.

Along two dimensions, (a) cultural barriers and language barriers, and (b) as asset-based and shortcoming-based bridging, we develop a model that shows the micro-processes of the capabilities they draw on and the implementation of these when bridging barriers. This results in four roles that multiculturals and multilinguals engage in as bridge individuals which we label: cultural teacher, language interpreter, cultural coach and language facilitator. I will briefly outline the roles in the next section.

First, multiculturals in their role as what we call 'cultural teacher' draw on the assets culture-specific and culture-general knowledge as well as cultural empathy when they see others having cultural barriers. They implement their assets through explaining culture-specific

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behavior and culture-general differences which helps the others overcome the barriers. Second, multilinguals in their role as what we label 'language interpreter' draw on their ability to effortlessly communicate in multiple languages and their ability to code-switch (i.e. changing the language spontaneously in a conversation) as assets when they see others having language barriers. They implement these assets through code-switching, translating and using simplified language which helps the others in overcoming their language barriers. For both roles, a high cultural or language fluency is necessary. Third, in their role of what we call the 'cultural coach', our respondents who perceive to have multicultural shortcomings engage in a reflective process of experiences where they did not meet others' cultural expectations and thus, become particularly sensitive toward other people who faced cultural barriers. They implement these perceived shortcomings through making others aware of the present cultural barrier and discussing coping strategies that had worked for them. Fourth, in the role of what we label 'language facilitator', respondents who perceive to have multilingual shortcomings engage in a reflective process of experiences when they did not meet the language expectations of others and become particularly sensitive toward language barriers of other people. In implementing these perceived shortcomings, they give others the space to speak and understand or rephrase what had been said. In this case, they do not have sufficient language skills to be the 'language interpreter' and translate or code-switch, but still help others in overcoming their language barriers through this rather indirect way.

The study provides a significant contribution to the literature, as it opens up the black box about multiculturals and multilinguals and bridging activities. By differentiating between asset-based and shortcoming-based bridging on one side and capabilities and implementation on the other side, as well as by defining four different roles of multiculturals and multilinguals, we depict for the first time the complex bridging activities of these particular groups of organizational members. In addition, while previous research has adopted a binary construct of

monocultural-multicultural and monolingual-multilingual, our findings clearly show that these individuals see themselves very differently. They might, for example, perceive themselves slightly as multiculturals (respectively multilinguals), but still perceive shortcomings that make them doubt their 'multiculturality' (respectively their 'multilinguality'). This new and much more nuanced perspective and the fact that the individuals concerned reflect frequently on these issues allowed us to uncover bridging mechanisms that are not only based on assets, but also on shortcomings.

In terms of practical implications, our study helps managers to understand the capabilities their multicultural and multilingual employees with different (cultural and language) fluency levels bring to the organization, and provide appropriate opportunities to recognize and use their capabilities to bridge cultural and language barriers. We provide various options for different roles they can adopt according to their fluency levels.

1.3.2 From mono to multi: Cognitive schemas of multicultural and multilingual employees

The second article of my dissertation was entirely drafted by me. Upon more general suggestions by my supervisor, Professor Pudelko, I wrote a substantially revised second version. We have submitted that second version to the *Academy of International Business Annual Meeting 2020* (currently under peer-review). Upon this, Prof Pudelko provided again more general comments and suggestions and on this basis, I finalized a third version of the article which is the one enclosed to this PhD dissertation and which we will submit in January to the *Academy of Management Annual Meeting 2020*. We will soon prepare the article for submission to *Human Relations* (VHB Jourqual 3: B, ABS: 4).

The article investigates the cultural and language knowledge structures that multiculturals and multilinguals store in their minds. These are so called cognitive schemas, which influence individuals' thinking, behavior, emotions and how information is interpreted.

Hitherto, research has only scratched the surface of the content of multiculturals' and multilinguals' cognitive schemas and how they develop them, considering that they possess not one but multiple cultures and languages. However, understanding this is necessary to comprehend the specific resources that these employees draw on. Research in IB and management has drawn on insights from cognitive psychology explaining the structure of cognitive cultural schemas of multicultural individuals. Cultural schemas are organized knowledge structures, including cultural norms, values and beliefs, that individuals store and access to interpret and select information about a culture. It has been suggested that these individuals possess multiple cultural schemas, directly or indirectly assuming that they store the full knowledge about a specific culture in their minds. Others proposed that multiculturals can also have hybrid cultural schemas which is the internalization of a hybrid culture of a group, e.g. Indians in Britain who have developed their own culture over time. Yet, these concepts neglect that individuals have unique experiences with their cultures which will likely affect what they internalize.

In addition, while cognitive schemas of multiculturals have been investigated to some degree, rather surprisingly, IB and management research has entirely disregarded the language schemas of multilingual employees. Language schemas are organized mental representations of language symbols, including knowledge about cultural, behavioural and functional aspects of language. This is all the more astonishing given that research in cognitive psychology suggests that their language schemas differ crucially from those of monolinguals. Given that the cognitive schemas contain crucial resources that these particular employees bring to their workplace and explain at least partially their behavior and thoughts, organizations need an in-depth understanding of them. Additionally, since we know that culture and language influence each other, the cultural and language schema will likely also be influenced by each other. Therefore, the objective of this article is to answer the following research questions: *1) What*

are cultural schemas within multicultural individuals comprised of? and *2) How and why do they internalize the various aspects?* as well as *3) What are language schemas within multilingual individuals comprised of?* and *4) How and why do they internalize the various aspects?*

Through the analysis of the 154 semi-structured interviews and the iterative process between data collection, data analysis and literature review about cultural and language schemas from cognitive psychology, language learning and intercultural development, we found that multiculturals and multilinguals internalize the knowledge structures related to their cultures and languages as two sub-schemas. We call these sub-schemas the contextual competence schema, developed through external influences, and the agency schema, developed through internal dealings with these influences. In the contextual competence schema, multiculturals internalize multicultural references within two separate contexts, namely the professional and the private context. But they also have agency in the process of internalizing these influences. We found that they adopt three main strategies: They *embrace* influences that they have a positive attitude toward, they *reject* influences they have a negative attitude toward, and / or they *accept* the perception of not belonging, which in turn allows them to accept the presence and absence of elements of their cultures within their schemas.

For multilinguals, the contextual competence schema contains their levels of proficiency and fluency, and this again with a differentiation between the private and the professional context for each of their languages. We found that they also show agency in the process of internalizing their multiple languages. They allowed two types of mixing their languages: Functional mixing which becomes apparent in the form of code-switching, and socio-cultural mixing which shows itself through the mix of proverbs and pragmatic transfers from one language to another.

Thanks to the integrated approach, the analysis also showed the overlap of multiculturalism and multilingualism. Our respondents saw language as an important mechanism to access and transmit cultural knowledge, values, norms and resulting behaviors. The other way around, our respondents regarded certain cultural elements such as culture-specific speech pragmatics and semiotics as important to fully access and transmit a language.

The resulting framework shows the complexity, dynamics and uniqueness of the internalized culture and language elements within multicultural and multilingual individuals and thus, contributes to research on multicultural and multilingual cognition. Since we unpacked the crucial differentiation between the private and professional context, we contribute to research on them specifically as employees. We were able to open up the black box of the specific content of their schemas, an important undertaking to understand the resources they bring to the organization. Moreover, it forms the basis to conduct further research on the specific use of those. With the agency schema, we also provide an explanation of the diverse forms and dominance of cultural and language elements within the schemas. Overall, we propose to acknowledge the existence of *a multicultural schema* and *a multilingual schema* within individuals as opposed to multiple cultural and language schemas. With our framework, we take a first step in that direction and follow the calls for a paradigm shift away from monocultural and monolingual lenses.

Managerial implications we derive from our findings include the possibility for employers to generate more realistic expectations toward their multicultural and multilingual subordinates. Managers should be aware of the difference in more social and more formal competences that arise from the different representations within the private and the professional context. We also provide a framework for multicultural and multilingual individuals to assess their own cognitive resources as unique compositions of elements from multiple cultures and / or languages.

1.3.3 Success in the comfort zone: Multicultural and multilingual individuals' social capital formation

The third article was drafted by me with ongoing discussions with Professor Pudelko. I discussed preliminary findings at the *Co-Lead Workshop at the University of Manitoba* at the beginning of October 2019. After having finalized a full draft, Professor Pudelko broadly commented on the article and provided suggestions. Based on this, I revised the article and it is this second version of the article which is now included in this PhD thesis. In January, we will submit it to the *Academy of Management Annual Meeting 2020*. We will soon prepare it for submission to the *Journal of Management* (VHS: A, ABS: 4*).

The paper attempts to answer the research questions what multiculturals and multilinguals draw on when forming social capital and how their unique characteristics affect the properties of their social capital outcome. Social capital is the network of relationships of individuals through which they can access resources such as, for example, knowledge and information. While internationally operating organizations rely more and more on such informal resources and structures of their employees, little is known how this increasing workforce of multiculturals and multilinguals forms social capital. However, this is important for organizations to support their multicultural and multilingual employees in creating such a network and ultimately, to turn these resources into benefits.

On the basis of the findings we teased out from the 154 semi-structured interviews, we generated theory explaining how multiculturals and multilinguals form three types of social capital: multilinguals form language-*specific* social capital only and multiculturals form both culture-*specific* and culture-*general* social capital. Since they have access to quantitatively more, and culturally / linguistically more diverse, people due to their multiple cultures and languages, their networks of relationships are large and multinational, which we label breadth of social capital. Additionally, we found that they build strong relationships, which we label

depth of social capital. The process of forming strong relationships is for each type (language-specific, culture-specific and culture-general) a complex and multifaceted one, where they draw on multiple language, cultural and personal attributes. Specifically, multilinguals use their functional knowledge of a language to start building relationships, but need to have internalized a deeper socio-cultural understanding of the language to establish a stronger relationship. Multiculturals in forming culture-specific social capital draw on surface knowledge about a culture such as music or sports to start building relationships, but need to have internalized a better understanding of behavioral norms for a deeper relationship. A shared social identity ultimately provides the strongest bond. Regarding culture-general social capital, they make use of personal attributes in addition to cultural ones that they have developed because of being multicultural. For example, because they describe themselves as curious, non-judgemental and able to take someone's perspective, they can develop strong relationships with others. Additionally, they also build strong ties with other multiculturals, because they share the lived experience which deeply connects them.

Our resulting model demonstrates important contributions to the literature on the network of relationships (i.e. social capital) of multicultural and multilingual employees that organizations can use to gain competitive advantage. The nuanced process of forming social capital based on multilingualism on the one and multiculturalism on the other hand opens the black box of the mechanisms that lead to these rich resources. Consequently, we provide detailed knowledge that was so far missing in the literature, but is needed to advance our understanding of the resources of these employees. It also serves as a framework to explore social capital outcomes of multicultural and multilingual employees as distinct groups. Furthermore, this paper yet again shows the importance of an integrated approach of studying multicultural and multilingual individuals. It was only through this that we could identify the difference between the language- and culture-specific and the culture-general attributes of the

social capital. Furthermore, it shows that identity-related mechanisms are crucial for multiculturals' social capital, but not for multilinguals' social capital.

We offer several suggestions to managers to support their multicultural and multilingual employees in developing their social capital, such as language training on different levels, cultural trainings, networking opportunities and options for professional and personal development specifically to train curiosity, non-judgmental attitudes and perspective-taking.

The following chapters contain the three articles of my dissertation project in their entirety.

2. Overcoming Cultural and Language Barriers: The Bridging Activities of Multicultural and Multilingual Individuals[1]

ABSTRACT

This study examines two closely related groups of employees that are more and more prevalent in today's organizations: multicultural and multilingual individuals. More specifically, this study investigates how these individuals employ their particular capabilities to bridge multicultural and multilingual barriers in their work contexts. While previous literature has already identified the usefulness of these individuals in overcoming such hurdles, very little is known about the micro processes that unfold in their bridging activities. This paper attempts to open up this black box. Based on the analysis of 154 interviews, we develop a theoretical model of bridging activities that carefully distinguishes between the related but still distinct concepts of culture- and language-related bridging. Through our inductive theory building we further came to understand the importance to distinguish between the capabilities ("the being") and the implementation ("the doing") of multicultural and multilingual individuals. Finally, we noticed that not only assets but also perceived shortcomings can be instrumental in their bridging activities. Based on our conceptualizations, we develop four roles in bridging activities: cultural teacher, language interpreter, cultural coach and language facilitator.

INTRODUCTION

In today's globalized business world, employees frequently operate in organizational work environments that are characterized by a significant degree of cultural and language diversity. This organizational diversity regularly translates into considerable cultural and

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[1] An earlier version of this paper is included in the AOM conference proceedings:
Augustin, T.J. 2019. The Impact of Perceived Multicultural and Multilingual Strengths and Deficits on Bridging Strategies. *Academy of Management Proceedings*, 2019(1).

language barriers that employees are faced with when working, for example, on project teams across the world, between headquarters and subsidiaries, as expatriates, inpatriates or third country nationals, or with foreign suppliers and clients (Salk & Brannen, 2000; Tung & Stahl, 2018). *Cultural diversity* can lead to positive outcomes, such as enhanced creativity (McLeod, Lobel, & Cox, 1996) and effective knowledge exchange (Hajro, Gibson, & Pudelko, 2015), if managed well to overcome cultural barriers (Nkomo, Bell, Roberts, Joshi, & Thatcher, 2019). Regarding *language diversity*, research has exclusively referenced negative effects such as unequal status among employees (Neeley & Dumas, 2016) and reduced trust within teams (Tenzer, Pudelko, & Harzing, 2014) (for an exception, see Aichhorn & Puck, 2017a). With the overwhelming focus of research being on the importance of overcoming *cultural and language barriers* to enable positive outcomes, the question becomes paramount *how* to overcome or at least reduce these barriers. In this context, so-called *bridge individuals* have been described to play a crucial role. Bridge individuals are defined as employees in a multinational context who connect different individuals or groups that are separated by a cultural or linguistic barrier (Sekiguchi, 2016). In particular, multiculturals and multilinguals have been identified as bridge individuals who can reduce hurdles in multicultural and multilingual work contexts (Barner-Rasmussen, Ehrnroot, Koveshnikov, & Mäkelä, 2014; Brannen, Thomas, & Garcia, 2009; Brannen & Thomas, 2010; Harzing & Feeley, 2002; Kane & Levina, 2017). As research has suggested, these individuals, who are by now highly prevalent in today's organizations, at least in most Western countries, can be employees of considerable value to organizations, due to their specific and much needed skills, abilities and competences (Fitzsimmons, 2013).

Multiculturals are individuals who have knowledge of, have internalized and identify with more than one societal culture (Vora, Martin, Fitzsimmons, Pekerti, Lakshman, & Raheem, 2019). Due to their cultural knowledge, cross-cultural abilities and multiple cultural identifications these organizational members have been described as ideal bridge individuals

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(Brannen & Thomas, 2010; Hong, 2010; Kane & Levina, 2017). It is surprising that despite their importance for the bridging of cultural barriers, this particular group has only recently been recognized and investigated in management studies.

Multilinguals, by contrast, are individuals who speak more than one language fluently and regularly (Bialystock, 2016; Dewaele, 2007; Grosjean, 2015). As such, they have been found to bridge language barriers with their specific language skills through translating for others as part of their normal jobs (Barner-Rasmussen et al., 2014; Harzing & Feely, 2003; Marchan-Piekkari, Welch, & Welch, 1999a; Vaara, Tienari, Piekkari, & Santti, 2005). While having received some scant interest, research has even less studied this group of organizational members in comparison to multiculturals.

Not least as a result of ever increasing migration flows and their generation-spanning impacts, multiculturals and multilinguals are far from being an exceptional group, at least in Western societies. From 2000 to 2017, international migration has globally increased by just under 50% (United Nations, 2017). As a result, more and more individuals experience more than one culture and speak more than one language in their daily lives. In the EU, for example, 65% of working-age adults know least one foreign language, and about one quarter of those speak their best foreign language on a proficient level (Eurostat, 2016). With multicultural and multilingual individuals being key to bridge cultural and language barriers and with both groups becoming at the same time more and more pervasive in modern societies and organizational work contexts, the understanding of their particular characteristics and their resulting bridging activities becomes of paramount conceptual and practical relevance for organizational management research.

While literature has already established that multicultural and multilingual individuals possess relevant skills to bridge cultural and language barriers, we still do not know much about what their specific *capabilities* are and why and how they actually *implement* them. This paper

therefore attempts to close this conceptually and practically relevant research gap and investigates the particular assets of multicultural and multilingual individuals and how they are implemented in performing bridging activities to overcome cultural and language barriers.

Furthermore, researchers often perceive language or multilingual skills as a component or an outcome of multicultural competence (Chen, Benet-Martinez, & Harris Bond, 2008). However, an increasing amount of studies have taken language "out of the 'culture box'" (Welch & Welch, 2008: 341) and shown that culture and language, while being interlinked, related, and complementary, are conceptually different and not necessarily coexisting (Barner-Rasmussen et al., 2014). We consider it therefore a conceptual shortcoming to still categorize language-related bridging as a mere sub-category or outflow of culture-related bridging. In addition, the assumption, explicit or implicit, has often been that multiculturals are characterized automatically by being multilingual as well. Yet, multiculturals do not necessarily speak the respective languages (Brannen & Thomas, 2010), rendering the widely-practiced lumping together of multicultural and multilingual individuals in organizations and their bridging activities even more problematic.

Consequently, we hold that this perception of multilingual skills being a sub-category of multicultural skills, respectively the conjoined view of multiculturals and multilinguals (Kassis-Henderson, 2005) is a conceptual fallacy that has prevented a more profound understanding of why and how bridge individuals are able to assist in overcoming cultural and language hurdles. It is therefore a further objective of this paper to carefully separate conceptually the bridging abilities of multiculturals and multilinguals, even though they might overlap in many cases.

In our efforts to disentangle the "complex nature of the language-culture relationship" (Aichhorn & Puck, 2017a: 400) in our study about the bridging activities of multiculturals and multilinguals, we chose an inductive approach. Basing our study on the systematic analysis of 154 semi-structured interviews with individuals who consider themselves as multicultural,

multilingual or both, we contribute to the literature in various ways: First, we develop a conceptual model that opens up the black box of the micro-processes which describe the bridging activities of multicultural and multilingual individuals. Furthermore, as part of our inductive approach, we discovered and included in our model the distinction between the capabilities of those individuals ("the being") and their implementation ("the doing"). Our findings also revealed the relevance of distinguishing between asset-based and perceived shortcoming-based bridging activities, a differentiation which we subsequently also incorporated into our model. Finally, on the basis of our model building, we establish four distinct roles, multiculturals and multilinguals can adopt in their bridging activities, which we label cultural teacher, language interpreter, cultural coach and language facilitator.

In the sections that follow, we first review the literature on research on multicultural and multilingual individuals and on bridging of cultural and language barriers. Subsequently, we describe our methodology. Then we report our empirical findings and develop specific propositions about the relationships among our core concepts. Finally, we conclude with the conceptual implications of our findings, managerial implications, limitations and suggestions for future research.

THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

In the following, we draw on literature on multicultural and multilingual employees to understand more about their particular characteristics and on literature on overcoming culture and language barriers, as this is what the ultimate objective of multiculturals and multilinguals in our context is. These two topics provided the "orienting points" (Dutton, Worline, Frost & Lilius 2006: 61) for the iterative process between literature study, data collection and data analysis which ultimately culminated in our mid-range theory building (Pratt, 2009).

Multicultural and Multilingual Employees

The few studies that have dealt with *both, multicultural and multilingual individuals* and their cultural and language skills (Barner-Rasmussen et al., 2014) base their conceptualization on a two by two matrix that categorizes individuals into four types: multicultural-multilingual, multicultural-monolingual, monocultural-multilingual, and monocultural-monolingual (Sofietti, 1960). Barner-Rasmussen et al. (2014) show that cultural and language skills are independent antecedents for boundary spanning as an outcome. Ringberg, Luna, Reihlen and Peracchio (2010) provide empirical evidence that monocultural-multilinguals translate more precisely than multicultural-multilinguals from one language to another, because the latter switch their cultural frames automatically which can result in a drift of the intended meaning. These few and fragmented findings suggest that culture and language should be regarded as conceptually distinct, but related to each other, and that multicultural and multilinguals skills lead to different outcomes in terms of bridging.

Multicultural individuals have gained much more attention in international business (IB) research than multilinguals. Early, mostly theory-based research suggested that multiculturals are particularly well suited to excel as bridge individuals (Brannen & Thomas, 2010). This assumption has been based on specific cognitive characteristics such as culture-specific and culture-general knowledge as well as language skills (Hong, 2010), on behavioral outcomes such as adaptability, the ability to behave flexibly and appropriately in intercultural situations (Hanek, Lee, & Brannen, 2014), on identity-related processes such as embracing their relevant cultural identity in specific situations (Kane & Levina, 2017), and on more social outcomes such as possessing high levels of social capital (Fitzsimmons, 2013), which renders them more likely to acquire and share external knowledge (Hong, 2010).

By contrast, in management research (unlike psychology and linguistics), *multilingual individuals* have gained considerably less attention. While a growing body of management

research investigates language diversity on the organizational (e.g. Harzing & Pudelko, 2014; Neeley & Dumas, 2016) and the team-level (e.g. Kassis Henderson, 2005; Tenzer & Pudelko, 2017), little attention has so far been paid to the individual level (Aichhorn & Puck, 2017a). In the few studies that exist, scholars have mostly been concerned with exploring the antecedents for language barriers, such as anxiety in speaking a foreign language (Aichhorn & Puck, 2017b), and individual outcomes, such as status loss (Neeley, 2013). While several studies propose that individuals with the respective language skills can act as bridge individuals (Feely & Harzing, 2003) and have also referred to them as language nodes (Marschan-Piekkari et al., 1999a), intermediaries (Marschan-Piekkari et al., 1999b), or translation machines (Vaara et al., 2005), they have not examined the particular capabilities multilinguals possess beyond their proficiency in specific languages, nor have they paid attention to the particular processes that lead to bridging. A notable exception is Aichhorn and Puck (2017a) who found that individuals use two major strategies to overcome language barriers within MNCs. Accommodation occurs when individuals adjust their communication to their conversation partners in terms of language choice and language style. By contrast, negotiation of shared meaning is used when individuals aim to achieve mutual understanding.

These studies provide first important but fragmented insights into the potential skills and abilities of either multicultural or multilingual individuals that facilitate bridging. Yet, we still lack an integrated and systematic understanding of the specific *types* of bridging capabilities of both groups of individuals. This is important for both management theory and practice. For theory, we need an in-depth understanding of the links between general characteristics, skills as well as abilities and the types of usage these are associated with to get a comprehensive picture of these groups of organizational members. For practice, managers need an in-depth understanding of the specific resources these groups of organizational members bring to help them apply their capabilities for the right tasks. Thus, we formulate our *first research question:*

what are the specific capabilities multicultural and / or multilingual individuals draw on when bridging cultural and language barriers?

Bridging Cultural and Language Barriers

While we already know that bridging activities can play an important role in overcoming barriers that derive from cultural and language diversity, the question remains how this is operationalized. Barner-Rasmussen et al. (2014) summarized four general bridging functions that are not specifically related to an international context: the information function which assists in gathering and delivering information across units (Johnson & Duxbury, 2010); linking, which is the act of building bridges between previously disconnected groups and members (Obstfeld, 2005); facilitating, which anticipates bridge individuals' function as channels through which information is delivered and interpreted for out-group members (Harzing, 2001); and intervening, which relates to their role in clarifying misunderstandings and mediating between conflict parties. Harzing, Köster and Manger (2011) specified that for an international context language and cultural skills are the two most relevant ones for bridge individuals. Kane & Levina (2017) added that in order to bridge cultural and language barriers, individuals must have not only the capabilities but also the willingness to do so. Finally, in a recent review, Wiewiora, Smidt and Chang (2019) found that specifically for learning activities, culture-specific aspects of flexibility and risk-taking are the most relevant bridging mechanism. These studies provide us with first but scattered insights into bridging activities based on cultural and language skills, but also illustrate that we are still lacking a systematic understanding of the micro-processes in which cultural or language skills are transformed into bridging activities. An understanding of these is crucial to resolve the disconnect between capabilities of these individuals on one hand, and putting them into action on the other. We therefore formulate our *second research question: how do multicultural and / or multilingual*

individuals implement their particular capabilities when bridging cultural and language barriers?

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

Given that the differentiation between multicultural and multilingual bridging has not yet been systematically investigated and given that we target an in-depth understanding of the micro-processes under study, we consider an explorative, inductive approach to be particularly well suited to address our research questions (Morgan & Smircich, 1980). In the tradition of grounded theory (Glaser & Strauss, 1967), we started out with the broad objective of studying bridging activities of both, multiculturals and multilinguals. It was only thanks to our inductive approach that we came to understand after several iterations between data collection and data analysis the relevance of distinguishing between both groups' assets and their implementation. Similarly, it was only through our chosen research approach that we uncovered the significance of the to us completely unexpected differentiation between what we subsequently labeled as asset-based versus shortcoming-based bridging. As these specific foci transpired from our data, we returned to the literature. This iteration between our data and previous research resulted in the specification of our research questions and became the starting point for our theory development (Edmondson & McManus, 2007).

We chose a qualitative, interview-based research design, as it is most suited to investigate the 'how' and 'why' questions (Pratt, 2009) we intended to explore. This also allowed us to investigate relations "close to the informants' experience" (Gioia, Corley, & Hamilton, 2013: 19) and, on this basis, to develop theoretical propositions (Mantere & Ketoviki, 2013). More specifically, we conducted semi-structured interviews which ensured consistency and comparability between our interviewees, while remaining open to the emergence of new issues

(Myers, 2008). Semi-structured interviews allowed us on one hand to address the same core topics with similar questions to allow for meaningful comparisons across interviewees. On the other hand, they gave us the flexibility to tap into the informants' "inner events" (Weiss, 1994) and to provide us with rich, thick descriptions (Doz, 2011) by following respondent-specific leads about their multicultural and multilingual background and experiences and the effects of their bridging activities on cross-cultural and cross-lingual collaborations.

Sample and Data Collection

We were interested in studying individuals who identified to varying degrees with being multicultural and / or multilingual, and who worked in a multicultural and multilingual organizational setting. We sought information on a broad variety of collaborations within and across multinational project teams, departments and business units, between cross-national headquarters and subsidiaries, and with an international client or supplier base.

Following Corbin and Strauss (2008), we followed a theoretical sampling approach in that we recruited interviewees based on two criteria: (a) having internalized, identifying with, and having knowledge of two or more cultures (Vora et al., 2019), and / or being fluent in two or more languages and using them regularly (Bialystock, 2016; Dewaele, 2007; Grosjean, 2015) and (b) working in a multicultural and / or multilingual organizational work context. Particularly the first criterion stimulated individuals with varying degrees of multicultural or multilingual skills to participate in our study and share with us their personal story. As a result, we collected very rich data through 154 semi-structured interviews with multicultural and / or multilingual individuals, all of whom work in a multicultural or multilingual organizational setting.

The interviews consisted of two main parts. In the first part, participants were asked to describe their individual background. This included demographic facts and general information such as their job responsibilities, firm and position tenure, and cultural and linguistic characteristics of the people they worked with.

The second and main part of the interview consisted of questions directly related to the participants' experience with their multiculturalism and / or multilingualism on different aspects of their organizational work life. At this stage, we specifically asked for the interviewee's perception of how their background and their particular assets helped them to engage in bridging activities which resulted in a reduction of cultural and language barriers in their work environment. We encouraged them to illustrate their comments with detailed real-life examples and to reflect upon their actions and others' reactions within these examples.

Interviews were conducted between 2015 and 2017 by the first author and ten of her Master's students, either in the context of their Master's thesis or a research class. The first author conducted 49 interviews, while the ten Master's students conducted between 8 and 12 interviews each. The interview guideline was developed by the first author and discussed intensively with the Master's students in group and individual sessions. Due to the first author's and students' background and physical location, the majority of interviews took place with individuals who considered German as one of their cultures (90) or languages (107). However, extensive data collection trips abroad also allowed us to conduct additional interviews in Canada, China, Japan, Korea, and Sweden, while an additional twelve interviews were conducted over the phone or via Skype with respondents located in Australia, Ethiopia, Mexico, the Netherlands, Singapore, Switzerland, the UK, the US, and Vietnam. Interviews were conducted in German, English, Spanish, French and Vietnamese. In most cases, the interviews took place in the language the interviewee preferred, which usually allows for obtaining the most intuitive answers (Harzing & Maznevski, 2002). In the few other cases, interviews were conducted in English rather than the participants' dominant language. However, even in these instances our respondents felt reasonably comfortable and talked openly about all aspects which were addressed as they have been using English also at work on a day to day basis. The interviews were transcribed in the same language as they had been conducted, except for the

interviews in Vietnamese, a language the authors cannot read or understand. In this case, the interviewer translated and transcribed all interviews to English. Interviews were between 32 minutes and 1 hour 58 minutes long, with the average interview being 59 minutes long. The transcription of the 154 interviews resulted in a document of about 1950 double spaced pages that formed the basis of our data analysis.

Participants represented a variety of cultural and linguistic backgrounds and worked in a very diverse set of industries and services, including for example the automotive, aero-space, food, oil and pharmaceutical industries, consulting, banking, media, auditing, retail and IT. Functional areas of the respondents also covered a broad range, for example marketing, sales, purchasing, HR, finance, accounting, controlling, research and development, and strategy. Positions of the interviewees ranged from trainees, over regular employees, lower, middle and upper managers, to vice-presidents and CEOs. However, since participants reported not only about their current employment, but also about experiences in past appointments, the final data set includes a much larger variety of organizational contexts across all continents, industries and services, functional areas, and positions. 88 of our respondents were male and 66 female. The youngest interviewee was 19 years old and the oldest 65 years, with an average age of 32. To provide an overview on the most important characteristics of the sample, Table 1 summarizes the cultures and languages with the respective frequency represented in our sample.

TABLE 1. Represented Cultures and Languages

Culture	Frequency	Culture	Frequency	Language	Frequency	Language	Frequency
Afghan	3	Iraqui	1	Afrikaans	2	Portuguese	7
Argentinian	3	Irish	1	Arabic	2	Punjabi	1
Australian	2	Italian	3	Bengali	1	Rumanian	4
Austrian	1	Japanese	6	Bosnian	7	Russian	13
Barbadian	1	Kazakhstani	1	Bulgarian	2	Spanish	17
Beninese	1	Korean	6	Business English	106	Swedish	1
Bolivian	1	Mauritian	2	Cantonese	3	Swiss German	3
Bosnian	5	Mexican	1	Catalan	2	Turkish	6
Brazilian	3	Montenegrin	1	Creole	2	Ukranian	1
British	4	Polish	2	Croatian	6	Vietnamese	6
Bulgarian	3	Portuguese	1	Czech	2	Wolof	1
Canadian	14	Romanian	3	Dari	1	Zulu	2
Chilean	1	Russian	11	Dutch	5		
Chinese	6	Senegalese	1	English	49		
Croatian	3	Serbian	1	Farsi	1		
Czech	2	Singaporian	1	French	28		
Dutch	4	Slovenian	1	German	107		
Egyptian	1	South African	3	Greek	2		
Filipino	1	Spanish	8	Hindu	5		
French	7	Sri Lankan	1	Italian	3		
German	90	Swiss	5	Japanese	5		
Greek	3	Tunisian	1	Korean	7		
Guinean	1	Turkish	5	Mandarin	8		
Hong Kongese	3	US-American	11	Marathi	1		
Hungarian	1	Vietnamese	5	Mina	1		
Indian	7	Yugoslavian	1	Persian	4		
Iranian	1			Polish	3		

Data Analysis

Using the software Atlas.ti for data analysis, we started the analysis of our interviews already while the interviewing process was still ongoing (Patton, 2002) as is recommended practice for inductive studies (Gioia et al., 2013). This way, when having encountered contradictory information in the data analysis phase, we were able to collect additional, more specific information to explain those inconsistencies. For reliability reasons, all members of the data collection team contributed to the coding structure. Although there was generally agreement on the meaning of similar occurrences, there were at times different codes given for the same phenomena. For example, what one interviewer coded as 'brings culture-specific knowledge', another coded as 'knowledge about this culture'. In these instances, the first author ultimately integrated similar codes to ensure consistency.

