

Bicultural Identity Integration at Work: Effects of  
Identity Conflict on Role Conflict Perceptions and Exhaustion

by

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### Author's Declaration

I hereby declare that I am the sole author of this thesis. This is a true copy of the thesis, including any required final revisions, as accepted by my examiners.

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## Abstract

Identifying with more than one culture has been found to confer numerous benefits, including greater psychological and emotional well-being. However, it is not clear how bicultural identity integration (BII; defined as biculturals' perceived compatibility between their two cultural identities) affects workplace well-being (i.e., employees' work exhaustion). I predict that biculturals' BII levels will influence work exhaustion through perceptions of role conflict. The results from two studies reveal that biculturals with low BII perceive conflict in their work role, and in turn, these perceptions are associated with greater work exhaustion. This research highlights the importance of BII for the effect of cultural identity on well-being. Practical implications are discussed in the context of training interventions for improving employee well-being.

*Keywords:* bicultural identity integration (BII), cultural identity, role conflict, work exhaustion

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## INTRODUCTION

Modern society is a portrait of cultural diversity. Growing numbers of individuals have internalized more than one culture and can be described as bicultural or multicultural (Sanchez, Shih, & Wilton, 2014). Globalization, the Internet, as well as cross-cultural friendships and partnerships encourage familiarity and identification with multiple cultures (Crisp, 2010). The possession of multiple social identities (i.e., the part of the self-concept derived from membership in social groups, such as cultural identity; Tajfel, 1978) has been associated with numerous benefits. The identity accumulation hypothesis has demonstrated that adopting numerous social identities promotes well-being by reducing social isolation (Thoits, 1983). Self-complexity, or possessing a greater number of independent social identities, has been found to buffer against the affective consequences of a negative experience, including depression and anxiety (Linville, 1985). Individuals with multiple social identities have access to a greater and more diverse pool of resources and social support to help them cope with negative life events, contributing to well-being (Cohen & Wills, 1985).

Similar benefits have been reported for individuals possessing multiple cultural identities. Compared to monoculturals, or individuals who identify with a single culture, biculturals have been found to exhibit greater psychological and emotional well-being, as well as behavioural competence (Nguyen & Benet-Martínez, 2013). Specifically, biculturalism is associated with lower anxiety and depression, and greater life satisfaction, self-esteem, academic achievement, career success, and social skills. The process of learning and implementing the customs of two cultures is proposed to imbue biculturals with greater social and cognitive flexibility, which act as a buffer against psychological and sociocultural maladjustment (e.g., interpersonal conflicts and intercultural miscommunication) and contribute to the aforementioned benefits (Nguyen &

Benet-Martínez, 2013). In the workplace, research indicates that biculturals achieve more promotions and are more innovative than monoculturals, with integrative complexity (a tendency to consider multiple perspectives when processing information) driving the relationship (Tadmor, Galinsky, & Maddux, 2012). This suggests that possessing multiple cultural identities may influence individuals' work outcomes through cognitive processes.

Past research suggests that there are a number of benefits associated with biculturalism. However, some researchers have argued that identifying with more than one cultural identity may not always be adaptive, as the process of dealing with two cultures and resolving cultural conflicts may lead to distress and identity confusion (see Rudmin, 2003). In fact, although biculturalism has been found to be positively associated with many outcomes, there is some empirical evidence to suggest that biculturalism is, at times, related to worse outcomes (Nguyen & Benet-Martínez, 2013), suggesting that there may be some unexamined moderators of these relationships. A key potential moderator that has not been assessed thus far, possibly due to its fairly recent conceptualization, is bicultural identity integration (BII). BII captures the perceived compatibility between individuals' two cultural identities (Benet-Martínez & Haritatos, 2005). It is composed of two independent constituents: cultural conflict (the perception of being caught between two conflicting cultures) and cultural distance (the perception of the two cultures being separate and distinct). Individuals with higher levels of BII (i.e., lower BII conflict and distance) perceive their two identities to be compatible and highly integrated, whereas those with lower BII (i.e., higher BII conflict and distance) perceive their two identities to be oppositional and often feel pressured to choose between their competing identities in any given situation (Benet-Martínez & Haritatos, 2005). Higher BII has been associated with experiencing greater psychological adjustment (a composite of higher self-esteem, life satisfaction, and subjective

happiness, and lower depression, anxiety, and loneliness) compared to lower BII (Chen, Benet-Martínez, & Bond, 2008). Thus, low-BII biculturals may not experience all of the benefits reportedly associated with biculturalism.

Whereas past work has focused on the effects of biculturalism on general well-being, the current investigation examines the relationship between BII and well-being in the workplace. Individuals spend an extensive amount of time at work (a conservative estimate is 90,000 hours over a lifetime; Pryce-Jones, 2010), and research on work-family spillover (or the transfer of moods, stress, and emotions from work to the family domain; Mennino, Rubin, & Brayfield, 2005) suggests that one's workplace well-being (or lack thereof) may extend to non-work domains as well. The study of workplace well-being and its antecedents can have widespread implications.

Work exhaustion is recognized as a negative indicator of workplace well-being. Exhausted employees are depleted of the mental and emotional energy required to meet job demands (Moore, 2000). In essence, employees' energy reserves have been depleted to the point where they no longer have energy left for additional job tasks, and they feel "fatigued," "used up," or "drained." One immediate effect of exhaustion is impaired task performance (Muraven & Baumeister, 2000), while the indirect effects consist of job dissatisfaction (Blau et al., 2012; Burke & Greenglass, 1995), decreased organizational commitment, and increased turnover intentions (Lee & Ashforth, 1996). Preventing and limiting work exhaustion is of practical importance to organizations.

In this paper, I argue that low-BII biculturals experience greater work exhaustion compared to high-BII biculturals. BII levels influence biculturals' responses to cultural cues;

high BIIs respond in a culturally congruent way, whereas low BIIs exhibit culturally incongruent behaviours (Benet-Martínez, Leu, Lee, & Morris, 2002). The response of low BIIs is suggested to arise from cultural identity threat; the fear that conforming to one culture's expectations (e.g., culturally normative behaviour following a cultural cue) involves temporarily abandoning one's other cultural identity (Mok & Morris, 2013). Based on the strength model of self-control (Baumeister, Bratslavsky, Muraven, & Tice, 1998), dealing with identity threat (e.g., low BIIs managing conflicting identities) may deplete one's limited self-control resources, which in turn leads to fatigue, exhaustion, and a decreased capability for further self-control (Hagger, Wood, Stiff, & Chatzisarantis, 2010). Thus, lower BII levels may be associated with greater work exhaustion.

Furthermore, I argue that perceptions of role conflict will mediate the relation between BII and work exhaustion. Role conflict in the workplace is the perception of incongruent expectations or incompatible job requirements (Peterson et al., 1995). Low BIIs, who possess two distinct cultural identities and perceptual frameworks (Benet-Martínez et al., 2002), may experience greater role conflict compared to high BIIs, whose perceptual lens is an amalgamation of their cultural identities (Amiot, de la Sablonnière, Terry, & Smith, 2007). Low-BII biculturals may perceive role demands to conflict if the demands activate both cultural identities, or require temporarily relinquishing one identity to satisfy the role requirements. Drawing on the depletion argument of role engagement (Rothbard, 2001), role conflict may deplete individuals' limited psychological and physiological resources, contributing to fatigue and exhaustion over time. I propose that role conflict perceptions will mediate the relation between BII and work exhaustion, such that lower levels of BII will be associated with greater perceived role conflict, which in turn will be related to greater work exhaustion.

This research contributes to the literature in numerous ways. First, it responds to the call for more research on the potential moderators of the biculturalism-wellbeing association (Nguyen & Benet-Martinez, 2013), through examination of BII's effects on biculturals' reported work exhaustion. Second, it contributes to the BII and identity literatures by investigating consequences of conflicting cultural identities. Third, it extends our knowledge about role conflict by identifying an individual factor (low BII) as an antecedent to role conflict perceptions. This is the first study to my knowledge that explores the effects of cultural identity conflict on role conflict and exhaustion in the workplace. This research is important as it provides evidence for the influential role of identity-related individual factors (i.e., BII) on workplace perceptions and outcomes, and suggests a promising direction for future research concerning workplace well-being.

