

# “I Kind of Have a Goal When I Do It”: The Phenomenology of Cultural Variability in Southeast Asian American Tricultural Emerging Adults

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## Abstract

Cultural variability (CV) is a dynamic identity process by which individuals play up and play down their cultural identities from day to day. This study examines the phenomenology of CV in a unique group of tricultural Southeast Asian American (SEAA) emerging adults who identify with Asian American, White American, and cultures to understand how it is experienced, the reasons for its use, the extent to which it is conscious/agentive, and how three cultural identities are managed simultaneously. Interpretive phenomenological analyses reveal that CV was used consciously and involved making behavioral and cognitive changes to fit in with out-group members, educate others about SEAA culture, and to distance themselves from in-group members. Importantly, the centrality of SEAA identity most often remained stable despite playing up/down identities. Overall, findings suggest that CV is an essential identity negotiation strategy for tricultural emerging adults that is complementary to alternation/code-switching.

## Keywords

cultural identity, cultural variability, cultural influence, tridimensional acculturation, Southeast Asian, hip hop

Processes of globalization around the world have increased cultural diversity, both in terms of a growing population of multiracial individuals (Jones & Bullock, 2012) and exposure to an expansive number of cultural groups with diverse beliefs and behaviors (Jensen, 2003). The rise in opportunities for emerging adults to form multicultural identities has been met with increased scholarly attention to the dynamic nature of multicultural identity negotiation (Benet-Martínez & Hong, 2014). In this article, we examine the phenomenology of one such process, *cultural variability* (CV), as it is experienced by emerging adults in the United States who are triculturally identified with Southeast Asian, White American, and hip hop cultures.

## Tricultural Identities: “Asian, White, and Hip Hop”

Cultural identity formation is a particularly important task during emerging adulthood (Arnett, 2003). It is an identity that may encompass ethnic identity and/or other social identities (e.g., gender, class) that contribute to one’s overall sense of self and is broadly comprised of the values and practices of the cultural in-group to which an individual belongs (Schwartz, Zamboanga, & Weisskirch, 2008). As such, cultural groups are largely defined by individual and social norms; they include

racialized identities (e.g., White) and nonethnic identities (e.g., hip hop).

Multicultural individuals are broadly defined as anyone who has lineage from, or affiliations with, more than one cultural group resulting in bicultural and tricultural identities (Benet-Martínez & Hong, 2014; Yampolsky, Amiot, & de la Sablonnière, 2016). Scholarship on tricultural identities arose in the early 2000s and examined the experiences of individuals from immigrant backgrounds for whom the heritage culture, the dominant culture of the receiving country, and a receiving country subculture are salient. Downie, Koestner, El Geledi, and Cree (2004) advanced this work with their finding that integration of ethnic heritage, French Canadian, and English Canadian cultural identities predicted psychological well-being. The

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work was a novel extension of biculturalism from a bidimensional acculturation framework (e.g., Berry, 1997) and paved the way for later theoretical and empirical work on tridimensional acculturation (Ferguson, Bornstein, & Pottinger, 2012), which was first demonstrated among Jamaican immigrants in the United States who were more likely to be triculturally identified with Jamaican, European American/White, and African American cultures than they were to be bicultural. This work and similar findings in other populations (e.g., Chinese American immigrants whose identity with Chinese, White American, and Chinese American cultures; Kim & Hou, 2016) validate the importance of expanded, tricultural frameworks for the multicultural and globalizing world that adolescents and emerging adults must navigate.

To negotiate the complex norms, values, beliefs, and behaviors associated with the different cultural groups to which they claim membership, multicultural individuals rely on identity processes such as alternation (i.e., switching between identities), integration or harmony (i.e., finding compatibility between identities), compartmentalization (i.e., separating and restricting identities into different domains or situations), chameleonism or malleability (i.e., flexibility adapting one's identity to local environment), and categorization (Baumeister, Shapiro, & Tice, 1985; Benet-Martínez & Haritatos, 2005; Downie, Koestner, El Geledi, & Cree, 2004; LaFromboise, Coleman, & Gerton, 1993; Mok & Morris, 2009, 2012; Roccas & Brewer, 2002). Emergent from this body of literature is the important theme that having a cohesive, integrated set of identities that can be flexibly adjusted is an essential component of healthy identity development in multicultural individuals. However, it remains to be seen how these identity strategies look in tricultural individuals and importantly, how they are experienced. For instance, although tricultural individuals can maneuver deftly among three identities, some modest to significant psychological strain or distress may be experienced in doing so (Ferguson, Iturbide, & Gordon, 2014; Sanchez, Shih, & Garcia, 2009).