While the interviews were transcribed in their original language (except for those in Vietnamese), all codes were developed in English to unitize the language of analysis. Inspired by Corbin & Strauss' (2008) Grounded Theory coding approach, we started with detailed line-by-line data analysis to generate initial first-order codes (open coding), most of which were in-vivo codes (i.e., verbatim terms used by the respondents). For example, the quote *"Because I jump back and forth between Vietnamese and Korean culture all the time, I have learned to empathize with each culture in its own way when I work with people from there. I see that as an advantage over those who only have one culture."* (P114; C: Viet, Kor; L: Viet, Kor, BE) generated the code 'cultural empathy as an advantage'. When quotes reflected theoretical concepts, we assigned codes that were informed by the literature. For example, the quote "*I got along well with my boss, so they often briefed me on what they wanted from him. Involuntarily, I was the link; that's how the Indians used me. Same thing with the Germans, because I understand the Indians, I was the link in that direction as well.*" (P40; C: Ger, Ind; L: Ger, Eng, Hin) generated the code "cultural bridging through cultural knowledge".
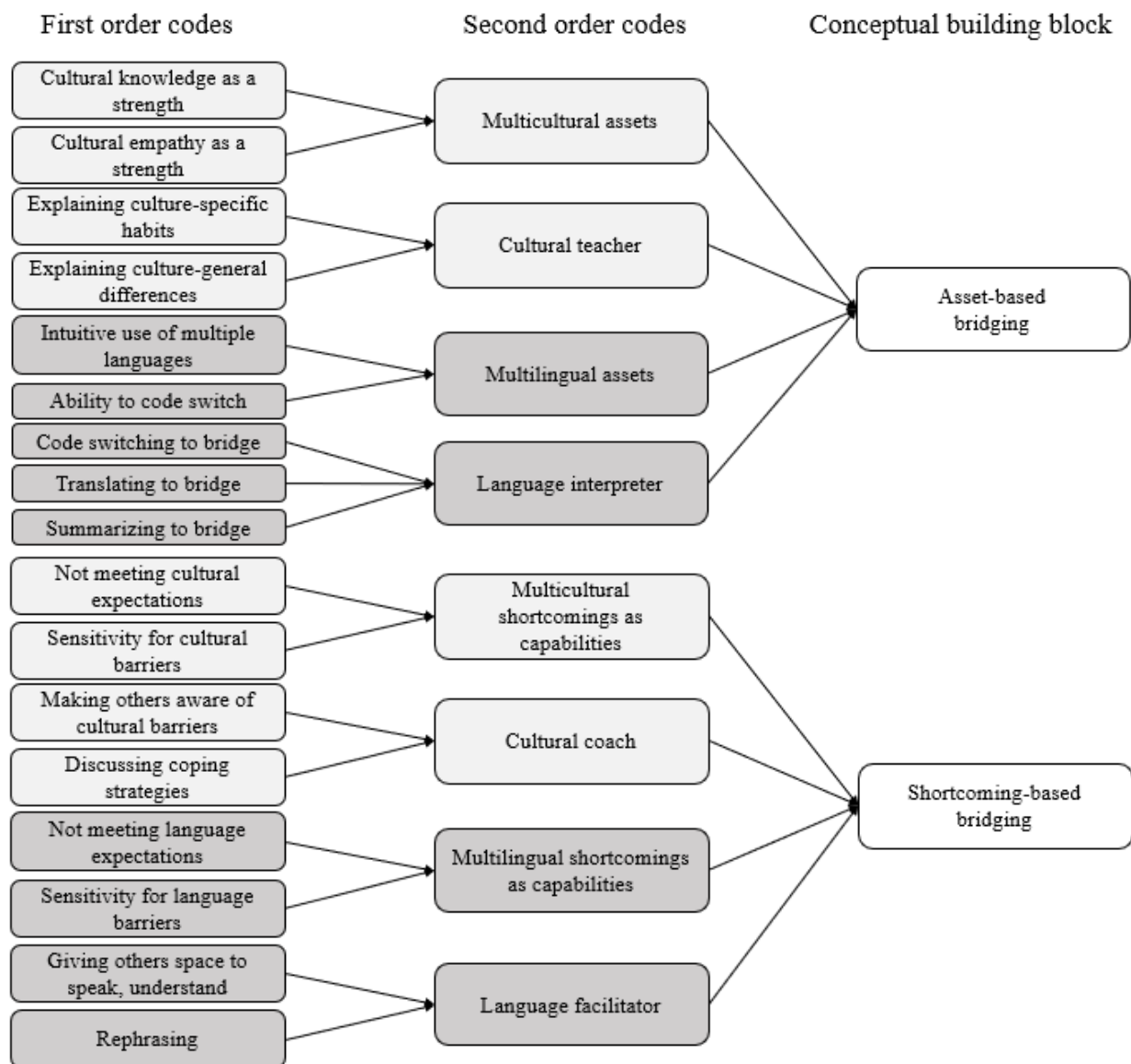
It was already at early stages of the coding process that we noticed, for example, that interviewees often had a hard time to decide whether they were multicultural or multilingual or both, because they questioned their capabilities due to certain experiences. In a similar vein, we also noticed early on in the data analysis process that respondents not only spoke about their particular cultural and language assets but equally about what we later labeled shortcomings in their command of culture or language. These instances became the starting point for further interviews, in which we probed for these aspects in more detail, and for more reading of previous research. These instances exemplify the iterative process of data collection, data analysis and additional literature study.

Using the constant comparative method (Glaser & Strauss, 1967), we then compared our data in different ways. First, we compared different parts of each interview to ensure consistency. Subsequently, we juxtaposed interview sections relating specifically to multiculturalism and then interview sections relating specifically to multilingualism before comparing both among each other. Similarly, we compared passages indicating cultural bridging and then passages indicating linguistic bridging before comparing also those among each other. By doing this, we noticed, for example, that bridging activities for both, cultural and language barriers did not only come from multicultural and multilingual assets. Instead, they arose from the respective perceived shortcomings as well.

Our various steps of comparisons helped us to merge codes into more conceptual categories or conceptual building blocks and finally into higher order themes (Lee, 1999). For example, 'cultural knowledge as a strength' and 'cultural empathy as a strength' were integrated into the category 'multicultural assets' and the codes 'not meeting cultural expectations' and 'experience with own cultural barrier' were aggregated into the category 'multicultural shortcomings'. Through these kind of comparison-led aggregation processes we arrived at eight categories which we ultimately grouped under two higher order themes – *asset-based bridging*

and *shortcoming-based bridging*. We iterated between data, codes, categories and higher order themes until no new categories and themes emerged and saturation was reached (Suddaby, 2006). Figure 1 summarizes our resulting coding scheme.

FIGURE 1. Coding Scheme

First order codes	Second order codes	Conceptual building block
Cultural knowledge as a strength		
Cultural empathy as a strength	Multicultural assets	
Explaining culture-specific habits		
Explaining culture-general differences	Cultural teacher	Asset-based bridging
Intuitive use of multiple languages		
Ability to code switch	Multilingual assets	
Code switching to bridge		
Translating to bridge	Language interpreter	
Summarizing to bridge		
Not meeting cultural expectations		
Sensitivity for cultural barriers	Multicultural shortcomings as capabilities	
Making others aware of cultural barriers		
Discussing coping strategies	Cultural coach	Shortcoming-based bridging
Not meeting language expectations		
Sensitivity for language barriers	Multilingual shortcomings as capabilities	
Giving others space to speak, understand		
Rephrasing	Language facilitator	

FINDINGS

As already indicated in the preceding data analysis section, our data clearly revealed an important finding: bridging does not only stem from particular assets multiculturals and multilinguals possess (a category that hardly comes as a surprise) but equally emerge out of perceived own shortcomings (a category that is significantly less intuitive). We structure our

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findings section according to this differentiation: *asset-based* and *shortcoming-based bridging*. Within each of these two sub-sections, we further differentiate between the bridging activities of our two groups of organizational members: *multicultural* and *multilingual individuals*. Moreover, for each of these two groups, we distinguish between two aspects: *capabilities* and *implementation*. The former is instrumental in answering our first research question (what are the specific capabilities multicultural and / or multilingual individuals draw on when bridging cultural and language barriers) and the latter our second research question (how multicultural and / or multilingual individuals implement their particular capabilities when bridging cultural and language barriers). This structuring according to *type of bridging activity*, *organizational members involved* and *bridging aspects* leads us to the eight building blocks of our modelling which also correspond to the eight second order codes depicted in our data structure (Figure 1).

Asset-Based Bridging

Multicultural individuals as cultural teachers. Our data on multiculturals reveal that this group of individuals apparently possess two important capabilities which they regard as key assets in cultural bridging: *cultural knowledge* as well as *cultural empathy*. Respondents frequently mentioned these capabilities as a result of having multiple sets of cultural reference, which they perceived distinguished them from their monocultural colleagues.

In terms of cultural knowledge, they referred to both culture-specific as well as culture-general knowledge that they viewed as assets. To exemplify, a German-Chilean respondent shared with the interviewer how he became aware of his strength in understanding other cultures when he was able to comprehend the rationale of his Uruguayan colleagues' behavior, while his German colleague was unable to do so.

> That was interesting, I noticed 'oh, he [German colleague] sees things differently than me'. He got really angry that they [Uruguayan colleagues] never say the truth. But I didn't see it as untrue, because I knew what they meant. (P1: C: Ger, Chil; L: Ger, Spa, BE)

This situation made our respondent discover his capability to read different behavioral patterns, which he traced back to his multicultural background. Most multiculturals indicated

this advanced understanding not only related to their own cultures (culture-specific knowledge), but also to cultural dimensions more generally (culture-general knowledge) (*"This works probably subconsciously - it is tough to sort out isolated parts of being - I notice differences in basically any cultural combination"*, P4: C: Aus, HK; L: Eng). This finding empirically confirms previous theoretical assumptions about multiculturals possessing next to culture-specific skills also culture-general skills (Brannen & Thomas, 2010).

Cultural empathy was the second capability that was frequently emphasized as a key asset of multiculturals. While knowledge refers to the entirely cognitive understanding of culturally different behaviors, cultural empathy is more related to an emotional connection to other individuals, and the ability to take others' perspectives. As the following Argentinian-German interviewee describes, she made conscious use at work of her skill to switch between the perspectives of different cultures.

> In my daily work I see the advantage [of being multicultural] that I can often put myself into my clients' shoes. I can understand a situation better and have a different type of empathy. I can recognize parallels in processes or things or behavior. (P58: C: Arg, Ger; L: Spa, Ger, BE)

This interviewee traced her 'tactfulness' and 'empathy' back to her ability to act in multiple cultural worlds that come together:

> Especially if you have different roots, you have a different feeling for other nations in your daily work. I simply have learned about different worlds. My world, the Argentinian on the one hand, and the German on the other hand, and so I have a different tactfulness for others or a different type of empathy. (P58: C: Arg, Ger; L: Spa, Ger, BE)

Throughout the sample, individuals confirmed how they perceived the capability to switch their perspectives as a key asset that helped them to navigate cross-cultural situations. Summarizing these two capabilities we propose:

> **Proposition 1a:** When confronted with cultural barriers in the work context, multicultural individuals activate the following asset-based bridging capabilities: culture-specific and culture-general knowledge and cultural empathy.

Proposition 1a provides us for the group of multiculturals already with first insights related to our first research question, what specific capabilities multiculturals draw on when bridging cultural barriers. However, this still leaves our second research question, how they implement their capabilities when bridging cultural barriers, unanswered.

In this context we found that multiculturals implement their asset-based bridging capabilities through two mechanisms: (1) *explaining culture-specific behaviors* and (2) *explaining culture-general differences*. More concretely, multiculturals use their culture-specific knowledge to explain certain cultural behavior they are very familiar with; and with the help of their culture-general knowledge and their cultural empathy they explain the implications of cultural differences and the necessity to take on different perspectives. Both of these activities are unilateral, that is the multicultural organizational members explain, while their monocultural colleagues learn from these explanations. We label the role the multiculturals engage in when implementing their specific asset-based bridging capabilities *cultural teacher*.

One Brazilian-German respondent recalled how she used her culture-specific knowledge to help a German colleague in the Germany-based organization to understand different behaviors in South America:

> When I started that job, we were two in my position. The other one was solely German. And we talked about it often. She had lots of questions: Why do the Brazilians do this? Why are the Argentinians doing that? So for her it was sometimes a bit confusing. So I told her, you know, in Brazil this is a bit different, and in Argentina as well… and she accepted that and considered it. (P103: C: Bra, Ger; L: Por, Ger, BE)

Our informant used her knowledge of specific cultures to help her colleague understand why team members from other cultures behaved differently from what she expected. Others used their culture-general knowledge and cultural empathy to explain that different perspectives exist.

> I am a big fan of understanding different points of view and to respect and value these. In my team, there are quite a few who say: 'But hey, we are in Germany, and we always do this and that…' and so on. Well, I just try to explain what I think I know and yeah, to open them for new perspectives. (P15: C: Ger, Ind; L: Ger, Eng)

Our findings correspond to what scholars already have pointed out in theoretical studies (Dau, 2014; Sekiguchi, 2016): multiculturals bridge cultural barriers through their cultural knowledge and by explaining resulting behavioral differences. Moreover, while it has been found that understanding each group's practices is necessary to span boundaries (Kane & Levina, 2017), we extend this view by including also the link between cultural empathy and bridging. While cultural knowledge is crucial to teach content, our findings suggest that cultural empathy is an integral part of this teaching process, by not only showing different perspectives, but also the necessity to open up for them as well. Summing up, we propose:

> **Proposition 1b**: Multicultural individuals in their role as cultural teachers implement their asset-based bridging capabilities by explaining culture-specific behavior and culture-general differences.

Multilingual individuals as language interpreters. Our multilingual respondents perceived their capabilities for *effortless communication in multiple languages* and *code-switching* as key assets to operate in a linguistically diverse work context. When asked about the advantages of being multilingual, they frequently mentioned how they use without any effort multiple languages in an almost automatic manner.

> As you know for each language I went to school in that country. When I speak the other languages, I do not really have to think in my mother tongue first. I can just directly speak Mandarin or Spanish. I can do that. (P16: C: US, Jap, Kor; L: Eng, Jap, Kor, Spa, Port)

Automaticity has also been identified in the literature as the ultimate stage in second language learning, describing the stage when language and thought merge and language becomes automatic in most contexts (Gardner, 2007). Less proficient second language speakers often have to take an extra step and translate from their native language to convey a message (Hinds, Neeley, Durnell, & Cramton, 2014). In multilingual work settings, this has been found to lead to language barriers (Neeley, 2013; Neeley & Dumas, 2016; Marchan-Piekkari et al., 1999a; Tenzer et al., 2014).

Another aspect that multilinguals perceived as a strong asset when working with people of various linguistic backgrounds is their ability to code-switch, a capability that is tightly connected to the intuitive use of multiple languages. It gave them the opportunity to effortlessly follow and engage in a single conversation of multiple languages.

> It is just a habit I guess, but I have a lot of bilingual friends and all often switch languages in the middle of the sentence. Because sometimes one language is better suited to communicate an idea than another. (P 34: C: Cad; L: Eng, Fre)

Research has thus far treated code-switching mostly as a weakness of employees who fall back from the shared language to their mother tongue, impeding efficient communication (Aichhorn & Puck, 2017b). The negative view resulted mostly from observed discussions that started out in the shared language and then broke down in sub-groups speaking in their mother tongues, thus excluding non-native speakers of those sub-groups. This phenomenon has mostly been discussed on the team- or organizational-level. Our findings show for the individual level, however, that code-switching is perceived as positive by those who have the capability to do so, because they can instantly adapt to their environment or use the language they perceive as most suited to transmit their thoughts. Hence, we propose:

> **Proposition 2a**: When confronted with language barriers in the work context, multilingual individuals activate the following asset-based bridging capabilities: effortless communication in multiple languages and code-switching.

For multilingual asset-based capabilities to lead to linguistic bridging, they had to be implemented, very much like we discovered multicultural capabilities being implemented to lead to cultural bridging. We found three mechanisms of relevance which depended on the communication participants: (1) *code-switching*, (2) *translating* and (3) *using simplified language*. As the multiculturals used their specific language skills to facilitate an information exchange very much like a professional interpreter, we use this analogy and label this role of multilinguals *language interpreter*.

If all communication participants had some degree of proficiency in the languages spoken apart from the shared language, our interviewees assisted the information exchange by

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employing their capability for code-switching. As such, code-switching was described by our interviewees not only in the context of a multilingual capability but also as an implementation mechanism. In the latter context it meant that our multilingual interviewees offered their colleagues to switch to their language (or a mixture of languages) to make them feel more at ease, even if this adaptation meant some additional efforts from the interviewee's side. As the following respondent explained, when working with his Russian colleague in a German business environment, they code-switched between Russian, English and German so that their conversation could be as convenient as possible.

> Then we switched to Russian. Because I noticed that he [a colleague] speaks that better, he doesn't have to search for words. I had to search a bit more for words, because I don't know all the technical terms, but it worked well. So our basic conversation was in Russian, with a bit of English and German. I found it very productive, because both of us did not have to think a lot, to stick to one language, but we simply could speak freely, and we understood each other well. (P60: C: Ger, Rus; L: Ger, Rus, BE)

Another interviewee mentioned that he actively encouraged his entire team to use code-switching.

> I try and encourage an open communication in whatever language they like. So we often have very mixed discussions because he [a colleague] is not great in German, he is still learning. And the others all understand English very well, so we express ourselves in meetings sometimes very interestingly, as we freely switch between English and German. (P12: C: SouthAf; L: Eng, Afrikaans, Ger)

By encouraging team members to speak (where feasible) the language they feel most comfortable in, even if this means some adjustment by the others, this interviewee built linguistic bridges for his team and so facilitated conversations. This supports some studies which have shown that code-switching was sometimes seen as unproblematic (Aichhorn & Puck, 2017a) and even a good approach to confront language barriers (Harzing et al., 2011), allowing in particular an unconstraint flow of ideas (Volk, Köhler & Pudelko, 2014).

While code-switching usually took place in contexts where most conversation partners could more or less speak or at least understand each other's language, translating as well as using simplified language were common mechanisms for multilinguals to implement their

asset-based bridging capabilities when the individuals involved in the communication did not all share a common language (usually Business English) to a sufficient degree of proficiency. Translation could occur either literally, i.e. word by word (or sentence by sentence) or in a summarized way, when the multilingual transmitted the overall meaning of a conversation in a condensed way. As one Brazilian-German respondent describes, he intentionally chose his seat in meetings to translate into Portuguese for Brazilian colleagues if the language changed from the shared language English to German which was the native language of some of the participants of the meeting:

> I usually did it [translating], because I thought it was not fair that we did not
> always hold the meeting in English even if it was supposed to be held in English,
> but at some point some people switched to German. So I took a seat next to the
> foreigners and translated. (P43: C: Bra, Ger; L: Por, Ger, BEng)

Using simplified language (mostly English) was to some extent very similar to translating as the multilingual person "translated" more sophisticated English into a simplified version to make the person with less English proficiency understand. Given that highly skilled multilinguals speak the language in question effortlessly, they were particularly well equipped to adjust to the proficiency level of their communication partners. Some even mentioned they would accept to speak grammatically wrong if they felt that would be more understandable for the other person ("*Maybe it might be even grammatically wrong on my site, but in a way that they will understand.*" P44: C: NL; L: Dut, Eng, Jap, Ger).

> I got used to it pretty soon. To use different words, less metaphors, less slang…
> I'm more attentive, I speak a bit slower and maybe a bit more clearly, definitely,
> for sure. I kind of try... it's a generic international English that I speak then. (P8: C:
> Cad, US, Ger; L: Eng, Fre, Ger)

Our findings confirm previous findings from the literature that multilingual employees engage in linguistic bridging by translating (Aichhorn & Puck, 2017a; Harzing et al., 2011; Marschan-Piekkari et al., 1999a; Vaara et al., 2005). Additionally, we found that the effortlessness with which multilinguals speak allow them to expand the repertoire of

mechanisms they employ to bridge, including also code-switching and using simplified language. Hence, we propose:

> **Proposition 2b**: Multilingual individuals in their role as language interpreters implement their asset-based bridging capabilities by code-switching, translating and using simplified language.

Shortcoming-Based Bridging

The above findings are intuitive in the sense that multiculturals and multilinguals perceive certain capabilities which define them as multiculturals and multilinguals as *assets* which they can implement at work to bridge cultural and language barriers. We discovered, however, that our respondents also made use of another, essentially opposite set of characteristics to those previously discussed assets. To signal this antagonism, we label them as *shortcomings* which our respondents perceive about themselves. Throughout our interviews we became very much aware of the fact that our respondents had also prior to our interviews very deeply thought about their position as multiculturals / multilinguals which included their own perceived shortcomings in these roles. This was especially relevant for respondents who perceived themselves as not fully multicultural / multilingual. These reflections also enabled them to develop a high degree of sensitivity about others who encounter cultural / linguistic barriers. As such, our interviewees considered even those shortcomings as ultimately helpful when bridging of cultural and linguistic barriers are concerned.

Multicultural individuals as cultural coaches. While multiculturals often had the feeling that others looked at them as "perfect multiculturals", they themselves were significantly more doubtful, noticing also their own shortcomings as multiculturals. As a consequence, they were (1) frequently *reflecting about not meeting cultural expectations*. Furthermore, on the basis of those reflections, they developed (2) *a high degree of sensitivity in recognizing when others face cultural barriers*.

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Reflecting on their shortcomings as multiculturals, our respondents frequently mentioned how they encountered situations in which they perceived not to meet cultural expectations that others set in them, either because of their particular demographic background or because they were fluent in this other country's language. The following quote shows how a Spanish-German, who was raised in Spain but who was perfectly bilingual due to his upbringing with German parents and in a German school and now works in Germany, noticed from a reaction of his German supervisor that his behavior was apparently still very much Spanish.

> After I had been in the team for about a month, my [German] supervisor offered me the "Du" [the informal way to address each other]. So the next time I came into a meeting room, I said hello to him and gave him a pat on his back. I get along well with him, but he seemed taken aback by this informality. in Spain, relationships are more informal, you also talk to your professors on a first name basis and you are on friendly terms with people much sooner. So I noticed that I had a different upbringing. And you see the difference, even though I speak German like a native speaker. (P65: C: Spa, Ger; L: Spa, Ger, BE)

The reaction of his supervisor, who expected him to behave according to German cultural norms due to his perfect German language skills, made him aware of having a different cultural background than his colleagues, even though he shared the same language with them. While his multilingualism certainly qualified him to bridge linguistic barriers and his insights into two cultures to bridge cultural barriers as well, he perceived himself to still have shortcomings when culture was concerned. These situations of not meeting cultural expectations (others or own) made the multiculturals aware of their multicultural shortcomings. At the same time, however, they regarded even their shortcomings as valuable experiences, as they made them much better empathize with others experiencing cultural barriers.

The notion of cultural frame switching, which is a dominant concept in multicultural management studies (Vora et al., 2019), suggests that multicultural individuals can fully switch from one cultural frame to another (Benet-Martinez, Leu, Lee, & Morris, 2002). In contrast, our findings contradict this position. We find that reality is much more nuanced and that multiculturals often do not perceive themselves as entirely culturally "fluent" in comprehending and acting proficiently in cultures they are meant to be fully familiar with. The same is true for

the notion of culture-general skills. Multiculturals often perceive shortcomings in their ability to behave appropriately in cultures other than their own.

We noticed the extent to which multiculturals perceived their own cultural shortcomings and how much they reflect on them. One might think that monoculturals have a lot more cultural shortcomings than multiculturals and therefore should also think about them more, however, being monocultural is arguably not a major point of identification for monoculturals. By contrast, we found that multiculturalism is a key aspect of defining who multiculturals are and so they reflect a lot about it including their own shortcomings.

> You are permanently trying to justify or understand yourself. Why can't I relate to this or that, what do they want now? You want to know more, hence, self-reflection is as a matter of course necessary for a bicultural person to find your way in life and to build your identity. It is a strong identity-building momentum. (P15: C: Ger, Ind; L: Ger, Eng)

Our findings further suggest that their reflections on their own multicultural shortcomings turned into valuable learning experiences. This goes in line with previous research suggesting that in particular situations in which individuals perceive a disconfirmation of expectations create an opportunity to learn and further develop cross-cultural capabilities (Rosenblatt, Worthley, & MacNab, 2013).

> I always had to observe more. What do the others do. And I take these observations with me. They are a part of me. How do others behave. Perhaps because of that I have had more opportunities to observe others how they behave. You learn a lot from that. When you observe something from the outside, you can reflect. And then you understand more. (P60: C: Ger, Rus; L: Ger, Rus, BE)

Being aware of own shortcomings as a multicultural and reflecting on those, result according to our respondents also in a particular high degree of sensitivity for recognizing when others encounter cultural barriers. We found that the capability of recognizing when others encounter cultural barriers was typically based on empathizing based on their own experience. This triggered them to be much more sensitive to their situation.

> When you're so used to being in a new environment and having to pick up what's going on, you develop this capability of kind of standing back and just kind of seeing what's going on. […] So when you are in a setting where, yes, now you're part of the majority and then there comes a new team member who not only is new but he's also from another country, maybe then I'm more sensitive to, you know,

what they might be going through. I think it maybe has to do with just having lived the discomfort or the unsettling experience of not being part of the majority. (P17: C: Sen; L: Wol, Fre, Eng)

Consequently, our findings indicate that also shortcomings in multiculturalism result in specific capabilities which ultimately might assist others to overcome their cultural barriers. Thus, we propose:

Proposition 3a: When confronted with cultural barriers in the work context, individuals with multicultural shortcomings activate the following shortcoming-based capabilities: reflecting about not meeting cultural expectations and recognizing when others encounter cultural barriers.

Our data further showed that multiculturals were able to implement their shortcoming-based bridging capabilities through the following mechanisms: (1) *making others aware of cultural barriers* and (2) *discussing coping strategies with them*. In the case of asset-based capabilities, we spoke about the multicultural as a cultural teacher. Given that multiculturals do not have in the case of their own shortcomings the authority to teach but only own reflections and a heightened sensitivity to offer for discussion, we speak in this case of a *cultural coach.*

Various respondents mentioned how they observed others making the same mistakes they had made themselves before and helped them by sharing how they had coped with these difficulties. Such mistakes could be based on perceived shortcomings in culture-general skills, like the German-Spanish interviewee after his assignment in China.

There was this guy I worked with very closely, he was an intern. He communicated with our Chinese subsidiary and at the beginning he wrote e-mails where I told him that he can't do it that way. If you tell them what mistakes they make, they will probably not reply or they will just do the same mistake again. (P65: C: Spa, Ger; L: Spa, Ger, BE)

These findings suggest that if multiculturals recognize that others are confronted with problematic situations in which they have been before, they can use their own experience about cultural shortcomings to make others aware of the problem which they might have not even detected on their own.

As a subsequent step, they can also offer suggestions of how to cope with such a situation. This type of bridging activity is thus less authoritative and knowledge-based than the asset-

based bridging mechanisms presented earlier. Others are not taught about culture-specific behaviors and culture-general differences; instead, parallels to own previous problems are recognized and shared with them such that coping mechanisms can be presented more as a basis for discussion than a matter of fact solutions. For example, the previous quote continues as follows:

> If they [the Chinese] made a mistake, I think you should better say "I think there might be a mistake, please check this again", instead of "This is the mistake, please resolve". In Germany you do it that way, I know, but in China I learned that you don't, you just have to be less direct. (P65: C: Spa, Ger; L: Spa, Ger, BE)

Discussions about coping mechanisms could also come from perceived shortcomings in culture-specific skills of their own cultures. This German-Greek respondent linked her sensitivity and the resulting "coaching" to her reflections on cultural barriers she faced in her second, Greek, culture:

> Some monoculturals I worked with did not understand why our South Korean colleague would make a savory meal for breakfast. So I was someone who said, just be open or ask her, what are common practices, and so on. I think I have a higher awareness and interest, because I still get surprised by my own [Greek] culture. (P77: C: Ger, Gre; L: Ger, BE, Gre)

To summarize, in their role as cultural coach, multiculturals use their shortcoming-based capabilities to make others aware of cultural barriers and offer discussions about coping mechanisms that they developed through their own experiences. Therefore, we propose:

> **Proposition 3b**: Individuals implement their shortcoming-based capabilities to bridge cultural barriers by making others aware of cultural barriers and by discussing coping strategies with them.

Multilingual individuals as language facilitator. We found that many if not most individuals who considered themselves as multilingual, also very clearly spoke about their perceptions of own language-related shortcomings. This finding in itself is very similar to multiculturals who also noticed their own culture-related shortcomings. Equally very much in line with shortcoming-based cultural bridging, we saw also multilinguals develop similar capabilities: (1) profoundly *reflecting about not meeting linguistic expectations* and (2*) sensitivity for recognizing when others encounter language barriers.*

Specifically, multicultural participants with limited multilingual skills shared how they often were confronted with the situation that as soon others found out that they had a multicultural background, they expected them to also speak the respective language(s) fluently. The following German-Sri-Lankan multicultural predominantly spoke German to her Sri-Lankan mother, and had learned English at school as all German school children do. Therefore, she ranked her English skills as not being superior to other German high school graduates, but her supervisor and colleagues still expected her to speak it on a native level, expectations she was of course unable to fulfill.

> Sometimes, people over-interpret a bicultural background. I often hear something like 'Oh, then you speak English perfectly', or 'you must speak Sinhala fluently', and that is simply not the case. […] Yesterday, a colleague of mine had the task to translate something into English. Another colleague told her 'Just ask [OWN NAME], she is fluent', but she did not even know how my English is. I guess she just assumed that. (P26: C: Ger, Sri; L: Ger, BE)

For other multilinguals who had in one (or more) of their languages a high degree of lexical proficiency (knowing the words), syntactical proficiency (knowing the grammar) and phonetic proficiency (knowing the pronunciation), they often still lacked pragmatic language skills, a problem that third parties were unable to understand. Speech pragmatics is a concept of linguistics that refers to how speech is used to create specific meaning (Puetz & Neff-van Aertselaer, 2008). As such, speech pragmatics is about culture-specific ways of speaking. For example, speech acts such as making a request differ from culture to culture; some articulate a request as a question whereas others as an imperative (Wierzbicka, 1985). A German-Chinese respondent who had Chinese parents and grew up bilingually in Germany shared how he often had a more German way of speaking when talking in Chinese. Since he did not have any accent in Mandarin, he felt that Chinese communication partners expected him to also employ Chinese speech pragmatics.

> You know, maybe it's funny, but one problem is that I do not have any accent in Chinese, but the way I say things is sometimes not appropriate or seems rude. For example, when I was in China, my boss told me to call our supplier to ask something. So I called, and instead of speaking my accent-free Chinese, I spoke in very simple sentences, with a bit of a foreign accent, to avoid that the supplier puts

me into a Chinese category and then thinks that I'm not polite. (P41: C: Ger, Chin; L: Ger, Chin, BE)

This incident showed that the interviewee was very well aware of his status as the "perfect multilingual" and the expectations that others would have in terms of finding the appropriate words but also of his shortcomings (hidden to others) when it came to speech pragmatics. Avoiding what is called 'pragmatic transfer', i.e. in this case the use of German cultural communication standards in the Chinese language, was apparently so difficult if not impossible for the interviewee that he preferred speaking Chinese worse than he was able to. This strategy shows that the respondent has also previously to the interview very well reflected about his situation as an ethnic Chinese and his multiculturalism / multilingualism.

Own negative experiences related to proficiency expectations led our respondents to develop a high degree of sensitivity for recognizing when others were encountering language barriers. For example, one interviewee who considered herself an Australian-German multicultural, but spoke German only on a very basic level as shew grew up in Australia and moved only a few years before the interview to Germany. She worked in a team in a media agency in Germany with Australian and German colleagues and French suppliers. As she constantly faced a language barrier with German, she was very sensitive towards and tolerant for others facing language barriers.

> I think, having my experience, learning another language, not always understanding what people say and being on the receiving end of that communication, sometimes gives you the feeling like you're lost in a conversation or you kind of are a bit frustrated because you don't know what's happening. I think I have a quite high level of tolerance for that in my dealings with – especially with the French people… I think sometimes I look at other people in workplaces and this is not just here in Germany but in Australia as well. And I can really try and put myself in the other person's situation and think, okay, how would this be making me feel right now if I – you know, not speaking my native language. (P2: C: Aus, Ger; L: Eng, Ger)

Consequently, our findings suggest that, similar to the case of multiculturalism, also shortcomings regarding multilingualism result in specific capabilities which ultimately might assist others to overcome their language barriers. We therefore propose:

Proposition 4a: When confronted with language barriers in the work context, individuals with multilingual shortcomings activate the following shortcoming-based capabilities: reflecting about not meeting linguistic expectations and recognizing when others encounter language barriers.

Multilinguals implemented their shortcoming-based capabilities via specific mechanisms, enabling them to bridge language barriers others were confronted with. These mechanisms are: (1) *giving others space to talk*, and (2) *rephrasing*. Given that in this context the multilinguals acted with less language proficiency-based authority compared to their role as language interpreter, we label this role of providing assistance *language facilitator*.

Being due to their own shortcomings acutely aware of the particular problems which not fully proficient speakers of a language encounter, multilinguals gave others more space to catch up on a conversation. A South African interviewee who grew up speaking English and Afrikaans and had been living and working in Germany for a bit more than a decade, repeated a few times throughout the interview how he often felt being behind on a conversation in meetings held in German, but also how others over-estimated his German skills, because he had little accent. Therefore, to assist others, he deliberately slowed down meetings to give them more space to participate.