### **Cultural Identity Activation and Conflict**

Inherent in each individual is a self-concept or identity; a set of cognitive representations about the self. Social Identity Theory distinguishes between two broad types of identity: one's personal identity (which includes attributes specific to the individual, such as personality) and one's social identity (which includes attributes of social groups to which one belongs) (Tajfel & Turner, 1979; Turner, 1982). A cultural identity is a type of social identity that encompasses the values, norms, beliefs, and attitudes associated with a group of people (Jameson, 2007), which serve as a guide for the typical, appropriate, and desirable behaviours of a particular group (Smircich, 1983). Bicultural individuals may draw on two distinct cultural meaning systems, or associative networks of the shared knowledge, values, and beliefs of a culture (D'Andrade, 1984). These meaning systems are interpretative frames that influence individuals' affects,

cognitions, and behaviours when culture is made salient (Benet-Martínez et al., 2002; Hong, Chiu, & Kung, 1997).

The dynamic constructivist approach to culture recognizes that individuals' meaning systems may contain conflicting theories (Hong, Morris, Chiu, & Benet-Martinez, 2000). For instance, North Americans tend to explain behaviour in terms of individual traits or dispositions, whereas East Asians tend to attribute behaviour to situational constraints (Choi, Nisbett, & Norenzayan, 1999). Such findings suggest cross-cultural differences in causal theories of behaviour, which may engender internal conflict for Asian-American biculturals. In any given situation, however, conflicting cultural identities and their respective meaning systems may not simultaneously guide behaviour (Hong et al., 2000).

The activation of a particular identity over another depends on the context (or the fit between the characteristics of an identity and the stimuli present in the situation) and commitment to that identity (Stets & Burke, 2000). According to Stryker's Identity Theory, individuals are more committed to identities that are positively valued by a large number of people over an extensive network, such as one's cultural identity (Stryker & Serpe, 1982). Hence, identities that are more embedded (i.e., generally relevant across situations and with numerous individuals, such as one's gender, race, and culture) may become activated over other identities that may appear more context-relevant (such as one's workplace identity). For example, an employee may be offended by an interaction in the workplace that is perceived as threatening to their gender or cultural identity, which would not have occurred had they perceived themselves simply as an employee of the organization.

Individuals' work environment may also influence cultural identity activation. The relative representation of different groups contributes to a heightened awareness of group membership for those in the minority (Frey & Tropp, 2006). In other words, a female employee may be acutely aware of her gender if she is the only woman in the room. Similarly, cultural identity may be salient in situations where one's culture is in the minority. This may occur frequently for biculturals, especially in a workplace predominantly comprised of members from one cultural group, which may increase awareness of belonging to another cultural group. For example, a Chinese-Canadian may be perceived as "Chinese" in a predominantly Canadian workplace, and as "Canadian" in a Chinese workplace. Hence, biculturals may frequently be aware of the cultural groups to which they belong.

Biculturals' perceptions and behaviours in the workplace may be influenced by their cultural identities, which may be activated through identity commitment (Stryker & Serpe, 1982) and environmental cues that enhance cultural awareness (Frey & Tropp, 2006). However, cultural identity activation elicits different responses from biculturals depending on BII level. High BIIs respond in an assimilative manner (i.e., they behave in a culturally congruent way), whereas low BIIs respond contrastively (i.e., they exhibit culturally incongruent behaviour) to cultural cues (Benet-Martínez et al., 2002; Mok & Morris, 2009, 2010, 2011, 2013). For example, Benet-Martínez and colleagues (2002) found that Chinese-Americans with high BII behaved in a Chinese fashion after being exposed to Chinese cultural cues, whereas those with low BII exhibited the opposite effect (i.e., they behaved in an American fashion after being exposed to Chinese cultural cues). Recent research has found that the contrastive response of low BIIs extends to self-perceived personality (Mok & Morris, 2009), creativity (Mok & Morris, 2010), behavioural forecasting (Mok & Morris, 2011), and consumer information-seeking and

choice (Mok & Morris, 2013). These studies suggest that BII may influence biculturals' perceptions and behaviours following cultural identity activation.

BII may also influence biculturals' workplace well-being, in that the processes underlying low BIIs' contrastive responses (contrary to high BIIs' assimilative responses) may contribute to cognitive depletion. High BIIs may behave in a culturally congruent way without excluding their other cultural identity, as both identities are integrated into one cultural knowledge system (Amiot et al., 2007). Low BIIs, however, must choose between two conflicting cultural meaning systems, effectively abandoning one identity temporarily (Mok & Morris, 2010). Losing a cultural identity can be perceived as a threat, triggering defensive behaviours such as resistance to cues to act in accordance with one identity. This reactance to cultural expectations leads to shifts away from the cued culture, in the form of contrastive responses (Mok & Morris, 2011). Conversely, high BIIs do not perceive cultural cues as threatening to the self, and their low defensiveness may enable assimilative responses (Mok & Morris, 2013). Past research has found that perceived threat of cultural identity exclusion mediates the effect of BII on responses to cultural cues (Mok & Morris, 2013). This is consistent with evidence suggesting that holding discrepant self-views (e.g., conflicting identities) is related to defensive behaviour (Jordan, Spencer, Zanna, Hoshino-Browne, & Correll, 2003).

In turn, dealing with threats to one's self-concept may be cognitively depleting. Prior research has found that threats to individuals' social identities are associated with decreased self-control in unrelated domains, such as decision making (Inzlicht & Kang, 2010). This is consistent with the view that acts of self-control use a common limited resource (Baumeister et al., 1998). Self-control is defined as an individual's capacity to change, override, and regulate their impulses, desires, and habitual responses (Baumeister & Heatherton, 1996). According to

the strength (or resource) model of self-control, engaging in acts of self-control (e.g., low BIIs choosing and switching between two conflicting cultural meaning systems) depletes one's limited self-control reservoir (Baumeister et al., 1998). Self-control has been likened to a muscle; just as a muscle becomes tired after a period of exertion, one's capacity for self-control is reduced following periods of self-regulation (Muraven & Baumeister, 2000). The state of diminished self-control strength, *ego depletion*, may be counteracted by restoring self-control resources through rest and relaxation (Tyler & Burns, 2008), or by eating to replenish blood glucose levels (Gailliot et al., 2007). Low BIIs' conflicting cultural identities may result in frequent experiences of ego depletion.

Ego depletion is associated with experiencing mental fatigue, or tiredness accompanied by an aversion to continue with the task at hand (Boksem & Tops, 2008). A chronic lack of recovery following cognitive exertion (i.e., prolonged ego depletion) may be experienced as excessive fatigue or exhaustion. In fact, exhaustion in the burnout literature has been conceptualized as the depletion of mental resources (Maslach, Schaufeli, & Leiter, 2001; Moore, 2000b). For the purposes of the current research, work exhaustion serves as an indicator of ego depletion.

Juggling conflicting cultural identities may require self-control and deplete low BIIs' cognitive resources, increasing susceptibility to experiencing exhaustion. This may be particularly relevant in the workplace, an environment that is cognitively demanding and abounding in cultural cues (e.g., interacting with multicultural colleagues and clients). Thus, low-BII biculturals, who may experience identity threat following cultural identity activation, and find themselves frequently switching between conflicting cultural frameworks, are expected

to experience greater work exhaustion compared to high-BII biculturals. To test this logic, I propose the following hypothesis:

*Hypothesis 1:* BII will be negatively related to work exhaustion, such that lower levels of BII will be associated with greater work exhaustion.

### **Role Conflict Perceptions**

Identity theory (Stryker, 1968, 1987; Stryker & Serpe, 1982) makes a distinction between role identities (e.g., parent, employee) and social identities (e.g., culture, gender, or race). A role is a set of behavioural expectations for a position in a social structure (Rizzo, House, & Lirtzman, 1970), and individuals develop role identities for the various positions that they occupy (Simon, 1992). Social identities influence which roles an individual may hold and their relative importance (e.g., culture may impose boundaries on the roles women may hold in the workplace) (Hogg, Terry, & White, 1995). In addition, the interpretation of a role is culturally dependent (e.g., the role of a mother consists of very different behavioural scripts in North America compared to Asia or Africa) (Matsumoto, 2007). Thus, role identities may be constrained and differentially interpreted depending on the cultural identities one holds.

Individuals may experience conflict within and between their various role identities. In the workplace, role conflict (within the employee role) may occur when there is perceived incongruence in the role expectations or incompatibility in the job requirements (Peterson et al., 1995). The conflict may be between an individual's internal standards or values and the defined role behaviours (e.g., a job that requires direct eye contact with customers may conflict with Aboriginal norms of avoiding direct eye contact when listening as a sign of respect and to avoid intimidating the speaker; Li, 2004), or result from perceiving others' requests or the job

requirements to be incompatible (e.g., being told that one should be both assertive and easygoing in order to excel in one's position) (Rizzo et al., 1970). Events in the workplace may also engender perceptions of role conflict by making salient otherwise latent inconsistencies in expectations (e.g., an unsuccessful meeting with a client may lead to recognizing that the expected behaviour did not match the enacted behaviour, based on one's established interpretative frame) (Peterson et al., 1995).