Southeast Asian American (SEAA) emerging adults hold two obvious cultural identities—that of the White, dominant culture to which they are exposed to by virtue of living in the United States, and their primary or most central identity, that of their Asian heritage culture. For SEAA individuals, that heritage culture encompasses the geopolitical territory broadly defined as anywhere south of China and east of India (Emmerson, 1984) and is inclusive of all ethnocultural groups in the region (i.e., Hmong) and individuals from several diverse cultures and languages. However, some SEAA adolescents and emerging adults have also internalized hip hop as a third cultural identity. They feel it is a core part of their self-concept to such an extent that some group members have self-ascribed the label “pencil”: yellow on the outside, white in the middle, and black at the core (Nguyen, 2013). This study examines the experiences of these tricultural SEAA emerging adults in navigating their identities.

It must be noted that whereas we, as authors, make the distinction between African American cultural identity and hip

hop identity in line with extant literature. Hip hop refers to the musical style/genre as well as the subculture which originated in the Bronx, NY, during the 1970s. Today, hip hop is a multicultural, global phenomenon that includes a range of activities including dance, music (i.e., rapping/MCing), DJing, and graffiti (Dimitriadis, 2009). It has roots in African American, Jamaican American, and Latino American communities, and its origins as a form of resistance to dominant White mainstream culture are still vehemently preserved by hip hop cultural purists. Beyond the physical activities involved in hip hop, there are some core beliefs, values, and behaviors that define this cultural identity, including political engagement, resistance of racial hierarchies, and challenge to stereotypes crafted about ethnic minority youth by the dominant culture (Langnes & Fasting, 2014). A hip hop identity need not be specific to any one cultural or ethnic group; therefore, it is arguably a cultural (rather than subcultural) identity.

Youth and mainstream media often conflate hip hop and African American/Black culture, as evidenced in the above self-proclaimed description of the “pencil” identity. Indeed, this overlap has resulted in important critiques of SEAA and Asian cultural appropriation (Dao, 2014). SEAA involvement in hip hop is due to exposure to mainstream popular culture, to living in close proximity with ethnically diverse populations, and to the appeal of hip hop's roots in resistance of the mainstream and self-expression of marginalized identities (Nguyen & Ferguson, 2010).

The latter source of involvement is the hip hop cultural value that most within-group members identify with most strongly. But because some youth who marginally participate in the culture continue to view it as an extension of African American/Black culture, in this study we use African American/Black as a proxy for hip hop on the survey instruments in some places because the conflation has content validity for the participants. We also utilize this language and conceptual frame in understanding and interpreting the narratives.

## CV

CV captures the degree to which individuals adjust the influence of a single cultural identity on their daily behaviors or interactions, that is, how they play up or play down aspects of a cultural identity (Ferguson, Nguyen, & Iturbide, 2016). For example, a Mexican American emerging adult participant from the originating study introducing CV stated, “My mom is visiting me. Whenever family visits I play up my cultural identity” (Ferguson, Nguyen, & Iturbide, 2016, p. 120). CV was found to be associated with lower quality peer interactions for immigrant emerging adults who identify strongly with their ethnic identities (Ferguson, Nguyen, Iturbide, & Giray, 2017). To explain this finding, we posited that too much identity “play” would lead to peer perceptions of false self-presentation or a lack of commitment to the ethnic group norms that are so readily maintained by peers (Nguyen & Brown, 2010), resulting in lower quality peer interactions. Thus, this study will explore the *experience* of CV: what it feels and looks like, when and

in what context it occurs, and the reasons for doing it (Research Question 1).

**Agency.** CV is informed by theoretical frameworks of identity agency, wherein individuals consciously and intentionally alter their identity expression. Dating back to sociological discussions of “double consciousness” (Du Bois, 1968), there is strong evidence for the adaptive ways ethnic minority groups are aware of, and negotiate, their multiple cultural identities in different contexts. Historically, this type of identity adaptation may be necessary for survival, especially by people of color in dominant White institutions and contexts. This presumption appears to be supported by open-ended questions in the originating survey in which participants report playing up/down identity intentionally to yield desired social and behavioral outcomes (Ferguson, Nguyen, & Iturbide, 2016).

