
Identifications and cultural practices amongst British Bangladeshi and mixed-heritage adolescents

Martyn Barrett, David Garbin, Marco Cinnirella
& John Eade

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Email: m.barrett@surrey.ac.uk

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Slide 2

Scope of this paper

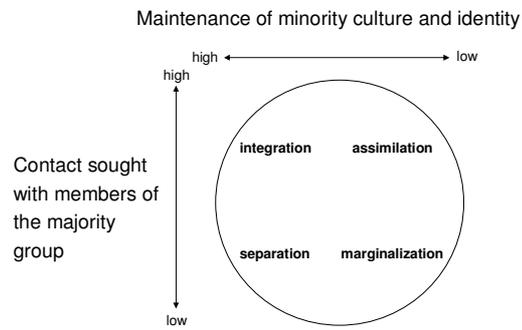
- I had originally intended for this paper to be a report of some of the findings which we obtained in a recent acculturation study
- In this study, we looked specifically at how 11-17-year-old British Bangladeshi and British mixed-heritage adolescents in London negotiate the demands of living with multiple cultures
- We found that these adolescents were very skillful at managing their multiple identities across different situations and contexts
- These adolescents were also very skillful at tailoring their cultural practices and behaviours according to situation and context
- We found no evidence of a sense of marginality, or of being “caught between two cultures”, in either group
- However, most importantly of all, we found that our findings were not compatible with the fourfold model of acculturation

Slide 3

- This outcome led me to try and think through what the problems are with the fourfold model which make it incompatible with our findings
- So, what I want to do in this paper is to work through some of the problems which I think undermine the fourfold model
- The specific version of the fourfold model which I am going to focus on in this talk is the version that is articulated by Berry, Phinney, Sam & Vedder (2006) in their book-length report of the ICSEY study
- And more specifically than that, I am going to home in on just one very small part of their model
- However, I think this is the core part of their model and so it is an extremely important part

Slide 4

The fourfold model (Berry et al., 2006)



Slide 5

Problem 1: The assumption of two cultures

- The first problem with this model is that it assumes that there are only two cultures in play, the ethnic minority culture and the national majority culture
- For this reason, Berry et al. (2006) only aimed to study:
 - how “immigrant youth live within and between two cultures” (p.2)
- However, in many locations, minority adolescents do not have to negotiate only their ethnic culture and the national culture
- They also have to negotiate a globalised youth culture (Arnett, 2002)
- For example, in our study, we found that many of the Bangladeshi and mixed-heritage youth were actively engaged with black subcultural codes, especially with black hip hop music and black RnB music along with their associated styles of speech and clothing
- Notice that these subcultures are not related to these adolescents’ ethnic culture, nor are they related to the majority national culture in which they live – they represent a third very different culture

Slide 6

Problem 1: The assumption of two cultures 2

- However, this is not the only other culture with which many ethnic minority youth engage
- In many locations today, minority adolescents are living not in bicultural societies but in multicultural societies
- In London, for example, where we collected our data, there is a huge level of ethnic diversity which some anthropologists are now calling super-diversity (Vertovec, 2006)
- An indication of the sheer level of cultural diversity in a city such as London comes from language surveys
- For example, one of these surveys found that, in London, schools are now providing support for over 300 different languages which are spoken by children as their first language (Baker & Eversley, 2000)

Slide 7

Problem 1: The assumption of two cultures 3

The 40 most common languages spoken in London schools, in rank order:

1. English	11. Cantonese	21. Igbo	31. Tigrinya
2. Bengali/Sylheti	12. Greek	22. French Creoles	32. German
3. Punjabi	13. Akan	23. Tagalog	33. Japanese
4. Gujarati	14. Portuguese	24. Kurdish	34. Serbian/Croatian
5. Hindi/Urdu	15. French	25. Polish	35. Russian
6. Turkish	16. Spanish	26. Swahili	36. Hebrew
7. Arabic	17. Tamil	27. Lingala	37. Korean
8. English Creoles	18. Farsi	28. Albanian	38. Pashto
9. Yoruba	19. Italian	29. Luganda	39. Amharic
10. Somali	20. Vietnamese	30. Ga	40. Sinhala

Source: Baker & Eversley (2000)

Slide 8

Problem 1: The assumption of two cultures 4

- In other words, most children and adolescents attending school in London are in contact with a very large number of different cultures on a daily basis
- Hence, the assumption that minority adolescents living in London are in contact only with their ethnic minority culture and the national majority culture is fundamentally wrong
- And indeed, in our study we found that our Bangladeshi and mixed-heritage adolescents were very actively engaged with multiple cultures (e.g. in the food they ate, the music they listened to, the movies they watched, etc.)