Perceptions of role conflict may be instigated by work events, as well as exacerbated by conflicting cultural identities (i.e., low BII). Past research has found that individual differences influence role perceptions (Miles, 1976), suggesting that individuals' interpretations of objective role conditions determine experiences of role conflict. Roles are embedded with culturally dependent norms and behavioural scripts (Matsumoto, 2007). Low-BII biculturals have two sets of cultural meaning systems, or two distinct perceptual frames through which to interpret role expectations (Benet-Martínez et al., 2002). Role conflict may arise if low BIIs experience identity threat and feel they must temporarily abandon one cultural identity to satisfy role demands; an indication of perceived incompatibility between role expectations and the values associated with the relinquished identity. In addition, low BIIs may perceive role conflict if the job requirements activate both cultural identities. For example, informing an Aboriginal-Canadian bicultural that they should be more assertive at work may activate their Canadian script for the employee role, as assertiveness is valued in the Canadian workplace (House, Hanges, Javidan, Dorfman, & Gupta, 2004). Instructing the same individual to be more easygoing at work may activate their Aboriginal employee script, as the Aboriginal cyclical view of time encourages flexibility and a laid-back attitude (Reynolds & Valentine, 2011). However, asking a low-BII bicultural to be both assertive and easygoing may engender perceptions of incompatible

role requirements, as the demands activate behavioural scripts associated with conflicting cultural identities. As conflicting cultural frameworks may not simultaneously guide behaviour (Hong et al., 2000), low BIIs may need to choose one cultural script over the other, igniting perceptions of role conflict. High BIIs, on the other hand, have integrated the behavioural scripts of both cultural identities into one cultural knowledge system (Amiot et al., 2007). Accordingly, requests to be both assertive and easygoing at work may not be perceived as conflicting, owing to both values being integrated into one inclusive “employee” behavioural script. Thus, low-BII biculturals may report more instances of role conflict at work compared to high-BII biculturals.

In turn, perceptions of role conflict may contribute to work exhaustion. The depletion argument, formulated to address the process of engagement in social roles, posits that individuals have limited psychological and physiological resources to expend, and role engagement depletes these resources (Rothbard, 2001). Engagement refers to individuals’ psychological presence or focus on role activities, and is composed of: 1) attention (i.e., the amount of time spent thinking about a role); and 2) absorption (i.e., the intensity of one’s focus on a role) (Rothbard, 2001). Role engagement, particularly when role demands are incompatible, may act as a stressor and contribute to strain (i.e., one’s psychological or physiological response to stress, which may manifest as exhaustion; Hurrell, Nelson, & Simmons, 1998) (Rothbard, 2001). This is consistent with the strength model of self-control, which suggests that volitional acts of self-control (e.g., compromising or choosing between perceived incompatible role demands) involve exertion, expending one’s limited supply of energy or self-control resources (Baumeister et al., 1998). Role conflict may require greater engagement (i.e., attention and absorption) in order to resolve the conflict, depleting individuals’ resources and contributing to fatigue and exhaustion over time. The link between role conflict perceptions and exhaustion has been established in past

research (Burke & Greenglass, 1995; Jawahar, Stone, & Kisamore, 2007; Lee & Ashforth, 1996; Sethi, Barrier, & King, 1999). If BII is correlated with perceived role conflict, and if role conflict is correlated with exhaustion, then BII may have an indirect effect on exhaustion (via its influence on role conflict perceptions). Accordingly, I propose the following hypothesis:

*Hypothesis 2:* Perceived role conflict will mediate the relation between BII and work exhaustion, such that lower levels of BII will be associated with greater perceptions of role conflict which, in turn, will be related to greater work exhaustion.

### **Overview of Studies**

Two studies tested the aforementioned hypotheses. Study 1 was designed to provide an initial test of the hypotheses, through administration of a survey to a bicultural student sample. Study 2 was designed to investigate whether the results of Study 1 could be replicated using a field sample. Study 2 further assessed both hypotheses via survey in a sample of currently employed, Aboriginal-Canadian bicultural adults.

# STUDY 1

## Method

### Participants

Ninety-eight<sup>1</sup> bicultural undergraduate students (45% male; Age range = 18 - 29,  $M = 20.16$ ,  $SD = 1.90$ ) at a large Canadian university participated in this study for course credit. Participants had to meet the following criteria: 1) identify with Canadian culture and one other culture; and 2) have held a job within the last six months<sup>2</sup>. The criteria did not exclude individuals who identified less strongly with one culture<sup>3</sup>, or who reported lower BII levels<sup>4</sup>. Cultures individuals identified with included<sup>5</sup>: Arab (3%), Chinese (28%), Indian (13%), Pakistani (4%), Polish (5%), Portuguese (5%), and Romanian (4%). Participants held a full-time job (11%), part-time job (64%) or co-op placement (25%) in a workplace that was either predominantly<sup>6</sup> Canadian (85%) or associated with their other cultural identity (15%). Participants were either currently employed (43%) or held a job within the last six months (56%), the latter having left their job on average three months before completing the survey (Range: 14 – 183 days,  $M = 90.73$ ,  $SD = 42.68$ ).

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<sup>1</sup> One hundred and twelve individuals participated in this study, but two individuals did not identify as bicultural, three did not identify with Canadian culture, five had not held a job within the last six months, and four did not complete the full survey.

<sup>2</sup> Six months was designated as the eligibility cut-off for recall purposes, as past research has found that recall of central events remains consistent six months after an event, while recall of peripheral details declines over that time period (Howe, Courage, & Peterson, 1994), rendering recall greater than six months after an event prone to error.

<sup>3</sup> Participants' responses to the item "How much do you identify with Canadian culture" ranged from two to six ( $M = 4.62$ ,  $SD = .90$ ) on a 6-point scale ranging from "very weakly identify" to "very strongly identify". Responses concerning participants' other cultural identity ranged from one to six ( $M = 4.18$ ,  $SD = 1.02$ ) on the same scale.

<sup>4</sup> Participants' mean BII levels ranged from 2.14 to 5.00 on a 5-point Likert scale ( $M = 3.57$ ,  $SD = .60$ ).

<sup>5</sup> Cultures that were identified by less than three percent of individuals were not mentioned in the above list, but included Filipino, Hungarian, Jamaican, Korean, Serbian and several others.

<sup>6</sup> "Predominantly" was defined as the culture to which most coworkers belonged (e.g., a Chinese restaurant with most employees identifying as Chinese would be considered a predominantly Chinese workplace).

## Procedure

Participants completed an online survey. Biculturals were asked to identify their other cultural identity (other than Canadian) and then complete a demographic questionnaire and measure of bicultural identity integration. Individuals then thought about their current job, or a job they had held within the last six months, and answered subsequent questions according to the job that they had in mind. To ensure that the participants were indeed envisioning a particular place of employment and recalling their experiences at work, they were asked a number of questions about their job, including job title, tenure in the position, and hours worked per week. Participants then completed measures assessing role conflict and work exhaustion.

## Measures

**Prescreening questionnaire.** Participants were asked to answer the following questions on a dichotomous Yes-No scale: 1) “Do you identify with more than one culture (i.e., do you consider yourself to be bicultural)?”; 2) “Do you identify with Canadian culture?”; and 3) “In the past six months, have you held a job (either full-time, part-time, or a co-op placement)?” Only participants who answered “Yes” to the three questions were eligible to participate, as a bicultural working sample was required to investigate the relationships between bicultural identity integration, role conflict, and work exhaustion. Participants were also asked to identify their other cultural identity with one word (e.g., “Chinese”). This word was automatically inserted in the online survey to denote individuals’ other cultural identity (e.g., “Is your workplace predominantly Canadian (i.e., most of your coworkers are Canadian) or [*insert other culture*] (i.e., most of your coworkers are [*insert other culture*])?”).

**Demographic questionnaire.** Participants were asked about their gender, age, number of years spent living in Canada, and number of years spent living in another country (associated with their other cultural identity). They were also asked to rate the strength of their identification with each cultural identity with two separate items that asked “How much do you identify with (*insert other culture*)/Canadian culture?” (Benet-Martínez & Haritatos, 2005). Responses were measured on a 6-point scale ranging from 1 (*very weakly identify*) to 6 (*very strongly identify*). Participants were then instructed to think about their current job, or a job that they had held within the last six months. They were asked the following questions with regards to their job: 1) “Is the job full-time, part-time, or a co-op placement?”; 2) “Are you currently working, or have worked in the past six months (and if the latter, how long has it been since you stopped working)?”; 3) “What is your job title?”; 4) “How long have you held the same job?”; 5) “How many hours per week do you work, on average?”; and 6) “Is your workplace predominantly Canadian or predominantly associated with your other cultural identity?”