Emerging adults in that study reported that they agentially vary the influence of their cultural identity for multiple reasons such as to fit in with the dominant culture or to deflect attention in order to avoid potential discrimination. In addition to playing up/down one aspect of their cultural identities as a protective means due to social identity threats (e.g., Branscombe, Ellemers, Spears, & Doosje, 1999), participants also reported adjusting their identities to adapt in their social relationships, for instance, increasing the influence of one’s Latino culture for motivation toward greater engagement in school. While it is evident identity agency is exerted in the process of CV, a deeper understanding of how CV is consciously enacted/engaged by emerging adults is in order (Research Question 2).

**Alternation.** CV is complementary to, but distinct from, identity alternation in which individuals engage in practices such as linguistic code-switching to express one identity over another in different contexts (LaFromboise et al., 1993). CV focuses on the variability within a single cultural identity, rather than between identities. It is a particularly useful construct for understanding tricultural identity management because the variability of each identity can be assessed simultaneously and CV does not presume change in one identity but required change in the others. However, CV and alternation are complementary and can theoretically be engaged simultaneously.

The focus of analyses using CV has been on participants’ central identity, but there is a need to understand how CV in one identity may be related to CV in other identities, especially to their primary identity (i.e., the identity expected to have greatest centrality). If one identity is played up, are others played down or do they remain stable (Research Question 3)?

### *Tri/Multicultural Identities: New Constructs*

Multicultural identities are increasingly recognized as adaptive; accumulating identities (i.e., holding greater numbers of identities) promotes psychological well-being and a greater sense of purpose (Brook, Garcia, & Fleming, 2008; Thoits, 1983). Therefore, the ways individuals manage their multiple identities require closer examination. Several newly introduced

constructs and measures help explain the ways individuals adjust or “play” with their tri/multicultural identities. This is balanced with the need to understand how individuals hold multiple identities yet maintain a unified sense of self. To understand the latter, identity centrality and identity integration are important constructs. Identity centrality refers to how strongly the identity affects one’s life, drawn from Sellers’ Centrality subscale on the Multidimensional Inventory of Black Identity (Sellers, Rowley, Chavous, Shelton, & Smith, 1997). Centrality typically focuses on the importance of a single identity. Identity integration, on the other hand, refers to the ways in which multiple identities can be unified. Two dimensions of identity integration, blendedness and harmony, contribute to low identity conflict (Benet-Martínez & Haritatos, 2005). However, identity integration must also be balanced with retaining cultural elements from each unique cultural identity which are core to the essence of oneself. This balancing act requires some cognitive flexibility such as the ability to frame switch or flexibly adapt cognition and behaviors to cultural cues.

The Cultural Identity Influence Measure (CIDIM; Ferguson, Nguyen, & Iturbide, 2016) also assesses how individuals manage multiple identities, but with a focus on the ways each distinct cultural identity changes over daily time, rather than developmental (i.e., stages across the life span) time. More precisely, the CIDIM yields a CV score for each cultural identity measured, which captures the degree to which each identity is simultaneously adjusted by individuals from day to day. These daily adjustments are likely to be more variable during emerging adulthood, a period of heightened identity exploration and fewer constraints on social roles, which allows individuals greater agency flexibility in adapting and changing cultural identity (Schwartz, Cote, & Arnett, 2005).

The quantitative approaches are useful in measuring the domains and valence of identity flexibility. Qualitative approaches provide an understanding of the experiential component of managing multiple cultural identities. In analyzing the coherence of life narratives, Yampolsky, Amiot, and de la Sablonniere (2016) found that individuals with integrated and categorized (i.e., identifying with one of their cultural identities over others, similar to centrality) identity profiles have more coherent life narratives than those who are compartmentalized (i.e., maintain separate identities). And in a qualitative study of Black college students at a predominantly White institution, Stewart (2008) found that seeking identity integration was an ongoing, daily challenge influenced by changing sociocultural contexts. This required individuals to pick and choose an aspect of their identity to emphasize while in pursuit of “being all of me” (Stewart, 2008).

This body of work illustrates the complexity in understanding multicultural identity development and processes. There is a tension between the need for identity flexibility with the desire for a stable, core sense of self. It is possible that CV may provide a template for explaining how individuals ameliorate this tension, but it requires close examination of the ways CV is used.