> Certainly I really want inwardly, within myself, give people the time to express themselves. And so I am slower than others during the meeting and I try to slow it down. And I'm forgiving on language. And I almost have a guilty feeling that we're not doing the discussion in their native tongue. So yes, I think it's not only the bilingualism that helps with that, but I think the way you're sensitized in your upbringing and within your environment that helps towards that. (P12: C: SouthAfr; L: Eng, Afrikaans, Ger)

A second mechanism to bridge language barriers without having the specific language skills was to rephrase, typically in the business language English. The following example of the above introduced Australian-German interviewee shows that she helps the French participants in their meetings to understand what her supervisor said by repeating what he has said in other words.

> Unfortunately, I have witnessed my boss going into a meeting and hear him say "Do you speak English?" and then they say "Yes", because they do, but not as their first language. And then he would just go blahblahblah, really long sentences, big
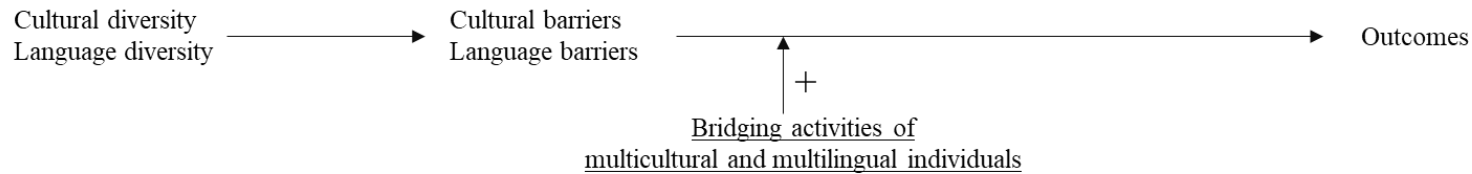
words, this sort of stuff and then I sit there and I'm like "Oh no, they're not going to understand this, poor people." So I have been in that situation before and that's when I normally jump in and I just stop him there and I'll just repeat what he's saying in other words. (P2: C: Aus, Ger; L: Eng, Ger)

The above examples illustrate that language-specific skills are not necessarily required for the bridging of language barriers. Rather, bridging mechanisms can also be built on shortcoming-based language capabilities. Thus, we propose:

Proposition 4b: Multilingual individuals implement their shortcoming-based capabilities to bridge language barriers by giving others space to talk and by rephrasing.

Having presented our findings regarding (1) asset-based but also shortcoming-based bridging for (2) multicultural and multilingual individuals with regard to (3) capabilities and implementation, we obtained eight building blocks for our modelling. For each of these building blocks we developed above a corresponding proposition. Bringing all propositions together, we put forward the model depicted in Figure 2.

FIGURE 2. Multicultural and Multilingual Individuals' Asset- and Shortcoming-Based Bridging

Cultural diversity ⟶ Cultural barriers ⟶ Outcomes
Language diversity   Language barriers

+

<u>Bridging activities of
multicultural and multilingual individuals</u>

Asset-based bridging

	Capabilities		Implementation
C	Culture-specific and culture-general knowledge Cultural empathy	Cultural teacher ⟶	Explaining culture-specific behavior Explaining culture-general differences
L	Ability to effortlessly communicate in multiple languages Ability to code-switch	Language interpreter ⟶	Code-switching Translating Using simplified language

Shortcoming-based bridging

	Capabilities		Implementation
C	Reflecting about not meeting cultural expectations Recognizing when others encounter cultural barriers	Cultural coach ⟶	Making others aware of cultural barriers Discussing coping strategies
L	Reflecting about not meeting linguistic expectations Recognizing when others encounter language barriers	Language facilitator ⟶	Giving others space to understand and speak Rephrasing

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

Based on our findings, we developed a model that illustrates how multiculturals and multilinguals develop on the basis not only of their assets but also their shortcomings specific capabilities which assist, once implemented, to bridge cultural and language barriers in their work contexts.

With asset-based bridging, individuals mainly pass on their authoritative knowledge to provide direct support to others in cultural or language barrier situations. Shortcoming-based bridging activities, in turn, are based on a more exploratory or speculative approach that is less unidirectional but involves the sharing and discussion of own experiences and potential lessons to be learned.

Theoretical Implications

Our inductively generated findings have several relevant implications for the IB literature. We argue that our study contributes to the nascent research stream of individual-level multiculturalism and, more importantly, is arguably the first to introduce the topic of individual-level multilingualism to IB research. In addition, by investigating both aspects in a systematically combined fashion, we show parallels between both areas and integrate them under a single, more holistic perspective as also our model indicates.

The last decade has seen some initial publications on *individual-level multiculturalism*. These studies were mostly conceptual (e.g. Brannen & Thomas, 2010; Brannen, Garcia, & Thomas, 2009; Dau, 2014; Fitzsimmons, 2013; Hong, 2010) or quantitative (e.g. Fitzsimmons, Liao, & Thomas, 2017; Hanek et al., 2014; Jang, 2017) in nature and entirely focusing on what we call multiculturals' assets, such as intercultural skills (Fitzsimmons et al., 2017) and cultural knowledge (Jang, 2017). With our explorative, inductive approach, in turn, we obtained a rather counter-intuitive and important finding: in order to bridge cultural barriers, multiculturals not only refer to and activate their assets but also their shortcomings.

In terms of their assets, we could demonstrate that mulitculturals, in their role of *cultural teachers*, not only bridge cultural barriers by employing their asset-based capabilities to explain the behavior of people from those specific cultures they are very familiar with, but in addition, they also explain cultural general differences. This confirms previous theorizing from conceptual studies which proposed that multiculturals use their culture-specific knowledge and cultural metacognition to engage in roles of boundary spanners and conflict mediators (Hong, 2010). More surprisingly, we also found that multiculturals, this time in their role as *cultural coaches*, are engaging in bridging activities by making use of what we described as their shortcoming-based capabilities to make others aware of cultural barriers and discuss coping strategies with them. This clearly is a new and counter-intuitive finding which we believe to be of major conceptual and practical relevance. Taking asset-based and shortcoming-based bridging activities together, we have shown that bridging of cultural barriers is a far more nuanced and complex undertaking than previous studies have shown, which involves different capabilities leading to different implementation outcomes.

Next to its contribution to research on multiculturals, this study is to the best of our knowledge the first to introduce *individual-level multilingualism* into IB research, as previous research has focused on the effects of multilingualism on the organizational (e.g. Aichhorn & Puck, 2017a) or team level (e.g. Vigier & Spencer-Oatey, 2017). In addition, the explicit or implicit assumption of previous research has been that multilingualism is a binary construct, i.e. either someone is multilingual or not. In this study, however, we show that the multilinguals themselves see things very differently. They reject in most instances the notion of being either entirely fluent or not. By contrast, even if they see different language abilities at play, they still face boundaries that they perceive as multilingual shortcomings. As such, our results provide a much more nuanced picture than research has depicted so far.

We also provide more nuance, very much in line with multiculturalism, in terms of bridging activities. Again, we could reveal the relevance not only of asset-based but also of shortcoming-based bridging. In their role as *language interpreters*, multilinguals transform their asset-based capabilities into code-switching, translating and the use of simplified language. In contrast, in their role as *language facilitators*, they employ their shortcoming-based capabilities to give others space to talk and to rephrase. By including also shortcoming-based capabilities and their implementation into the perspective, we challenge the view that individuals must possess specific language skills to bridge language boundaries (Barner-Rasmussen et al., 2014).

Yet again, the resulting picture is a highly differentiated one. As such, it also resembles more to that drawn by other research disciplines than management studies. For example, research in linguistics and psychology assesses individuals' multilingualism not only based on fluency, but also based on frequency of use (Bialystock, 2016; Grosjean, 2015). Further, second-language acquisition research established that proficiency levels differ from elemental to automaticity (Gardner, 2007), and that the development of speech pragmatics in an additional language needs other learning activities and more interaction than for developing grammatical competence (Bardovi-Harlig, 2013). Consequently, and following Cheng, Henisz, Roth and Swaminathan (2009) and Vora et al. (2019), IB research on multilinguals can only benefit from drawing on different disciplines to generate a more informed view on of multilingual individuals.

By having looked, unlike most studies did before, at both multiculturalism and multilingualism together, we could reveal important findings which result in considerably different conclusions from those drawn by previous literature. For example, possessing multilingual fluency has been defined as one key aspect of multicultural competency (Chen et al., 2008; Chen, Lam, Hui, Ng, Mak, & Guan, 2016). In contrast, we found that both

phenomena, while being interrelated and often occurring in combination, are still conceptually largely separate and can therefore occur to very different degrees. Consequently, individuals showing high multicultural assets may raise expectations for others to also be fully multilingual in the respective languages, expectations which they often are not able to meet. The same argument applies the other way around, i.e. perfect language abilities do not necessarily imply a high level of cultural competency and any such expectations by outsiders would be erroneous. Consequently, the idea that multicultural competence and multilingual fluency always come together, without considering that individuals may be multicultural (multilingual) without being multilingual (multicultural), is in our view an unwarranted simplification.

We also could detect important parallels in terms of certain multiculturals' and multilinguals' characteristics, for example with regard to empathy. Scholars already have suggested in conceptual studies that multicultural individuals are particularly empathetic (Brannen et al., 2009). Our findings not only support this view but also find clear empirical evidence for empathy with multilinguals. They typically have faced and reflected upon not meeting own and others' linguistic expectations and therefore have equally developed a high degree of linguistic sensitivity in recognizing language barriers of others.

We have also seen strong parallels between multiculturalism and multilingualism in the context of bridging barriers. As our model is showing, we have found very similar mechanisms for both areas, multiculturalism and multilingualism: We distinguish for both between assets and shortcomings and between capabilities and implementation, resulting in two very similar roles of bridging activities for each of the two groups. What distinguishes our study probably the most from the previous literature on multiculturals and multilinguals is that research so far has mostly if not exclusively looked at what we label as *assets* of both groups, whereas our results suggest for both muliculturals and multilinguals alike that their perceived *shortcomings* are equably valuable resources for bridging activities.

In the context of shortcoming-based bridging, we also have highlighted the importance of reflection for research on overcoming cultural and language barriers. Not only do individuals develop empathy through reflection, they also use their own experience with cultural or language deficits to bridge culture and language barriers for others. As a key component for cognitive development, including an increased ability to use and combine knowledge and experiences for future behavior (Lindh & Thorgren, 2016), we could demonstrate that reflection plays a crucial role for individuals dealing with multicultural and multilingual contexts.

The striking parallels that we established between multiculturals and multilinguals in their characteristics and activities clearly suggest that the relationship between the concepts of multiculturalism and multilingualism is highly dynamic, interrelated and interactive. Consequently, following the evidence where it led us, our study has taken an integrative approach. In doing so, we responded to recent calls to examine the relationship between both constructs with regard to relevant outcomes (Fitzsimmons et al., 2017). So far, this has barely been done, even though some scholars agree that while being conceptually distinct, language and culture are related concepts (Barner-Rasmussen et al., 2014; Ringberg et al., 2010). Whereas much research has treated language skills as a component or an outcome of multicultural competence (Chao, Chen, Roisman, & Hong, 2007; Chen et al., 2016; Fitzsimmons et al., 2017), our study clearly suggests otherwise. We submit that both phenomena are conceptually different and while empirically they often come together, they don't have to. And even if they do occur together, the extent to which they do so, or which aspects of multiculturalism and multilingualism are affected all can differ. This complexity adds again to the relevance of a more nuanced depiction we wish to advocate here.

Managerial Implications

Our study contains a series of important managerial implications. First, while cultural and language barriers are mostly viewed with anxiety and something a manager would try to avoid, our study suggests that they can also be an opportunity to learn and develop additional multicultural and multilingual capabilities. Managers in multicultural and / or multilingual settings should offer a space for reflection, such that employees can develop and use these skills.

Second, our differentiated view on multiculturalism and multilingualism showed that individuals can be more fluent in one or the other. Some may show many multicultural aspects, but have difficulties in one of the respective languages. Others may be highly fluent in more than one language, but have limited multicultural fluency. This should be sufficiently understood and acknowledged, so that multiculturals and multilinguals are not put under too much pressure to live up to unrealistic expectations regarding their asset-based capabilities.

Third, it should on the other hand be understood that their capacity to bridge cultural and language barriers is not limited to asset-based capabilities. Managers should therefore be open to several types of bridging between individuals and consider that not only assets but also shortcomings can be a source of such activities. In this context, managers should also understand that the repertoire of bridging activities is not just limited to (hard) knowledge- and proficiency-based ones such as 'explaining culture-specific behavior' or 'translating' but also include more (soft) accompanying activities such as 'discussing coping strategies' and 'giving others space to talk'. The four roles 'cultural teacher', 'language interpreter', 'cultural coach' and 'language facilitator' that we have developed should indicate the full spectrum of bridging activities that is available.

Fourth, managers should evaluate indicators that an employee may be multicultural or multilingual with caution, as this might create expectations that the employee might not meet.

Consequently, surface-level characteristics such as a foreign name or a different ethnic appearance do not mean that the individual is multicultural and multilingual. And even if this person considers him- or herself multicultural and / or multilingual, the question remains to which degree. While even perceived shortcomings can lead also to constructive outcomes, they need reflection – and reflection necessitates enough space that should not be constrained by too much pressure through unrealistic expectations.

Fifth, cultural and language training for employees should include awareness training for cultural and linguistic barriers. This can be implemented via critical incidents, as these can help individuals to engage in the process of reflection and thus, further learning and cognitive development (Lindh & Thorgren, 2016).

Limitations and Suggestions for Future Research

Although our study provides important insights into the positive but also the negative lived experiences of multiculturals and multilinguals and their contributions to multicultural and multilingual bridging, it naturally also has several limitations. First, while our respondents worked in a great variety of industries and functional positions, and represented a wide range of age, tenure, and hierarchical levels, our sample consists of a disproportionally high number of individuals who considered German to be one of their cultures and / or languages. This was largely due to the background and physical location of the authors and interviewers. One might argue that this overrepresentation of one country could have influenced the outcome of our investigation (Barkema, Chen, George, Luo, & Tsui, 2015). While we cannot exclude this possibility, we should keep in mind though that our interviewees represented 53 national cultures and 39 languages and that we were unable to detect any culture- or language-specific particularities in our findings. On this basis we assume to have described rather universally valid phenomena of cultural and linguistic bridging activities, but future research, possibly in

form of quantitative testing, might nevertheless put a particular focus on differences in cultural and linguistic bridging activities.

Second, since all respondents worked in an international setting, most of them spoke at least English on a regular basis, regardless of their native language(s). Thus, while our data set consisted of many multiculturals-multilinguals and a large amount of rather monoculturals-multilinguals, we only had a relatively small number of multiculturals-monolinguals. These interviewees were mainly native English speakers who have not learned another language to a notable degree of fluency. While one might argue that English-speaking multicultural individuals with zero knowledge of another language are the perfect interviewees to control for language when studying multicultural strengths and deficits and their impact on bridging, we should emphasize that this case is probably extremely rare, given that multiculturalism often goes along with at least some degree of proficiency in the respective other language(s) (see also Barner-Rasmussen et al., 2014; Fitzsimmons et al., 2017).

Our semi-structured interview approach provided the opportunity to probe in-depth multicultural and multilingual shortcomings. While these shortcomings proved to be essential for our theory building, as we found not only assets but also shortcomings to be a source of cultural and linguistic bridging activities, we argue that the focus on shortcomings should influence future research also in a wider sense. Our study offered a very nuanced picture, showing that being entirely monocultural / monolingual respectively fully multicultural / multilingual ultimately are rare extremes on a wide scale which provides much scope for differentiation regarding proficiency levels respectively shortcomings. Hence, future studies should distance themselves from the still prevalent binary conception of mono- vs. multiculturals and -linguals.

Furthermore, our study has equally shown that culture and language, while closely interlinked are nevertheless distinct concepts. From this follows that future research on

multiculturalism should stop assuming multilingual skills to be an outcome or a component of multicultural competence.

To conclude, we hope that our study has helped in opening the door toward a more nuanced perspective on multiculturalism and multilingualism. If future research treats both as distinct concepts and each as a continuum, allowing for graduation and nuance, instead of a binary variable (multiculturalism/-lingualism yes or no), we foresee many conceptual important and managerially relevant insights on this ever increasing group of people.

3. From Mono to Multi: Cognitive Schemas of Multicultural and Multilingual Employees

ABSTRACT

This study explores multicultural and multilingual individuals as two employee groups that gain increased importance for globally operating organizations. Companies have recognized the valuable resources these employees bring to their cross-cultural and cross-lingual ventures. As such, this study investigates their cognitive schemas as an important resource for outcomes in the workplace. Cognitive schemas are organized knowledge structures and influence individuals' thinking, behaviour, emotions and how information is interpreted. So far, little is known about the composition of multiculturals' and multilinguals' cognitive schemas and how they develop them, given that they possess not one but multiple cultures and languages. Yet, this is crucial to improve our understanding about the resources these individuals draw upon when acting at the workplace. Based on the analysis of 154 semi-structured interviews, we develop a framework of multicultural and multilingual schemas within individuals. Our inductive theory building concluded that their schemas are developed through external influences and internal dealings and consist of unique compositions of cultural and language elements. The schemas highlight the importance to consider varying degrees of knowledge in their multiple cultures and languages, specifically related to the professional and private contexts. In addition, they further our understanding about the individual agency in developing the schemas. We propose a shift toward acknowledging the existence of a multicultural schema and a multilingual schema within individuals as opposed to multiple cultural and language schemas.

INTRODUCTION

Internationally operating organizations have started to recognize that multicultural and multilingual individuals can help them succeed in cross-cultural and -lingual endeavors (Aichhorn & Puck, 2017a; Fitzsimmons, 2013; Fitzsimmons, Liao, & Thomas, 2017; Harzing & Feeley, 2008; Marchan-Piekkari, Welch, & Welch, 1999; Tenzer, Pudelko, & Harzing, 2014). Multiculturals are individuals who identify with and have internalized and knowledge of more than one societal culture (Vora, Martin, Fitzsimmons, Pekerti, Lakshman, & Raheem, 2018). Multilinguals are individuals who speak more than one language fluently and regularly (Bialystock, 2016; Grosjean, 2014). These individuals are increasingly appointed for cross-cultural and -lingual roles such as expatriates (Zhang & Harzing, 2016; Kane & Levina, 2017), members of multinational teams (MNTs) (Dau, 2014; Hinds, Neeley, Durnell, & Cramton, 2014), and global leaders (Lakshman, 2013). Yet, each of these two groups are diverse individuals, with multiculturals having internalized their cultures in different ways (Benet-Martinez, Leu, Lee, & Morris, 2002; Martin & Shao, 2016) and multilinguals possessing language skills to varying degrees (Grosjean, 2014). Understanding how they contribute to organizational outcomes requires to understand their unique characteristics.

In this regard, much of the research has focussed on the cognitive characteristics of multicultural individuals and the largely positive outcomes for the organizational context. So far, scholars predominantly assume that multiculturals possess multiple complete cultural schemas. For example, German-Turkish individuals who were born and grew up in Germany with Turkish parents would have the entire system of knowledge, values and beliefs from both cultures, the German and the Turkish one. Cultural schemas are organized knowledge structures, including cultural norms, values and beliefs, that individuals access to interpret and select information about a culture (Markus & Kitayama, 1991). Accordingly, multiculturals have been found to possess separate or hybrid cultural schema (Martin & Shao, 2016; Martin,

Shao, & Thomas, 2019) and to perceive and interpret information differently through switching their cultural frames (cultural frame switching - CFS) (Cheng, Lee, Benet-Martinez, & Huynh, 2014). While these studies have advanced our understanding about the multicultural mind, we still don't have an in-depth insight into the composition of their schemas, i.e. what knowledge, values and beliefs from each of their cultures they can access.

By contrast, while multicultural cognition has received some attention, IB research has completely disregarded multilinguals' cognitive characteristics and has exclusively looked at the language skills of multilingual individuals. Scholars categorize them into native or non-native speakers of the relevant language (Neeley, 2013; Neeley & Dumas, 2016) or someone who can make themselves understood in the business lingua franca (Cuypers, Ertug, & Hennart, 2015, Harzing, Koester, & Magner, 2011). However, multilingual individuals equally have separate or hybrid mental language schema depending on the age and way of acquisition of their languages (Bassetti & Cook, 1991; Kim, Relkin, Lee, & Hirsch, 1997). Language schemas are organized mental representations of language symbols, including knowledge about cultural, behavioural and functional aspects of language (Cook, 1991). Multilinguals also typically show a varying degree of the skills in each of their languages as well as a dominant language (Grosjean, 2014; Dewaele & van Oudenhove, 2009). For example, the German-Turkish individuals from our example above could be more skilled in German and perceive it as their dominant language, because they use it more often and in more situations than Turkish (or the other way around). Considering that highly skilled multilinguals are often described as a benefit for the organization (Harzing & Feeley, 2003; Marschan Piekkari et al., 1999), a more nuanced study of their cognitive characteristics to understand the resources they bring seems to be mandatory.

Additionally, research in IB has so far taken a fragmented approach and studied multiculturals and multilinguals separately. However, while culture and language are different

concepts, they are related and complementary (Barner-Rasumussen, Ehrnrooth, Koveshnikov, & Makela, 2014). Particularly the way individuals develop the knowledge structures related to their cultures and languages will likely have some sort of mutual influence. Since international organizations, regardless of their size, typically need employees who can effectively work in both cross-cultural and cross-lingual environments, IB research should take a more integrated approach in the study of these particular groups of the workforce. As such, we take an integrated approach in our attempt to unpack the cognitive schemas of multiculturals and multilinguals both in terms of what they are comprised of and how they develop them.

Due to the little research being done around the topic, our study takes an inductive, explorative approach to uncover the multicultural and multilingual minds in an interpretive, subjective manner. Drawing on 154 qualitative semi-structured interviews with multicultural and multilingual professionals of varying degrees, all working in an international setting, our study provides an in-depth understanding of the what and how of multicultural and multilingual cognitive schemas. Using inductive reasoning, we will present evidence that individuals develop their culture- and language-related schemas through external influences and internal agency. The content is then stored in two sub-schemas which we label *contextual competence sub-schema* and *agency sub-schema*. We further show that culture and language mutually play a role in the other schema. Our study makes several important contributions to the literature. We propose a shift away from *multiple cultural schema* and *multiple language schema*, toward *a multicultural schema* and *a multilingual schema*. Through this, we highlight the uniqueness in the composition of individuals' internalized multiple cultures and/or languages. It will help researchers and managers to better understand the cultural and language knowledge, competences and skills that multiculturals and multilinguals bring to the international workplace. Specifically, we show how the knowledge, competences and skills in each of their cultures and languages can differ significantly in the private and the professional contexts.

Furthermore, since we demonstrate how multicultural and multilingual schemas mutually influence each other in their development, we advance our understanding about the complex relationship between culture and language on the very micro level.

The remainder of this paper is structured as follows. We begin with a brief overview on the literature that informed our study, namely multicultural individuals, cultural schema, multilingual individuals and language schema. Second, we explain our research design, data collection, sample and data analysis. Third, we present our findings regarding the composition of a multicultural schema, that of a multilingual schema, and how these two influence each other and incorporate them into a comprehensive framework. Finally, we discuss theoretical contributions, managerial implications, as well as limitations of our study and future research suggestions.

THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

The following section draws on literature about first, multicultural employees and cultural schemas to provide an overview on the cognitive characteristics and internalizations of multicultural individuals, and second, multilingual employees and language schemas to learn about their cognitive characteristics and internalizations with regards to their languages. These streams were our "orienting points" (Dutton, Worline, Frost & Lilius 2006: 61) for the iterative process between literature study, data collection and data analysis which ultimately led us to build our mid-range theory (Pratt, 2009).

Multicultural individual's Cognition and Cultural Schemas

Over the last decade, the rise of research in IB on multicultural individuals improved our understanding about the value that they bring to the organization. In this regard, IB scholars have studied cognitive characteristics of multicultural individuals and conceptualized them as having internalized more than one cultural schema (Hong, Morris, Chiu and Benet-Martinez,

2000; Vora et al., 2019). However, scholars have primarily looked at antecedents to and outcomes of their cultural schemas, without paying sufficient attention to the characteristics of the cultural schemas itself. Yet, understanding these is crucial to study the impact on individual, team and organizational outcomes, because schemas influence how we behave, think, and interpret information (Nifadgar, 2018).

Currently, the dominant view of the cognitive characteristics of multiculturals is that they are comprised of multiple complete cultural schema. Multiculturals are then able to activate the respective cultural schema in response to situational cues (Benet-Martinez, Leu, Lee, & Morris, 2002). Specifically, when multiculturals engage in cultural frame switching (CFS), it is suggested they apply different cultural meaning systems to the processing of and reaction to social situations (Hong et al., 2000; Nguyen & Benet-Martinez, 2007). Thereby they unconsciously apply their cultural frames according to certain external cues that come out of the specific situation, e.g. language, pictures, or expectations (Benet-Martinez, Leu, Lee, & Morris, 2002; Luna, Ringberg, & Peracchio, 2008). Research on bicultural identity integration (BII) has specified the extent to which multiculturals integrate their identities, ranging from low (i.e. viewing their cultural schemas as separate and conflicting) to high (i.e. seeing their cultural schemas as compatible and harmonizing) (Benet-Martinez & Haritatos, 2005). BII has been used extensively to show why multiculturals differ in individual outcomes, based on where they are on the BII continuum. For example, Cheng, et al. (2006) show that multiculturals with harmonizing cultural identities (high in BII) respond in culturally congruent ways when exposed to positive cultural cues, and in culturally incongruent ways when exposed to negative cultural cues. The opposite appears to be true for multiculturals with conflicting cultural identities (low in BII). High BII has also been found to contribute to psychological adjustment, especially in combination with bilingual competence (Chen et al., 2008; Chen,

2015), to an increased creativity in resolving tasks (Mok & Morris, 2010), and to a match in cultural norms during performance appraisals (Mok, Chen, & Morris, 2010).

While the concept of BII provides a more nuanced view on the nature of the internalized cultural schemas, it still ignores that multiculturals have unique experiences with each of their cultures, which in turn influences the information and knowledge they store about them. Martin and Shao (2016) found that the cultural schemas of multiculturals differ according to the context in which they acquired their cultures. While innate multiculturals acquired their cultures in a single context (e.g. at home with parents from two different cultures), achieved multiculturals, for example first and second generation immigrants, acquired their cultures in separate contexts, most likely one at home and one outside of home. These two types differ in the way that innate multiculturals possess a single hybrid cultural schema, whereas achieved multiculturals access separate cultural schemas. Hybrid cultural schemas are here defined as the internalization of a hybrid culture of a group, for example of a group of immigrants such as Indians in Britain who have developed their own hybrid culture over time (Martin & Shao, 2016; Martin et al., 2019). This novel view challenges the findings about CFS, as innate multicultural individuals may not be able to access distinct cultural schemas and thus, may respond differently to situational cues than achieved multiculturals (Martin et al., 2019).

Yet, the current state of research does not provide further insight into what specifically is internalized in the cultural schemas, whether they are hybrid or separate. The predominant assumption that they possess complete cultural schemas as representation of societal cultures and activate them solely based on external cues neglects that they develop uniquely according to their individual experience (Leung & Morris, 2015). Moreover, as BII research indicates, individuals manage the integration of their schema differently based on how compatible they view their cultures. Yet, the potential capability to manage the specific composition and activation of their schemas remains to be explored.

Drawing on research about cultural schemas, IB research can receive valuable insights into the black box of multiculturals' cognitive schemas. Cultural schemas are cognitive structures that contain knowledge for interaction in a certain cultural context (Nishida, 1999). Through interactions with others of the same culture, individuals create abstract concepts which they organize in their long-term memory (Nishida, 1999). Thus, a first consideration for multicultural individuals' schemas should be that their interactions with others from specific cultures are often limited to certain contexts and situations, e.g. one of their cultures only applies with their parents at home.

While schema theorists speak mostly about stored knowledge, values or beliefs can also be internalized into schemas (Fellows & Liu, 2016). Further, the same belief or value can be stored with fundamentally different associative understandings of their meanings (Hunzaker & Valentino, 2019; Leung & Morris, 2015). These stocks of organized knowledge evolve gradually throughout one's life and are related to personal experiences and associated feelings (Ivanova and Torkkeli, 2013). Hunzaker and Valentino (2019) emphasize that, due to the unique individual experiences, a cultural schema contains elements that are idiosyncratic to the individual. For a multicultural person, the experiences within specific cultural contexts, including their associated feelings, will always be either in a different space (e.g. at home and outside of home) or to different times (e.g. due to moving to different cultures throughout one's life), or both. Thus, by definition, their cultural schemas will contain unique combinations of elements. Conversely, the current approach to multicultural cognition in IB research is that cultural schemas represent shared representations among members of a certain culture. Thus, the approach does not account for the individual, unique schematic characteristics resulting from individual experiences and personal choices.

Consequently, our first set of research questions is: *1) What do cultural schemas within multicultural individuals consist of?* and *2) How and why do they internalize the various aspects?*

Multilingual Individual's Cognition and Language Schemas

While there are gaps in the understanding of the cognitive characteristics of multicultural individuals, the cognitive characteristics of multilingual individuals have yet to be uncovered for the IB literature. This is an important endeavor to understand the full potential that these individuals bring to the organization that goes beyond the vague assumption that they speak more than one language. The following section discusses the current state of language research in IB with regards to multilingual individuals in the light of research in linguistics on multilingual individuals and cognitive language schemas.

So far, language studies within IB widely use demographic indicators to categorize individuals into native and non-native speakers in terms of their proficiency (Aichhorn & Puck, 2017a, 2017b; Hinds et al., 2014; Neeley, 2013; Neeley & Dumas, 2016; Tenzer et al., 2014; Tenzer & Pudelko, 2017). For example, while someone who was born and raised in an English-speaking environment is categorized as a native speaker, and someone who has learned English as a second language, but demonstrates proficiency at the level of an educated native speaker is considered as bilingual, someone who speaks English accurately in workplace conversations but makes some errors is referred to as professional-level speaker (Hinds et al., 2014). Conversely, when highlighting the positive outcomes of speaking more than one language, research has provided vague definitions such as they "spoke more than two languages and hence were themselves important communication nodes in the company" (Harzing et al., 2011: 284).

Research in linguistics, in turn, highlights that most commonly, multilinguals' proficiency, fluency and use of their specific languages varies depending on the domain or

context, indicating that their language schemas are more complex (Grosjean, 2014). Similar to the cultural schemas of multiculturals, multilinguals who learn languages in the same context and early in life (e.g. at home when parents use two different languages) have been found to possess a hybrid mental representation of the language symbols, whereas multilinguals who learn their languages in different contexts and later in life (e.g. one at home and one in school) have separate mental representations (Kim et al., 1997; Lambert, 1956).

Scholars have started to criticize the view that a multilingual individual is the sum of two complete monolinguals and argue that they are a specific speaker-hearer with a unique cognitive language system (Cook, 1991; Grosjean, 1998; Pavlenko, 2000). Simply adding another language on top of the first one is not sufficient to be called multilingual (Edwards, 2006). The Complementary Principle states that most individuals acquire their languages in different domains in life and for different purposes (Grosjean, 1997: 22). Consequently, the fluency and use may be limited in a certain domain for one or more of the languages. Hence, an individual may be multilingual not by having internalized two complete language systems, but by having knowledge of different genres of different languages (Blommaert, 2007). For example, an individual may be fluent in academic language in one language, and in conversational language in another (Cummins, 1984). In the IB context, this means that an individual who has learned English for the professional context may be highly proficient in the business context (Hinds et al., 2014), but has issues in following a small talk with their peers (Cohen & Kassis-Henderson, 2017). If a multilingual shows high fluency in multiple domains, linguistics scholars specify them as a multicontextual communicative expert (Hall, Cheng, & Carlson, 2006). Considering these findings, the dichotomous view of being either native or non-native in a language may lead to serious discrepancies in the expectations of employers toward their multilingual employees. While employers may categorize a multilingual who has

learned another language from their parents, for example, as a native speaker, they actually may not possess the proficiency level in the business domain.

This what we call native-non-native-speaker-view in IB research also results in neglecting the agency that individuals may have when choosing a language. For example, multilinguals can strive for valorization, the attribution of positive values to the use of certain languages, when they choose a language (Hamers & Blanc, 2000). Thus, a multilingual employee may have internalized multiple language schemas, but decides to refrain from speaking one of their languages due to a perceived lower status of that language.

To understand these variances multilinguals' knowledge of languages, cognitive and socio-linguistic studies can provide important insights. Additionally, research on language learning has used language schemas to explain how individuals understand and express a newly learned language. Language schemas as understood within these fields consist of three types: content schemas store knowledge about topics, themes and cultural aspects including speech pragmatics, i.e. the way speech acts are articulated in a given context to convey meaning (Kasper, 2001; Puetz and Neff-Aertselaer, 2008), formal schemas contain more behavioral knowledge of discourse forms such as genres, textual structure and formality, and linguistic schemas refer to the skills and knowledge needed to encode and decode linguistic units, including knowledge of grammar, syntax and vocabulary (Cook, 1991). The schemas are interrelated such that together, they function for individuals to understand and express a language (Al-Issa, 2006). Within content schemas, image schemas play a role in storing abstract conceptual representations that arise from our daily interactions and observations and thus, are concepts from our embodied experience (Evans, & Green, 2006: 176). Such schemas store knowledge in social and moral terms about roles and rights and obligations in interpersonal relations and situational context (Kadar and Haugh, 2013). As such, they are highly culturally influenced. The content schema is connected to the formal schema which

contains more strategic knowledge and information about structuring the speech or text and the level of formality. When a content schema is activated, it mediates the selection of the formal schema (McConachy, 2019). For example, if a content schema related to the work context is activated, the formal schema 'formal communication' would likely follow. Lastly, the linguistic schema allows to understand and express the related language code, including the respective vocabulary, grammar and syntax.