**Bicultural Identity Integration.** The 8-item BIIS-1 scale by Benet-Martínez and Haritatos (2005) was used (see Appendix A). Four items assessed BII conflict (e.g., “I am conflicted between the [*insert other culture*] and Canadian ways of doing things”) and four items BII distance (e.g., “I keep [*insert other culture*] and Canadian cultures separate”). Participants rated their agreement with each item using a 5-point Likert-type scale ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 5 (*strongly agree*). The scale showed questionable reliability (Gliem & Gliem, 2003), with a Cronbach’s alpha of .62. Subscale reliabilities for BII conflict and BII distance were .82 and .50, respectively. An exploratory factor analysis using maximum likelihood extraction with criteria for extraction set at eigenvalues above 1 revealed three factors. The third factor consisted solely of the item “I am simply a [*insert other culture*] person who lives in

Canada.” An additional factor analysis with Varimax rotation set for a two-factor structure consistent with prior work revealed moderate to high factor loadings for BII conflict items (ranging from .65 to .85) with minimal cross-factor loadings (none greater than .14)<sup>7</sup>. However, the BII distance item “I am simply a [*insert other culture*] person who lives in Canada” exhibited a loading of .04 and a cross-factor loading of .05. This item is more descriptive in nature and does not clearly mention distance or non-overlap between cultures, which may explain its weak loading. The item was dropped from the analyses<sup>8</sup>, consistent with Tabachnick and Fidell’s (2007) rule of thumb of .32 as the minimum loading for an item to be included in a scale. The item “I keep [*insert other culture*] and Canadian cultures separate” loaded .35 with a cross-loading of .24, barely making the .32 cut-off for inclusion (which also includes maintaining cross-factor loadings below .32). Cronbach alphas for the overall scale and BII distance subscale, without the poorly-loading item, were .67 and .67, respectively (compared to .62 and .50 with the questionable item).

**Role conflict.** The 3-item role conflict scale from Peterson and colleagues (1995) was used (see Appendix B). This measure, derived from Rizzo et al.’s (1970) role conflict scale, includes items which were found to produce a reliable and valid index of role conflict across cultures. As the current study includes participants from many different cultural backgrounds, a cross-culturally validated measure of role conflict was deemed appropriate. Participants were instructed to answer the items based on their current job or place of employment that they indicated in the demographic questionnaire. Participants indicated their agreement with items (e.g., “I often get involved in situations in which there are conflicting requirements”) on a

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<sup>7</sup> The results did not change when only the BII conflict scale items were used. This analysis was conducted so that the results of the two studies may be more directly comparable.

<sup>8</sup> The results did not change with or without the questionable item.

5-point Likert-type scale ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 5 (*strongly agree*). Scale reliability was low (Cronbach's alpha = .50), and analysis of item inter-correlations revealed that the item "I had to do things that had to be done differently under different conditions" was not significantly correlated with the other two items ( $r = .09$  and  $r = .04$ ). This item was not included in the analyses to obtain greater scale internal consistency (Cronbach's alpha = .73 without the questionable item)<sup>9</sup>.

**Work Exhaustion.** The 5-item work exhaustion scale by Moore (2000a) was used (see Appendix C). Participants were told to answer according to the job that they had in mind (as indicated in the demographic questionnaire). Work exhaustion items (e.g., "I feel used up at the end of the work day") were rated on a 7-point scale ranging from 1 (*never*) to 7 (*daily*). Scale reliability was excellent (Cronbach's alpha = .93).

## Results

Descriptive statistics and correlations are presented in Table 1. Consistent with past findings, role conflict and work exhaustion were positively correlated ( $r = .33, p = .001$ ) (Moore, 2000b). Preliminary analyses revealed that demographic characteristics, including gender and age, were not significantly correlated with any of the predictors. However, the number of years spent living in Canada was significantly correlated with BII ( $r = .24, p = .016$ ) and work exhaustion ( $r = .22, p = .029$ ). The variance due to time spent in Canada may be argued to reflect meaningful developmental changes (i.e., individuals may increasingly perceive their cultural identities to be compatible the more time they spend living in Canada, due to lower societal rates

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<sup>9</sup> The results did not change with or without the questionable item.

of cultural discrimination<sup>10</sup>, for example). Thus, the time spent in Canada was not included as a control variable, as any associated variance may be meaningful rather than irrelevant.

Table 1  
*Study 1: Descriptive Statistics and Bivariate Correlations*

Variable	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	1	2
1. Bicultural Identity Integration	3.57	.60		
2. Role conflict	2.74	.99	-.37**	
3. Work exhaustion	3.64	1.56	-.13	.33**

*Note.*  $N = 98$ . BII and role conflict are measured on a scale from 1 to 5, and work exhaustion on a scale from 1 to 7. \*\*  $p < .01$ .

### Hypothesis Testing

Bivariate linear regression analyses were conducted to test the hypothesis that BII will be negatively related to work exhaustion. BII was not significantly related to work exhaustion,  $R^2 = .02$ ,  $\beta = -.13$ ,  $t(96) = -1.32$ ,  $p = .190$ . As no direct effect between BII and work exhaustion was found, Hypothesis 1 was not supported.

According to Zhao, Lynch, and Chen (2010), a significant direct effect is not a necessary prerequisite for mediation. Hence, I followed the authors' steps for mediation testing, using the recommended bootstrap test in Preacher and Hayes' (2004, 2008) mediation script. This method of mediation testing is increasingly advocated over Baron and Kenny's (1986) traditional mediation analyses and use of the Sobel test (MacKinnon, Lockwood, Hoffman, West, & Sheets, 2002; Shrout & Bolger, 2002), as it allows for mediation testing without a significant zero-order

<sup>10</sup> Discrimination (i.e., being mistreated because of one's cultural background) is an antecedent of cultural conflict and low BII (Benet-Martínez & Haritatos, 2005).

effect of the independent variable (IV) on the dependent variable (DV), and uses the more powerful bootstrap test of the indirect effect (Zhao et al., 2010). I examined the indirect effect of BII on work exhaustion through perceptions of role conflict, using Hayes' (2013) PROCESS macro for SPSS (model 4, bootstrapping with 5000 resamples, 95% confidence interval). Indirect effects are significant if the confidence interval does not include zero (Preacher & Hayes, 2004). Figure 1 illustrates the results. BII was significantly negatively related to role conflict perceptions ( $B = -.61, SE = .16, p < .001, 95\% CI = [-0.92, -0.29]$ ), but was not related to work exhaustion ( $B = -.35, SE = .27, p = .190, 95\% CI = [-0.88, 0.18]$ ). When both BII and role conflict were included as predictors, role conflict was significantly positively related to work exhaustion ( $B = .52, SE = .16, p = .002, 95\% CI = [0.19, 0.85]$ ), whereas BII was not ( $B = -.03, SE = .27, p = .898, 95\% CI = [-0.58, 0.51]$ ). The indirect effect of BII on work exhaustion through role conflict perceptions was significant (indirect effect =  $-.32, SE = .14, 95\% CI = [-0.65, -0.10]$ ). These results fit Zhao and colleagues' (2010) criteria for indirect-only mediation, where the indirect effect is significant, while the direct effect controlling for the mediator is not. Thus, Hypothesis 2 was supported.

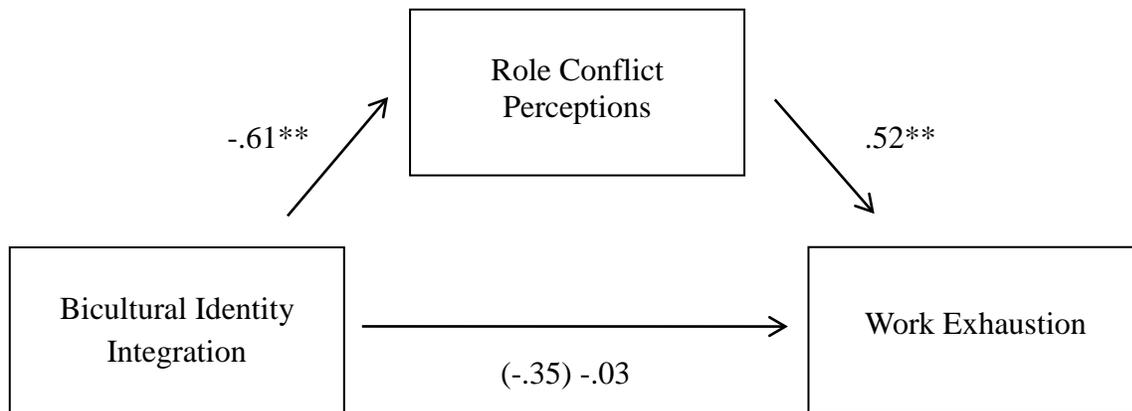


Figure 1. Unstandardized coefficients for the relation between BII and work exhaustion as mediated by role conflict perceptions. Note that the unstandardized coefficient between BII and work exhaustion, controlling for role conflict perceptions, is outside the parentheses. The bootstrapped unstandardized indirect effect was  $-.32$  (95% CI =  $[-0.65, -0.10]$ ).  $N = 98$   
 \*\*  $p < .01$ .