## Phenomenological Approach to Understanding CV

Phenomenological methodologies can be useful in examining the ways emerging adults make sense of their multiple identities and how they make adjustments to the amount of cultural influence each identity has on their daily behaviors and interactions. Interpretive phenomenological analysis (IPA) is an inductive approach to data analysis that provides an in-depth examination of smaller, homogenous samples to explore a phenomenon (Pietkiewicz & Smith, 2014). In this case, how individuals make sense of CV, how they experience CV, and what meaning they attribute to the phenomenon of CV are of interest. The aim of IPA is not to generate generalizable theories, but rather to understand the lived experience of participants, particularly as they narrate their sense-making of a phenomenon—CV, in this case—during the research process (Smith & Osborn, 2015). Importantly however, while participants share their perspectives of everyday life, the aim is not to clarify individual experiences for the sake of the participant but instead for the sake of the discipline (Giorgi, 2006). Therefore, the analysis of participant responses is contextualized in the discipline of identity development, and the individual experiences are used to understand how the phenomenon of CV can inform our understanding of identity processes in tricultural individuals.

In this study, a phenomenological approach is used to understand CV as experienced by triculturally identified SEAA emerging adults, focusing on three research questions. (1) How do triculturally identified emerging adults experience CV? Specifically, what changes when CV is engaged, in what contexts is CV used, what are the reasons for engaging in CV? (2) To what extent is CV a conscious, agentic identity process? and (3) How do individuals manage CV of three cultural identities concurrently (i.e., how do the cultural identities vary in relation to each other)?

## Statement of Positionality

This research is originally rooted in the first author's dissertation research, a mixed-methods study on Hmong adolescent acculturation and autonomy development in which recruitment and interviewing occurred at two community centers in predominantly Hmong neighborhoods. Outside of the formal interviews, the participants informally shared their experiences with hip hop. Often the interviews were conducted in community centers where "breaking" was perpetually occurring. As a former dancer of nearly 25 years myself, the conversations naturally drifted to the dancing. Over time, rapport was built and the Hmong adolescents in the community center began to question and push the research study, eventually addressing the gap they saw in the study's focus solely on Hmong and American bicultural orientations. This led to the disclosure of their "pencil" identities. The mutual trust in the relationship may have been due in part to my identity as a Southeast Asian woman who was invested in the community (at the time I was also a board member for one of the community organizations that shared the community center space). This disclosure

stayed with me, and after several years, the timing was right for further investigation.

Pairing with the second author, a long-time collaborator, brought to light the notion of tricultural identities. Both of us have personal experiences navigating multiple cultural worlds vis-à-vis our immigrant, ethnic, professional, and gender identities. The other members of the recruitment research team included three Asian and Southeast Asian undergraduate students; two were women and one identified as transgender. Two were heavily steeped in hip hop culture and activities as MCs or dancers themselves. As a result of these identities, we all felt some bias that indeed there was a phenomenon related to the navigation of multiple cultural identities on a day-to-day, situational basis. And we understood that something unique was happening with the break dancing and hip hop phenomenon across the nation. This informed the study design and procedures. It also undoubtedly informed the data analysis, though the coding and analysis process has intentionally involved individuals who do not share these identities nor participate in hip hop. This allowed us to compare insider/outsider perspectives during the coding and interpretation process and to protect from confirmation bias. The themes established within this manuscript are a result of the dynamic discussions among these members of the research team.

## Method

Participants for this IPA were six SEAA emerging adults drawn from a larger study of 40 self-identified SEAA emerging adults who engaged in hip hop activities (e.g., dancing, DJing, graffiti, MCing;  $M_{\text{age}}=19.35$ ,  $SD = 1.22$ ; 53.1% female). For this study, emerging adults were defined as those aged 18–22; this target age is likely to include those with long-term immersion in hip hop culture rather than individuals who recreationally participate in their high school club and they are likely be engaged in identity exploration which merits daily cultural identity adjustment. Participants were recruited in person at break dance tournaments in the Midwest and nationally, through college or community organizations with b-boy/girl (i.e., break dance) clubs. Participants were informed that the study explored cultural identities and the role that hip hop plays in their lives. For inclusion in the study, participants had only to self-report that they were SEAA individuals who engaged in hip hop.

The majority of participants were from Minnesota and Wisconsin. Hmong participants comprised the largest ethnic group (81.6%) and the remaining participants were Cambodian, Filipino, Laotian, and Vietnamese. Just five participants were first-generation immigrants, arriving in the United States when they were age 7 or older; the remainder were second-generation (U.S. born to immigrant parents; 89.8%). All were attending college.