The content and structure of language schemas leads us to the question how multilingual individuals store their knowledge of a language considering their unique situational experiences which by definition have to result in unique properties of the content, formal and linguistic schema. We argue that with a shift away from the native-non-native-speaker view toward a multilingual speaker view (Henry, 2017), IB research can uncover the specific language resources that a multilingual employee possesses and consequently, can find ways to unleash their full potential. We argue that a closer attention to the unique cognitive schemas of multilinguals will be an important step toward the goal. With our study, we therefore aim to answer our second set of research questions: *3) What do language schemas within multilingual individuals consist of?* And *4) How and why do they internalize the various aspects?*

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

Given that we do not have an in-depth understanding of the complex schemas of both multicultural and multilingual individuals, we regarded an explorative, inductive research design as most suited (Morgan & Smircich, 1980; Suddaby, 2006). Inspired by the tradition of Grounded Theory (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Corbin & Strauss, 2008), we started with the broad objective of examining the cognitive schemas of multiculturals and multilinguals separately.

Throughout the iterative process between data analysis and data collection, we discovered the differentiation in both multicultural and multilingual schemas between the more externally influenced competences and the more internal dealings with these through agency. It was also due to our inductive approach that we revealed mutual influences of multicultural and multilingual schemas. At that point, we returned to the literature to specify our research questions, which in turn became the starting point of our theory development (Edmondson & McManus, 2007).

Specifically, we chose qualitative semi-structured interviews as a research design to generate a rich set of interview data that brings us "close to the informants' experience" (Gioia, Corley, & Hamilton, 2013: 19). The semi-structured interviews ensured consistency and comparability of our interviews, while remaining open to new issues (Myers, 2008). By tapping into our respondents' "inner events" (Weiss, 1994: 75), we could follow their leads about the cultural and linguistic influences in different contexts throughout their lives, and the effects of their choices in dealing with these influences. As a result, the interviews provided us with rich and thick descriptions of their multicultural and multilingual schemas (Doz, 2011).

Data Collection and Sample

We were interested in studying individuals of varying degrees of multiculturalism and multilingualism and who worked in an international work setting. We aimed to gather insights into employees' internalization of multiculturalism and / or multilingualism and the impact of and / or on the work context. With that in mind, we selected our participants according to the principle of theoretical sampling (Corbin & Strauss, 2008; Glaser & Strauss, 1967: 45). With broad theoretical concepts in mind, we recruited participants based on two broad criteria: (1) having internalized, identifying with, and having knowledge of two or more cultures (Vora et al., 2019), and / or being fluent in two or more languages and using them regularly (Bialystock, 2016; Grosjean, 2014) and (2) working in a multicultural and / or multilingual work context.

To trigger a conscious self-selection process by potential participants, we purposefully named multiculturalism and multilingualism as distinct concepts (Sofietti, 1960; Barner-Rasmussen et al., 2014, Ringberg, Luna, Reihlen, & Peracchio, 2010). This opened the data collection for varying degrees of multiculturalism and multilingualism. In fact, it invited respondents to share their uncertainties in having the competences or willingness of being multicultural or multilingual, as individuals often started the interview by describing how they would identify or not and why in different situations. With the second criterion, we ensured that our participants worked in a context where their multiculturalism and / or multilingualism were actively used as employees of any kind of organization. Our data collection resulted in a rich data set through 154 semi-structured interviews.

Participants were primarily recruited through the personal networks of the interviewees followed by snowballing. We also sent out requests to HR departments of organizations of different sizes and industries and they connected us with potential candidates. Interviews were conducted by the first author as well as 10 Master's students between 2015 and 2017. The first author conducted 49 interviews, while the Master's students each conducted between 8 and 12 interviews. Due to the background and physical location of the first author and students, most interviews were conducted in Germany with individuals who identified with German as one of their cultures or languages. In addition, data collection trips abroad took place in Canada, China, Japan, Korea, and Sweden, while twelve interviews were conducted over phone or Skype with respondents located in Australia, Ethiopia, Mexico, the Netherlands, Singapore, Switzerland, the UK, the US, and Vietnam. Interviews were conducted in the language the participant chose to allow them to speak at most ease (Harzing & Maznevski, 2002), if the language skills of the interviewer permitted. This included German, English, French, Spanish and Vietnamese. Otherwise the interview was conducted in English as the shared language. The interviews were transcribed verbatim in the language of the interview, except for three

Vietnamese interviews which the interviewer translated to English, because the authors cannot read or understand Vietnamese. The resulting 1950 double-spaced pages of the transcripts formed the basis of our data analysis. Interviews were between 32 minutes and 1 hour 58 minutes long, with the average interview being 59 minutes long.

The semi-structured interviews consisted of two main parts. In the first part, participants were asked to share their personal history and experience. This included general demographic facts such as their age, their professional background such as job responsibilities, tenure at the organization and position, as well as the cultural and linguistic background of the people they worked with. In this part, we also asked how, where and when they acquired their multiple cultures and languages, and how these had shaped them throughout different stages in their life and in different domains, such as school, work and private domains. Regarding their multilingualism, we also asked them how proficient they were in each of their languages and how comfortable they felt using them in different domains. The second and main part directly asked about their subjective experience at the workplace. According to our inductive approach, we started by asking generic questions to hear participants' subjective view on the topic, such as "how do you make use of your multiple cultures and / or languages at work and why?". Then we asked more specific questions and prompted them to share concrete examples (Witzel, 2000). For example, many participants shared that they used one of their languages rarely at work, but that that language was their primary language at home. We then asked more concrete questions such as in what rare situations they used the language and what it meant to them. They often provided examples that were related to a social, casual situation during their work day, such as at coffee breaks with specific coworkers whom they shared this language with, but that they did not have sufficient skills to use the language in formal business situations.

An initial interview guideline was created by the authors with theoretical concepts in mind. Throughout the interview process, the first author discussed the interview guideline

intensively with each Master's student in group and individual sessions. Prior to the discussions, they were given readings about multicultural and multilingual individuals and the task to familiarize themselves with the topic. Together with remaining open to new themes throughout the data collection process, we continuously refined the interview guideline according to emerging themes and new insights into theory (Myers, 2008). For example, at the beginning of the study we expected to have relatively brief and straightforward conversations about interviewees' internalization of cultures and languages. However, it soon became apparent that they were constantly debating about their multiculturalism and multilingualism and that they distinguished strongly between the private and professional contexts. Thus, we extended our literature review and investigated the topic in more depth by including additional questions to our interview protocol.

The data collection resulted in a sample that represents various cultural and linguistic backgrounds. Respondents worked in a wide range of industries and services, e.g. in the automotive industry, aero-space, food and pharmaceutical industries, consulting, auditing, banking, media, retail, IT or the public sector, and covered a variety of functional areas, such as event management, marketing, sales, finance, accounting, controlling, research and development, and strategy. Positions of the interviewees ranged from trainees, over regular employees, lower, middle and upper managers, to vice-presidents and CEOs. However, respondents reported not only about their current employment, but also about experiences in past appointments. 88 of our respondents were male and 66 female. The youngest interviewee was 19 years old and the oldest 65 years, with an average age of 32 (the age of 14 interviewees is unknown). Table 1 provides an overview of the cultures and languages that are represented in our sample. We distinguish between English as societal language and English as business language, since Business English Lingua Franca (BELF) is a "neutral and shared

communication code … used for conducting business within the global business discourse community" (Louhiala-Salminen, Charles, & Kankaanranta, 2005: 403–404).

TABLE 1. Represented Cultures and Languages

Culture	Frequency	Culture	Frequency	Language	Frequency	Language	Frequency
Afghan	3	Iraqui	1	Afrikaans	2	Portuguese	7
Argentinian	3	Irish	1	Arabic	2	Punjabi	1
Australian	2	Italian	3	Bengali	1	Rumanian	4
Austrian	1	Japanese	6	Bosnian	7	Russian	13
Barbadian	1	Kazakhstani	1	Bulgarian	2	Spanish	17
Beninese	1	Korean	6	Business English	106	Swedish	1
Bolivian	1	Mauritian	2	Cantonese	3	Swiss German	3
Bosnian	5	Mexican	1	Catalan	2	Turkish	6
Brazilian	3	Montenegrin	1	Creole	2	Ukranian	1
British	4	Polish	2	Croatian	6	Vietnamese	6
Bulgarian	3	Portuguese	1	Czech	2	Wolof	1
Canadian	14	Romanian	3	Dari	1	Zulu	2
Chilean	1	Russian	11	Dutch	5		
Chinese	6	Senegalese	1	English	49		
Croatian	3	Serbian	1	Farsi	1		
Czech	2	Singaporian	1	French	28		
Dutch	4	Slovenian	1	German	107		
Egyptian	1	South African	3	Greek	2		
Filipino	1	Spanish	8	Hindu	5		
French	7	Sri Lankan	1	Italian	3		
German	90	Swiss	5	Japanese	5		
Greek	3	Tunisian	1	Korean	7		
Guinean	1	Turkish	5	Mandarin	8		
Hong Kongese	3	US-American	11	Marathi	1		
Hungarian	1	Vietnamese	5	Mina	1		
Indian	7	Yugoslavian	1	Persian	4		
Iranian	1			Polish	3		

Data Analysis

We used the qualitative research software Atlas.ti to code our transcripts. As common in inductive studies, because theorizing occurs during and after data collection (Patton, 2002), we started the coding process while data collection was still ongoing (Locke, 2001). That way, we could respond to unclear or contradictory information and collect additional information to clarify these inconsistencies. At the same time, we constantly turned back to the literature to find links and gaps, as common in the iterative process of data analysis and getting informed by existing theory. All members of the data collection team contributed to the coding scheme to ensure reliability. While we largely agreed on the meaning of similar quotes, there were at times different codes given to the same phenomena. For example, one interviewer coded an occurrence where the respondent did not actively speak the language, but saw their passive language skills as crucial to learn and internalize cultural elements as "passive language skills give access to culture", while another one coded the occurrence as "only understands the language but that's important to understand the culture". In these instances, the first author integrated these codes for consistency. While the transcripts were in the language of the interviews (except for the three Vietnamese ones), codes were developed in English to ensure a single language of analysis.

Using an open coding technique (Corbin & Strauss, 2008), each paragraph of the interview transcript was read and labeled with a descriptive code. Some codes were taken directly from the data. For example, many participants said they "cherry-pick from all their cultures", so we assigned the code to all statements that were directly said as such or interpreted as such (e.g. *"You learn both frameworks. And because of that, I think you can take the best, you know, you can cherry-pick. So you can find the middle ground."* P56; C: Bos, Ger; L: Ger, Croa). Other codes reflected theoretical concepts from the literature. For example, the quote "*I have developed sort of a 'mixed language' with my Dad and my sister. Sometimes we think of*

the German word and then we use Greek in the same sentence. Then you say the article in Greek, but the noun in German and the subordinate sentence again in Greek. Just how it is easiest in that moment." (P77; Ger, Gre; L: Ger, BE, Gre) was labeled "code switching to take the easy way". Further exemplary codes and quotes are presented in tables 2 to 6 throughout the findings section. In this early stage of our data analysis, we already realized that our informants often had difficulties deciding if they considered themselves as multicultural or multilingual or both, because they questioned their competences in certain contexts. Further, it became apparent that respondents viewed multiculturalism and multilingualism as distinct, but also saw some overlap when it came to internalizing cultural and linguistic elements. We also noticed that our respondents incorporated cultural and language elements not only in line with the external influences they have had throughout their lives, but also through their individual, internal, subjective dealing with these influences which we later labeled agency schemas. These preliminary findings instigated further interviews in which we gathered more details on these aspects. At the same time, we reviewed further previous research regarding internalization of cultures and languages, individual-level processes in the cultural and linguistic socialization and cultural and language schemas. These are examples of the iterative process between data collection, data analysis, and literature research.

In the next step, we compared our data in different ways, as Corbin and Strauss (1998) suggest in their axial coding. Thereby, we moved from a data-driven to a more theory-guided analysis (Gioia et al., 2013). Using the constant comparative method (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Rynes & Gephard, 2004), we studied the theoretical relationships between the first-order codes. We started by comparing codes in different parts of each interview. Next, we compared interviews with equal and similar codes, first between culture-related and second between language-related codes. By doing so, we grouped related codes together into second-order codes. For example, the first-order codes "culture-specific dominance in professional and
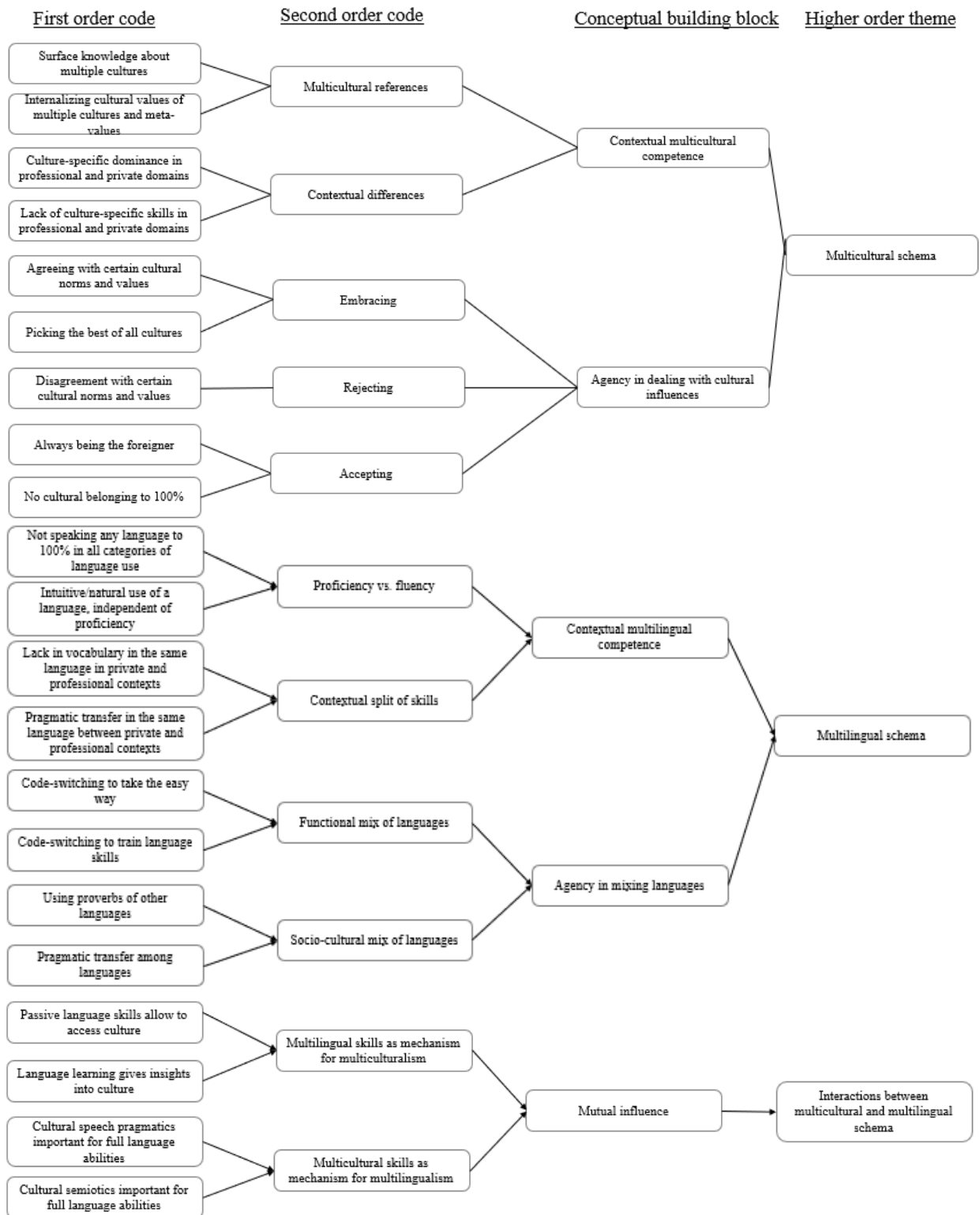
private domains" and "lack of culture-specific skills in professional and private domains" were merged into the second-order code "contextual differences". We then compared codes related to multiculturalism with codes related to multilingualism. During this step, we realized that participants referred on one hand to more external influences and competence-based elements as part of their schemas, and on the other hand to more subjective attitudes toward cultural and language elements which ultimately led to their choices in internalizing them or not (e.g. preferences for some cultural norms and values over others or unique ways of mixing their languages). Consequently, for each multiculturalism and multilingualism, we grouped the competence-based elements together and the agency-based elements together, which became our conceptual building blocks. Through the comparison of codes, we also became aware of the interactions that individuals saw between multiculturalism and multilingualism. While they saw language skills as a medium to access and internalize cultural elements, they also regarded cultural elements of language such as pragmatics and semiotics as a mechanism to fully access and internalize language elements. We grouped the related second-order codes together into the conceptual building block 'mutual influence'.

Our various ways of comparing our data led us to merge similar first-order codes into second-order codes, then into more conceptual categories and ultimately, into higher order themes (Lee, 1999). For example, the first-order codes 'agreeing with certain cultural norms and values' and 'picking the best of all cultures' were integrated into the second-order code 'embracing', 'using proverbs of other languages' and 'pragmatic transfer among languages' were integrated into 'socio-cultural mixing of languages', and 'passive language skills allow to access culture' and 'language learning gives insights into culture' into 'multilingual skills as mechanism for multiculturalism'. We then aggregated the second-order codes into five more conceptual categories as our theoretical building blocks, namely 'contextual multicultural competence', 'agency in dealing with cultural influences', 'contextual multilingual

competence', 'agency in mixing languages', and 'mutual influence'. We ultimately grouped these under three higher order themes – *multicultural schema*, *multilingual schema* and *interactions between multicultural and multilingual schema*.

The resulting coding scheme is summarized in Figure 1.

FIGURE 1. Coding Scheme

First order code | Second order code | Conceptual building block | Higher order theme

- Surface knowledge about multiple cultures
- Internalizing cultural values of multiple cultures and meta-values
→ Multicultural references

- Culture-specific dominance in professional and private domains
- Lack of culture-specific skills in professional and private domains
→ Contextual differences

→ Contextual multicultural competence

- Agreeing with certain cultural norms and values
- Picking the best of all cultures
→ Embracing

- Disagreement with certain cultural norms and values
→ Rejecting

→ Agency in dealing with cultural influences

→ Multicultural schema

- Always being the foreigner
- No cultural belonging to 100%
→ Accepting

- Not speaking any language to 100% in all categories of language use
- Intuitive/natural use of a language, independent of proficiency
→ Proficiency vs. fluency

- Lack in vocabulary in the same language in private and professional contexts
- Pragmatic transfer in the same language between private and professional contexts
→ Contextual split of skills

→ Contextual multilingual competence

- Code-switching to take the easy way
- Code-switching to train language skills
→ Functional mix of languages

- Using proverbs of other languages
- Pragmatic transfer among languages
→ Socio-cultural mix of languages

→ Agency in mixing languages

→ Multilingual schema

- Passive language skills allow to access culture
- Language learning gives insights into culture
→ Multilingual skills as mechanism for multiculturalism

- Cultural speech pragmatics important for full language abilities
- Cultural semiotics important for full language abilities
→ Multicultural skills as mechanism for multilingualism

→ Mutual influence

→ Interactions between multicultural and multilingual schema

FINDINGS

Our findings are presented according to the conceptual building blocks from our data analysis. According to the differentiation we undertook between multiculturalism and multilingualism, we first present the multicultural schema and second the multilingual schema. Within each schema, we distinguish between two categories which we label *contextual competence-based category*, and *agency-based category*. The former is fundamental to answer the first in the sets of our research questions (what do multicultural and multilingual schemas consist of), whereas the latter answers the second in the sets of research questions (how and why do multiculturals and multilinguals internalize the various aspects). The answers to our two sets of research questions are complemented by our findings about the *interactions between the multicultural and multilingual schema*. The structure of our findings according to the *employee*, the *contextual competence schema*, the *agency-schema* and the *interactions* corresponds to the eleven second-order codes from our data analysis (depicted in Figure 1) and leads to eleven propositions (in Figure 3).

Multicultural Schema

In this section, we present our findings regarding multiculturals' descriptions about the cultural elements that they internalize. These can be broadly integrated into what we label the *contextual cultural competence*. We then present our findings about how multiculturals create their schema. We label this aspect *agency in dealing with cultural influences*.

Contextual cultural competence schema within multicultural schemas. Our data on multiculturals reveal that individuals of this group internalize different elements of their cultures into their cognitive schema. Furthermore, they possess different culture-specific knowledge and resulting skills, mainly according to the private and professional contexts. Regarding the cultural elements of the cognitive schema, we found that it possesses both, culture-specific surface knowledge of multiple cultures and multiple culture-specific values,

which we label *multicultural references*. These were crucial elements of their multiple cultures that had influenced them and resulted in the content of the schemas they accessed today. However, they also clearly differentiated between the professional and private contexts when it came to their culture-specific knowledge and skills. Some aspects from one of their cultures were often more dominant in one of these contexts. However, they could also lack the knowledge about behaviours in a culture in one of those domains. As such, they differentiated in their cultural competence between the private and the professional contexts.

In terms of multicultural references, our respondents mentioned *culture-specific surface knowledge*, such as food, music or literature from multiple cultures as important cultural surface-level aspects of their lives. Respondents mentioned these aspects as important sources of how they live and behave. These were crucial influences from their upbringing, as the following participant explains:

> Living in Australia, my Dad would teach us a poem or, you know, he would cook something like food or whatever and we would only know it by the German name. So we had a lot of the German influence through our day-to-day lives. (P2; C: Austr, Ger; L: Eng)

In addition, they were also able to keep such surface knowledge from a culture other than the one they were living in. For example, a Russian-German who was living and working in Germany kept Russian literature and music in her daily habits:

> So the Russian part of me is that I know the language, I read Russian books, listen to Russian music and other cultural aspects such as movies, music and so on. That is something that I keep from my home or from the country. (P81; C: Ger, Rus; L: Ger, Rus, BE)

Another aspect were the culture-specific values of multiple cultures that they had incorporated in their own value system, such as this German-Egyptian multicultural:

> I took a lot of Arabic values with me. Especially the value of family and things like that I have from the Arabic culture. (P10; C: Ger, Egy; L: Ger, BE, Span, Arab)

While she referred to values of specific cultures, such as the value of the family, it was also common among our respondents to value the differences of cultures. For example, this British-French interviewee explained how he has internalized the belief in multiple values:

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My father invited his working colleagues, they were coming from different countries, so very early in my life I met Japanese, Koreans, people from Saudi Arabia, they were coming home, so for me it was like: Okay, they come from Saudi Arabia that is fine. They dress differently, they have their little carpets, but it is their choice, get along with it. I didn't really care, I wasn't shocked. That is why I have difficulties today, relating to purity, purity-type of organizations, where people are monocultural or ... it doesn't mean that I don't have principles or beliefs. Values I value, you know what I mean? It doesn't mean that everything is the same for me, no. It simply means, that I appreciate this and that and different contexts. (P67, C: Brit, Fre; L: Eng, Fre)

Our respondents often mentioned that their multicultural upbringing helped them to be appreciative of the concept that different cultures have different values. We label this concept *meta-values,* because it reflects the ability to transfer the knowledge about different values to a broader principle of valuing multiple values. Our findings about values thus show that multiculturals not only internalize values of specific cultures, but also meta-values.

To summarize, while cultural knowledge has been acknowledged as the content of cultural schemas of multiculturals (Hong et al., 2000), our findings show that values are equally important aspects that multicultural individuals internalize in their schema. Multiculturals store both surface knowledge and values of multiple cultures, which then become the aspects they draw on in their everyday lives. We therefore label them multicultural references, because they are like their terms of reference for their thinking and behaving. Thus, we propose:

Proposition 1a: Multicultural individuals internalize culture-specific surface knowledge, culture-specific values and meta-values, which comprise their multicultural references.

Proposition 1a gives us already a part of the answer for our first research question *what do multicultural schemas consist of*, as we found that they consist of culture-specific surface knowledge and values as multicultural references.

Yet, our rich data set showed that it is more than multicultural references that these individuals internalize. We also found another aspect which we labeled *contextual differences*. We recognized those differences as respondents clearly distinguished between the professional and private domain when speaking about the multicultural references and skills they were able to draw on. Our interviewees explained how the context they were in defined whether they

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were able to draw on and use cultural skills of a specific culture. This typically mirrored the dominance of the cultures in how they had acquired and used them. The majority of our sample had acquired certain cultures in certain contexts, for example one (or more) cultures at home with the family and one (or more) cultures outside of home, e.g. in their everyday life, such as school or work. Thus, they had incorporated their culture-specific skills and the propensity to use them accordingly. To exemplify, a German-Polish interviewee, born in Poland who moved to Germany at the age of eight, assigned more German values to her professional life, while she primarily kept Polish values in her private life:

> In my private life, my Polish culture dominates and in my professional life my
> German. I am a very accurate person when it comes to work and I'm also more
> distanced. It takes a long time for me to call my coworkers friends, I think that's a
> German thing. But in my private life I am very Polish. I'm always concerned what
> others think and what my neighbors will say and so on. And if I think about
> raising children in the future I would do it as my [Polish] parents did I think. (P14;
> C: Ger, Pol; L: Ger, Pol, BE)

In line with this dominance, multiculturals incorporated more formal elements from their professional life (including their schooling) and more emotional elements from their private life. Many of our participants that had spent a significant amount of time studying and/or working in the German context highlighted that they were rigidly on time or very structured in their professional lives, elements that are highly valued in the German work context. Conversely, they often highlighted that they internalized more emotional elements such as family-orientation in their private lives, which is for example an important aspect in the Polish culture.

Yet, this differentiation between professional and private contexts was not only characterized by the dominance of one culture. This would imply that elements of another culture are also present in that domain. By contrast, we found that multiculturals could simply lack the knowledge and thus internalization of cultural norms and values in some contexts. For example, while their private (professional) life could contain or even be dominated by elements of one culture, the professional (private) life could have very little or no elements of that

culture. As one participant explained, although his Chinese culture very much dominated his private life, he had never worked in China and thus, had incorporated more elements from the Canadian culture in the professional context.

> I am from a Chinese cultural background, but somehow all my university years, and all my work experience, I have never worked a day in China. So, although I come from that cultural background, I have a lot of characteristics from that Chinese culture there, but like when it comes to work, I was trained, my knowledge, I got all from Canada here. So, my typical way when I talk to the co-workers, I'll be more - how can I say this - westernized. Very straight forward, task-oriented. (P 94; C: Chin, Cad; L: Chin, Engl)

While this could speak to separate as opposed to integrated cultural schema within multicultural individuals (Martin & Shao, 2016), the following German-Czech interviewee explained how he viewed his two cultures as fluid or integrated in the private context, but could not transfer that to the professional context.

> When I went on my expatriate assignment to the Czech Republic, I wanted to check if these two cultures [German and Czech] that seemed to be fluidly integrated within myself, were as fluidly integrated in my professional life. I found my boundaries fairly quickly. I realized quickly that this doesn't work easily. In my private life it was fine, because I can switch between my cultures and languages. But only in my private life. (P3 C: Ger, Cz; L: Ger, Cz, Spa, BE)

This finding fundamentally challenges a prevalent assumption in the literature. Research has so far assumed that each cultural schema is more or less a complete one, such that individuals can switch between one full cultural frame to another triggered by contextual clues such as language or visuals (Benet-Martinez, et al., 2002). In contrast, our findings suggest that these schemas are rather domain-specific ones. They are not necessarily complete cultural schemas in each context which would allow them to fully activate a certain cultural schema in any given context. Instead an individual incorporates certain culture-specific aspects into two different domains of their schema, the professional and the private one. This, in turn, reflects the contexts of acquisition of the specific culture. Hence, we propose:

> **Proposition 1b**: Multicultural individuals internalize contextual differences of multicultural elements, which is characterized by culture-specific skills and the lack thereof in private and professional contexts.

Additional   quotes for the conceptual building block multicultural contextual competence schema are presented in Table 2.

TABLE 2. Exemplary Quotes of the Multicultural Contextual Competence Schema

Quote	First order code
• Cultural wise I got the stories and going back to visit, we go to Crop Over which is a big festival in Barbados. Music wise, my parents would listen to soul music when I was a kid, but I didn't pay much attention to it, I grew up more with American pop music kind of thing. (P68; C: Bar, Cad; L: Eng, Fre) • We had some English culture, like English music mainly. English music at home, you know like Beatles and Rolling Stones and stuff and we had only English TV. We were not allowed to watch French TV. We had, you know, we had the bed stories were English and Dutch and we had Dutch food. So I would say that these are the cultural elements is the part of the culture that I had from my mom and dad. (P75; C: Fre, Eng; L: Fre, Eng)	Knowledge about multiple surface-level cultures
• And of course I also learned and took values that are probably more Turkish than German. For example, I'd say the focus on the family which is important for many Southern people, that's something that I definitely have. (P64; C: Ger, Tur; L: Ger, Tur, BE) • That is why I have difficulties today, relating to purety, very culturally embedded type of organizations, where people are monocultural or ... it doesn't mean that I don't have principles or beliefs, careful! Values I value, you know what I mean? (P67; C: Brit, Fre; L: Eng, Fre)	Internalizing cultural values of multiple cultures and meta-values
• In my professional life the German culture [dominates], as I've said. I mean I've really learned the discipline in school, being on time and adhere to scheduled meetings and so on. In my private life, I live my Turkish culture. (P55; C: Tur, Ger; L: Ger, Tur, BE) • So my work life, my academic life, funny, my creative life is definitely English. But my emotional life with my family is Afrikaans. And my emotional life today is probably a little more German. I'm a confused bunny. (P 12; C:SouthAf; L:Eng,Afrikaans,Ger)	Culture-specific dominance in professional and private domains
• I must say that I have a hard time imagining to have a German partner, because he would not have the same upbringing. Also in terms of language, upbringing, religion and so on, he would not be the same as me. I think it would be difficult for me, and potentially for my partner, to find common ground, because honestly I don't know much about the German way of living, I mean at home. (P55; C: Tur, Ger; L: Ger, Tur, BE) • I lived in Germany during the decisive years in my life. The years when you develop your personality, when you develop your decision-making, how you approach things, how you solve problems, all of that I experienced here [Germany]. And you solve problems differently in Germany, you manage conflicts differently, you provide feedback in a different way than in the Czech Republic. And it does not just come naturally to you. I realized that there is a difference in you as a human, there is a difference as a professional human who suddenly is in a purely Czech environment and has to learn how problem solving works, how are the approaches, how do you provide feedback and I realized it does not come to me automatically. (P3; C: Ger, Cz; L: Ger, Cz, Spa, BE)	Lack of culture-specific skills in professional and private domains

Figure 2 visualizes the composition of the contextual-competence sub-schema within the multicultural schema, as well as within the multilingual schema which we address in the section after the next.

FIGURE 2. Contextual Multicultural and Multilingual Competence
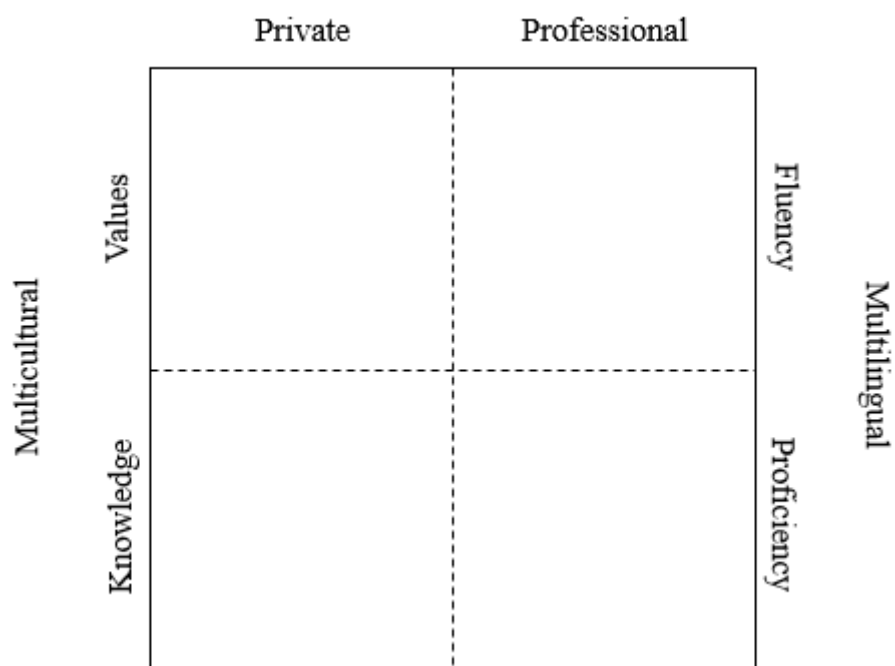
Agency within multicultural schemas. In our attempt to answer our second research question in the first set (how and why do multicultural individuals internalize the various aspects), we found that individuals were not only influenced by societal cultures, but also had agency in choosing what to internalize and what not. While the competence-based category that we presented in the previous section was more based on external input and influences to the schema of multicultural individuals, we also found that multiculturals executed a choice about the aspects that they internalize. We present these under the agency-schema. We label it as such, because the agency in creating their multicultural schema is more internal as opposed to the external input, and represents how they deal with the influences within themselves. Interviewees explained what aspects of their cultures such as norms, values or behaviours they agreed with and thus, incorporated into their schema. At the same time, they had negative attitudes toward other cultural norms, values or behaviours and deliberately excluded those from their schema. Lastly, they were often confronted with the perception of being 'the foreigner' which became an integral part of their thinking about themselves. We call these three forms of agency *embracing*, *rejecting* and *accepting* when internalizing cultural aspects.