Problem 2: The assumption of cross-situational consistency in cultural attitudes and behaviour

- A second problem with the fourfold model is that it assumes that identities, cultural practices and acculturation attitudes are invariant across different contexts and situations, so that it is possible to place individuals uniquely within a single acculturation category
- In other words, Berry et al. (2006) argue that cultural maintenance and intergroup contact:
 - “define an intercultural contact space within which individuals occupy a preferred attitudinal position” (p. 73)
- However, there is now extensive evidence that minority individuals adopt different attitudinal positions in different life domains
- For example, there is a fundamental distinction between private (i.e. within the home) and public (i.e. outside the home) domains (Anwar, 1998; Arends-Toth & Van de Vijver, 2003; Ghuman, 2003; Vermeulen & Penninx, 2000)

Problem 2: The assumption of cross-situational consistency in cultural attitudes and behaviour 2

- It has been found that acculturation attitudes and cultural practices frequently vary between private and public domains:
 - a separatist approach is often preferred by minority individuals within private domains (e.g. in language use, in religious observance, in child-rearing matters, etc.)
 - however, integration or assimilation approaches are often preferred in public domains (e.g. when minority individuals are at school, in the workplace, interacting with friends outside the family, etc.)
- In our study, we also found that the identifications, cultural practices and acculturation attitudes of our Bangladeshi and mixed-heritage adolescents varied significantly across contexts:
 - For example, we found differences in language use, food consumption, choice of music, choice of movies, the use of 'correct' behaviour, etc., between the home and when at school or with the peer group

Problem 3: The assumption that there is just a single form of biculturalism

- A third problem with the fourfold model is that it fails to differentiate between different forms of biculturalism, and instead subsumes them all within the single category of “integration”
- However, there is now extensive evidence that there are at least three different types of biculturalism (Ballard, 1994; Coleman, Casali & Wampold, 2001; LaFromboise, Coleman & Gerton, 1993; Maira, 2002; Rudmin, 2003):
 - Integration: both cultures are simultaneously affirmed and maintained
 - Alternation or code-switching: the cultures are alternated or switched according to context
 - Hybridity or fusion: the cultures are blended to form a novel hybrid culture

Problem 3: The assumption that there is just a single form of biculturalism 2

- These three different types of biculturalism represent very different ways of managing and negotiating multiple cultures
- Furthermore, these different types of biculturalism may have different consequences in terms of the psychological and sociocultural adaptation of minority individuals
- In our study, we found that all three forms of biculturalism were exhibited by our Bangladeshi and mixed-heritage adolescents:
 - For example, some mixed-heritage participants simultaneously affirmed both of their two ethnic heritages irrespective of context (integration)
 - However, many of the Bangladeshi participants adhered to ethnic cultural practices in the home but switched to national and globalised-youth cultural practices outside the home (alternation)
 - Some of our Bangladeshi participants were strongly involved with the Bhangra and the Bollywood Remix scenes – these are hybridised South Asian/Western pop music subcultures (fusion)

Problem 4: The imposition of an artificial analytic framework onto minority individuals

- A fourth problem is that the fourfold model is often presented as a framework which has emerged empirically or inductively from the analysis of data concerning minority individuals' attitudes
- However, in practice a fourfold typology is often imposed artificially on data
- Some studies do this by using midpoint or median splits on two scales designed to measure globalised attitudes to the national culture and to the individual's own ethnic culture respectively (e.g. Farver et al., 2002; Zagefka & Brown, 2002)
- These studies therefore ignore:
 - that these individuals may be negotiating more than two cultures
 - that these individuals' attitudes may vary according to context
 - that these individuals may be deploying qualitatively different bicultural strategies (such as integration, alternation and fusion)

Problem 4: The imposition of an artificial analytic framework onto minority individuals 2