## Procedure

This phenomenological analysis examined data from a survey and semi-structured individual interviews. Participants consented to

**Table 1.** Participant Identity Centrality and Cultural Variability Scores.

Participants	Gender/Age/ Ethnicity	Centrality			Cultural Variability		
		SEAA	White	Black	SEAA	White	Black
Aniloc	Female / 20 / Hmong	4.13	3.00	3.00	0.74	0.83	1.48
Danny	Male / 22 / Vietnamese	2.88	2.00	2.88	1.55	0.91	0.76
John	Male / 18 / Laotian	3.13	2.75	1.88	1.66	1.04	0.97
Lizzie	Female / 22 / Cambodian	3.88	2.88	3.00	1.29	1.13	0.52
Peach	Female / 22 / Hmong	4.50	4.00	4.00	0.92	1.47	0.40
Timothy	Male / 19 / Hmong	4.25	2.38	—	0.99	1.46	1.72

complete up to seven surveys online (delivered daily) and had the option to consent/decline participation in the interview portion (i.e., the interview was not required for participation). The Day 1 survey contained demographic questions and a measure of cultural identity centrality. A measure of CV was included on Day 1–7 surveys.

Upon completion of the surveys, a subsample of participants who originally consented to an individual interview was selected based on their CV and Centrality scores ( $n = 6$ ). Participants who were most likely to engage in complex tricultural identity negotiations were targeted for the individual interviews. It was hypothesized that individuals may have a higher need for CV due to the atypical identity configurations. Therefore, criteria for selecting interview participants were Black or White Centrality scores above the median or SEAA Centrality below the median. And because we wanted to observe the phenomenon of CV, participants whose CV scores were above the median were also invited to participate. All but one invited participant agreed to the interview, resulting in six interviews. Table 1 contains information about the interview participants.

### Measures

**CV.** CV was assessed using an adapted version of the 10-item CIDIM (Ferguson, Nguyen, & Iturbide, 2016). Using this prompt, the measure assesses how much one’s behavior and social interactions on a given day are influenced by each cultural identity being assessed (i.e., Asian American, African American/Black, and White/European American) on two domains (*Behavior and Peer Sociability* and *Family Interactions*: “Please indicate how much the music you listened to was influenced by XX ethnic/cultural identity today”). Instead of asking for responses on a 0–100% scale, the CIDIM was adapted to a Likert-type scale ranging from 1 (*not at all, 0% influence*) to 7 (*entirely, 100% influence*). CV was the standard deviation of daily scores for each cultural identity; therefore, each participant had three CV scores. Cronbach’s  $\alpha$  ranged from .86 to .90 across all three identities for the full sample. In preliminary analyses on the full sample, there were no

significant differences in CV scores by domain and CV scores by domain did not differ in their association with outcome variables. Given these findings and the focus on phenomenology of CV as a whole in this manuscript, the total CV scores are reported (domains combined).

**Cultural identity centrality.** The Ethnic Identity Centrality subscale of the Multidimensional Inventory of Black Identity (Sellers et al., 1997) was given to participants on Day 1. Participants responded to eight questions pertaining to the importance of each identity (SEAA, White American, Black/Hip Hop) for their overall sense of self (e.g., *In general, being a member of my ethnic group/identifying with African American/Black culture/identifying with White culture is an important part of my self-image*).

Because participants self-identified into the study, this scale was important for identifying the extent to which they culturally identified with each of the three identities. A Likert-type scale was used (1 = *strongly disagree* to 5 = *strongly agree*) and high mean scores represented strong Centrality. Cronbach’s  $\alpha$  on all three scales for the full sample ranged from .73 to .85.

**Interview.** The individual interviews were conducted in person or via Skype by the principal investigator/first author. Interviews ranged from 38 to 65 min and were audio-recorded, transcribed, then de-identified. See Appendix for the interview protocol. Interviews began with icebreakers and a request for the participant to confirm their preferred cultural identity label in order to compare it with the survey report. Next was an identity drawing activity in which participants were asked to log into a website on which a blank page and software tools were provided to “draw” their cultural identities and label, resize, and move around up to three identity circles.