The choice of *embracing* happened when specific cultural habits and values were selected over others. Respondents mentioned how they agreed with some values or norms of one of their cultures more than with those of another culture or other cultures which they then accepted as part of their schema. They articulated this as conscious choices they have made to become the person they are. For example, a German-Italian participant highlighted how he chose to incorporate German traits or practices into his professional life, because he valued the thoroughness and reliability which he often missed in work values of his other culture, Italian:

> Well, I try to work like a German. I find that ambitious, because the ancestors of my mother were Prussian, so I do have some Prussian virtues within myself. Hence, I try to follow those Prussian virtues and sometimes it makes me mad if others act differently. I mean thoroughness and faith, reliability. I see those as important characteristics and I do not see them in the Italian values. Especially thoroughness and reliability, yeah. (P 18; C: Ger, Ita; L: Ger, BE, Ita)

This quote also shows that multiculturals' choices often differed in their professional and private lives, emphasizing the differentiation of contexts again. For example, they could embrace values of one culture in their professional lives, while choosing some of other cultures in their private lives.

> I take the best of both cultures and I have to say that, if you have family there, the Croatian is the more emotional part and the German the more logical one. (P 63; C: Ger, Croa; L: Ger, Croa, Eng)

As the following respondent articulates, they often referred to their agency as "cherry picking".

> You can take learnings from not just one, but two different cultures or more, three, four, I don't know how many you have. But you can take learnings and this is your choice to do it and to combine them to become something that you think is better. You know, not necessarily what the society thinks, but what you think. You know, take the good things and balance them. (P11; C: Pers, Brit, Dut, Ger; L: Far, Engl, Dut)

They consciously chose to internalize certain elements, thus practiced agency over creating their multicultural schema according to what they evaluated as positive and desirable. While they can certainly only choose from the aspects they have learned or been influenced by, thus, are limited in the choices they have, they still hold some degree of agency over how they compose their multicultural schema. This explains the act of *embracing,* when one chooses culture-specific aspects they have been exposed to and allow them to be part of their schema. Therefore, we propose:

Proposition 2a: Multicultural individuals choose to internalize cultural elements they have a positive attitude to into their multicultural schema by *embracing* them.

On the flipside, multiculturals can choose to *reject* negative attitudes. While they picked what they regarded as positive to incorporate into their schema, they also rejected what they regarded as negative or disagreed with. For example, the previously mentioned participant whose family was Persian and who considered to have cultural elements from Iran, UK, the Netherlands and Germany mentioned that he disagreed with some habits of all of the cultures he has been immersed in.

> But the way I am now I would say it's a mix. I don't identify myself 100%. If I go to Iran a lot of the cultural behavior that I see around me in my family, friends, I can't stand it much. It's like I don't agree with it and I'm not like that. And in the Western countries, in Europe for example, a lot of it is - maybe I'm just simply used to it because I'm living here for years now -, but a lot of it I also don't agree with. So I would say I'm a bit lost in the middle. (P11; C: Pers, Brit, Dut, Ger; L: Far, Engl, Dut)

He describes the mix of values or practices that he followed as coming from disagreeing with certain cultural behaviours. We label this choice *rejecting*, because multiculturals get in contact with values or norms, but choose to not allow them to become part of their own schema.

> **Proposition 2b**: Multiculturals choose to exclude cultural elements they have a negative attitude about by *rejecting* them.

The third choice was based on the perception of the multiculturals to be always perceived as foreigners or not completely belonging to the group they were in. This was a highly prevalent finding irrelevant of their visible ethnic or racial characteristics and the cultural distance between their cultures. Many participants shared this when we asked them about disadvantages of being multicultural. They generally perceived their multiculturalism and upbringing as positive, except for the fact that they were permanently confronted with being perceived as "the foreigner".

> Very often a couple years ago, people asked "So what do you feel like? Do you feel Dutch or Russian, Afghan, what are you?" But it is very difficult to say because… you are always an outsider because you are always a bit different and a bit strange in some way. (P36; C: Dut, Rus, Afg; L: Dut, Rus, BE, Per, Rom)

Another more internal way of experiencing the more negative sides of being multicultural was the perception of not fully belonging to any of their cultures. Our respondents explained that they had internalized fundamental culture-specific elements, but still felt they didn't have sufficient elements to fully belong to that culture.

> My mother wanted us to have roots in Mexico. So, I even took a Mexican Folk Dancing, you know, all these kind of traditional things. So, yes, I do consider myself very Mexican. Just sometimes I do not fit in there because of the Canadian part I think. So, that is what keeps me from being completely Mexican. (P27; C: Mex, Cad; L: Eng, Spa)

Since this was a continuous experience throughout their entire lives, it contributed to the internalization of the sense to be different than the majority.

Everyone should perceive me as they wish. So if they think I'm more Russian, then that's their opinion. If they think I'm more German, that's fine as well. (P81; C: Ger, Rus; L: Ger, Rus, BE)

This aspect shows the dynamics between the external influences and internal choice for their schema. With regards to the external influences, the context where the individual is being socialized, influences how the schema develops. Always feeling as a foreigner and as not fully belonging to the dominant cultural group around them, provides an aspect of their schema that makes them feel different *("In any case, you permanently get the feeling of being different"*, P10; C: Ger, Egy; L: Ger, BE, Span, Arab). With regards to the internal agency, this contributes to the formation of their schema, as "being different" becomes a normal, unconscious part of being. We label this part of the agency *accepting*, because with accepting the perception of not belonging anywhere multiculturals allow to accept the presence or absence of elements of multiple cultures within themselves. Thus, we propose:

Proposition 2c: Multiculturals choose to recognize elements of multiple cultures within themselves by *accepting* the permanent sense of being different.

Additional quotes for the multicultural agency schema are presented in Table 3.

TABLE 3. Exemplary Quotes of the Multicultural Agency Sub-Schema

Quote	First order code
• I personally am more attracted to the Chilean part of me. In my private life, it just works better. The serenity, to value the life... I am more the type of person who doesn't value materiality so much, but rather to have a good time in my leisure time, some sun, and so on. (P1; C:Ger,Chil; L:Ger,Spa,Bus-E) • So comedy in French and comedy in English is completely different. I can appreciate both. But I know a lot of people that can not. I know a lot of anglophone people that do not think French comedy is funny and vice versa. Because it is very different. English humor is more like, sort of cut and dried, or you have very vulgar and that kind of stuff, so very extreme. French humor is more silly, you know, like making stupid voices or imitating characters, a lot of impersonation and that kind of things. So definitely that sense... I enjoy both. (P 34; C:Cad; L:Eng,Fre)	Agreeing with certain cultural norms and values
• You learn both frameworks. And because of that, I think you can take the best, you know, you can cherry-pick. (P56; C: Bos, Ger; L: Ger, Croa) • I mean you see that everywhere in Québec and obviously in Montreal, there is definitely some major differences in terms of social style, culture and everything between the francophone and anglophone communities. So I guess to some extent I would like to think that I had the best of both. (P 34; C:Cad; L:Eng,Fre)	Picking the best of all cultures
• I see both the mistakes and the good aspects of all my cultures and in the end I feel neutral. I pick the best and I reject the worst. (P7; C: Mex; L: Spa, Engl) • Sometimes my cultures are so contradicting. I wanted to bring the three cultures I grew up with into harmony, but in some attitudes they are absolutely different, so I… well, I voted against some. (P78; C: Ita, Swi, Tun; L: Ger, Ita, Ar)	Disagreement with certain cultural norms and values
• When I'm in Germany, I'm the Spaniard, and when I'm in Spain, I'm the German. (P65; C:Spa,Ger; L:Spa,Ger,B-Eng) • Abroad I was the German, in Germany I was the Dutch. (P95; C: Arg, Sp, NL; L: Spa, Eng, Ger, Dut) • When you are a franco-english, so the two cultures, and you have no preference for the one or the other, you tend to be considered as an English person, when you are in France and as a frenchman when you are in England and it is very tough to have to face the prejudices. (P67; C: Brit, Fre; L: Eng, Fre)	Always being the foreigner
• To me, bicultural means you don't belong fully to any country or any culture, but you don't not belong to no culture. (P 77; C: Ger, Gre; L: Ger, Gre, BE) • In the end, I'm nothing. I certainly don't feel like an American, perhaps more like a European, but I'm not European. (P8; C:Cad,US,Ger; L:Eng,Fr,Ger)	No cultural belonging to 100%

To summarize, a multicultural schema can be seen as a dynamic process of external influences and internal processes. External influences are represented in our competence-based category and include multicultural references such as surface-level cultural knowledge and cultural values and meta-values, as well as the separation into domain-specific contexts, i.e. private and professional. Internal processes are represented in the agency-based category and include the choice that individuals execute in the way that they incorporate norms and values they associate positive attitudes with, exclude cultural norms and values that they regard as negative, and allow elements of multiple cultures by accepting the perception of being different. It is important to note that not all multiculturals engage in all three agency options or if so, not to the same extent. We found, however, that all multiculturals engage in at least one of the options to at least a minimal degree. More generally, their schema is created throughout their life experiences (Cook, 1991; Hunzaker & Valentino, 2019; McConachy, 2019), depending on the context they acquire their cultures in as well as the context the schema is put into practice.

In the next section, we will present how multilingual individuals construct their multilingual schema.

Multilingual Schema

We found that our participants similarly created their multilingual schema based on *contextual multilingual competence* on the one hand, as well as *agency in mixing languages* on the other hand.

Contextual competence within multilingual schemas. The competence that multilingual respondents drew on to explain their multilingualism was in two dimensions: proficiency vs. fluency (skills and ability), and (again) professional vs. private domain (context). Regarding the first dimension, proficiency can be characterized as the functional language skills. This includes the lexical and grammatical skills needed to make oneself

understood in a language, and similarly the ability to use a language in the four categories of speaking, reading, understanding and writing (Jong, Grounhout, Schoonen, & Hulstijn, 2013). By contrast, fluency can be characterized as the speedy and smooth delivery of speech without filled pauses, repetitions or repairs (Jong et al., 2013; Segalowitz, 2010). Figure 2 visualizes these dimensions.

In terms of proficiency, our participants often claimed that they were not capable of using each of their languages to "one hundred percent". Typically, they mentioned this when we asked them if they saw any disadvantages of being multilingual.

> I guess in the end you don't dominate all the languages this well, it happens to me as well I start to forget a lot of words in Spanish and when I go back home I forget how to write things because I haven't read a book in Spanish for maybe 4 years now. (P7; C: Mex; L: Spa, Engl)

This observation is in line with research in linguistics which suggests that multilinguals are not the sum of two complete language systems, but a complex product of pieces of several languages (Cook, 1991; Edwards, 2006; Grosjean, 2014). More often than not, the self-assessed proficiency level of our participants differed in their languages. For example, they saw difficulties in speaking on the same level in terms of vocabulary and grammar, as the following respondent explained:

> If I go back to Iran and I work in an office, like in the government building somewhere where people write letters and have meetings and these kinds of things in Persian, pretty quickly it's going to be obvious that I don't have as much control as the others. You know, with the words, half of the vocabulary that they use is really passive for me, I don't actively use it. I completely understand 100% everything they say, but I don't actively use the same vocabulary. (P11; C: Pers, Brit, Dut, Ger; L: Far, Engl, Dut)

Additionally, they described how their proficiency level in a language could differ strongly in the categories of use such as speaking, writing, listening and understanding. As the following German-Turkish participant explains, his proficiency level in his ethnic language Turkish was lower than in English which he had learned later in life for business use, and he did not have any writing ability in Turkish:

> I always say, nowadays I can speak better English than Turkish. I could always make myself understood in the country, make my way, shopping, all of that. But if I'm on level C1, C2 in English, that is not where I am in Turkish. Especially because I cannot write Turkish. Big difference. (P64; C: Ger, Tur; L: Ger, Tur, BE)

We found that proficiency and fluency do not always go together. Fluency represents rather the intuition of using a language and how natural it comes. The more fluent a person is, the less they have to consciously think about the choice of words, syntactical order and speech style. Having the knowledge about these, in turn, relates to their proficiency. A Mexican participant who had grown up at the border to the US with primary and secondary schooling in English explained this fluency with a "filter":

> If you ask me what my first impression is in Spanish it just comes out automatically, with English there is a small filter and with French there are three filters. I really have to think about 'Is this really what I want/mean to say?' (P7; C: Mex; L: Spa, Eng)

Some participants felt highly comfortable and intuitive in using a language, while not feeling fully proficient, e.g. due to a lack in vocabulary. This was often the case for individuals who regularly spoke another language at home than outside of home and thus, were highly used to speaking that language while being limited in the proficiency, e.g. in the technical vocabulary.

> I can speak to everyone just fine. I can also use the technical vocabulary in Czech. However, I certainly don't have the full vocabulary. While I don't include any German words anymore, I'm quite sure that I don't always use the most appropriate word. But I do speak fluently. (P82; C: Ger, Cze; L: Ger, Cze, BE)

Literature on language (learning) has suggested that automaticity is the ultimate stage of learning a language. In this stage, the individual's language and thought merge and the language becomes part of the self (Gardner, 2007). In multilingual individuals who have been exposed to a language at a young age, we found that this automaticity can be developed in a language, even though the individual may not necessarily have the full proficiency. This also confirms previous findings from linguistic research that it is common within multilinguals that one language dominates (Grosjean, 2014). Previous research has found that employees can feel anxious in speaking a foreign language (Aichhorn & Puck, 2017b). What we found here is that

being anxious (or comfortable) and being incapable (or capable) are two sides of the multilingual coin. Summing up these findings, we propose:

> **Proposition 3a**: Multilingual individuals internalize each of their languages to varying degrees in terms of *proficiency* and *fluency*.

The second dimension relates to the differentiation between professional and private context. Compared to the multicultural differentiation, the split was even more prevalent within multilinguals. Individuals clearly differentiated their multilingual skills and knowledge of each language to these two contexts in which they had acquired and were using their language skills. Especially those individuals who had acquired and used one of their languages exclusively in the private domain, often reported that that language was largely useless for them at work, except for social situations. These gaps in their multilingual skills were mainly manifested within the lexical (vocabulary) and speech pragmatic (communication style) areas.

A lack in vocabulary in one of their languages became apparent when they were suddenly speaking it outside of the context they usually used it. Multilinguals had a lexical repertoire for each of their languages according to the domain(s) they had acquired the respective language in. Since many of our participants had grown up using a language at home that was different from the mainstream language where they lived, they often lacked the vocabulary that is generally related to work or specific to their profession. For example, the German-Czech participant who had been schooled exclusively in German and in post-secondary education partly in English, remembered how he struggled speaking in Czech when he started a management position at the Czech subsidiary of the German company he was employed.

> Yes, I had no choice, because I did not possess the specific vocabulary from school or at home. We did not talk much about market share, sales performance or profit margin at home (laughs). Thus, I simply had to learn specific vocabulary. (P3; C: Ger, Cze; L: Ger, Cze, Spa, BE)

A lack in vocabulary is an obvious one which becomes quickly noticeable (Gardner, 2007). Learning a language only in a certain context requires one only to learn the vocabulary

that applies to that context. For example, a person who learns a language only in school, will not necessary possess the vocabulary of a colloquial slang. Research in linguistics has emphasized that multilingual individuals possess the vocabulary of their languages only for the functions they need it (Grosjean, 2014) which is crucial to keep in mind when studying them as employees in a professional context.

Another difference that is noted less immediately relates to their pragmatic language skills. In this domain, strong differences across cultures exist (Gass & Selinker, 2001: 245; Pavlenko, 2000). For example, in some cultures a request is expressed as a question and in other cultures as an imperative (Wierzbicka, 1985). For multilinguals, this makes their proficiency and fluency more complex as we found strong differences across domains: While using a language in a more informal conversational way in the private context, language is used more formally in the professional context. As a consequence, when respondents used their language outside of the context they usually did, they realized that their communication style was not appropriate. To specify, a language that they exclusively used in a professional context did not give them the pragmatic skills to use it in a social or private situation. The following participant grew up in a Russian household in the French part of Montreal, speaking Russian at home, French outside of home and French and English in school. His work had been bilingual French and English since he entered the job market six years ago.

> I am really comfortable in business situations, but when you go in more social English than it is more difficult for me in terms of expression, the relation is easier with the French than with the English. When you go out of the business you just start talking about the sun and the moon and then sometimes I feel like I can't go further than the business communication with my English clients. Compared to my French that is better, I feel more comfortable in French with my customers. (P66; C: Rus, Cad; L: Fre, Rus, Eng)

The other way around, using a language that they normally use in the private context in a business situation resulted in a too casual communication style. One German-Chinese participant who had acquired Chinese at home while living in Germany since the age of one and just recently started to use it at work referred to this as "children speech":

The disadvantage is that I speak more like a children speech, because of how I speak it [Chinese] at home. (P41; C: Ger, Chin; L: Ger, Chin, BE)

The literature in linguistics, and more recently in international business, has referred to a similar phenomenon as pragmatic transfer. Pragmatic transfer means that individuals use similar patterns or moments as in their native language when conveying a message in a non-native language (Fujio, 2004, Woodfield, 2008). In multilingual individuals, we found that an intra-language pragmatic transfer occurs between the private and professional domains. If they had the pragmatic skills of a language in just one domain, they transferred these to the other domain, resulting in an inadequate use of the language. Summing up, we propose:

Proposition 3b: Multilingual individuals internalize contextual differences of multilingual elements, which is characterized by different degrees of language abilities and the lack thereof in the professional and the private contexts.

Additional quotes for the multilingual contextual competence schema are presented in Table 4.

TABLE 4. Exemplary Quotes of the Multilingual Contextual Competence Sub-Schema

Quotes	First order code
• When someone asks me if I'm bilingual, I make a differentiation. I say: „Orally I am, but not when it comes to writing." (P18; C: Ger, Ita; L: Ger, BE, Ita) • The thing is, none of the languages that I speak I speak 100%. I would say they're all in the 60, 70% range. (P11; C: Pers, Brit, Dut, Ger; L: Far, Engl, Dut)	Not speaking any language to 100% in all categories of language use
• I understand everything perfectly in Greek and I speak colloquial Greek perfectly, without thinking. But then there are sometimes things that I can't express perfectly. (P77; C: Ger, Gre; L: Ger, Gre, BE) • But I would definitely say there is an association with the language in that if I'm speaking about personal or family issues then my Bengali will have more vocabulary but if I'm speaking about professional business issues then obviously English is the dominant language; and in general English is the best way for me to express myself in pretty much any facet. (P79; Ind, Brit; L: Eng, Beng, Spa, Fre, Cant, Ita, Ger)	Intuitive/natural use of a language, independent of proficiency
• I would say my Dutch writing is better than my Persian, probably. Because I worked in the Dutch environment, I was writing letters to customers and things like this, so that I feel quite confident about. It's just in different areas. You know in the office English and Dutch. At home with my family, at the end it's my mother tongue, I'm a Persian. (P11; C: Pers, Brit, Dut, Ger; L: Far, Engl, Dut) • It depends on the type of vocabulary. If it's a business situation, my Croatian is relatively weak. I can paraphrise and get to the point, but my day-to-day vocabulary is much better. (P47; C: Cro, Ger; L: Cro, Ger)	Lack in vocabulary in the same language in private and professional contexts
• I never learned Croatian in school and I lack a lot of the formal way of expressing myself. But not the casual style from home. If I tried to write a professional article in Croatian, it would probably sound like a letter to a friend. But I could easily write one in English or German. (P63; C: Ger, Cro; L: Ger, Cro, Eng)) • Chinese, although I'm exposed to it at a very young age, but I don't practice it at a daily basis, besides with my Mum. And even so, when I speak Chinese with my Mum, it's very simple Chinese. (P42; C: Sing; L: Eng, Chin)	Pragmatic transfer in the same language between private and professional contexts

Agency in multilingual schemas. The above findings provide a partial answer to our first research question within the second set (what do multilingual schema consist of). To address the second research question within that set (how and why do multilinguals internalize the various aspects), we also found that multilinguals have a certain degree of agency over internalizing language elements, similar to our findings about multicultural individuals. Our data showed that our respondents had created their individual unique language, which was a mix of the languages they had knowledge of. Since this individual language is the result of their choice of using their languages, and similar to the choice multiculturals make when creating their schema, we also label it the agency sub-schema. Specifically, the agency sub-schema consists of functional mixing as the product of code-switching, as well as a sociocultural mix of their languages through transferring proverbs and speech pragmatics between languages.

Code-switching as a functional mixing of languages was highly common among multilingual individuals. Code-switching is the switch between two or more languages within a single statement that has been developed to a standardized use (Gumperz, 1977). This becomes an integral part of the way individuals use their languages. Our respondents mainly mixed their languages when speaking with other individuals that spoke the same languages. This was often the case in multilingual families, but also with friends or coworkers who had basic skills in the same languages. The mix typically reflected the contextual split within the competence-based category as their choice of language related to the use in the private and professional domains. For example, when talking about their work, they said the relevant words in the language they primarily used at work, while using the most common language in the private domain for more private topics.

> Even if I talk to my parents, it's a total mix. If it is about work, it's more German, if we speak about some domestic things or family or something, then it is Polish with a touch. (P 14; C: Ger, Pol; L: Ger, Pol, BE)

In linguistics, the use of a communicative device such as code-switching to signal intentions has been labeled a contextualization cue (Gumperz, 1977; Auer, 2013). We found that multilinguals used contextualization cues for a variety of reasons. Some simply said that they were going the easiest way:

> When I'm speaking Turkish to my siblings or Mom, for example, and I don't find the right word in that moment, for example 'train' or something. Then I speak Turkish-Turkish and then I want to say "train" and then I thing 'Gosh, what was that word again?'. In that moment I think of the German word and then I just say 'Zug' [German for 'train'] and continue in Turkish. I just go the easiest way. (P55; C: Tur, Ger; L: Ger, Tur, BE)

Others wanted to practice their languages:

> Nowadays, especially when I speak to my Mom there is a lot of Croatian involved. I think that's a good thing, because that's how I train the language. (P63; C: Ger, Cro; L: Ger, Cro, Eng)

Research in linguistics has found that individuals execute this type of agency to explore identification and a sense of belonging with their languages (Kanno, 2003). For our respondents, the code-switching had become an integral part of their multilingualism, which contributed to their multilingual schema with a unique language comprised of a certain mix of the languages available to them. Since they make use of the more functional (i.e. lexis and grammar) as opposed to socio-cultural (i.e. speech pragmatics and proverbs) elements of languages when they code-switch, we label this *functional mixing*. Thus, we propose:

> **Proposition 4a**: Multilinguals execute agency in creating their multilingual schema through functional mixing of the languages they speak.

Another way of creating their unique way of speaking was to transfer cultural elements into the different languages. Participants often reported how they mixed proverbs or pragmatic aspects of other languages into the language currently at use. That way, individuals could highlight their multilingualism when the context did not allow them to code-switch, because the participants in the conversation did not necessarily speak their languages. For example, a German-Korean participant mixed translated Korean proverbs in when speaking German.

> People often laugh at me, because I mix in Korean speech or proverbs without realizing. (P 52; C: Ger, Kor; L: Ger, BE, Kor)

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Choosing to transfer speech pragmatics from one language to the other was another way of highlighting their multilingualism. Multilingual respondents mentioned how they chose to say something in a way that was different from the pragmatic norms of the language they were actually using. In other words, they used the pragmatic norms of one of their other languages to justify their communication style, hence, proactively executed pragmatic transfer. A Dutch multilingual participant illustrated how he mentioned in meetings that "the Dutch are known for being blunt" to justify his direct communication.

> I mean the Dutch are known sometimes to be blunt. We sometimes don't understand what you mean. We try to be correct and honest and not blunt. But then you realize actually in other cultures you are too blunt. Yeah, we are trying to be honest but there are different ways you're getting there. […] I have learned to sometimes deliberately play or you just formulate "Now I give you my answer as a Dutchman, which is probably too blunt" then I can say stuff so you make a joke about yourself and people get the intent. (P44; C: Dut; L: Dut, Eng, Ger, Jap)

As mentioned earlier, pragmatic transfer is common in second or additional language speakers (Fujio, 2004, Woodfield, 2008) and happens rather unconsciously, because pragmatic skills are difficult to learn (Gardner, 2007). However, our findings suggest that multilingual individuals can also consciously choose to use pragmatic transfer. They have agency over the use of their multiple languages and create their own way of speaking through this. Thus, we propose:

Proposition 4b: Multilingual individuals execute agency in creating their multilingual schema through a sociocultural mix of the languages they speak.

Additional quotes are presented in Table 5.

TABLE 5. Exemplary Quotes of the Multilingual Agency Sub-Schema

Quotes	First-order code
• With my mum for example, I do not speak really a language. It is a bit of a mixture of other languages because we developed our own language. But is a lot of Russian, Romanian and Dutch I would say. (P36; C: Dut, Rus, Afg; L: Dut, Rus, BE, Per, Rom) • Of course there are occasions we communicate in [the] native language, like say - sometimes, I switch from English to Chinese and back with my Chinese staff, just because it's easier. (P94; C: Chin, Cad; L: Mand, Eng)	Code-switching to take the easy way
• I'm always glad that I can use whatever language when I speak with my supervisor, because that's how I can practice Turkish in the business context as well. (P101; C: Ger, Tur; L: Ger, Tur, BE) • [I speak French] mainly with the French speakers on my team, so if someone speaks French I am able to answer them in French. If we are doing a group meeting, I go back and forth even if English would be fine, so I can practice my French whenever possible. (P68, C: Bar, Cad; L: Eng, Fre)	Code-switching to train language skills
• For example TV shows, people here [Germany] only watch a few American TV shows. 5% or so are on TV, but I watch five more that our coworkers in South Africa or Dubai or India watch. I know the jokes, I know the proverbs, it helps a lot. (P40; C: Ger, Ind; L: Ger, Eng, Hin) • What I do often is to use proverbs from Argentina in German. I used to do it unconsciously, but nowadays I play with it. (P58; C: Arg, Ger; L: Spa, Ger, BE)	Using proverbs of other languages
• Sometimes I wrote business letters to the client and I used a more formal style that we have in Bulgarian. I knew that it was too formal, but I felt I could bring in what I knew from my other language. (P51; C: Bul, Ger L: Bul, Ger, BE) • My level in Chinese is more on a conversational level right. But then the conversational style is much more formal than in German. So sometimes in German, especially when I speak to just a little bit older people, I use a more formal way. It is funny, because it confuses them sometimes. (P41; C: Ger, Chin; L: Ger, Chin, BE)	Pragmatic transfer among languages

Interaction Between Multicultural and Multilingual Schemas

When analyzing our data to answer our second research question in each of the sets (how and why do multiculturals and multilinguals internalize the various aspects), we also found that there are interactions between multicultural and multilingual schema. This is not surprising, as language is generally considered as an element of culture (Whorf, 1956). Research in IB and cross-cultural management often deals with culture and language together or subsumes language under culture (Marchan-Piekkari et al., 1999). In the following, we show how multilingual knowledge and skills act as a mechanism for creating the multicultural schema, and, conversely, how multicultural knowledge and skills act as a mechanism for creating the multilingual schema. Interviewees explained relations between multiculturalism and multilingualism in various instances. Most respondents saw at least a minimal interdependency between multiculturalism and multilingualism.

First, most regarded language skills as a mechanism to access and transmit culture. Even those who had little active language skills (i.e. producing speech through speaking or writing) viewed their passive language skills (i.e. understanding speech through listening or reading) as an important contributor to access the culture and incorporate cultural aspects such as values and norms, into their schemas. For example, the following participant identified as multicultural German-Egyptian, but not as fully multilingual since she only possessed passive Arabic language skills:

> A lot of culture comes from the language and you have to understand that, so understand the indirect communication or reading between the lines. That's all part of the culture and you access that directly or indirectly through the language. Since I have that – my understanding skills are good – I'm maybe a level below multilingual, but that's important to be multicultural. (P 10; C: Ger, Egy; L: Ger, BE, Span, Arab)

She did not identify as multilingual due to the lack of active language skills. However, her ability to understand the language of her Egyptian culture contributed to her multicultural schema, because it allowed her to access and understand those cultural norms and values and

ultimately, to incorporate them. More generally, respondents frequently mentioned that learning the language gave them insights into the culture:

> Well for me language and culture are interlinked, completely. You know, if you learn a language, and I definitely know this from experience of having dealt with various languages, you automatically gain an insight into the culture simply by the nature of phrasing or idioms that are used which kind of say a lot about the culture from which the language came from […] I would say that it's not exclusive that one must be able to speak the language in order to have an insight into the culture but of course if you learn the language it does automatically give you a lot of insights into that culture. (P79; C: Ind, Brit; L: Eng, Beng, Spa, Fre, Cant, Ita, Ger)

These quotes reflect our observations that our respondents saw language as an enabler to culture. Hence, multilingual skills allowed them to incorporate multicultural aspects into their multicultural schema. We therefore propose:

> **Proposition 5a:** Multilingual skills are a mechanism to access and transmit culture and thus, contribute to the multicultural schema.

Second, respondents also regarded cultural elements as a mechanism to their multilingual schema. As we saw earlier, culture-specific speech pragmatics and proverbs were elements that multilinguals chose to incorporate into their contextual competence schema. Yet, in more general terms, respondents mentioned *culture-specific speech pragmatics* and *semiotics* as mechanisms to learn and transmit languages.

Regarding culture-specific speech pragmatics, multilinguals explained that the knowledge about communication norms was an important aspect to access a language in full. As the following interviewee explains, the knowledge about speech pragmatics was an enabler for her to speak with the people from the respective culture.

> I think because I know the culture, it is easier to communicate with people from that culture. It is not sufficient to know the language, because some people know how to speak a language, but they don't know, quote on quote the right way to communicate with the people. (P 51; C: Bul, Ger L: Bul, Ger, BE)

Speech pragmatics is the linguistic area that deals with socio-cultural language elements (McConachy, 2019), so it's not surprising that our respondents regarded the understanding of

the cultural norms of communicating as a mechanism to fully access and use a language and thus, as an interaction between the multicultural and multilingual schema.

The second mechanism relates to *semiotics*. Semiotics deals with the relationship between signs (i.e. words or concepts) and their meaning within a social context (Brannen, 2004). Our respondents frequently mentioned that the culture-specific understanding of the meaning of the words helped them to access the languages.

> A lot of interpretation is involved with what people mean in different cultures. And I experience it first-hand when I set up meetings in India with the Indian colleagues or with the Brazilian colleagues or the Mexican colleagues. I really experience that we do not always understand each other. Not because we didn't understand the words, but because we're speaking to different cultures with different interpretations. (P 12; C: SAfr, Ger; L: Eng, Afr, Ger)

Since words and concepts can have different meanings in different languages (Brannen, 2004; Ringberg et al., 2010), the understanding of the social or cultural context of the words helped our multilingual respondents to accurately understand and produce their languages. To sum up, we propose:

> **Proposition 5b**: Multicultural knowledge and skills are a mechanism to access and transmit language and thus, contribute to the multilingual schema.

Additional quotes for the interaction between the multicultural and multilingual schemas are presented in Table 5.