### Supplementary Analyses

The cultural composition of individuals' workplace<sup>11</sup> was analyzed as a potential moderator of the BII-role conflict relationship. As contextual cues influence identity activation (Stets & Burke, 2000), it is possible that BII interacts with the work environment to determine role conflict perceptions. However, the interaction between BII and workplace composition was found to be non-significant,  $B = .09$ ,  $SE = .44$ ,  $t(94) = 0.21$ ,  $p = .835$ . The main effect of workplace composition on role conflict perceptions was also non-significant,  $B = .45$ ,  $SE = .27$ ,  $t(94) = 1.63$ ,  $p = .106$ . This suggests that the cultural group to which the majority of workers belong does not affect role conflict perceptions.

<sup>11</sup> This was assessed with the item "Is your workplace predominantly Canadian (coded as 0) or predominantly associated with your other cultural identity (coded as 1)?"

The mediation analyses conducted to test Hypothesis 2 were repeated, splitting participants into two groups based on employment status (previous versus current employment). This was done to alleviate concerns that the results may be affected by recall inaccuracy, as over half of the participants were not currently employed (56%), and were asked to recall their experiences of role conflict and work exhaustion from a job they had held within the last six months. The results of the analyses are illustrated in Table 2. The indirect effect of BII on work exhaustion through role conflict perceptions was significant for both currently employed participants (indirect effect = -.33, *SE* = .20, 95% CI = [-0.86, -0.04]) and previously employed individuals (indirect effect = -.33, *SE* = .22, 95% CI = [-0.89, -0.01]). Similar results were obtained regardless of employment status, suggesting that participants' recall of past work experiences does not serve as a major limitation of the current findings.

Table 2  
*Summary of Indirect Effects Tests (BII Predicting Work Exhaustion)*

Indirect effect tested	<i>B</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>p</i>	95% CI	
				Lower	Upper
Path A: BII → Role conflict					
Current employment	-.49	.21	.026	-.93	-.06*
Previous employment	-.72	.24	.003	-1.19	-.25**
Path B: Role conflict → Work exhaustion					
Current employment	.66	.24	.009	.18	1.14**
Previous employment	.45	.22	.048	.01	.90*
Path C: BII → Work exhaustion					
Current employment	-.09	.34	.795	-.79	.61
Previous employment	.07	.42	.876	-.77	.90

*Note:* Current employment *N* = 42. Previous employment *N* = 55. \* *p* < .05, \*\* *p* < .01

## Discussion

Study 1 provided preliminary support for the mediating effect of role conflict perceptions in the relationship between BII and work exhaustion. Lower BII levels were associated with greater perceptions of role conflict at work, which, in turn, was related to greater work exhaustion. These results are consistent with the hypothesized theoretical framework.

A potential limitation of Study 1 is that I used a student sample for convenience and preliminary hypothesis testing. As over half of the participants (56%) were asked to recall their past work experiences, memory failure may have contributed to participant recall inaccuracy (Raphael, 1987). A marginally significant difference in work exhaustion was observed based on employment status, with individuals recalling past work experiences reporting greater work exhaustion compared to those currently employed<sup>12</sup>. A possible explanation for this group difference is the peak-end rule of memory recall, which states that individuals' memory for an experience is largely based on its peak (or most intense point) and its end, rather than the average of experienced moments (Ariely & Carmon, 2000). Although prompted to report their overall experienced work exhaustion, previously employed individuals may recall the more intense moments of their experience and report greater work exhaustion compared to their average experience. Analyses conducted to alleviate these concerns revealed similar patterns of results for both participant groups. Nonetheless, Study 2 was conducted in an effort to replicate the current study's results, while addressing the issue of potentially inaccurate responding due to recall bias. Accordingly, the second study employs a field sample of currently working, bicultural adults.

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<sup>12</sup> Individuals previously employed ( $N = 55$ ) reported greater work exhaustion ( $M = 3.90$ ,  $SD = 1.60$ ) compared to individuals currently employed ( $N = 42$ ,  $M = 3.30$ ,  $SD = 1.49$ ),  $t(95) = 1.91$ ,  $p = .059$ .

## STUDY 2

### Method

#### Participants

Participants were 44<sup>13</sup> bicultural (Aboriginal-Canadian) individuals (34% male; Age range = 18 - 64,  $M = 37.27$ ,  $SD = 14.21$ ) residing in Southern Ontario. Individuals were recruited through community advertisements and referrals from Aboriginal community centres.

Participants were prescreened to meet the following criteria: 1) identify with Canadian culture<sup>14</sup> as well as Aboriginal<sup>15</sup> culture, and 2) be currently employed. The criteria did not exclude individuals who identified less strongly with one culture<sup>16</sup>, or who reported lower BII levels<sup>17</sup>.

Aboriginal cultures that individuals identified with included<sup>18</sup>: Cree (9%), Iroquois (21%), Métis (23%), and Ojibway (43%). Participants exhibited a diverse range of educational backgrounds: 16% did not complete high school, 23% had a high school diploma, 5% completed technical training, 20% had a college degree, 18% held a bachelor's degree, and 18% possessed a master's degree. Individuals worked in either a predominantly<sup>19</sup> Aboriginal (18%) or predominantly non-Aboriginal (82%) workplace. Participants worked 31.47 hours a week on average ( $SD =$

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<sup>13</sup> Forty-seven individuals participated in the study, but one individual indicated that they were not currently employed, and two did not complete the full survey.

<sup>14</sup> All respondents identified with Canadian culture to some degree (i.e., none were screened out on this basis).

<sup>15</sup> The term "Aboriginal" was used to refer to First Nations, Inuit, and Métis individuals. A note was included in the survey informing participants of this terminology.

<sup>16</sup> Participants' responses to the item "How much do you identify with Canadian culture?" ranged from one to six ( $M = 4.34$ ,  $SD = 1.24$ ), and responses to "How much do you identify with Aboriginal culture?" ranged from two to six ( $M = 4.74$ ,  $SD = 1.24$ ) on a 6-point scale.

<sup>17</sup> Participants' mean BII levels ranged from 1.00 to 5.00 on a 5-point Likert scale ( $M = 2.84$ ,  $SD = .99$ ).

<sup>18</sup> Cultures that were identified by less than 5% of individuals were not mentioned in the above list, but included Algonquin, Cherokee, and Mi'kmaq among others. Individuals could identify with more than one Aboriginal culture.

<sup>19</sup> "Predominantly" was defined as the culture to which most coworkers belonged.

13.73) and had held their current position for about three years before completing the survey (Range: 1 – 276 months,  $M = 34.40$ ,  $SD = 56.17$ ).

## **Procedure**

Participants completed a two-part study, either online or on paper. In Part 1, respondents answered demographic questions and completed a measure of bicultural identity integration regarding relations between their Aboriginal and Canadian cultural identities. Three days after completion of the first part of the study, participants received a paper survey or were emailed a link to complete the second part of the study. Part 2 was completed on average two weeks later ( $M = 13.75$ ,  $SD = 16.77$  days), and included measures of role conflict and work exhaustion.

One advantage of a two-part survey design is evidence for variables' temporal precedence (Warner, 2012). As the directionality of the relationship between role conflict and work exhaustion has already been established in the literature (Burke & Greenglass, 1995; Lee & Ashforth, 1993), the independent variable was separated temporally from both the mediator and the dependent variable to provide evidence that BII may lead to perceptions of role conflict, rather than the other way around (versus a design where both the independent variable and the mediator are separated temporally from the dependent variable).

## **Measures**

**Prescreening questionnaire.** Participants were asked to answer the following questions on a dichotomous Yes-No scale: 1) “Do you identify as Aboriginal-Canadian?”; and 2) “Are you currently employed?” Only participants who answered “Yes” to these questions were eligible to participate.