Whereas all participants self-reported as triculturally identified per study inclusion criteria, the interview prompt allowed participants to determine the identities they felt were most meaningful to include on the drawing. As a result, three participants chose not to include a third identity in their drawings. Of those three participants, two did not include White American culture as an aspect of their cultural identity but did discuss the ways they engaged in CV for White American culture, playing up/down perceived White American aspects of their identity despite its omission on their drawings. Despite their self-identification as members of multiple cultures, the drawing activity seemed to cue participants to include the identities that were most salient at the time. It is possible that half did not include a third cultural identity because it was not salient at the time or, more likely, because the White American identity that was left off is a ubiquitous, normalized cultural standard that is so much a part of the institutional and cultural norms that it resides in participant unconsciousness. The pervasiveness of Whiteness has been named as cultural racism and compared to the air we breathe, such that it is often unrecognized (Akamatsu, 2002). Therefore, we did not dismiss participants’ identification as tricultural due to the lack of presence of a third

**Table 2.** Cultural Identity Drawings from Phenomenological Interviews.

Participant	Identity Drawing
Aniloc, age 20	
Danny, age 22	
John, age 18	
Lizzie, age 22	

(continued)

**Table 2.** (continued)

Participant	Identity Drawing
Peach, age 22	
Timothy, age 19	

identity on the drawing. Table 2 includes the identity drawings for each participant.

After completing an identity drawing, semi-structured interview questions were used to guide participant descriptions of their drawings (i.e., Let’s look at each of these parts of your cultural identity—please describe each one and tell me a little more about that part of your identity.) Throughout the course of the interview, participants could manipulate their identity circles, dragging them around the screen or enlarging/minimizing them, and final drawings were saved at the conclusion of the interview. Field notes regarding any changes to the identity circles during the interviews were also analyzed.

**Analysis**

Using an interpretive phenomenological approach (Pietkiewicz & Smith, 2014), interview transcripts were read multiple times by three members of the research team with a specific focus on CV. All portions of the transcripts wherein CV was discussed were “flagged” and then excerpted for analysis. Excerpts were read and interpretive comments were made in each reading. The research team discussed each narrative excerpt and transformed comments and discussion notes into emergent themes and thematic clusters (i.e., subordinate ideas and patterns within the themes) presented herein. Results of the phenomenological analysis are supported by data triangulated between the narratives, identity drawings, and survey responses to address the research questions.

**Results**

**Question 1: Experiencing CV**

**Theme 1: The nature of CV.** Participant descriptions of the changes that occur when an identity is played up/down formed

three clusters: (a) behavioral changes, (b) affective experience, and (c) cognitive or decision-making experiences. The latter cluster overlapped considerably with themes identified for Research Question 2 (is CV conscious/agentive?), in that explicit descriptions of the thinking and decisions are, by nature, conscious. Thus, the data supporting that cluster are presented later in the results.

**Behavioral changes.** Clothing and language were the most commonly adjusted when CV was engaged:

A little more, a lot more slang. (laughs) Hip hop jargon that also comes out. The way we dress, it also changes a lot . . . I wear specific dance shoes. My shirt is a little different. My hat is a little more either old school or new school. So that comes out. (Danny)

Because SEAA emerging adults do not wear ethnic dress on a daily basis, increasing the influence of SEAA culture on dress was rare. It was more common to adjust daily dress as influenced by White American culture while simultaneously downplaying “fobby” dress deemed to be low status (“fobby” is a derivative of “fresh off the boat” signifying new Asian immigrants). Here, Aniloc described changing her dress at a conference where she was the only Hmong student:

(You gave an example of how you changed your voice, your language. In what other ways did culture influence you in that situation?) I felt like I had to wear like leggings. Like they wear t-shirts or Aeropostale kind of design shirts . . . So I felt like I had to dress similar to them. Because if I dressed too Asian or too fobby or too nice, it would be weird.

In addition to dress and language, behavioral changes such as adhering to social interaction norms occurred when CV was engaged:

Like if I am at home, I’m going to be more Laotian. I’m going to speak Lao with my parents. I’m going to be respectful in a way that they know. Because there are different social norms . . . you have to bow, you have to speak a certain way. And then when I’m speaking with American people, I feel like I leave my Laotian side like a lot more and kind of like become American. I switch it up. But in general, I just feel like an Asian American. Like that I’m just me. (John)

**Affective experiences.** Participants also reported affective experiences with CV, which we coded into the thematic clusters of distressing, difficult but worthwhile, or easy. Two participants described negative emotional experiences with CV. The prevailing sentiment from participants was that CV was relatively easy and either affectively neutral or positive, indicating that managing tricultural identities on a daily basis is not rife with conflict or emotional distress. Importantly, playing up hip hop identities appeared to cultivate the most positive affective response from participants:

It feels, it actually feels like one of the best feelings in the world. And the reason why is because when I am only devoting myself to hip hop, then I can go anywhere, do hip hop, and people can look at it and say, “Oh, that’s hip hop.” It doesn’t have to be like, “He’s Asian,” or, “He’s Hmong.” So it actually feels great. (Timothy)

Peach was the only participant whose identity circles were decidedly separated (i.e., no overlap), and she expressed struggle in a version of CV that she perceived as choosing between identities (rather than playing up/down an identity): “So I have to pick and choose where I’m taking from today. Like today was, I’m going to be American . . . Versus being Hmong . . . So it’s a daily struggle.” Whereas Peach’s distress was due to the process of CV itself, CV was accompanied by fear for Lizzie, who was concerned with not playing up an identity sufficiently: “Sometimes it’s confusing, especially with the political climate of today. I haven’t had anyone say things to me, but I get really scared if I don’t act American enough in certain spaces . . . .”

Other participants recognized that the process of CV could be challenging, but they viewed it as a meaningful, ultimately worthwhile, identity strategy. Aniloc, who earlier described altering her dress to fit in with predominantly White peers at a conference, reports that doing so was a necessary part of her identity development process in helping her learn how to better negotiate multiple identities and contexts. Ultimately, CV in her White American identity helped to affirm Aniloc’s ethnic identity one year later:

I did feel very uncomfortable half of the time. I learned a lot of things but I felt like I wasn’t me. So this year when I went, I actually encouraged a lot of people of diversity to apply as well. And it was a much better experience actually being able to be myself rather than just walking around with White girls and trying to blend in and trying to be cool. So I felt like kind of shrunk my Hmong away for the first conference and I was like, “okay, I’m going to be more American.” And then this conference I’m like, “I am Hmong. I’m a Hmong-American. I should be proud that.”

**Cues and contexts for CV.** CV processes appeared to be externally informed by cues in participants’ sociocultural context that helped them determine which of their three identities to play up/down. Unsurprisingly, participants described peer or familial contexts that prompted CV as seen in the narratives previously presented (e.g., language changes around peers vs. families). But the bulk of their descriptions were focused on the anticipated function that playing up/down each cultural identity would serve to help them navigate the sociocultural context. For example, Aniloc described the contextual reasons for playing up/down her identities in her Lutheran college environment:

If I’m like in school and I’m surrounded by like White people, I want to identify as an American Lutheran rather than as a Hmong Lutheran. I’m proud of who I am. But at that time, I feel like it’s not getting me anywhere by identifying as a Hmong.

If playing up an identity was not perceived to serve a positive function or yield benefits for participants within the social context at hand, participants reported de-emphasizing that identity or holding it stable. Importantly, playing down CV did not diminish the importance of that identity to participant's sense of self—Aniloc's SEAA Centrality score is the highest of all her identities and her SEAA CV score is relatively low.

Whereas the social environment (i.e., who was physically present) cued participant CV responses, participants' hip hop identity did not seem to vary by social or environmental cues:

A lot of the reasons why I identified or was influenced by a certain group was because I was with them . . . In all honesty, the hip hop culture influenced me a lot even when they weren't around me, because I listened to that kind of music and I do a lot of things related to that, like dancing. But when I go to class, I'm constantly being reminded that I'm not White and I'm Asian. And like trying to like remember, hey, you're not White, but you're in class and you are a Hmong person. Don't forget that. (Aniloc)

CV in hip hop served a different social function than providing social advantage to participants: It helped to educate out-group members and also amplified ethnic identity with in-group and out-group members—these findings are discussed in participant reasons for engaging CV below. The narrative data indicate participants were most likely to hold SEAA CV stable while making daily adjustment to other identities; these findings are corroborated by the lower SEAA CV scores evidenced by the survey (for all participants but John and Danny).

*Reasons for CV.* CV was enacted when cued by the sociocultural context, but the reasons for playing up/down identities varied by reference group (in-group or out-group).

*CV to educate out-group members.* There was an aspect of performativity to out-group members described by participants, such as playing up one's SEAA identity to educate others about one's ethnic culture, particularly when participants felt doing so disrupted stereotypes of Asian Americans held by non-Asian peers:

I would describe myself as Hmong-American. Not as Asian, but as Hmong-American. Because after all, (campus cultural event) is an event held by the Hmong students. And empowering the Hmong students and educating people about the Hmong culture. And I would drop hip hop and Asian because I would like to focus more on the Hmong aspect of it instead of the overall Asian aspect of it . . . (Timothy)

Timothy also played up his hip hop identity to educate others:

(Hip hop has) helped me make friends on campus as a freshman last year coming into this school. So it's kind of like going in there and just saying like, "Hey, I'm a break dancer." And then everybody looks at you and acknowledges you like oh, you're Asian, you do hip hop, and you're Hmong-American. Like many people

in Wisconsin have never heard of Hmong before, you know. And that's actually one of the things as well.