TABLE 6. Exemplary Quotes of Interactions Between Multicultural and Multilingual Schemas

Quotes	First-order code
• You can live in a culture without perfectly knowing the language. Of course you can express yourself better when speaking the language, emotions and so on, but I think even if you only understand the language you will also understand the culture to an extent. (P77; C: Ger, Gre; L: Ger, Gre, BE) • If you can't speak the language, then you can't express the culture. You can understand some of it though, understanding the language is important to learn the culture. (P63; C: Ger, Cro; L: Ger, Cro, Eng)	Passive language skills allow to access culture
• I would say that if one learns a language, you automatically learn aspects of that culture as well and therefore to a lesser or greater extent I have facets of all the different cultures that I have been exposed to. (P100; C: Ger; L: Ger, Eng) • I ultimately grew up with the Rumanian culture and not with the German. But I learn the German culture through learning the language and getting in touch with it by that. (P48; C: Rom, Ger; L: Rom, Ger)	Language learning gives insights into culture
• I think where it could be a bit different would be in a situation where I would for example be alone in sort of an informal setting with only native English people who speak faster, make jokes with cultural references. It's hard to follow. So it's easier on one on one, but in a group discussion where you're slower to pick up thoughts it's more difficult, I would say. (P29; C: Cad; L: Fre, Eng) • I was working in Japan and they would get technical advice from a colleague in Britain. My Japanese co-workers found it very difficult to read. Because the fax would say "We advise against not stopping the pump." Advice, against, not, shutting down, the pump. And they always ask me to explain what it meant and then after I explained they shut down the pump. So this Brit was replaced by another one. And the other one was an Australian, so again a native English speaker. He would say "Shut down the pump". I find I a very fine or nice example of how even two native English speakers could be interpreted completely, perceived differently, the quality of their work just by the difficulties for the in this case Japanese to understand to subtleties of the different language (P44; C: Dut; L: Dut, Eng, Ger, Jap)	Cultural speech pragmatics important for full language abilities
• We had an office in Uruguay and I usually spoke to them. And I took over a case that he [Portuguese colleague] was working with. And there was a misinterpretation of what he wrote in an email. Then I was considering, does he mean it like in a Portuguese way? Like the words you could tell that he spoke a Portuguese Spanish so to say and there was a misunderstanding there and then that caused some problem with the costumer. (P31; C: Bol, L: Spa, Eng, Swe) • Sometimes misunderstandings don't happen because of the wrong vocabulary, but because we interpret the word in a different way. It's so important to go beyond translating, and consider a more non-verbal component. That we don't stick to our German interpretation of something, but actually ask what it means for them. (P3; C: Ger, Cz; L: Ger, Cz, Spa, BE)	Cultural semiotics important for full language abilities

Summing up, our findings suggest that multilingual skills are a mechanism to internalize culture into the multicultural schema, and, conversely, multicultural skills are a mechanism to internalize language into the multilingual schema. Understanding and/or producing the language give access to cultural knowledge, norms and values, as such allow multiculturals to incorporate these into their multicultural schema. In turn, cultural elements contribute to the multilingual schema. As we saw in the previous section, the use of cultural proverbs and the culture-specific speech pragmatics play a role in creating the multilingual schema. Additionally, the culture-specific semiotic understanding allows for accessing and transmitting a language.

In Figure 3, we incorporate our findings in a comprehensive framework of multicultural and multilingual schemas. The boxes visualize Propositions 1 to 4. In addition, we depict the interactions between multicultural and multilingual schema through the arrows and Propositions 5 a and b.
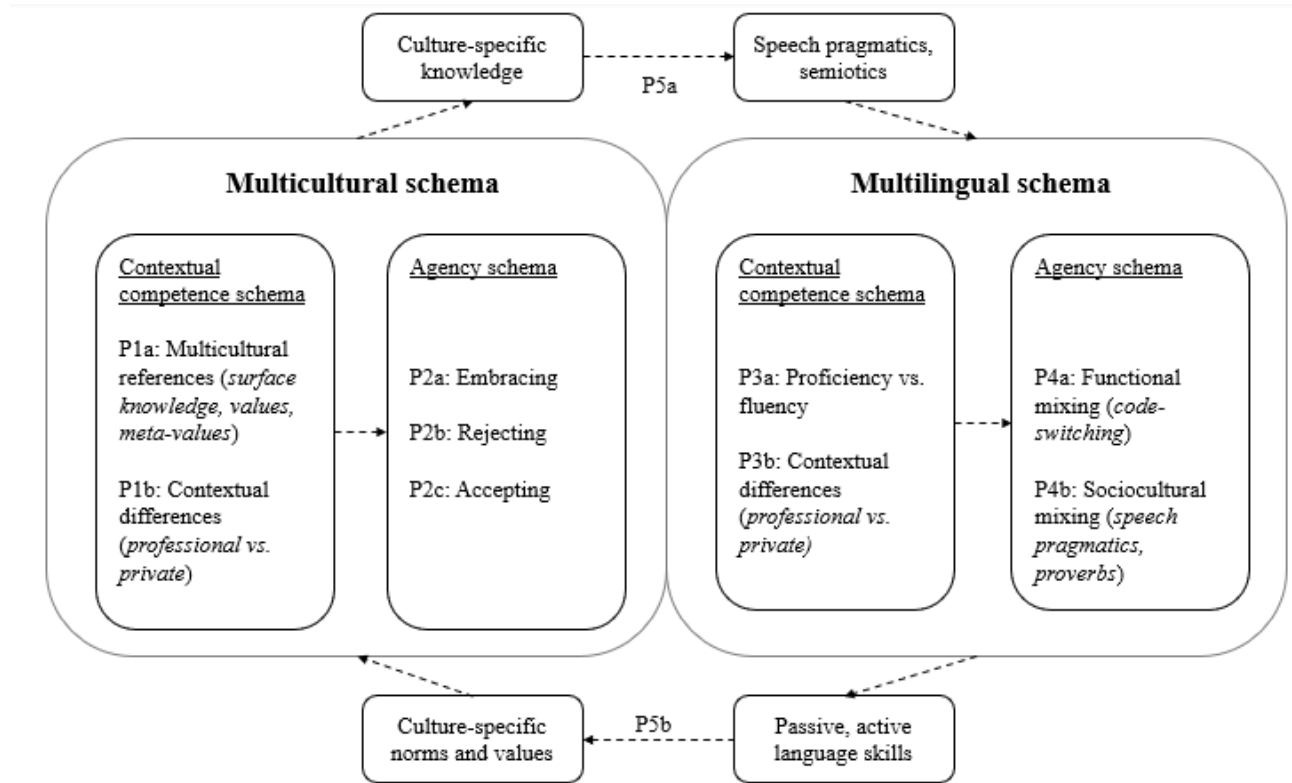
First, the *sub-schema contextual competence* within the multicultural schema shows the multicultural references as well as the contextual split of skills into professional and private domains. For the multilingual schema, it includes the differentiation between proficiency and fluency, and the contextual difference of multilingual skills between professional and private domains. This contextual difference manifested itself typically in the same way in both the multicultural and the multilingual schema. For example, those who possessed knowledge and skills of a culture in the private domain only, typically had better multilingual skills in the private domain as well, and the other way around.

Second, the *agency sub-schema* explains how individuals execute their choice of incorporating specific cultural or language elements into their schema. For the multicultural schema, we found three forms of choices: embracing, rejecting and accepting. For the multilingual schema, we found two forms of language mixing, functional and sociocultural.

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Third, we found *interactions* between the multicultural and multilingual schema. Language in the form of passive or active abilities are a mechanism for the internalization of multicultural aspects into the schema. In turn, cultural elements of language are a mechanism for creating the multilingual schema through the knowledge of culture-specific speech pragmatics and semiotics.

In the following section, we discuss the significance of our findings and model for theory and practice, and provide limitations and suggestions for future research.

FIGURE 3. A Framework of Multicultural and Multilingual Schemas within Individuals

DISCUSSION

In answering our research questions, our analysis revealed that multicultural and multilingual individuals store elements of multiple cultures and / or within the contextual competence sub-schema. With regards to our second research question, the agency sub-schema and the mutual influence of the multicultural and multilingual schemas emerged from our study as ways to create their schemas. Because these two sub-schemas are comprised of a unique mixture of references, skills and attitudes, we propose a shift away from "multiple cultural schemas" or "multiple language schemas" (multiple languages) to "*a multicultural schema*" and "*a multilingual schema*". It was our inductive, explorative approach that enabled us to uncover the complexity of such schemas that had previously been treated as a sum of multiple schemas.

Theoretical Contributions

Our study theoretically contributes to research on first, multiculturals by offering a novel way to study their cognitive characteristics as multicultural schemas, second, multilinguals by introducing their cognitive characteristics to IB research and third, the integration of individual-level multiculturalism and multilingualism by expanding to treat them as distinct concepts, while allowing for their mutual influence.

The last decade has seen some initial articles with a cognitive approach to individual-level multiculturalism. Borrowing from cognitive psychology, scholars have studied the structure of a multicultural mind as multiple, full, and separate cultural schemas (Hong et al., 2002; Lakshman, 2013; Luecke, Kostova, & Roth, 2014, Martin & Shao, 2016), hybrid cultural schemas (Martin & Shao, 2016; Martin et al., 2019), and a harmonizing or conflicting integration of cultural schemas (Benet-Martinez et al., 2006). We followed Vora et al.'s (2019) call to go beyond the study of cultural schemas as antecedents to perceptions and interpretations, toward the actual composition of the cultural meaning systems, and Hong et

al.'s (2000) call to consider other aspects than only knowledge to understand multicultural cognition. We found that multiculturals' schemas are a unique composition of *multicultural references* (knowledge, values and meta-values), present to a varying extent in *different contexts* (in our sample, professional vs. private) which we subsumed under the *contextual competence sub-schema*. Due to our rich data set resulting from our in-depth interviews, we could also crystallize that a second sub-schema, the *agency sub-schema*, is comprised of different strategies to manage the composition. Through *embracing*, *rejecting* and *accepting*, multicultural individuals allow, prohibit or accept different influences to become internalized. Our findings show that the multicultural mind is far more complex as well as unique and subjective than previously assumed.

Our notion of a multicultural schema is conceptually and empirically distinct from a hybrid cultural schema in that it exists as a unique composition internally within the individual as opposed to a representation of a hybrid schema of a group, i.e. the internalization of a hybrid culture of a group of, for example, immigrants (Martin & Shao, 2016; Martin et al., 2019). The agency sub-schema explains how individuals manage the external influences to ultimately internalize a unique set of elements of multiple cultures into their contextual competence sub-schema. This expands previous findings that both contextual influence and agency play a role for their identity (Cederberg, 2014), to be relevant for their cognitive schema as well.

Further, our notion of a multicultural schema also differs from separate cultural schemas in that multicultural individuals integrate different values, attitudes and beliefs (Benet-Martinez et al., 2006). By giving more attention to the varying dominance of the different respective cultures in different social contexts (such as the professional and the private ones), we have shown that someone, considered to be multicultural, might have for each culture an entirely different set of cultural abilities available according to different social spheres. Consequently, the idea that this person would be fully versed in all cultures for every aspect

(private or professional) and that this person could always pick out ingredients from those two fully developed cultural skill sets, is in our view an unwarranted simplification. Being the first study in IB research to provide an insight to such an extent into the complex, multifaceted multicultural mind helps to foster a better understanding of the skillsets and resources multicultural employees bring to the workplace.

In addition to the contributions on multiculturals, this study also contributes to multilingual individuals in IB research. The little research on individual-level multilingualism has so far categorized individuals into native and non-native speakers of the business language and with that, proficient and non-proficient speakers (e.g. Aichhorn & Puck, 2017b; Neeley, 2013; Neeley & Dumas, 2016; Tenzer et al., 2014; Tenzer & Pudelko, 2016; Tenzer & Pudelko, 2017). With our findings, we introduce language schemas more broadly, and specifically schemas of multilinguals to IB research. Thereby, we challenge the highly dominant monolingual view by providing evidence that the language-related cognitive characteristics consist of a complex mix of elements from multiple languages. Similar to the multicultural schema, we found that multilinguals integrate their multiple languages with varying *proficiencies* and *fluencies*, present to varying degrees in *different contexts* (again, in our sample the professional and private contexts). Through *functional* and *socio-cultural mixing*, multilinguals execute agency over the composition (and ultimately the activation) of their language repertoire, which we subsume under the *agency sub-schema*. So far, research has treated code-switching and mixing as unconscious acts resulting from a lack of language abilities (Brannen & Salk, 2000; Harzing & Feeley, 2008; Neeley, 2013; Neeley & Dumas, 2016; Tenzer et al., 2014). We found, however, that multilinguals internalize code-switching as their unique language and can actively choose to code-switch. With the shift from the native-non-native-speaker-view to a multilingual schema, our study provides the ground for exploring

the unique skillsets and value, and a more profound study of the challenges, that multilingual employees bring to the workplace.

Further, these findings also show that a similar argumentation as for multiculturalism is equally valid for the case for multilingualism: someone being raised by a parent in a particular language, which differs from the one of the country of residence, might make this person proficient and potentially fluent in "family talk" in this particular language. However, this does not imply that this person will be able to "talk business" in that language due to a lack of proficiency. Yet, with a limited proficiency, a multilingual can still be fluent in the sense that they use their languages intuitively and naturally, which may mean they would have lower cognitive effort (Volk, Koehler, & Pudelko, 2014). Again, reality is more nuanced than we might have considered before when adopting a native-non-native-speaker-view. As we have shown, borrowing from other disciplines such as cognitive linguistics and language learning within education, IB research can unleash the complex and rich potential of multilingual employees.

Our study also responds to the calls for integrated research on individual-level multiculturalism and multilingualism (Barner-Rasmussen et al., 2014; Fitzsimmons et al., 2017; Vora et al., 2019). Through our research design of studying multiculturalism and multilingualism together, we detected how the two influence each other in the composition of the schema. Our findings show that language serves as a mechanism for the multicultural schema, and culture as a mechanism for the multilingual schema. With passive language skills, individuals gain access to culture and thus, can acquire cultural norms and values to potentially be internalized into their schema. Through actively learning a language, they receive further insights into the culture and thus, can potentially internalize elements into the contextual competence sub-schema. Culture, in turn, is a mechanism for the multilingual schema. Culture-specific knowledge is necessary to be able to incorporate cultural elements into language,

namely speech pragmatics and semiotics. As research on language barriers has pointed out, speech pragmatics are one hidden barrier (Tenzer & Pudelko, forthcoming). Our findings confirmed that knowledge in speech pragmatics are a fundamental element within the multilingual schema that stems from culture-specific knowledge. With our study, we provide specific interactions and mutual influences between multicultural and multilingual schema to an extent that has not been reached in IB research before. On the individual level, research has often equated multiculturalism with multilingualism or declared that multicultural individuals are always highly proficient in all of their languages (Chen, Benet-Martinez, & Harris, 2008, Hong, 2010). Vora et al. (2019) propose that language skills are part of the knowledge dimension in their tri-dimensional model of individual-level multiculturalism and that multicultural individuals have at least a minimal degree on each of the three dimensions, language skills having the potential to contribute to the knowledge dimension. While the interdependency between culture and language is known in the literature, individual-level multiculturalism and multilingualism has scarcely studied the interactions. The field can use our findings as a base-line to further study the complex relationships between individual-level multiculturalism and multilingualism and outcomes on the individual, team and organizational levels.

Managerial Implications

Given that multicultural and multilingual individuals comprise a high portion of an organization's workforce in many parts of the world (Aichhorn & Puck, 2017a; Aichhorn & Puck, 2017b; Fitzsimmons, 2013; Harzing & Feeley, 2008; Neeley & Dumas, 2016; Tenzer & Pudelko, 2017; Vora et al., 2019), our study has several relevant managerial implications. First, multicultural and/or multilingual employees can use this framework of multicultural and multilingual schema to recognize the unique contributions that they bring to the workplace and develop agency over their representation at work (see also Fitzsimmons et al., 2017). Often

multicultural and multilingual employees look at themselves from a deficiency lens and are afraid of not meeting the expectations with regards to their cultural and language skills. By shifting their thinking from not having full access to a certain cultural or language schema to acknowledging their unique composition of elements from multiple cultures or languages in the form of a multicultural or multilingual schema, they may develop more confidence in the benefits they bring to the organization in different situations. Moreover, they may recognize both their strengths and limitations and can actively work on developing the content of their schemas to their needs.

Second, when managing multicultural and multilingual employees, supervisors should be aware of their cognitive capabilities and resulting abilities. Multicultural and multilingual individuals bring very different and unique knowledge, skills, competences and attitudes about their cultures and languages to the workplace. Each individual will have varying degrees in each of their cultures and languages, as well as different degrees within the professional and private context. While supervisors and colleagues may assume that they possess fully developed culture-specific and language-specific skills that are relevant at the workplace, these expectations might not necessarily be met (Augustin, 2019). This does not mean that their skills are useless, they are just applicable for different aspects at work, e.g. socializing and networking when more informal language is appropriate.

Third, supervisors and colleagues should be aware of the unique way multicultural and multilingual individuals create their schemas which is partly dependent on their very subjective and individual agency. Even if someone has been exposed to various cultures, it does not mean that they represent the societal knowledge, values or beliefs, because they choose to internalize them or not. In a similar vein, even if someone has been exposed to various languages, they may not completely separate them and speak "like a native speaker" as often expected, because they can choose to mix in different functional or cultural aspects. Being cautious with

assumptions and bias will help to reduce a mismatch in expectations and what the individuals can activate in their schemas. Additionally, it will reduce the risk of negative emotional reactions from other individuals in the organization (Tenzer & Pudelko, 2017).

Fourth, while organizations often select multicultural employees for expatriate assignments due to their assumed proficiency with the host culture and language (Harzing, Pudelko, & Reiche, 2016; Kane & Levina, 2017), our study shows that the relative proficiency and fluency in the culture and language matter far more. To support multicultural and / or multilingual expatriates in their assignment, organizations should provide them with the necessary training before and during their assignment. This includes both language training for professional and conversational purposes as well as cultural training on business and social etiquette.

Limitations and Suggestions for Future Research

Even though this study provides important insights into the cognitive complexity of multicultural and multilingual individuals, we are aware of some limitations.

First, while our interviewees represented a range of industries, professions and hierarchical levels, our sample was heavily dominated by individuals who identify (at least partially) with the German culture and / or language. This is due to the cultural and linguistic background as well as the physical location of the authors and interviewers at the time of data collection. Especially the findings about the agency sub-schema can be influenced by this dominance. Germany has a relatively high status in the globalized business world. Thus, interview partners may have particularly positive attitudes toward German cultural knowledge and values and the language, specifically in their professional lives. According to research on multicultural and multilingual individuals, there is a high chance that one of their cultures or languages has a higher status and more power than the others (Jin, Schjolberg, & Tambs, 2017). However, we should keep in mind that even though our sample represented 53 national cultures

and 39 languages, we did not detect any culture-specific or language-specific particularities. Thus, we expect to have similar findings with other combinations of cultures and languages. Nevertheless, for future research, we suggest to test the framework with individuals of other cultural and linguistic backgrounds, particularly non-Western ones, also to reduce the dominance of Western studies in IB research (Westwood, 2007).

Second, with our cross-sectional research design, we interviewed the respondents at one point in time while covering their past and present experiences. We are aware that retrospective data has limitations (Flick, 2009). However, through our in-depth interviews, we felt that we had access to our respondents' inner events as they reflected about their life journey with regards to the development and composition of their multicultural and multilingual schemas (Weiss, 1994). Nevertheless, we encourage future research to conduct longitudinal studies that follow individuals' development and composition of multicultural and multilingual schemas over time and contexts.

Third, given our inductive study design, we did not test the model we propose. A key benefit of inductive theory-building is to create theoretical propositions upon which large-scale quantitative testing can be based (Welch, Piekkari, Plakoyiannaki, & Paavilainen-Mäntymäki, 2011). Thus, we encourage scholars to test our model with a quantitative research design.

Fourth, the scope of our paper did not allow us to study both the composition and the activation of multicultural and multilingual schema. While it may seem that the content and structure of the schemas are not directly relevant to IB research and international workplaces, we emphasize again that most IB research on multicultural cognition has assumed a cognitive representation of societal cultures within the individual, which we found to be oversimplified. As such our study resembles more fundamental than applied research. With the adoption of a multicultural schema lens, and similarly a multilingual schema lens, we see promising research on social, task and cognitive outcomes on the individual, team and organizational levels

(Fitzsimmons et al., 2017). In that regard, it could be particularly interesting to study not only the composition of the schema, but also the activation in various cultural and linguistic contexts.

CONCLUSION

Our qualitative study explored the cognitive schema of multicultural and multilingual individuals. We found that they are structured through a contextual-competence and an agency sub-schema, resulting in unique, subjective composition of elements from multiple cultures and languages. Along a contextual differentiation between the private and professional domain, multiculturals internalize knowledge and values from their multiple cultures, and multilinguals internalize varying degrees of proficiency and fluency in their multiple languages. The agency sub-schema specifies the subjective strategies that multiculturals adopt when embracing, rejecting or accepting cultural elements. Similarly, multilinguals develop agency in mixing their languages functionally and socio-culturally. Both schemas influence each other: Language provides access and insights into cultural elements, while culture provides access to deeper knowledge in languages. We propose a shift in the characterization of multicultural and multilingual internalizations away from multiple cultural and language schema toward *a multicultural schema* and *a multilingual schema*. This new perspective overcomes the monocultural and monolingual view on organizational members. When researchers draw on the complex cognitive compositions, they may be better able to comprehend the value that multicultural and multilingual employees bring to the workplace. Specifically, attention to the contextual differences in their competence can help to provide support in unleashing their full potential. The findings from this study indicate that multiculturals and multilinguals possess a variety of resources that may be different from the expectations of both researchers and organizations, but are nevertheless valuable.

3. Success in the Comfort Zone: Multicultural and Multilingual individuals' Social Capital Formation

ABSTRACT

This study investigates the social capital formation and outcome of two increasingly important groups of employees: multicultural and multilingual individuals. While internationally operating organizations are increasingly relying on the informal resources of their employees such as social capital to gain a competitive advantage, cultural and language differences among their employees limit the formation and presence of social capital. Since multicultural and multilingual employees could be a solution to this dilemma, we investigate how they form social capital and identify the properties of their network of relationships as relevant to the organization. Based on the analysis of 154 semi-structured interviews with multicultural and multilingual individuals in international workplaces, we develop a model that shows the multifaceted process how multilinguals form language-specific social capital only, whereas multiculturals form culture-specific and culture-general social capital. Our inductive reasoning unpacks the language-related, culture-related and personal attributes that these individuals draw on when forming social capital. Our study contributes to international business research by introducing the micro-processes of forming social capital and expanding knowledge about the resources that multicultural and multilingual employees bring to organizations.

INTRODUCTION

Organizations that operate on an international level have started to recognize the immense benefits that multicultural and multilingual employees bring to the workplace. Multiculturals are individuals who have knowledge of, have internalized and identify with multiple cultures (Vora, Martin, Fitzsimmons, Pekerti, Lakshman, & Raheem, 2019). Multilinguals are individuals who speak more than one language fluently and regularly (Bialystock, 2016; Grosjean, 2014). Considering that international migration constantly increases and impacts individuals over generations (Fitzsimmons, Baggs, & Brannen, in press), multicultural and multilingual employees become the norm rather than the exception (Luecke, Kostova, & Roth, 2014).

Research in international business (IB) has paid increasing attention to multicultural employees due to their contributions to relevant outcomes such as interpersonal relationships (Fitzsimmons, 2013), social capital (Fitzsimmons, Liao, & Thomas, 2017) and boundary spanning between culturally distinct organizational units (Kane & Levina, 2017). They have also been suggested to bring valuable characteristics to the workplace that are useful for a smooth collaboration such as adaptability, flexibility and empathy (Brannen, Garcia, & Thomas, 2009; Brannen & Thomas, 2010; Fitzsimmons et al., 2017; Hong, 2010). Multilinguals as a distinct group of employees have received considerably less attention, mainly only as they constitute a solution for language barriers (Harzing et al., 2011; Feeley & Harzing, 2003, Marschan-Piekkari, Welch, & Welch, 1999a). With the overwhelming focus being on the contributions of these employees related to connecting with other individuals and consolidating resources, the question becomes paramount how they approach the building of their relationships and networks. As such, we link this question to the concept of social capital.

Social capital is defined as the "aggregate of resources embedded within, available through, and derived from, the network of relationships" (Inkpen & Tsang, 2005: 151). As

internationally operating organizations face the dynamics of cross-cultural and cross-lingual collaborations, structural solutions to effective business do not suffice anymore (Kostova & Roth, 2003). As such, they are increasingly tapping into the more informal resources their employees can generate, one of these being their social capital. Through their employees' social relations, organizations can benefit from influence, solidarity and acquisition of information (Kwon & Adler, 2014).

To form social capital, individuals interact directly with other individuals (Burt, 2000). From similarity attraction theory we know that individuals feel most comfortable with other individuals who are similar to them (Berscheid & Walster 1969; Byrne 1971). As such, shared norms, values, codes and language are vital in this process, facilitating a strong connectedness among the individuals (Nahapiet & Ghoshal, 1998; Putnam, 1993). In this vein, Kostova and Roth (2003) proposed that a lack of these commonalities, induced, for example, by cultural differences and language barriers pose a particular challenge for multinational corporations (MNCs). Employees would have to leave their comfort zone to build relationships with not-so-similar colleagues across the world. This links back to multicultural and multilingual employees as a possible solution to still being able to form and access social capital.

Consequently, the starting point of this study is the realization of first how important employees' social capital for internationally operating organizations is and second what potential lies in the social capital resources that multicultural and multilingual individuals carry, in other words, the quantity and quality of their social ties. Consequently, our study explores how these groups of individuals form social capital and what the specific outcome of this process is. It is an important endeavor to move research on these increasingly important employee groups forward so that management can support them in their strategic social capital formation and in the use of their networks of relationships.

While IB research considers both culture and language as core elements of multinational collaborations in several forms (Birkinshaw, Brannen & Tung, 2011; Tung & Stahl, 2018), research on the individual level has so far been fragmented, looking at multicultural individuals only and largely neglecting multilinguals' contributions. We take an integrated approach which acknowledges that culture and language are distinct concepts, yet interlinked, related and complementary (Barner-Rasmussen, Ehrnroot, Koveshnikov, & Mäkelä, 2014; Ringberg, Luna, Reihlen, & Peracchio, 2010).

Given the explorative nature of our research question, we conducted an inductive, qualitative study based on the systematic analysis of 154 semi-structured interviews with individuals who consider themselves as multicultural, multilingual or both to varying degrees and work in international settings. We develop a model that shows the multifaceted and complex nature of the formation of social capital based on individuals' multilingualism and multiculturalism. Through our inductive reasoning, we were able to detect that multilinguals' social capital is only language-specific, whereas multiculturals' social capital is both culture-specific and culture-general. We found that both groups have large and multinational networks of relationships. More specifically, we show that multilingual individuals draw on a sequence of language-related attributes to build a strong network of relationships. Multiculturals, in turn, use a sequence of culture-related attributes for the formation of a strong culture-specific social capital, while they additionally use personal attributes to form a strong culture-general social capital.

We contribute to the literature by opening the black box of the micro-processes of multiculturals' and multilinguals' social capital formation. We show that multicultural individuals draw on more attributes and that the process is more nuanced and complex than previously assumed. Further, we introduce a more profound understanding of the benefits that multilingual individuals bring to organizations by showing how they form social capital and

how their social capital outcome is characterized. Lastly, we contribute to the social capital literature that has so far not considered specific employee groups by introducing how multicultural and multilingual employees form social capital and what effect the unique process has on the outcome.

The remainder of this paper is structured as follows: We first review the literature on multicultural and multilingual employees as well was social capital to ground our study in these streams of research. We then present our research design, data collection and data analysis. Next, we present our findings along the outcomes language-specific, culture-specific and culture-general social capital. We conclude by discussing our study's theoretical contributions, managerial implications, as well as limitations and suggestions for future research.

THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

Multicultural and Multilingual Employees

Research on multiculturals and multilinguals has gained more attention in IB over the past decade (though to a significantly lesser extent on the latter). Multicultural and multilingual employees have been found to bring compelling benefits to organizations due to their unique cross-cultural and cross-lingual skill sets. Yet, research has so far studied multiculturals and multilinguals separately. Often, multilingual skills are being assumed to only be an element or outcome of multicultural competence (Chen, Benet-Martinez, & Harris Bond, 2008). Others have taken language "out of the 'culture box'" (Welch & Welch, 2008: 341) in an attempt to study language without any cultural connections. However, while culture and language are conceptually different, they are interlinked, related and complementary (Barner-Rasmussen et al., 2014; Cohen & Kassis-Henderson, 2017; Ringberg, Luna, Reihlen, & Peracchio, 2010; Fitzsimmons et al., 2017). We therefore see it as a conceptual shortcoming that multiculturals and multilinguals are studied separately, especially regarding their interpersonal interactions,

networks and social capital. While we understand that the two concepts often intersect, we approach them separately to tease out the specific attributes that these individuals draw on in their social capital formation, as well as the differences in the social capital outcome.

In this regard, multiculturals, have been found to be particularly adept in maintaining harmonious relationships due to their cross-cultural cognitive and affective competency (Lakshman, 2013), stemming from their cognitive complexity (Benet-Martinez, Lee, & Leu, 2006) and cultural meta-cognitive skills (Thomas et al., 2016). Additionally, they have been found to be particularly empathetic, flexible and adaptable (Brannen & Thomas, 2010; Hanek, Lee, & Brannen, 2014; Nguyen & Benet-Martinez, 2007) and to have a higher social sensitivity (Lyttle, Barker, & Cornwell, 2011). These attributes indicate that they may be especially skilled in forming social capital, as social interaction is a mandatory part of this (Burt, 2000; Kostova & Roth, 2003).

While most research on multilingual work places has been conducted on the team and organizational levels (e.g. Neeley & Dumas, 2016; Tenzer, Pudelko, & Harzing, 2014; Tenzer & Pudelko, 2017), few studies have also highlighted how multilingual individuals create communication strategies that foster positive collaborations (Aichhorn & Puck, 2017). Yet, multilinguals are so far studied because of the high skill levels in multiple languages, through which they facilitate collaborations between two groups that are divided by language boundaries (Aichhorn & Puck, 2017; Harzing, Koester & Manger, 2011). Research has yet to open the black box on the more specific attributes of multilingual individuals that helps them to succeed in multilingual work contexts.

Notwithstanding these conceptual gaps, the literature indicates that multiculturals and multilinguals possess the appropriate skills and attributes to have a high social capital. Before presenting the current state of research on multiculturals and multilinguals specifically with regards to their social capital, we will first introduce the concept as relevant to our study.

Social Capital Formation

General research on social capital formation. The interest in management and organizational research in studying social capital mainly came from the benefits of using it, for example for influence and solidarity (Adler & Kwon, 2002), knowledge transfer (Inkpen & Tsang, 2005), career success and innovation (Hennekam, McKenna, Richardson, & Ananthram, 2019). Social capital refers to the resources that can be accessed through relationships (Nahapiel & Ghoshal, 1998; Inkpen & Tsang, 2005). Scholars have explored social capital as both a public and a private good (Kwon & Adler, 2014). As a private good, social capital belongs to an individual, while as a public good, it does not only benefit those who have created it, but also other group members at large (Kwon & Adler, 2014). In our study, we focus on the private good, while keeping in mind that the individual-level social capital is automatically beneficial for the organization as a whole (Welch & Welch, 2018).

Social capital is conceptualized along three dimensions. First, structural social capital is defined as the overall pattern of connections an individual possesses that may be usable in the short or long term (Bourdieu, 2011; Inkpen & Tsang, 2002; Nahapiet & Ghoshal, 1998). The main aspects of structural social capital are the number of ties an individual has, with whom and how strong these ties are (Kwon & Adler, 2002) or in other words, the quantity and the quality of personal relationships (Watson & Papamarcos, 2002). Second, relational social capital focuses on the personal relationships that individuals have developed through interaction, including trust and reciprocity (Nahapiet & Ghoshal, 1998). Third, cognitive social capital refers to resources that enable shared meaning and understanding among the actors involved, including shared codes and norms (Kwon & Adler, 2002). Since we are interested in the quantity and quality of multiculturals' and multilinguals' social capital, our study focuses on structural social capital, while acknowledging that the three forms are interwoven (Inkpen & Tsang, 2005).

Since individuals form social capital as a result of direct interactions with other individuals (Burt, 2000), scholars have argued that cultural differences, language barriers and a lack of shared norms and values restrict social capital formation (Kostova & Roth, 2003). This raises the question whether for multiculturals and multilinguals, these limitations will be reduced, at least with individuals from their own cultures and languages, because they have characteristics that induce identification and in-group perceptions among the actors (Ibarra, 1993; Salk & Brannen, 2000). Additionally, their interactions could even be increased, since they can benefit from effective communication as a determinant function of social capital (Watson & Papamarcos, 2002). We concur with Kwon and Adler's (2014) suggestion that research should start paying attention to the characteristics of the actors involved in the relationships that offer social capital, because these play a role when choosing with whom to establish a relationship and on whom to draw when accessing resources. Consequently, our study will address the characteristics of multicultural and multilingual employees.

Multiculturals' and multilinguals' social capital formation. When looking specifically at social capital outcomes of multiculturals, research in IB has exclusively considered identity-related resources even though multiculturals have so much more to draw on such as knowledge and internalized schemas (Vora et al., 2019). Fitzsimmons (2013) proposes that a higher identity plurality within multiculturals leads to higher levels of structural social capital, because they find it harder to differentiate between in- and out-groups. As such, they may have both members of their own (Repke & Benet-Martinez, 2017) and other cultures (Fitzsimmons, Liao, & Thomas, 2017) within their networks.