**Demographic questionnaire.** Participants were asked about their gender, age, education level, and the strength of their identification with both Canadian and Aboriginal cultures (measure described in Study 1). They were then asked the following questions about their current job: 1) “What is your occupational field or industry?”; 2) “What is your job title?”; 3) “How long have you held the same job?”; 4) “How many hours per week do you work, on average?”; and 5) “Is your workplace predominantly Aboriginal or predominantly non-Aboriginal?”

**Bicultural Identity Integration.** This measure was identical to the measure used in Study 1 (see Appendix A; Benet-Martínez & Haritatos, 2005). Scale reliability was low (Cronbach’s alpha = .52), with subscale reliabilities of .88 for BII conflict and .03 for BII distance. As was the case in Study 1, an exploratory factor analysis using maximum likelihood extraction with criteria for extraction set at eigenvalues above 1 revealed three factors. A factor analysis with Varimax rotation set for a two-factor structure revealed high factor loadings for BII conflict items (ranging from .74 to .96) with minimal cross-factor loadings (none greater than .31). BII distance items, however, did not all load as expected. Three items (“I keep Aboriginal and Canadian cultures separate”, “I feel Aboriginal-Canadian”, and “I feel part of a combined culture”) violated Tabachnick and Fidell’s (2007) minimal scale loading cut-off value of .32 (items had loadings of .07, .31, and .03, respectively). These items were not included in the analyses. In addition, the item “I am simply an Aboriginal person who lives in Canada” loaded in the opposite direction as predicted. The item was designed to indicate lower levels of BII, but indicated higher BII in my sample. It is possible that the key word “simply”, meant to indicate greater distance between two cultures, was not a strong enough cue for participants, who may have interpreted the item as adequately describing their current living situation. Due to the issues

with the BII distance subscale listed above, only the BII conflict subscale items were used in the current study as a measure of BII ( $\alpha = .88$ ).

**Role conflict.** The measure described in Study 1 was employed (see Appendix B; Peterson et al., 1995). Participants were instructed to answer the questions based on their current job (e.g., “I receive incompatible requests from two or more people”). Scale reliability was acceptable (Cronbach’s alpha = .72).

**Work Exhaustion.** This measure was identical to the one described in Study 1 (see Appendix C; Moore, 2000a). Participants answered the questions according to their current job (e.g., “I feel emotionally drained from my work”). Scale reliability was excellent (Cronbach’s alpha = .94).

## Results

Descriptive statistics and correlations are presented in Table 3. Consistent with Study 1 results, role conflict was significantly negatively correlated with BII ( $r = -.38, p = .011$ ), and positively correlated with work exhaustion ( $r = .51, p < .001$ ). None of the demographic variables were significantly correlated with the predictors.

Table 3  
*Study 2: Descriptive Statistics and Bivariate Correlations*

Variable	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	1	2
1. Bicultural Identity Integration	2.84	.99		
2. Role conflict	2.92	.86	-.38*	
3. Work exhaustion	3.80	1.46	-.08	.51**

*Note.*  $N = 44$ . BII and role conflict are measured on a scale from 1 to 5, and work exhaustion on a scale from 1 to 7. \*  $p < .05$  \*\*  $p < .01$ .

## Hypothesis Testing

Bivariate linear regression analyses were conducted to test Hypothesis 1. BII was not significantly related to work exhaustion,  $R^2 = .01$ ,  $\beta = -.08$ ,  $t(42) = -0.50$ ,  $p = .619$ . As no direct effect between BII and work exhaustion was found, Hypothesis 1 was not supported.

To test for mediation between BII and work exhaustion through role conflict perceptions, I used Hayes' (2013) PROCESS macro for SPSS (model 4, bootstrapping with 5000 resamples, 95% confidence interval). The results are illustrated in Figure 2. BII was significantly negatively related to role conflict perceptions ( $B = -.33$ ,  $SE = .12$ ,  $p = .011$ , 95% CI = [-0.58, -0.08]), but was not related to work exhaustion ( $B = -.11$ ,  $SE = .23$ ,  $p = .619$ , 95% CI = [-0.57, 0.34]). When both BII and role conflict were included as predictors, role conflict was significantly positively related to work exhaustion ( $B = .96$ ,  $SE = .24$ ,  $p < .001$ , 95% CI = [0.47, 1.45]), whereas BII was not ( $B = .20$ ,  $SE = .21$ ,  $p = .346$ , 95% CI = [-0.22, 0.63]). The indirect effect of BII on work exhaustion through role conflict perceptions was significant (indirect effect =  $-.31$ ,  $SE = .17$ , 95% CI = [-0.74, -0.08]). These results are consistent with Study 1 and fit the criteria for indirect-only mediation, providing support for Hypothesis 2.

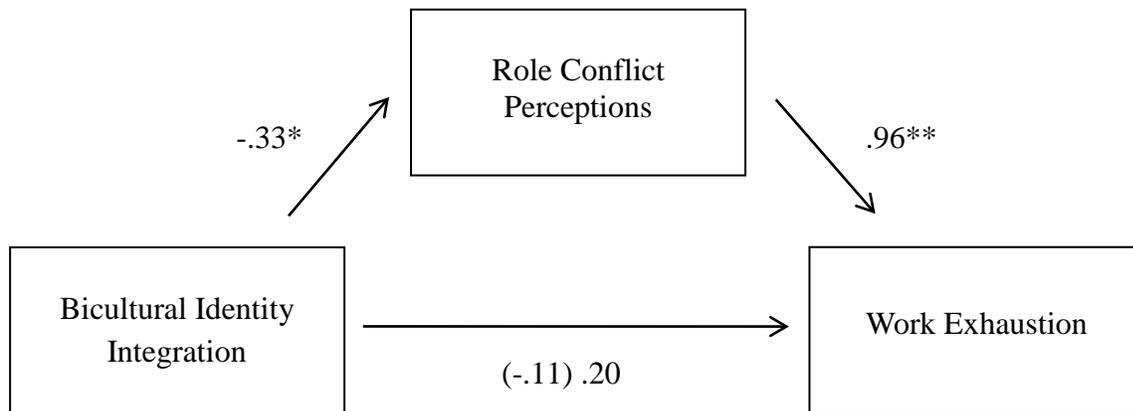


Figure 2. Unstandardized coefficients for the relation between BII and work exhaustion as mediated by role conflict perceptions. Note that the unstandardized coefficient between BII and work exhaustion, controlling for role conflict perceptions, is outside the parentheses. The bootstrapped unstandardized indirect effect was  $-.31$  (95% CI =  $[-0.74, -0.08]$ ).  $N = 44$

\*  $p < .05$  \*\*  $p < .01$ .

### Supplementary Analyses

Moderation analyses were conducted to determine whether workplace composition<sup>20</sup> influences the association between BII and role conflict perceptions. Consistent with Study 1 findings, the interaction between BII and workplace composition was non-significant,  $B = .54$ ,  $SE = .34$ ,  $t(40) = 1.60$ ,  $p = .117$ . The main effect of workplace composition on role conflict perceptions was also non-significant,  $B = -.10$ ,  $SE = .31$ ,  $t(40) = -0.32$ ,  $p = .754$ . These results suggest that a workplace's cultural makeup does not influence individuals' perceptions of role conflict.

<sup>20</sup> This was assessed with the item "Is your workplace predominantly Aboriginal (coded as 1) or predominantly non-Aboriginal (coded as 0)?"

## Discussion

Study 2 provided additional support for the indirect effect of BII on work exhaustion through perceptions of role conflict. A significant indirect effect in the absence of a direct effect means that BII influences work exhaustion solely through individuals' perceptions of role conflict. This suggests that possessing conflicting cultural identities is not exhausting in itself. Rather, conflicting identities may increase perceptions of role conflict, and dealing with these perceptions contributes to work exhaustion.

One limitation of Study 2 is the small sample size. However, the goal of the current study was to investigate whether the results of Study 1 could be replicated using a field sample. The two studies complement each other in terms of a data quality-quantity trade-off, with Study 1 focusing on data quantity (i.e., a larger  $N$ ) and Study 2 prioritizing quality (i.e., a field sample of currently employed, bicultural adults using a longitudinal design). As the results of both studies supported the hypothesized model (i.e., the current study's results corroborated the findings from Study 1), the small sample size in Study 2 was deemed an acceptable limitation.