- Berry et al. (2006) instead use a different method, namely cluster analysis, to assign ethnic minority adolescents to acculturation profiles
- However, in their study, a four cluster solution was specified in advance on a priori theoretical grounds:
 - "Based on the fit with the dominant theoretical framework guiding the study ... we decided to use four clusters" (p.102)
- Furthermore, only three interpretable clusters emerged from this cluster analysis
- The fourth cluster (the so-called "diffuse profile") was:
 - "not easily interpretable" because these individuals simultaneously "endorsed three acculturation attitudes: assimilation, marginalization, and separation" (p.104)

Problem 4: The imposition of an artificial analytic framework onto minority individuals 3

- The fact that Berry et al. (2006) imposed an artificial analytic framework onto minority adolescents is supported by the very low internal reliabilities of the scales which they used to measure the adolescents' acculturation attitudes:
 - integration 0.48
 - separation 0.58
 - assimilation 0.64
 - marginalisation 0.55
- This interpretation is further supported by the fact that when Berry et al. attempted to measure parental acculturation attitudes, they:
 - "were not successful in defining scales ... that had satisfactory psychometric properties" (p. 62)
- Notice that this is precisely what would be predicted if the fourfold model is indeed an artificial analytic framework imposed on data

Problem 5: The dissociation between attitudes, identifications and practices

- A fifth problem with the fourfold model is that it is incorrect to say that acculturation attitudes, cultural identifications and cultural practices always cohere into one of four different acculturation profiles
- For example, Hutnik (1991) found that cultural identifications and cultural practices are sometimes at variance with each other:
 - For example, she found that minority adolescents sometimes identify only with their ethnic group but do not engage in any ethnic behaviours
- Similarly, Snauwaert et al. (2003) found that different classifications of individuals can be derived depending on whether desire for contact, adoption of cultural practices or identification is measured:
 - For example, they found that the proportion of "integration" individuals in their sample was 82% when desire for contact with majority individuals was measured, but only 37% when adoption of national practices was measured, and only 10% when national identification was measured

Problem 5: The dissociation between attitudes, identifications and practices 2

- Interestingly, even Berry et al. (2006) report evidence that acculturation attitudes, cultural identifications and cultural practices do not always cohere
- While they found that individuals showing the integration profile, the ethnic profile and the national profile did indeed exhibit coherent patterns of attitudes, identifications and practices, individuals showing the diffuse profile did not exhibit a coherent pattern
- For example, these individuals exhibited:
 - simultaneous endorsement of assimilation, marginalisation and separation attitudes, but with assimilation being the most highly endorsed, while at the same time they displayed low national identity and low levels of contact with national peers
 - high proficiency and use of the ethnic language, but low ethnic identity

Problem 5: The dissociation between attitudes, identifications and practices 3

- In our study, we also found that identifications and cultural practices did not always cohere:
 - For example, most of our Bangladeshi adolescents had a very strong Muslim identity which was frequently prioritised over all other identities
 - However, only a few of these Bangladeshi adolescents showed a proper scriptural sense of religiosity, and there were very few strict followers of religious obligations concerning prayer
 - So, the findings of previous studies and our own study are consistent in showing that acculturation attitudes, cultural identifications and cultural practices do not always cohere in the manner which is claimed by the fourfold model
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A summary of the problems and why the fourfold model is incompatible with our findings

- The fourfold model makes the assumption that minority individuals only have to negotiate two cultures, an ethnic and a national culture
 - We found that British Bangladeshi and mixed-heritage youth are actively engaged with a multiplicity of different cultures
- The fourfold model makes the assumption that there is cross-situational consistency in acculturation attitudes and behaviour
 - We found that identifications, attitudes and practices often vary between the home, the school and the peer group
- The fourfold model makes the assumption that there is just a single form of biculturalism
 - We found that it was necessary distinguish between integration, alternation and fusion

A summary of the problems and why the fourfold model is incompatible with our findings 2

- The fourfold model imposes an artificial analytic framework onto minority individuals
 - We found that we could not meaningfully use the fourfold model to provide a veridical account of the everyday lives and subjective experiences of our participants, or of the data which we collected
- The fourfold model claims that acculturation attitudes, cultural identifications and cultural practices always cohere into one of four different acculturation profiles
 - We found that the attitudes, identifications and practices of our participants did not always cohere into coherent profiles but were instead often dissociated