Further, multilinguals may create and access social capital through their language capital (Welch & Welch, 2018), defined as the "aggregate possession of relevant foreign language skills" (Welch & Welch, 2008: 355). Welch and Welch (2018) argue that an individual with the respective language fluency can build social capital in situations when

others without that fluency cannot. Yet, their language skills can vary tremendously (Grosjean, 2014), impacting the depth of information that can be exchanged to build social capital (Piekkari, 2008). This calls for a closer examination of the link between multilingual skills and variance in social capital outcomes.

Yet, the bulk of IB research has so far focussed on the *use* of ties, networks and social capital multiculturals and multilinguals possess. For example, multicultural employees in their role as boundary spanners (Hong, 2010; Kane & Levina, 2017), bridge individuals (Brannen & Thomas, 2010; Sekiguchi, 2016) and cultural brokers (Jang, 2017) help organizations in their flow of knowledge and information. Similarly, multilingual employees act as bridge individuals (Feely & Harzing, 2003; Harzing et al., 2011; Marschan-Piekkari et al., 1999b) language nodes (Marschan-Piekkari et al., 1999a), or intermediaries (Marschan-Piekkari et al., 1999b) when bridging language gaps within organizations (Aichhorn & Puck, 2017). Whiles these roles imply their capabilities to form and facilitate access to social capital, they are more needs-based in that multiculturals and multilinguals are welcomed employees who fill a gap where one exists, for example within teams (Jang, 2017; Tenzer, Pudelko, & Harzing, 2014) or between headquarters and subsidiaries (Harzing & Pudelko, 2014). Yet, multiculturals and multilinguals may also purposefully choose to draw upon their cultures and languages to strengthen ties with individuals of specific cultures for future use (Moore, 2016; Welch & Welch, 2018). For example, individuals can choose to learn foreign languages to acquire language capital, which in turn may lead to social capital in the future (Welch & Welch, 2018). Therefore, we study multiculturals' and multilinguals' social capital formation in general, without the immediate need to use it. It is crucial to advance our understanding about the ways they form social capital, to understand how managers and organizations can support them in fostering their social capital and ultimately benefit from it.

As a consequence of the research that has been conducted about multiculturals and multilinguals more broadly, we see a conceptual disconnect between the processes and outcomes related to their social capital, including to their networks, ties and work relationships. Research has on the one hand looked at unique characteristics, skills and abilities that these individuals bring (e.g. Brannen & Thomas, 2010; Fitzsimmons et al., 2017), and on the other hand on social capital related roles they take on (e.g. Barner-Rasmussen et al., 2014; Kane & Levina, 2017; Marchan-Piekkari et al., 1999a), but not sufficiently at the links between the two as well as the process of how they form their social capital. It is crucial to close this gap to advance our understanding about the resources that multicultural and multilingual employees bring to the organization and to ultimately, use them for the benefit of both employee and organization.

To sum up, we see it as a conceptual gap that there is currently no understanding about *what specifically* they draw upon within their multiculturalism and multilingualism when forming social capital, and *how* their unique characteristics affect of their social capital outcome. Understanding these micro-processes on the individual level is crucial for organizations not the least to provide the necessary professional development and networking opportunities so that these individuals can develop and make use of their resources, and to place their employees in the right positions to leverage their social capital (Welch & Welch, 2018). We therefore aim to explore the following research questions:

1) *What do multiculturals and multilinguals draw on when forming social capital?* and

2) *How do the unique characteristics of multicultural and multilingual individuals affect their social capital outcome?*

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

Since we are interested in examining the micro-processes through which multicultural and multilingual individuals form social capital, as well as the properties of their social capital outcome, with the little previous research about the topic, we found an explorative, inductive design to be best suited (Morgan & Smircich, 1980; Suddaby, 2006). Inspired by Grounded Theory (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Corbin & Strauss, 2008), we started with a broad goal in mind: understanding how multicultural and multilingual individuals form social capital. After several iterations between data collection and analysis, we came to understand that multiculturals and multilinguals used very different attributes to form a large and multinational network on one hand, and a strong network on the other. It was also only thanks to our inductive approach through the comparison of multiculturals and multilinguals that we established the differentiation between the language-specific, culture-specific and culture-general structural attributes of their social capital. We iterated between our data and the literature once these themes crystallized from our data. This resulted in the specification of our research questions and initiated our theory development (Edmondson & McManus, 2007).

With the aim to answer our research questions, we chose a qualitative, interview-based research design to collect detailed descriptions from our subjects of study, multiculturals and multilinguals (Cornelissen, 2017; Gioia, Corley, & Hamilton, 2013). More specifically, we conducted semi-structured interviews which allowed for consistency and comparability among our interviewees while remaining open to the emergence of new themes (Myers, 2008). This allowed us to tap into their "inner events" (Weiss, 1994: 10) and follow their leads about the effects of their multiculturalism and multilingualism on the process of building and the attributes of their relationships.

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Data Collection and Sample

As we were interested in studying social capital of multicultural and multilingual individuals' in their work context, we followed a theoretical sampling approach to seek out our interviewees based on two criteria (Corbin & Strauss, 2008): (a) individuals having internalized, identifying with, and having knowledge of two or more cultures (Vora et al., 2019), and / or being fluent in two or more languages and using them regularly (Bialystock, 2016; Dewaele, 2007; Grosjean, 2014) and (b) individuals working in a multicultural and / or multilingual organizational work context. The first criterion led us to individuals with varying levels of language and cultural fluency to participate in our study. This turned out to be an important aspect that led us to the different sources and outcomes of the breadth and depth of their social capital. The second criterion ensured that their specific linguistic and cultural background of the interviewees was also relevant in their work context as opposed to their domestic context. As a result of our data gathering efforts, we collected a very rich data set based on 154 semi-structured interviews.

The interviews had two main parts. In the first part, we asked our respondents to share their personal history and experiences with regards to their cultures and / or languages. For example, we asked them to specify how they had acquired their multiple cultures and / or languages and how proficient and fluent they were in each of them. This part also included demographic facts and information regarding their age, job responsibilities, tenure, and the cultural and language characteristics of the people they worked with and considered as part of their network. In the second and main part, we asked questions directly related to our respondents' experience with their multiculturalism and / or multilingualism on different aspects of their work. Following the principles of induction, we started with broad questions that allowed our respondents to reveal their subjective view on the topic (Corbin & Strauss, 2008; Weiss, 1994). For example, we asked how their professional network characteristics

looked like and how they had gotten there. We then followed up with more specific questions and encouraged them to share specific examples (Corbin & Strauss, 2008). For example, we asked multicultural respondents how exactly their unique experiences with multiple cultures helped them in building relationships. At this stage, we encouraged our interviewees to share detailed real-life examples and reflect upon their and others' actions and reactions within these. As our emerging theory took shape, we refined our interview guideline. For example, our respondents constantly highlighted the relevance of the fluency in specific languages for the formation of strong ties. Consequently, we probed this with more detailed questions in later interviews.

Interviews were conducted between 2015 and 2017. The first author conducted 49 interviews and ten of her Master's students conducted between 8 and 12 interviews each, either in the context of their Master's thesis or a research class. The first author developed the interview guideline and discussed it extensively with the Master's students in individual or group sessions. Since the interviewers were physically located in Germany, the majority of interviewees considered German as one of their cultures (90) or languages (107). However, data collection trips abroad took place in Canada, China, Japan, Korea, and Sweden, while an additional twelve interviews were conducted over the phone or via Skype with respondents located in Australia, Ethiopia, Mexico, the Netherlands, Singapore, Switzerland, the UK, the US, and Vietnam. If the language skills of the interviewer allowed, the interviews were conducted in the preferred language of the respondent to receive the most intuitive and natural answers (Harzing & Maznevski, 2002). In the few other cases, the language of the interview was English as the most proficient language among interviewer and interviewee. This resulted in interviews in German, English, Spanish, French and Vietnamese. The interviews were recorded and transcribed verbatim in the same language as they had been conducted, except for the three interviews in Vietnamese, a language the authors cannot read or understand. The

interviewer translated and transcribed these to English. The average interview was 59 minutes long, with the shortest being 32 and the longest 1 hours and 58 minutes long. The transcription of the 154 interviews resulted in a document of about 1950 double spaced pages that were the basis of our data analysis.

Our respondents represented 53 national cultures and 39 languages and worked in a diverse set of industries and services, including for example automotive, aero-space, food, oil and pharmaceutical industries, consulting, banking, media, auditing, retail and IT. Respondents worked in a broad range of functional areas, for example marketing, sales, purchasing, HR, finance, accounting, controlling, research and development, and strategy. Their positions ranged from trainees, over regular employees, lower, middle and upper managers, to vice-presidents and CEOs. Additionally, they reported about past appointments, which increased the variety of organizational contexts across all continents, industries and services, functional areas, and positions in our final data set. 88 of our respondents were male and 66 female. The average age of the interviewees was 32, with the youngest being 19 and the oldest 65 years old. Table 1 provides an overview on the cultures and languages with the respective frequency represented in our sample. We distinguish between English as societal language and English as business language, since Business English Lingua Franca (BELF) is a "neutral and shared communication code … used for conducting business within the global business discourse community" (Louhiala-Salminen & Kankaanranta, 2005: 403–404).

TABLE 1. Represented Cultures and Languages

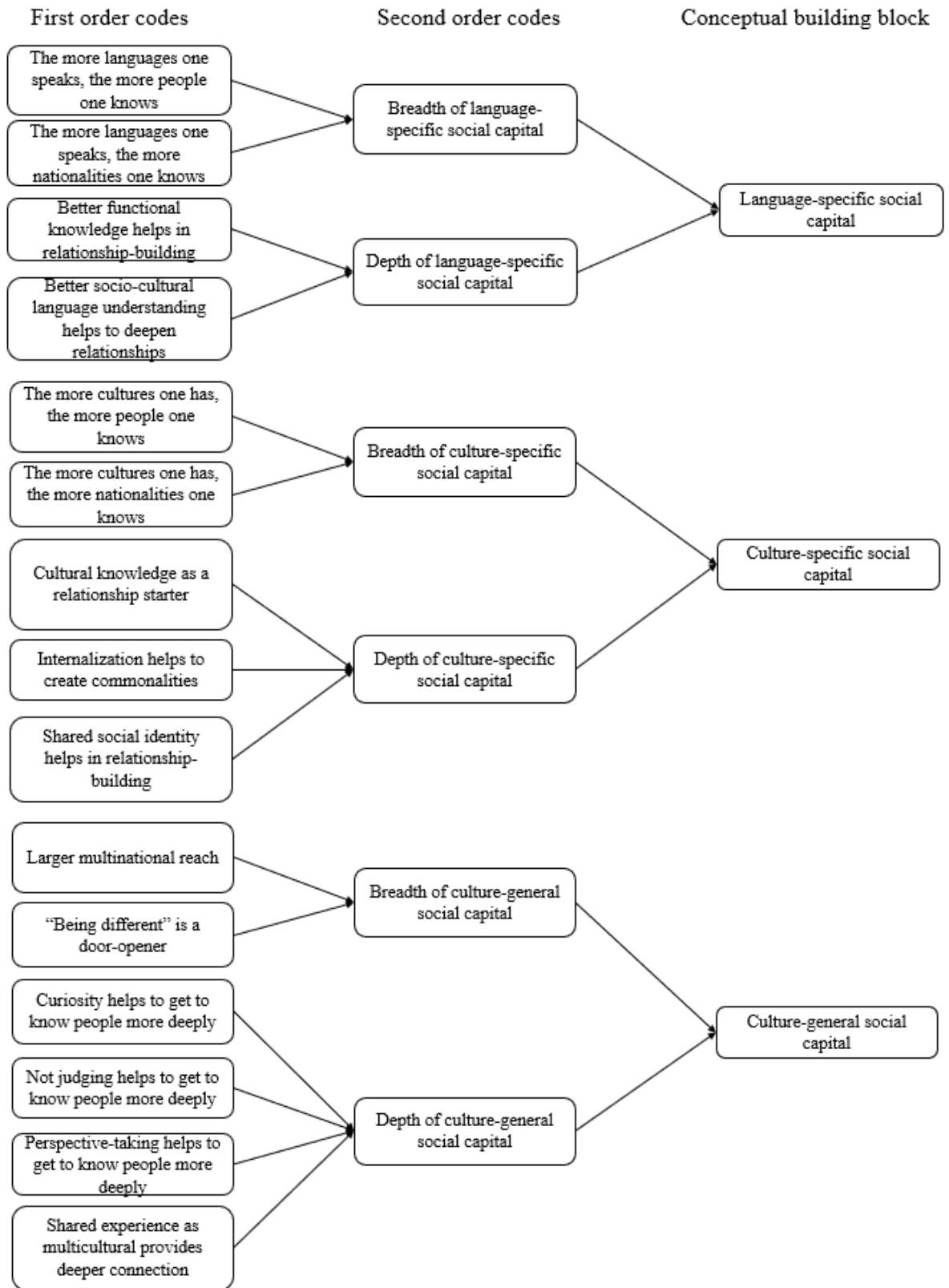| Culture	Frequency	Culture	Frequency	Language	Frequency	Language	Frequency
Afghan	3	Iraqui	1	Afrikaans	2	Portuguese	7
Argentinian	3	Irish	1	Arabic	2	Punjabi	1
Australian	2	Italian	3	Bengali	1	Rumanian	4
Austrian	1	Japanese	6	Bosnian	7	Russian	13
Barbadian	1	Kazakhstani	1	Bulgarian	2	Spanish	17
Beninese	1	Korean	6	Business English	106	Swedish	1
Bolivian	1	Mauritian	2	Cantonese	3	Swiss German	3
Bosnian	5	Mexican	1	Catalan	2	Turkish	6
Brazilian	3	Montenegrin	1	Creole	2	Ukranian	1
British	4	Polish	2	Croatian	6	Vietnamese	6
Bulgarian	3	Portuguese	1	Czech	2	Wolof	1
Canadian	14	Romanian	3	Dari	1	Zulu	2
Chilean	1	Russian	11	Dutch	5		
Chinese	6	Senegalese	1	English	49		
Croatian	3	Serbian	1	Farsi	1		
Czech	2	Singaporian	1	French	28		
Dutch	4	Slovenian	1	German	107		
Egyptian	1	South African	3	Greek	2		
Filipino	1	Spanish	8	Hindu	5		
French	7	Sri Lankan	1	Italian	3		
German	90	Swiss	5	Japanese	5		
Greek	3	Tunisian	1	Korean	7		
Guinean	1	Turkish	5	Mandarin	8		
Hong Kongese	3	US-American	11	Marathi	1		
Hungarian	1	Vietnamese	5	Mina	1		
Indian	7	Yugoslavian	1	Persian	4		
Iranian	1			Polish	3		

Data Analysis

Using Atlas.ti as aid for qualitative data analysis, we followed Corbin and Strauss' (2008) data analysis process of open coding, axial coding and integration. As common in inductive studies, we started our data analysis while interviews were still ongoing (Pratt, 2009). This allowed us to adjust our interview guideline with more specific questions when foci emerged from our theory building (Gioia et al., 2013).

During the stage of open coding, we went through each interview and assigned each passage with a descriptive first order code (Corbin & Strauss, 2008). Most codes that we later identified as most relevant to the central theme of this study were in-vivo codes, representing verbatim terms used by the respondents (Locke, 2001). For example, the quote "*Perhaps it was also a door-opener that my name doesn't sound very German, so people from other nationalities were directly interested*" (P 30; C: Ger, Ita; L: Ger, Ita, BE) was labeled with the code 'being different is a door-opener'. Other codes represented concepts from the literature. For example, the quote "*Usually I feel that when we deal with people, either some from France or Quebec, it's much easier to establish sort of a trust relation. It's faster to establish that, I feel. I think it just helps the flow of the conversation. People are just talking and answering instead of trying to express what they want to express and it's less work for everyone.*" (P29; C: Cad; L: Fre, Eng) created the code 'better functional knowledge helps in relationship-building'. It was at this stage of the data analysis that we already noticed there were different mechanisms at play as to what multiculturals on one hand and multilinguals on the other draw on when forming social capital. Consequently, we turned to the literature to gain theoretical insights into language- and culture-related as well as personal attributes and probed for these instances in further interviews. These are examples of the iterative process between data analysis, data collection and literature study.

In the next stage, we engaged in axial coding, as we aimed to understand the relationships among the first-order codes by combining them into more abstract second-order codes. With the constant comparative method (Locke, 2001), we compared our data in different ways. First, we juxtaposed interview sections that had codes relating to multicultural social capital and those with codes relating to multilingual social capital. Through this process, we realized that our interviewees related different sources to the multinationality and size of their network on one hand, and the strength of their ties on the other, which we later labeled breadth and depth of social capital. For example, while multilinguals saw a direct link between their specific languages and the members of their network (code: the more languages one speaks, the more people one knows), they emphasized that a more cultural understanding of speaking the language was necessary to build strong relationships (code: better socio-cultural language understanding helps to deepen relationships). We also compared those codes between multicultural and multilingual social capital. In this step, we came to understand that there is a difference in the outcome for multiculturals, in the sense that they can build both culture-specific and -general social capital, whereas multilinguals only have a language-specific outcome. This way, we grouped relevant codes into second-order codes. For example, the codes 'the own cultures are reflected in the network' and 'larger outreach to own cultures' were grouped under the second-order code 'breadth of culture-specific social capital'. Finally, we integrated our six conceptual second-order codes under three conceptual building blocks (Lee, 1999): language-specific social capital, culture-specific social capital and culture-general social capital. On this basis we engaged in our theory development by formulating theoretical propositions and designing our theoretical model (Mantere & Ketoviki, 2013). Figure 1 summarizes our final coding scheme.

FIGURE 1. Coding Scheme

First order codes

- The more languages one speaks, the more people one knows
- The more languages one speaks, the more nationalities one knows
- Better functional knowledge helps in relationship-building
- Better socio-cultural language understanding helps to deepen relationships
- The more cultures one has, the more people one knows
- The more cultures one has, the more nationalities one knows
- Cultural knowledge as a relationship starter
- Internalization helps to create commonalities
- Shared social identity helps in relationship-building
- Larger multinational reach
- "Being different" is a door-opener
- Curiosity helps to get to know people more deeply
- Not judging helps to get to know people more deeply
- Perspective-taking helps to get to know people more deeply
- Shared experience as multicultural provides deeper connection

Second order codes

- Breadth of language-specific social capital
- Depth of language-specific social capital
- Breadth of culture-specific social capital
- Depth of culture-specific social capital
- Breadth of culture-general social capital
- Depth of culture-general social capital

Conceptual building block

- Language-specific social capital
- Culture-specific social capital
- Culture-general social capital

When analysing our data, we first found that multiculturals and multilinguals virtually unanimously believe that they have advantages in social capital formation because of their multiple cultures and languages. This entailed the more specific research questions that we elaborated on in the theoretical background: what do they draw on when forming social capital, and how do their unique characteristics affect the their social capital outcome. While most of our respondents identified to some extent with both multiculturalism and multilingualism, our rich data set still allowed us to tease out the differences between language-related and culture-related social capital when focusing on the varying degrees of both, multiculturalism and multilingualism. For example, some were highly fluent in multiple languages, but expressed only a limited identification with one (or more) of their cultures. The other way around, some highly identified with their cultures, had internalized behavioral norms and possessed a lot of knowledge, but showed limited fluency in one of their languages. By exploring the differing consequences for social capital formation, we were able to distinguish effects resulting from multiculturalism and multilingualism.

Consequently, and as already indicated in the previous section about our data analysis, our data then clearly unleashed an important finding: Multilinguals form *language-specific social capital* (only), whereas multiculturals form both *culture-specific* and *culture-general social capital*. We will present our findings along these three structural outcomes. Therein, we found two dimensions at play. First, our respondents discussed the multinationality of their social capital and its size, which we subsumed under the dimension *breadth of social capital*. Second, they highlighted the strength of their ties, which we categorized as *depth of social capital*. These findings answered our second research question: How do the unique characteristics of multicultural and multilingual individuals affect their social capital outcome?

In answering our first research question, what do multiculturals and multilinguals draw on when forming social capital, we found that there were different mechanisms at play, very much depending on the type of social capital that was being built. These were quantitative, contextual, cognitive, identity-related and personal attributes. Discussing these mechanisms will be the core of our presentation of the findings.

Language-Specific Social Capital

It was highly prevalent in our data that sharing a specific language with others helped multilinguals to build relationships and form what we label language-specific social capital.

> I think you connect much more with the people who speak the same language. It's easier to exchange words and jokes and all that. (P29; C: Cad; L: Fre, Eng)

This finding can be explained by the well known similarity-attraction theory (Berscheid & Walster 1969; Byrne 1971), according to which individuals can build relationships easier with individuals who share similarities. Furthermore, we found that for sharing a specific language, two dimensions apparently were of relevance which we labeled breadth and depth of language-specific social capital.

Breadth of language-specific social capital. By definition, multilinguals speak more than one language. Consequently, they share with more people a common language than monolinguals do. As such, our respondents highlighted that each language increased the size of their network:

> Networking is important and because I speak French and English then I can basically build relationships in many more settings. (P 37; C: Ben, Cad; L: Fre, Eng)

Interestingly, our respondents also found it clearly beneficial to get access to people even if the proficiency level in a language was low. Even with a few words in the language of the conversation partner, they perceived to be able to create a more casual atmosphere which helped their relationship.

> It is just that, Chinese people just have that thing that when they cannot speak really English very well, they feel shy to speak English in public in front of their Chinese colleagues who might laugh about them. So I really had to make extra

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effort to go to them, speak a little bit of Mandarin sometimes so they laugh about me or whatever. But just to break the ice and then I found out they actually liked me and I liked them, so that was fine. (P 86; C: NL, Guin, L: Fre, Dut, BE)

Since many also expressed an interest and ease in learning additional languages because of their multilingualism, it increased the reach of their relationship building even more.

Our respondents also highlighted the direct link between the increased number of languages they speak and the increased multinationality of their network.

Because I speak Vietnamese fluently, of course I have one more gate to network. I think I certainly have an advantage over others, because with my language I reach another nationality. (P 91; C: Ger, Viet; L: Ger, Viet, BE)

Consequently, being able to share specific languages had a direct effect on the attributes of the social network of those multilinguals regarding the size and nationalities represented (and with that the social capital they can potentially draw on). These findings support previous research that proposes knowledge in more than one language to be an integral part of an employee's resource in the form of social capital (Welch & Welch, 2018). More specifically, we found that language is an enabler for social capital building with people who speak the same language. We therefore propose:

Proposition 1a: The higher the number of languages multilingual individuals speak, the more breadth (i.e., size and multinationality) has their language-specific social capital.

Depth of language-specific social capital. We found that not only the quantity, but also the quality of the language skills mattered in building relationships. Two mechanisms to what we call the depth of social capital became apparent: multilinguals' functional knowledge and the internalization of their socio-cultural understanding.

Our respondents found high language proficiency levels to be beneficial for a smooth collaboration. Typically, respondents referred to their knowledge of technical terms (lexical proficiency), paired with their ability to have accurate conversations (grammatical proficiency) in that language. As the following interviewee explains, he perceived his collaboration as more familiar and easier with his Spanish-speaking colleagues when speaking their language.

> Typically they're happy when they can speak Spanish. Especially about financial topics, it's difficult to do that in a foreign language. Of course we could also discuss these topics in English, but it is so different if we do that in Spanish, especially because then we are on more familiar terms with each other (P65; C: Spa, Ger; L: Spa, Ger, BE)

This finding was reinforced by basically the opposite perception: Multilinguals found a limited language proficiency to be restrictive in building a relationship:

> From a more social aspect, yes, it was actually quite hard for me to get to know Danes more personally. Because I could not really understand them when they spoke Danish and they did not really understand me when I spoke Swedish. So there was a real limit in getting to know each other. (P 31; C: Bol, L: Spa, Eng, Swe)

While just a few words in a language can certainly be a 'door-opener' to get to know people, as we discussed in the previous section, a higher proficiency is needed to move beyond a superficial contact among people. Particularly in the work context this includes the knowledge of technical terms and accurate vocabulary and grammar to be able to have meetings or work-related discussions in the language of most comfort. These aspects are commonly defined as functional proficiency in a language. We therefore propose:

> **Proposition 1b**: The more functional knowledge multilingual individuals have in their respective languages, the more depth (i.e., the strength of ties) has their language-specific social capital.

Further, we found that the depth of language-specific social capital goes beyond these functional proficiency factors. A socio-cultural understanding of the language spoken matters as well. Respondents who identified as both multilingual and multicultural, as well as those multilinguals with a very high degree in each of their languages, stressed the importance of cultural aspects in languages such as speech pragmatics (the culture-specific way of conveying a message) and semiotics (the culture-specific meaning of words). The following respondent summarized this as an ability to communicate softly:

> I have an easier time with people from English-speaking countries and cultures, especially because of my native English proficiency. Even if lots of people here in Germany learn English, if you can communicate with them such that they see you as one of them, then you have a huge advantage and that's not overly common. People can communicate functionally, but not in a soft way. I think that's my biggest advantage. (P40; C: Ger, Ind; L: Ger, Eng, Hin)

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Research on language learning supports our findings. Lambert (1956) found that when learning an additional language, individuals go through a process of two clusters, the vocabulary cluster referring to the functional linguistic system of a language, and the socio-cultural cluster, relating to culturally based linguistic behavior. Learning the socio-cultural cluster is significantly more challenging and involves a deeper understanding of the cultural norms when speaking a language (Noels & Giles, 2009). It allows for a more affective connection between the speakers. Consequently, multilinguals who have internalized the socio-cultural understanding can build stronger relationships. Thus, we propose:

> **Proposition 1c**: The more socio-cultural understanding in their respective languages multilingual individuals have internalized, the more depth (i.e., the strength of ties) has their language-specific social capital.

To sum up our three propositions, we demonstrated that multilinguals draw on multiple languages to build the breadth of their language-specific social capital with a higher number of people from more language backgrounds and thus, nationalities. Further, structural social capital not only includes the quantity, but also the quality of social ties. In line with that, we found that not only the quantity, but also the quality of the language skills matters for multilinguals' social capital. As such, the functional knowledge and internalization of the socio-cultural understanding in a language allow for the depth of language-specific social capital. To conclude the insights won on language-specific social capital, we summarize the previous three propositions into the first overall proposition:

> **Proposition 1**: Multilingualism leads to an increased breadth and depth of language-specific social capital.

TABLE 2. Exemplary Quotes to the Conceptual Building Block: Language-Specific Social Capital

Quote	First order code
• Since I speak Russian and that's similar to lots of Slavic languages, I can understand lots of other people and speak a bit in their languages with them. (P90; C: Ger, Rus; L: Ger, Rus, BE) • Yeah being multilingual, it is understanding more people and make yourself understandable to them. So connecting with even more people than if you would just speak one or two languages (P 86)	The more languages one speaks, the more people one knows
• There is something that was interesting when I was working with my English partner. I have a much stronger network with the French people and she had a completely different network. Sometimes I couldn't get the information that she could and there was a surprisingly little overlap or there were significant parts of the networks that were not the same. (P 29; C: Cad; L: Fre, Eng) • Really, the biggest advantage that I see [in being bilingual] is being able to socialize more with a bigger group of people. […] I can just talk to more people because otherwise the subset is smaller, of English only and French only and English and French together just broadens the horizon basically. (P34; C: Cad; L: Eng, Fre)	The more languages one speaks, the more nationalities one knows
• Thanks to my language skills it is really easier to make connections. I know a bunch of French people, Americans, Portuguese, a German guy is here because I approach them speaking their own languages. That is kind of awesome if you go around all over the world and you can speak their language and they're just widely opening their two arms. (P 16; C: US, Jap; L: Eng, Jap; Port, Ger) • Two or three times I had topics to discuss with Spanish colleagues. It obviosuly helped that I speak the language. I could get a lot closer to them in our small talk, and that certainly helped. (P46; C: Ger, L: Ger, Spa, BE)	Better functional knowledge helps in relationship-building
• I remember with some people from the Russian mission, if you say "I speak Russian because my mother is from Russia" then it is "Oh ok, let's come, have a coffee and let's talk". And you have also, for example like, you have a formal language but you can sometimes also use a bit like a slang and then it is easier to connect with somebody when you speak slang it is less formal. (P 36; C: Dut, Rus, Afg; L: Dut, Rus, Dar, BE) • It's much easier to have a strong network. So you can have a one on one discussion with somebody that is French-Canadian for example and you have that connection with them. Whereas if you don't have the language and you don't understand the culture, it would be tough. I mean you could, but I know it's a lot tougher, so you naturally would not be inclined having long discussions or having more personal relationship with the peer as you would if you didn't. (P69; C: US, Cad; L: Eng, Fre)	Better socio-cultural language understanding helps to deepen relationships

Culture-Specific Social Capital

Similar to our findings regarding the language-specific social capital, it was also highly prevalent in our data that sharing a specific culture with others helped multiculturals to build what we call culture-general social capital.

> We were from the same culture, two different countries and languages, but still the same culture. We instantly felt connected through the culture. (P60; C: Ger, Rus; L: Ger, Rus, BE)

It was also here apparent that two dimensions were important. Accordingly, we label them breadth and depth of culture-specific social capital.

Breadth of culture-specific social capital. Since multicultural individuals have by definition more than one specific culture, they can also build closer relationships with people from more than one culture. This involved a direct link between the number of their specific cultures and the size of their network and with that, of the social capital they can draw on. The following German-Turkish interviewee said:

> With two cultures, you can access different networks. Your network is automatically a bit bigger by having those two cultures represented. (P96; C: Ger, Tur; L: Ger, Tur, BE)

Our respondents also emphasized the link between the increased number of cultures they have and the increased multinationality with people of their own cultural background.

> We pretty much only get along because we are both half-Vietnamese. But it's still nice to go for a Vietnamese dinner every now and then and just know that you could phone each other if you need anything at work. (P84; C: Ger, Viet; L: Ger, Viet, BE)

These finding supports Repke and Benet-Martinez' (2018) research that showed that the specific cultures an individual has are reflected in the composition of their social network. Further, similarity-attraction theory also comes in with common cultures. As such, individuals who share a culture find it easier to build a relationship with each other. Given the connection between their specific cultures and the culture-specific composition of their social capital, we argue:

> **Proposition 2a**: The higher the number of cultures multicultural individuals have, the more breadth (i.e., size and multinationality) has their culture-specific social capital.

Depth of culture-specific social capital. While the simple presence of cultures increased the breadth, we established that the depth of culture-specific social capital was related to the extent our respondents were immersed in their cultures. More specifically, we found that there were three criteria to engage in deeper relationships with individuals of their own cultures: First, knowledge, second, internalization, and third, identity.

Our respondents mentioned factual knowledge about their cultures as an important aspect to find common ground for conversations and interactions with people of the same culture. Sharing knowledge about popular culture or common topics created a connection between them and enabled more profound interactions. As one respondent noted:

> So, we all speak French but then we usually will also share something. Let's say West Africans will share a very similar type of music, Central Africans will also share a particular type of music. Simple things, as theater, actors, soap operas, local superstars and stuff like that. You can find those common grounds very easily if you have an understanding for them. (P 37; C: Ben, Cad; L: Fre, Eng)

This type of factual knowledge was typically related to culture-specific aspects of music, literature, history or sports. While one does not necessarily have to be multicultural to possess this knowledge, it appeared to us that multiculturals are likely and authentic in having this knowledge. Our multicultural respondents clearly used the common knowledge to move beyond small talks and engage in more personal and to them meaningful conversations. Through that, they were able to establish stronger relationships. Consequently, we propose:

> **Proposition 2b**: The more culture-specific knowledge about their respective cultures multicultural individuals have, the more depth (i.e. strengths of ties) has their culture-specific social capital.

We further found that for achieving depth of culture-specific social capital also other factors mattered. One was a deeper form of internalization into the specific cultures. Similar to the language-related attributes, internalization goes beyond factual knowledge and includes the immersion in deeper lying norms and behaviors of the specific culture. A German-Chinese participant described how he won over both German and Chinese colleagues, because he brought attributes and an understanding for both sides:

> I think I generally received trust from both sides, exactly because I grew up bicultural. The Germans saw the German in me and trusted me. With the Chinese I had a good relationship, because I brought more Chinese attributes at the same time. They saw the Chinese qualities and that I brought an understanding for aspects that are different in interpersonal relationships. (P71; C: Ger, Chin; L: Ger, Mand, BE)

Thus, multiculturals had internalized not so obvious aspects of the cultures which became apparent when interacting with others from this culture more closely. This internalization of the specific cultures, which also resulted in behavioral adjustments, were described by our respondents as crucial aspects for interpersonal relationships. The internalization of cultural aspects is a cognitive process within multiculturals. We therefore propose:

Proposition 2c: The more multicultural individuals internalize about their cultures, the more depth (i.e., the strength of ties) has their culture-specific social capital.