## GENERAL DISCUSSION

I examined the relationship between BII and workplace well-being across two studies. The findings indicate that: 1) biculturals with low BII are more likely to perceive role conflict in the workplace; and 2) individuals who perceive role conflict at work are more likely to experience work exhaustion. Role conflict perceptions mediated the relationship between BII and work exhaustion in both studies, supporting Hypothesis 2. Hypothesis 1 was not supported, suggesting that BII levels may not have a direct effect on workplace well-being. Rather, BII levels may affect individual perceptions of role conflict, and it is these perceptions which lead to experiencing work exhaustion. Accordingly, BII levels may have an indirect effect on workplace well-being through role conflict perceptions.

### **Theoretical Implications**

This research addresses the call for an investigation of the biculturalism-wellbeing association (Nguyen & Benet-Martinez, 2013). The finding that biculturals may differ in their experienced work outcomes (in terms of role conflict perceptions and work exhaustion) depending on the degree of perceived compatibility (versus conflict) between their cultural identities suggests that BII may moderate the relationship between biculturalism and well-being. In other words, identifying with more than one culture may or may not contribute to greater well-being, depending on BII level. The current studies suggest that lower levels of BII are indirectly associated with lower workplace well-being (or greater work exhaustion).

This work also extends prior research on biculturalism and role conflict, by identifying a consequence of conflicting cultural identities (i.e., role conflict), as well as an antecedent of role conflict perceptions (i.e., low BII). To my knowledge, my research is the first to examine the

associations between cultural identity conflict and role conflict perceptions. The dearth of research on the effects of biculturalism in the workplace prompted a call to extend the study of biculturals into the organizational domain (Brannen & Thomas, 2010). Much of the ensuing work focused on the areas of cross-cultural leadership (Lakshman, 2013; Santiago, 2015) and teamwork (Dau, 2016; Hong, 2010), leaving a gap in the bicultural literature on identity integration in relation to role perceptions. Likewise, the role conflict literature has amassed support for the influence of individual characteristics on role perceptions (Dasgupta, 2012; Jackson & Schuler, 1985; Miles, 1976), but has neglected cultural identity in its quest to identify antecedents of role conflict. My research bridges such gaps in the bicultural and role conflict literatures.

The current studies also contribute to the BII and identity literatures. Past research maintains that social identities (such as cultural identity) may influence cognition and behaviour by acting as interpretative frames which, when activated, guide individual perceptions (Hong et al., 1997). The finding that identity conflict (or low BII) is associated with greater perceptions of role conflict suggests that one's cultural identity may become activated and serve as an interpretative guide of role expectations in the workplace. This research contributes to the BII literature, and in a broader sense, supports the view that social identities act as interpretative frames capable of influencing cognition (Hong et al., 2000).

The present findings also shed light on potential boundary conditions for generalizability of the BIIS-1 measure of BII. In both studies, I encountered issues of weak item loadings and low scale reliability for the BII distance subscale. These issues are not uncommon in the literature, with La (2011) and Lee (2012) reporting BII distance subscale reliabilities of .43 and .44, respectively. A possible explanation for the low subscale reliabilities is item ambiguity. BII

distance reflects a perception of two cultures being separate, different, and distinct. However, the item “I am simply a [*insert other culture*] person who lives in Canada” is descriptive in nature and does not clearly allude to distance or non-overlap between cultures. The item “I feel [*insert other culture*]-Canadian” may be interpreted as simply identifying with both cultures, as it is unclear that the hyphen is meant to indicate overlap between the cultures. Finally, the item “I feel part of a combined culture” may be misinterpreted as being part of an environment that is a combination of both cultures (e.g., a Chinatown in a Canadian city). The reference to a “combined culture” may also be understood to mean the emergence of a third culture, which is a separate construct (Useem, Useem, & Donoghue, 1963). In contrast to the BII distance items’ ambiguity, the BII conflict items employ the words “conflicted,” “caught,” and “trapped,” all of which clearly indicate a perception of being conflicted or torn between two cultures. Thus, issues with the BII distance subscale may stem from the operationalization of the construct.

The BII distance subscale was particularly problematic in Study 2. The second study differentiates itself from past research (mostly conducted with international students, and first or second-generation biculturals; Benet-Martínez & Haritatos, 2005; Cheng & Lee, 2013; La, 2011; Lee, 2012) with its sample of Aboriginal-Canadian biculturals. Unlike other types of biculturals, Aboriginals may be unable to conceptualize their dual identity in terms of distance. It is possible that Aboriginal biculturals perceive their Aboriginal identity to encompass their Canadian identity, leading to identifying as “Canadian,” yet perceiving BII distance items (concerning the degree of separation between cultures) to be illogical according to a mental model of one identity contained within another. Aboriginal communities negotiating self-government agreements (Hurley, 2009) may also contribute to perceptions of being first and foremost Aboriginal, and then Canadian, or an “Aboriginal living in Canada.” This conceptualization of one cultural

identity encompassed within another still allows for perceptions of conflict between the two identities. BII distance and BII conflict are independent constructs; weakly correlated and predicted by different antecedents (Benet-Martínez & Haritatos, 2005). In effect, the results of Study 2 were entirely driven by BII conflict, as the BII distance items were excluded from the analyses. The implication of these findings is that it may be inappropriate to assess BII distance for Aboriginals, or other biculturals who may conceptualize their dual identities as encompassed within one another. This research provides some insight into the generalizability of the BIIS-1 measure of BII, specifically its BII distance subscale.

### **Practical Implications**

This research may inform the training practices of organizations with bicultural employees. Training that focuses on changing how low-BII biculturals think about seemingly incompatible cultural identities may subsequently lower role conflict perceptions, resulting in greater employee well-being. Past research has found that the adoption of paradoxical frames (i.e., mental templates that encourage individuals to recognize contradictions, yet understand their potential as complementary) leads to greater integrative complexity, or a willingness to tolerate and integrate different perspectives by generating new linkages among them (Miron-Spektor, Gino, & Argote, 2011). A mindset that supports the recognition of contradictory factors also promotes feelings of discomfort and internal conflict (Miron-Spektor, et al., 2011). However, a sense of conflict is suggested to enhance perspective-taking and the exploration of novel associations in an attempt to adapt to one's environment (Huang & Galinsky, 2011). Adopting paradoxical frames elicits “both/and” thought patterns (compared to conventional “either/or” lines of thought), which can result in the discovery of links between opposing factors, as well as the generation of new ideas to existing problems (Lüscher & Lewis, 2008). Based on

this literature, training biculturals to think paradoxically may foster the perspective that opposing identities are complementary, and encourage the integration of identities through the generation of cognitive associations between them.

Training employees to think paradoxically may be accomplished through increasing individuals' awareness of paradoxes in the workplace. For example, Miron-Spektor and colleagues (2011) primed paradoxical frames by instructing participants to read a vignette describing a new product as both novel and affordable, and emphasizing that although these two aspects are often incompatible, they can be achieved together. Alternatively, a more direct training approach may be to address the perceived incompatibilities between low BIIs' cultural identities. Following Lüscher and Lewis' (2008) approach of working through a paradox with managers in a focus group setting, training could take the form of guiding biculturals' thought processes by helping them to recognize and integrate any incongruities between their cultural identities. Training that increases biculturals' perceptions of compatibility between their cultural identities may also result in higher BII levels over time. Prior work has demonstrated the malleability of BII (Cheng & Lee, 2013). Furthermore, attentional elaboration of an identity conflict has been suggested to promote identity integration by engendering novel behavioural scripts that incorporate both identity domains (Hirsh & Kang, 2015). Training that encourages low BIIs to attend to the source of perceived behavioural conflicts (e.g., conflicting cultural identities) may facilitate identity integration, reducing the likelihood of future identity conflict and contributing to higher levels of BII. In turn, higher BII levels (and lower identity conflict) should be associated with decreased perceptions of role conflict.

It is important to note that paradoxical thinking may lower role conflict perceptions directly, as well as indirectly through decreased perceptions of cultural identity conflict.

Miron-Spektor et al. (2011) provide an example of the direct pathway, in which an employee receives directions from her boss that appear contradictory (i.e., to plan and organize everything for a product launch, yet remain flexible enough to deal with last-minute customer requests). The authors state that without a paradoxical mindset, the employee is likely to focus on one request and miss the opportunity to accomplish both. However, paradoxical thought patterns encourage the recognition of the requests as inherently incompatible, and facilitate the exploration of alternative solutions that encompass both (e.g., planning and organizing to help prepare for possible last-minute requests, enabling even greater flexibility when addressing the customers' demands). This example illustrates how paradoxical thought may result in lower perceptions of role conflict (i.e., receiving incompatible requests, or being involved in a situation with conflicting requirements); perceptions that do not stem from identity conflict. Role conflict has been associated with greater exhaustion (Lee & Ashforth, 1996), lower job satisfaction (Hartenian, Hadaway, & Badovick, 1994), as well as decreased organizational commitment and job involvement (Fisher & Gitelson, 1983; Jackson & Schuler, 1985). Thus, training biculturals to think paradoxically may help reduce role conflict perceptions (through direct and indirect pathways), and ultimately, lead to greater employee well-being.