A third and more affective mechanism regarding the depth of social capital was based on the identity with the specific cultures. We found that our respondents attached a high degree of importance to the identification with their cultures when forming strong ties. Through this, they were able to create a shared social identity with people from the respective culture. This could be related to a hybrid culture as the following respondent explains:

> Our good relationship just unfolded step by step. And we're all German-Korean. I think it's because we all know how it is to live as German-Korean in Germany, because we all grew up in a similar way. So automatically we share something without having to talk about it. (P52; C: Ger, Kor; L: Ger, Kor, BE)

Similar to this respondent, many others explained a common social identity as something unspoken or invisible among the individuals involved. Through this invisible bond, they created a strong connection. This was arguably more affective compared to the rather cognitive bond from the previous section. Identity is further an attribute that needs deeper immersion in the cultures. As such, we argue that it also results in stronger ties if it becomes a commonality among the actors involved. We therefore propose:

Proposition 2d: The more multicultural individuals establish an identity with their respective cultures, the more depth (i.e., the strength of ties) has their culture-specific social capital.

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From these propositions, it should become clear that the three aspects of knowledge, internalization and identity build on each other. While knowledge and contextual bonds are operating on a more superficial level, internalization requires a higher immersion, and identity additionally necessitates a strong emotional connection to the cultures. Accordingly, with every step multiculturals deepen their social capital with individuals from their cultures.

To conclude the insights won on culture-specific social capital, we formulate the second overall proposition:

Proposition 2: Multiculturalism leads to an increased breadth and depth of culture-specific social capital.

Additional quotes for our findings on culture-specific social capital are presented in Table 3.

TABLE 3. Exemplary Quotes to the Conceptual Building Block: Culture-Specific Social Capital

Quotes	First-order codes
• If you have two cultures, you can access those two networks. You automatically have a larger network and I find that you can also make use of that. (P83; C: Ger, Tur; L: Ger, Tur, BE) • Compared to people that are my age and have a similar professional pathway, my network is certainly one of the bigger ones, because I can draw on my German and my Russian connections. (P85; C: Ger, Rus; L: Ger, Rus, BE)	The more cultures one has, the more people one knows
• My colleague with an English-German background had lots of contacts in England and was the one who phoned them, I knew more Russian colleagues and another colleague had the connection to our Polish subsidiaries. (P81; C: Ger, Rus; L: Ger, Rus, BE) • A lot of the business came from immigrants from China, people who actually had the money and I was a very strong sales person. I was able to socialize with them, become part of their group and then get the business. (P94; C: Chin, Cad; L: Mand, Eng)	The more cultures one has, the more nationalities one knows
• I would say so because my English-speaking culture is more similar to the US guys, so when I go to Wisconsin a lot of stuff we did back home with my dad relates to what they do, not at work level but more at a personal level, when we were having dinner at night and were talking, it is much easier to relate to what they were talking about. (P23; C: US, Cad; L: Eng, Fre) • Well I lived there for almost five years and I went to college there, so a lot of the people that I would talk to, the culture, the college culture they have there, I've been through it, so I kind of can connect on other levels with people. Here you don't have the same culture, or very little of it. So different sports, like football and things of that nature which here is not as popular. Or just universities and knowledge of the States in general. It'd be different than if I had stayed here for example. If I had stayed here and my culture was here and I'd never been to the States, I probably wouldn't have been exposed to all of that (P69; C: US, Cad; L: Eng, Fre)	Cultural knowledge as a relationship starter
• I know how both cultures are like. Since I was born into them, I know how to behave and how to deal with them. It's probably easier for me to bond with someone from the Turkish culture. (P 83: Ger, Tur; L: Ger, Tur, BE) • I feel that we are used to a certain type of interaction. The French type of interaction, you know, like French. I feel we are a certain way, a certain humor, you know, so it would click more easily. (P75; C: Fre, Eng; L: Fre, Eng)	Internalization helps to create commonalities
• We Egypts in the company have a real little group. My status may be slightly different, because my Arabic language skills are lower, but we meet often and are a real group. (P10; C: Ger, Egy; L: Ger, BE, Spa, Ara) • I worked with Italian colleagues on a project. And I felt instantly closer to them. You can collaborate easily without having to explain much. I noticed that we had a different bond. (P89; C: Ger, Ita; L: Ger, Ita, BE)	Shared social identity helps in relationship-building

Culture-General Social Capital

As opposed to multilinguals who exclusively formed language-*specific* social capital, multiculturals could build next to culture-specific social capital also what we call culture-*general* social capital. With this term we refer to social capital that multiculturals have built with people of cultures other than their one ones. Also here we found the distinction between breadth and depth of social capital to be of relevance. Additionally, they perceived to have a stronger bond with other multiculturals, regardless of their cultural composition, due to having experiences in common.

Breadth of culture-general social capital. Multiculturals explained that compared to monoculturals they did not only have a larger network based on people they know from their own cultures, but also based on people they got to know who are of all kinds of third cultures:

> But then I also have a very international network. Not only my Turkish network,
> but also lots of Germans and even from completely different countries such as
> Italy. (P83; C: Ger, Tur; L: Ger, Tur, BE)

This supports conceptually deduced propositions by Fitzsimmons (2013) that multiculturals tend to befriend people regardless of their cultural background, thus resulting in a higher social capital.

We then found that multiculturals also gain access to individuals, regardless of their culture, through generally being perceived as 'different'. It became highly apparent that our respondents were virtually never part of the majority, because they always were perceived as some sort of different. This sparked the interest of other individuals to speak to and learn more about them. They often mentioned their names and look as conversation starters with people from all kinds of backgrounds, such as the following German-Chilean participant:

> I think if my name was Robert Schmitt [typical German name], people wouldn't
> ask me so many questions to learn more about me. I think it's because of my
> name, my look... Because I'm different. (P1; C: Ger, Chil; L: Ger, Spa, BE)

They perceived this aspect as beneficial to get in contact with people, irrespective of the other's cultural background. We therefore propose:

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Proposition 3a: The more multicultural individuals are perceived as different, the more breadth has their culture-specific social capital.

Depth of culture-general social capital. Interestingly, the depth of culture-general social capital was not only based on multicultural attributes such as the cultural context and knowledge, internalization and identity, but much more on personal attributes that multiculturals are likely to develop, namely being curious, non-judgmental and able to take someone's perspective. While the more superficial attribute of being different opened the door to a broader range of people, the strength of these ties was mostly related to personal attributes. These personal attributes went beyond those attributes which can be associated more directly with multirculturals, such as culture-specific knowledge, internalization and identity.

First, our respondents highlighted curiosity, particularly regarding cultural aspects, as an important aspect to find out more about the other person and thus, create deeper relationships. It was highly prevalent in our data that multiculturals perceived themselves as particularly curious, because of the fact that they had internalized multiple cultures. They connected their curiosity to the ability to build deeper relationships, as the following respondent elaborates:

> I'm very interested in a lot of things, because I am multicultural. I am Interested in other cultures, less scared, more curious. I understand others easily, because I can find different links and parallels. I have less reservations toward others, and that way you can get to know each other much more. (P15; C: Ger, Ind; L: Ger, Hin, Eng)

Curiosity has previously been found to be a motivational antecedent to learning (Berlyne, 1978). It makes sense that multiculturals develop a higher degree of curiosity because of their increased learning experience about different cultures. Our respondents clearly saw it as an enabler to get to know others better, hence, build closer relationships. From this follows:

> **Proposition 3b:** The more multicultural individuals are curious about the cultures of others, the more depth (i.e., the strength of ties) has their cultural-general social capital.

While curiosity certainly helps to get to know others better, it does not prevent individuals from judging what they learn about the person which, in turn, would prevent the ties to become stronger. Our respondents also saw two further, closely related attributes as beneficial in building strong social capital, their non-judgmental nature and their ability to take someone's perspective. As the following German-Spanish participant explains, he found himself to be more critical toward stereotypes and less prone to judging different behaviors:

> When you grow up with multiple cultures you are more open, you have less prejudice, you may know about stereotypes but you don't necessarily believe in them. And you can transfer that to other cultures. For example, with my colleagues in China, I just don't judge their behaviors or whatever… That certainly helps in building that mutual trust. (P70; C: Ger, Spa; L: Ger, Spa, BE)

Another respondent described how her ability to understand other perspectives helped her to get along well with people:

> Because I grew up with two cultures, I can put myself into other cultures' shoes. I can accept "okay, that's how it is for them" and don't question it. I have a huge understanding for other perspectives and that's what helps to get along well with people. (P83; C: Ger, Tur; L: Ger, Tur, BE)

While multiculturals have previously been described as particularly open and empathetic toward others (Brannen & Thomas, 2010), we found that their tendency to avoid judging other cultures as well as the ability to understand different perspectives also helped them to build relationships. Both allowed them to create a more trustful relationship. They saw the source of these attributes in their immersion in multiple cultures which had helped them to accept differences and other viewpoints, hence, enabling relationship-building to move forward. We therefore propose:

> **Proposition 3c:** The more multicultural individuals are non-judgmental about others' cultures and able to take others' perspectives, the more depth (i.e., the strength of ties) has their cultural-general social capital.

Similar to the previously discussed mechanism for culture-specific social capital, namely knowledge, internalization and identity, the personal attributes of curiosity as well as being non-judgmental and taking perspective are building on each other, bringing the degree

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of engagement with their cultures on a higher level and through that, increasing the depth of the social capital further.

Lastly, as a somewhat separate but still highly relevant aspect, we found that multiculturals also built deeper culture-general social capital with a specific group of individuals, namely other multiculturals, regardless of their specific cultures. This was based on a more emotional connection related to their multicultural identity. Our respondents very often mentioned that they had a deeper connection and special bond with other multiculturals due to their shared experience of being multicultural, such as the following respondent:

> I get along much better with multiculturals. I can better communicate and discuss, because they also have a story to tell. It is difficult to articulate, but I get very close with them, because they also look at things from multiple perspectives. (P78; C: Ita, Swi, Tun; Ger, Ita, Ar)

This finding extends observations from immigration research that found that immigrants perceive each other as in-group regardless of their country of origin to foster a sense of belonging (Skovgaard-Smith & Poulfelt, 2017). Our respondents created an identity with other multiculturals which allowed deeper relationships. This was only possible with other multiculturals, but it nevertheless contributed to their culture-general social capital. We therefore propose:

> **Proposition 3d**: The more multicultural individuals have a common identity with other multicultural individuals, the more depth (i.e., the strength of ties) has their cultural-general social capital with this particular group.

To summarize, multiculturals' attribute of being different opens the doors to relationships with people from any culture, thus increasing the breadth of their culture-general capital. For an increased depth, they draw on cognitive personal attributes, first on curiosity, and then on being non-judgmental and taking perspectives. Additionally and more emotionally related, they create a shared identity with other multiculturals, thus enabling a stronger bond. To conclude these insights won on culture-general social capital, we formulate the third overall proposition:

Proposition 3: Multiculturalism leads to an increased breadth and depth of culture-general social capital.

Additional quotes for our findings on culture-general social capital are presented in Table 4.

TABLE 4. Exemplary Quotes to the Conceptual Building Block: Culture-General Social Capital

Quotes	First-order codes
• Because I like networking and I like approaching other people, I think I do have quite a large network. (P90) • And I have a bigger group of people. I don't only have connections with Germans, not only with Russians, not only with Turkish, but a bit over everything (P87; Ger, Rus; L: Ger, Rus, BE)	Larger multinational reach
• The Chinese colleagues will always ask me a few things at some point, such as „tell us a little bit about yourself". The first question is always „Why do you speak German so well?" So we get into a conversation and then they are much more open, because I have a German side but show some understanding and empathy. (P41; C: Ger, Chin; L: Ger, Chin, BE)) • In the spur of the moment [being multicultural] is a good hook. People see my name and first thing they ask is if I'm from Greece (P77; C: Ger, Gre; L: Ger, Gre, BE)	"Being different" sparks interest
• Well just being curious about other cultures. Just sometimes to compare like "Oh you do that in Italy. We do that this way in Belgium or in Guinea", yes make the connections and again being curious about them. Because people like to talk about their own culture and their habits because they miss it (P86; C: NL, Guin, L: Fre, Dut, BE) • Perhaps I'm more curious and more optimistic. There is a difference between assuming that the system I'm from or in is the best system, and being curious about other systems, how they function and being open that they may function as good or better as mine. (P88; C: Bri, Ger; L: Eng, Ger)	Curiosity helps to get to know people more deeply
• I mean at that time when people did behave differently and you think "ok this is so crazy", I mean why is he behaving like this?! But then when you think about this, maybe it is in the culture, they do not know yet. Maybe they have not adapted to your culture yet. So, that is what I have learned to do. Normally it is in a person's behavior to judge as soon as you see something wrong happening or somebody saying something wrong. But now I have learned to look at it in a different way. (P39; C: Ind; L: Eng, Hind, Mar) • I think it's interesting that other cultures sometimes react completely different. I think one shouldn't judge too quickly that someone is lazy or something. If it's normal to be a bit late in a culture, then it doesn't matter. Here in Germany people often explode if someone is a minute late. My attitude really helped me in my work in the international organization (P25; C: Ger, Hung; L: Ger, BE)	Not judging helps to get to know people more deeply
• When you're multicultural you can put yourself into the other person's shoes and that's how they can be comfortable and trust you. Especially networking is much easier with this connection. (P28; C: Rum, Ger; L: Rum, Ger, BE) • I think an advantage in building stronger relationships is that I know that there is not just one perspective on things and not just one culture, but that there are several and different ones. I mean I had to understand both sides all my life. And I'm sure that helps to connect deeper with people. (P 89; C: Ger, Ita; L: Ger, Ita, BE)	Perspective-taking helps to get to know people more deeply

• I go for lunch much more often with other people who have a bicultural background. So we share personal things and talk on a very different level. We're closer. (P77; C: Ger, Gre; L: Ger, Gre, BE) • I feel more comfortable when I talk to other multiculturals. We can make other jokes and can talk casually and just get along really well. (P40; C: Ger, Ind; L: Ger, Eng, Hin)	Shared experience as multicultural provides deeper connection

In Figure 2, we incorporate the findings and propositions into a comprehensive model that depicts how multicultural and multilingual individuals form social capital. We discuss its relevance for theory and practice in the subsequent discussion.

FIGURE 2. Multiculturals and Multilinguals Forming Social Capital
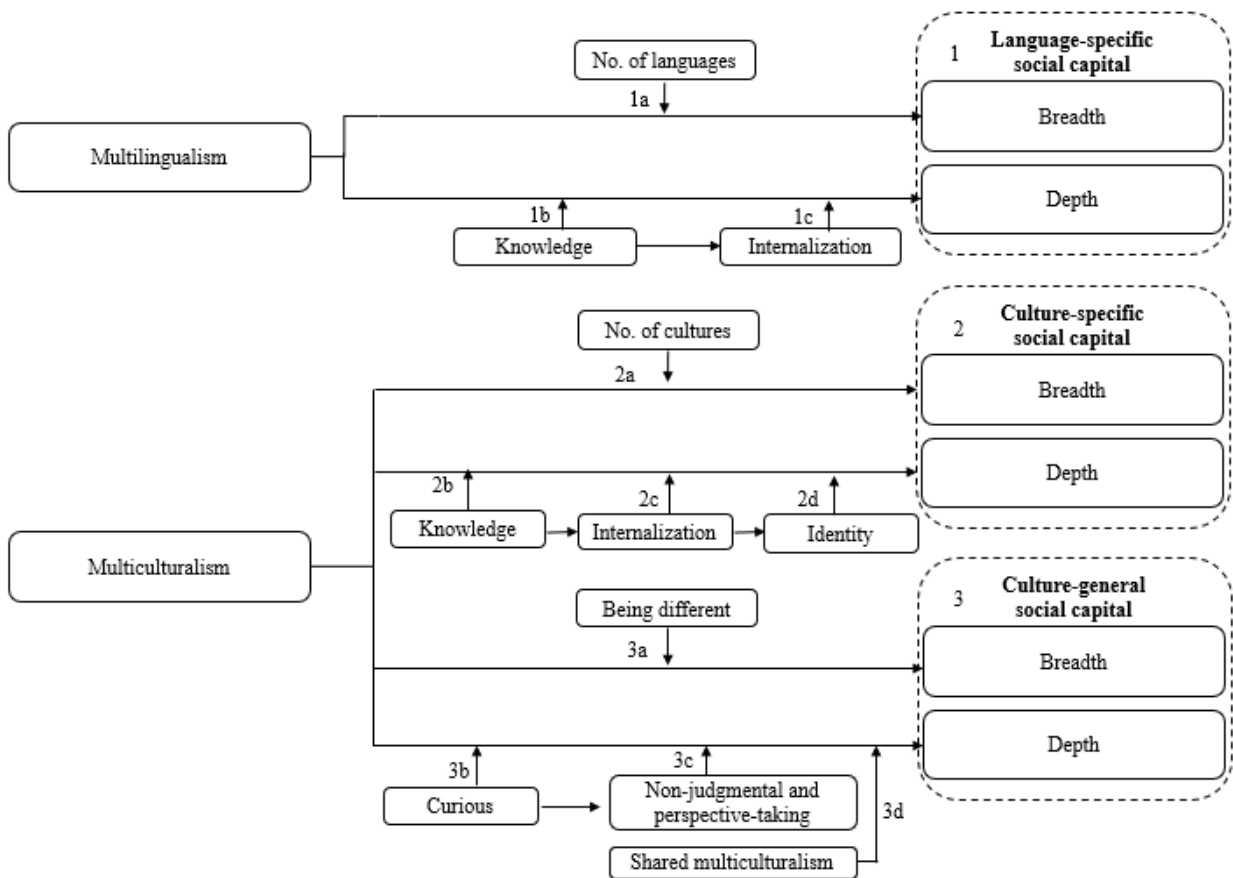
DISCUSSION

Our model visualizes the related, but distinct process and outcome of multiculturals and multilinguals building social capital. While multilinguals only build language-specific social capital, multiculturals have the ability not only to build culture-specific but also culture-general social capital. The mechanisms for this social capital formation include quantitative attributes (i.e. number of languages and cultures), contextual attributes (i.e. being different), cognitive attributes (i.e. knowledge, internalization, being curious, non-judgmental and able to take perspective) and more affective attributes (identity, including shared multiculturalism). While the quantitative attributes contribute to the breadth of the respective social capital and the contextual and cognitive attributes to both breadth and depth, the affective attributes contribute the most to the depth of the cultural social capital.

Theoretical Contributions

Our inductively generated findings provide several important contributions to the IB literature, specifically on the nascent streams of research on multicultural and multilingual individuals. While multicultural individuals recently have gained increasing interest in the management and IB literature, multilingual individuals so far have received only scarce attention, possibly because they have mostly been subsumed under multiculturals. With our study, we have investigated multiculturals and multilinguals as two distinct groups. More specifically, we expand our knowledge about multicultural individuals, specifically about the micro-processes with which they form social capital. Additionally, we offer important insights into the interrelations and distinctions of the concepts of individual-level multiculturalism and multilingualism.

Regarding multicultural individuals, we established a much more nuanced picture on the attributes they draw on to build relationships as well as on the attributes of their social capital as an outcome. Previous research considered identity-related processes only, arguing

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that a higher identity plurality leads to higher social capital (Fitzsimmons, 2013; Fitzsimmons et al., 2017). We found, however, that multiculturals additionally draw on contextual, cognitive and personal attributes. Specifically, in the formation of culture-specific social capital, identity is according to our findings still the mechanism that results in the strongest ties. Yet, our findings equally show that culture-specific knowledge and internalization are also mechanisms for deeper relationships. Further, in the formation of culture-general capital, the contextual attribute of being different contributes to the breadth, whereas the personal (and rather cognitive) attributes of being curious, non-judgmental and able to take the perspective of others are mechanisms for the depth. Additionally, we found that multiculturals also build stronger ties with other multiculturals through an identity-based bond. As such, we expanded research on multiculturals' social capital by not only looking at the outcome, but also the process of forming it. Our findings show that forming social capital from multiculturalism is a nuanced and complex undertaking. We have shown that Vora et al.'s (2019) tri-dimensional model of individual-level multiculturalism, consisting of knowledge, internalization and identity can be related to the process of forming social capital if we do not neglect contextual and personal aspects. We take it a step further and found the strong bond between two multiculturals, regardless of the specific composition, once again expanding their culture-general social capital. In addition, we have related multiculturalism to personal attributes, an undertaking that has gained considerably less attention. While multiculturals have previously been found to be particularly empathetic, flexible and adaptable (Brannen, Garcia, & Thomas, 2009; Brannen & Thomas, 2010; Fitzsimmons et al., 2017; Hong, 2010), our findings demonstrate that they are also particularly curious, non-judgmental and able to take others' perspectives. We further showed that their personal attributes are of high relevance for relationships with people from other cultural backgrounds. These are important contributions to move the field of research on multiculturals forward.

Regarding multilinguals, our study contributes to the nascent stream of research on multilingual individuals in IB. To the best of our knowledge, Welch and Welch's (2018) study is the only one in IB that relates multilingual employees to social capital, which they label language capital and relate to the number of languages one speaks. We expand this notion by providing a much more nuanced picture on the language-specific social capital that multilinguals possess and the cognitive and more affective mechanisms that facilitate social capital formation beyond the quantitative one. Drawing from early literature on language learning (Lambert, 1956), our findings show that functional knowledge and the internalization of socio-cultural understanding of a language build on each other in proportion to the depth of the social capital. This shows yet again that specifically IB research can benefit from other disciplines to shed light on the complex and multifaceted phenomena containing language (Birkinshaw, Brannen, & Tung, 2011). Further, research on language barriers in organizations has acknowledged a different impact of a lack of more functional language skills, such as lexical and syntactical skills, and of more culture-related language abilities, such as pragmatics and prosodics, on different organizational process such as trust formation (Tenzer et al., 2014), status (Neeley & Dumas, 2016), power dynamics (Tenzer & Pudelko, 2017) and decision-making (Harzing et al., 2011). We investigate these different types of language skills in a positive light, showing that each contributes to strong ties, although the internalization of a socio-cultural understanding enables deeper relationships than the functional skills. This again demonstrates that multilingual individuals are a complex group of employees that deserves to be untangled through in-depth micro-level research. We wish to advocate for a more positive view on multilingual individuals, shifting away from the deficiencies that individuals who speak several languages may possess which often lead to language barriers.

Since our research design included both multicultural and multilingual employees, we could detect important findings that a separate approach of previous research has not been able

to detect. It was only due to our integrated approach that we could refine the mechanisms and outcomes for language-related social capital and culture-related social capital. It was also thanks to our integrated approach that we saw the emergence of language-specific social capital only, whereas culture-related social capital was apparent in both a specific and a general type. We therefore move the field beyond the vague distinction (or no distinction) between multiculturalism and multilingualism. For instance, previously, multilingual fluency has been defined as a required aspect for multicultural competency (Chen et al., 2008; Chen, Lam, Hui, Ng, Mak, & Guan, 2016). We found, however, that the formation of culture-related social capital occurs largely independent from language attributes, and the formation of language-related social capital occurs largely independent from cultural attributes. While we certainly saw a strong interrelation between multiculturalism and multilingualism within our sample, our findings still show that an in-depth exploration allows to treat them as distinct concepts (see also Barner-Rasmussen et al., 2014; Ringberg et al., 2010). We can once again see that these employee groups are much more complex than previous research has assumed.

Further, we contribute to the social capital literature by showing how these particular employee groups establish social capital. We found that they use their language- and culture-related as well as personal attributes to build social capital that is unique to them, as such differs from that of monoculturals and monolinguals. Especially for MNCs, our findings show that they could arguably constitute a solution to their cultural and language barriers when relying on social capital for acquiring information, for example (Kostova & Roth, 2003).

Managerial Implications

Our study has several important managerial implications. First, we unpack the resources that multicultural and multilingual employees bring to the organization in the form of social capital, a crucial aspect for the organization to have a competitive advantage (Hollenbeck & Jamieson, 2015). Managers can expect their multilingual employees to have

some extent of language-specific social capital, and multicultural employees to have some extent of culture-specific and culture-general social capital. This helps managers to place their multicultural and multilingual employees in adequate positions to make use of the social capital to avoid that these employees perceive their resources as irrelevant (Welch & Welch, 2018).

Second, our study contributes to managing the expectations between the organization and the multicultural and multilingual employees regarding the breadth and depth of their social capital. While organizations can expect these individuals to have and expand a relatively large and international network regardless of the fluency level in their cultures and languages, the strength (or depth) may be limited depending on their fluency. Oftentimes, managers take it for granted that individuals with multiple cultures and languages create good relationships with other individuals from those cultures and languages. However, as we have shown, there is a difference between an initial access and the deepening of relationships. An awareness of this can contribute to realistic expectations and ultimately, a beneficial use of the individual's social capital.

Third, the more detailed knowledge about the specific characteristics and skills multiculturals and multilinguals draw on to form social capital helps HR departments to create professional development opportunities that unleash and support these. By providing beginner language training to employees, organizations can broaden their overall access to language-specific social capital (Welch & Welch, 2018). Advanced language training will help multilingual employees to deepen existing relationships. Further, culture-specific trainings will strengthen the necessary understanding for deeper relationships with people from specific cultures. Organizations could also provide networking opportunities specifically for multicultural individuals for stronger culture-general ties among their employees. Lastly, providing options to use and develop personal characteristics such as openness, curiosity and perspective-taking will give multiculturals perceived value and space to showcase their

particular assets. All these measures create the necessary knowledge, skills and attitudes to broaden employees' comfort zone, automatically resulting in more interaction with people from different cultural and language backgrounds.

Fourth, by unpacking the linkage between the specific capabilities and the resulting social capital outcome, multicultural and multilingual employees themselves can reflect and become aware of their assets and consciously put them into practice when building relationships. We also hope we provide them with concepts and vocabulary to articulate their strengths toward their employer.

Limitations and Suggestion for Future Research

While our study makes important contributions to theory and practice regarding multicultural and multilingual employees, we also wish to acknowledge its limitations. First, we had a relatively high proportion of respondents with a German cultural (90) and / or language (107) background, mainly due to the background and physical location of the interviewers. While one could argue that this may have influenced the outcome of our study, we nevertheless have 53 national cultures and 39 languages represented in our sample. Thus, we suppose that our findings are valid for a general multicultural and multilingual population. However, we encourage future research to first, test our propositions, possibly with quantitative methods, and second, to include other cultures and languages in their samples, especially from underrepresented regions such as Africa (the region with the most languages) and Latin America (the region with the least languages) (Westwood, 2007).

Second, due to the international work environment of all our interviewees, most of them spoke at least English on a regular basis, often in addition to their native language(s). Hence, we had relatively few 'true' monolinguals, who were native speakers of English while having multiple cultural backgrounds (such as Australian and Hong-Kongese or British and US-American), but no additional language knowledge to a notable degree. While this multicultural-

monolingual part of the sample would make a good control group for the differentiation between cultural and language influence on individuals' social capital formation, we must also acknowledge that the case is extremely rare given the significance of English as the business lingua franca (see also Barner-Rasmussen et al., 2014). Additionally, the different language abilities of professional speakers of the business language English and native English speakers, among other indicators, allowed us to detect the need for high proficiency to develop strong ties. We nevertheless see potential in conducting research on English-speaking multicultural-monolingual individuals for a better understanding of the culture-specific and -general social capital.

Third, our findings are based on data of one side of the social capital structure only, without matched responses from individuals that are part of our respondents' social capital. Clearly, dyads would have been optimal to prove for the perceptions from our respondents especially about the strength of the ties and depth of relationships. However, our inductive approach made it difficult to adjust our research design to include dyads, because it would have meant additional effort from the side of our interviewees to connect us with a suitable person from their network. We still encourage researchers to conduct studies that explore the structural social capital of multiculturals and multilinguals with data from multiple actors within their networks and ideally the elaboration of relationships over time.

Fourth, our data covers what our respondents reported to us at one point in time. Particularly regarding the development of the depth of social capital, time may play an important role (Tsai, 2000). While we obtained in-depth insights from our respondents into different stages of relationships with people, from early connections to long-term (work) relationships and hence, could include the factor of time in this way, we nevertheless see value in conducting longitudinal studies on social capital formation of multicultural and multilingual employees.

CONCLUSION

With our inductive study based on 154 qualitative semi-structured interviews, we generated mid-range theory explaining how multicultural and multilingual employees form social capital, and how the structural outcome looks like. We showed that their social capital is characterized by breadth and depth, with multilinguals forming language-specific and multiculturals both culture-specific and culture-general social capital. By unraveling the micro-processes of social capital formation, our study has shown that multilinguals draw on quantitative, cognitive and more affective attributes, while multiculturals draw on quantitative, contextual, cognitive, identity-related and personal attributes. Our resulting model depicts the multifaceted nature of social capital formation building on these attributes. We contribute to the literature by providing an in-depth understanding of the important resources that multiculturals and multilinguals bring to the international workplace in the form of social capital, expand the notion of social capital formation of multiculturals beyond identity-related processes, and of multilinguals beyond language capital, and provide a framework to explore social outcomes of multicultural and multilingual employees as distinct groups. Our study is important for management to become aware, foster the development of and benefit from multiculturals' and multilinguals' social resources and for multicultural and multilingual employees themselves to strategically develop and use their strengths. While we acknowledge our study's limitations, we provide suggestions for future research on different language and cultural backgrounds, with dyads and over a longer period of time.

5. Discussion of my Specific Contribution

The three articles provide substantial knowledge for the nascent stream of multicultural and multilingual employees, a workforce that gains increasing importance. On the basis of my qualitative data collection and analysis, I developed comprehensive models that explain 1) the capabilities these individuals have and how they implement them when engaging as bridge individuals, helping others to overcome cultural and language barriers, 2) the components they internalize to their multicultural and multilingual schemas that they can draw on when working in multinational settings, and 3) how they form social capital and how the properties of their social capital outcome look like which they and organizations can use to access resources. As such, I provide the following theoretical contributions:

First, the three articles clearly show that cultural and language diversity within individuals and the resulting processes and outcomes are complex, nuanced and multifaceted. In the second article, I provide a significantly deeper insight into the knowledge structures in multicultural and multilingual individuals' minds and how they internalize these. In the first and third article, I show how they use a multitude of attributes and characteristics for their advantage in work contexts. By looking at the complex micro-processes that lead to outcomes such as the bridging of cultural and language barriers and social capital, research gains a much better idea of the mechanisms that enable the beneficial use of this workforce.

Second, all three papers also show the complex dynamics between culture and language in general, and multiculturalism and multilingualism on the individual level in particular. So far, a separate approach on culture on the one hand and language on the other hand has led to fragmented findings in the three areas of my papers and beyond. For example, through the study of language barriers without considering multiculturals' roles in overcoming these, research was not able to detect their contributions. Further, the study of multiculturals' cognitive schemas without considering the language elements prevented to substantiate the

crucial role of language in internalizing cultural elements. In addition, it was only due to the integrated approach that I could differentiate between the language-specific only social capital stemming from multilingualism, but culture-specific and culture-general social capital that results from multiculturalism. My three papers clearly show the benefits of taking an integrated approach to study these closely related employee groups, because the cultural and language resources do overlap and influence each other.

Third, I offer ways to move beyond binary constructs and study multiculturalism and multilingualism as continua. Previously, individuals were categorized into the binary construct mono-cultural / -lingual and multi-cultural / -lingual. Research on multicultural individuals has started to adopt a perspective along continua by conceptualizing them along degrees in knowledge, internalization and identification. Research on multilingual individuals, in turn, has treated them as either native or non-native speakers, rarely allowing for a third option of professional speakers. In the three papers, I adopt, based on my findings, the perspective that they can have varying degrees of proficiency, also with regards to different contexts such as the professional and the private. By categorizing multiculturals and multilinguals along continua, my studies show that they take on the role as bridge individual even with lower levels of cultural or language skills, possess unique compositions of cultural and language elements in their cognitive schemas, and form deeper or less deep social capital.

Fourth, my study shows the importance of drawing from other disciplines such as linguistics and education, from the latter specifically from language learning and intercultural development. Scholars have previously highlighted that particularly IB research can learn from other disciplines to generate theory, and some have injected elements from linguistics into language research and psychology into multicultural research. My study confirms that linguistics is a rich discipline to learn from and introduces fields from education. As such, for example, my study shows that different stages in multilingualism, similarly to different stages

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in language learning, result in either asset- or shortcoming-based forms of bridging, as well as varying depth in social capital. Further, drawing from psychology and education research, I was able to show how multiculturals internalize knowledge, skills, values and norms as a multicultural schema in their minds.

Last but certainly not least, my qualitative, inductive, explorative study finally uncovered some of the many unknowns of multicultural and multilingual employees. Qualitative methods are particularly well suited to study unknown topics. Since multicultural and multilingual individuals as employee groups are still young streams of research, I could advance theory through an in-depth exploration of these individuals. For example, through the inductive approach, I could reveal the unexpected finding that individuals not only draw on their cultural and / or language-related assets, but also shortcomings to bridge language barriers. With the in-depth semi-structured interviews, I could uncover the deeply internalized cultural and language elements in their cognitive schemas. Further, the approach allowed me to unravel the multifaceted process of forming social capital, which included new attributes that had not been detected before.

To conclude, my study advances research on employees that gain increasing importance in the business world, particularly in multinational contexts, namely, multicultural and multilingual individuals. I am confident that I could provide substantial new knowledge through the mid-range theories that I developed on the basis of my rich data set.

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