### **Limitations and Future Research**

Notwithstanding these contributions, there are several limitations to my research that future work may wish to address. One limitation lies in the correlational nature of the data, leaving the causal direction of the results open to interpretation. It is also possible that role conflict at work may exacerbate perceptions of cultural identity conflict over time. Specifically, aspects of a role may highlight differences between individuals' two cultural identities, leading to the perception that the identities are disparate and conflicting as a result (and contributing to

lower BII levels). Prior work has shown that BII levels may fluctuate based on one's experiences (Cheng & Lee, 2013), so future research should not disregard this potential alternative explanation of the current findings.

One avenue for future work may be to experimentally manipulate BII in order to ascertain the directionality of the results. Using an adapted version of Cheng and Lee's (2013) instructions for the workplace, participants could be asked to recall either positive or negative bicultural experiences at work (e.g., "the interaction with my boss left me feeling conflicted between my Aboriginal values and his way of doing things"). Subsequently measuring biculturals' BII levels and perceptions of role conflict would then reveal whether the recall of negative (or positive) bicultural experiences at work leads to greater (or lower) perceptions of role conflict. This would provide further support for my hypothesized theoretical framework.

Another limitation is that the data originated from a common source, resulting in an inability to rule out common method variance (CMV) as a potential source of error. Participants in both studies were asked to self-report on the variables of interest due to the nature of the data (i.e., individuals' identity and perceptions). However, the observed relationships between the constructs may be inflated due to participants' transient mood state or consistency motives, for example (Podsakoff, MacKenzie, Lee, & Podsakoff, 2003). Still, it is unlikely that CMV provides an explanation for the current findings, as the proposed mediation was replicated across two studies, with Study 2 designed to minimize CMV. Study 2 incorporated a time lag between the measurement of the predictor (BII) and criterion variables (role conflict and work exhaustion), decreasing the salience and availability of participants' prior responses, and inhibiting tendencies to maintain consistency across measures (which is particularly problematic for retrospective accounts of perceptions and behaviours, such as Study 1 participants recalling

past work experiences; Podsakoff et al., 2003). Nevertheless, future studies may attempt to further control for CMV in order to better approximate the relations between the variables.

An additional limitation is the possibility of a third variable confounding the observed pattern of relationships between the studied variables. Trait negative affectivity, or the tendency to have a negative view of the self and experience aversive emotional states (Watson & Clark, 1984), may contribute to perceptions of conflict between one's cultural identities and within one's work role, driving the observed association between BII and role conflict perceptions. Negative affectivity represents an individual difference in temperament and cognitive style (Carlson, 1999), influencing how individuals perceive and interpret their experiences (Staw, Bell, & Clausen, 1986). It is possible that participants high in negative affectivity reported lower levels of BII (i.e., negative self-image tendencies may lead to a heightened awareness of existing conflict, or increased perceptions of identity conflict), and greater perceptions of role conflict (prior work has found a positive association between negative affectivity and role conflict; Chen & Spector, 1991). The cognitive style associated with negative affectivity may also predispose individuals to experiencing symptoms of strain (Cooke & Rousseau, 1983), such as work exhaustion. Individuals high in negative affectivity may have reported greater identity conflict, perceptions of role conflict, and work exhaustion, thereby inflating the observed relationships between these variables. Future studies should explore the possibility that the current findings may be attributed to a third variable, such as negative affectivity.

Interesting areas for future research pertain to the generalizability of the current findings to different types of social identities (e.g., gender and racial identity), and different populations (e.g., multicultural individuals). Various social identities may become activated at work and influence individuals' cognitions and behaviours in much the same way as cultural identity. If

the proposed mechanism is generalizable across social identities, then individuals may develop role conflict perceptions when the fulfillment of role demands requires choosing one identity over another (in instances where multiple, non-integrated identities become activated under a broader social identity). Gender identity, or the degree to which one identifies with masculine and feminine personality traits, is composed of two orthogonal dimensions, with androgynous individuals identifying highly with both masculine (e.g., ambitious, assertive) and feminine (e.g., compassionate, understanding) traits (Bem, 1974; Palan, 2001). Women in the workplace may feel the need to “act like a man” in order to get ahead, due to the high degree of overlap between typically masculine traits and those associated with effective leadership (e.g., dominant, self-confident) (Eagly & Carli, 2007). In turn, women may get the impression that their work role requires temporarily relinquishing their feminine gender identity in favour of masculine behavioural displays, fueling perceptions of role conflict. In line with this example, I expect cultural identity conflict, and in a broader sense, social identity conflict, to contribute to role conflict perceptions at work.

Future research may also benefit from investigating the proposed theoretical framework in relation to individuals who identify with more than two cultural identities. Multiculturals may face an even greater challenge than biculturals when integrating their cultural identities into one cultural knowledge system, as each additional cultural identity may increase the likelihood of conflict. Successful management of multicultural identities and their differing demands and expectations (e.g., group norms) depends on the resolution of conflicts arising from these manifold demands (Hong, Wan, No, & Chiu, 2007). Obstacles to conflict resolution include a lack of available cognitive resources (Amiot et al., 2007), and societal attitudes that devalue multicultural policies or one cultural group (Sibley & Ward, 2013). In addition to having to

negotiate more cultural demands, multiculturals are more likely to perceive discrimination against an identity, dimming prospects for successful identity integration. Thus, I would expect greater rates of cultural identity conflict and, connectedly, greater perceptions of role conflict for multicultural individuals, compared to biculturals. Future studies should explore these propositions.

### **Conclusion**

Across two studies, I have demonstrated that the integration of one's cultural identities (or lack thereof) contributes indirectly to workplace well-being by influencing perceptions of role conflict within one's work role. This research makes important contributions to the identity, BII, and role conflict literatures. The findings may also inform training interventions aimed at improving bicultural employees' well-being. Finally, biculturals do not necessarily benefit from enhanced well-being at work. Rather, it is the successful integration of one's cultural identities (i.e., high BII) that appears to be pivotal in determining workplace well-being.

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## Appendix A

### BIIS-1 scale (Benet-Martínez & Haritatos, 2005)

*Instructions:* Please rate your agreement with each statement using the following 5-point scale.

1	2	3	4	5
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree Nor Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree

1. I am simply a [*insert other culture*] person who lives in Canada (R).
2. I keep [*insert other culture*] and Canadian cultures separate (R).
3. I feel [*insert other culture*]-Canadian.
4. I feel part of a combined culture.
5. I am conflicted between the [*insert other culture*] and Canadian ways of doing things (R).
6. I feel like someone moving between two cultures (R).
7. I feel caught between the [*insert other culture*] and Canadian cultures (R).
8. I don't feel trapped between the [*insert other culture*] and Canadian cultures.

*Note.* Items 1 to 4 make up the cultural distance subscale. Items 5 to 8 make up the cultural conflict subscale. Higher scores indicate higher levels of BII, or lower cultural distance and conflict. (R) indicates that the item was reverse-coded. [*insert other culture*] was replaced by participants' respective cultural identities in the survey (e.g., "Aboriginal" in Study 2).

## Appendix B

### Role Conflict scale (Peterson et al., 1995)

*Instructions:* Please rate your agreement with each statement according to the job that you have in mind, using the following 5-point scale.

1	2	3	4	5
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree Nor Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree

1. I often get involved in situations in which there are conflicting requirements.
2. I receive incompatible requests from two or more people.
3. I have to do things that should be done differently under different conditions.

*Note.* Higher scores indicate higher levels of role conflict.

## Appendix C

### Work Exhaustion scale (Moore, 2000a)

*Instructions:* Please respond to the following statements according to the job that you have in mind, using the 7-point scale below.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Never	Almost never (a few times a year or less)	Rarely (once a month or less)	Sometimes (a few times a month)	Rather often (once a week)	Nearly all the time (a few times a week)	Daily

1. I feel emotionally drained from my work.
2. I feel used up at the end of the work day.
3. I feel fatigued when I get up in the morning and have to face another day on the job.
4. I feel burned out from my work.
5. Working all day is really a strain for me.

*Note.* Higher scores indicate higher levels of work exhaustion.