Thus, for Timothy, whose experiences with CV resonated with the other participant interviews, multiple factors were considered when enacting CV and in determining which ID to play up in order to best achieve his goals with out-group members.

Hip hop was reported to be critical in helping participants reach out to others in educating about SEAA culture, in part because it was more acceptable in White American culture. It served as a bridge to inform out-group members about the heterogeneity in the Asian diaspora and allowed participants to express their pride in SEAA culture in ways that were more familiar to out-group members. Participants often reported playing up hip hop and SEAA cultural identities simultaneously:

. . . when I perform, I identify myself I'm a Vietnamese person. I can actually be in the arts as well, other than like in a medical field or in the business field, law school and such . . . Because Vietnamese people are also artists, too. We do enjoy singing and dancing and acting. (Danny)

*CV to fit in with out-group.* Participants both played up the characteristics they perceived to be associated with White American culture or cultural expectations, as seen in Aniloc's case. In this excerpt, Lizzie discussed engaging CV to adapt to White American cultural norms represented by out-group peers and the geographic location and compares it to her baseline identity:

Since I go to (school in large, urban coastal city) when I go grocery shopping or when I'm in this general area, it is very diverse. But there are a lot more European White people here. So I tend to talk and tend to try to fit in more. I try to talk more Americanized. If I'm around Asian people at like school, I feel like I can be more myself, which is the mixture . . . Two years ago I had a roommate and she's a white American . . . And around her, I would definitely try to be more White girl. (laughs) Sorry. But be more like her, be talking like her, and eating with her, go visiting the beach and dressing in outfits similar to each other. (Lizzie)

Participants similar to Lizzie, who spoke explicitly of playing up White American identity and downplaying SEAA identity, had higher SEAA Centrality scores than White Centrality scores. This indicates the adjustments they made to their cultural identities did not diminish their ethnic sense of self but were instead functional, seemingly minor, and temporary adjustments to navigate the environment.

*CV to distance from in-group.* Surprisingly, participants reported that they frequently played down their SEAA identities with in-group members. Their reasons formed two key clusters: (a) distancing from cultural values/beliefs and (b) distancing from in-group reliance. The women-identified participants, in particular, expressed playing down the influences of SEAA culture on their relationships (e.g., who they chose to



spend time with, have romantic relationships with) and on their adherence to traditional cultural beliefs. They used CV in these cases because they perceived SEAA cultural influence as restrictive to their autonomy or to other social identities such as gender role:

In my Hmong culture, you should be married to a Hmong dude. But in the American culture, that's what it means to be American, is to be able to be with whoever you want I made the decision actually very young that I wasn't going to marry a Hmong guy. I made that decision when I was twelve. (Peach)

Other participants reported engaging CV to play down their SEAA identity for self-protective purposes, to prevent themselves from being taken advantage of by peers and elders who were perceived as relying on a shared ethnic identity to ask for favors. Danny described his eagerness to coordinate a hip hop performance for a co-ethnic peer who later did not respond to his request to reciprocate and assist at another event: "That really switched my mindset around. Because I became a little bit too distant in the Vietnamese community. I said I don't really talk to any Vietnamese people. When I hear the Vietnamese dialect, I kind of turn away." Interestingly, this experience affected only Danny's SEAA identity not his hip hop cultural identity. Aspiring artist Aniloc echoed Danny's sentiments and describes her response to being asked to provide photography services for free in terms of CV: "I had another experience where I did kind of shrink my Hmong circle. I feel like sometimes Hmong people try to take advantage of you." By distancing themselves, Danny and Aniloc appeared able to preserve the quality of their relationships by feeling connected to, but not used by, members of their in-group.

### Question 2: Consciousness and Agency in CV

Descriptions of CV indicated it was a cognitive process of which participants were consciously aware. Participants did not report that CV was engaged subconsciously, even in retrospective recall. In fact, participants explicitly described the decision-making pathways used to play up/down a cultural identity (e.g., Peach: "In my mind, those circuits, I mean, every time I have to make a decision, the circuits break off like this. And this is option A, and this is option B. And then I have to decide okay, which option do I want to go with? If I go with option B, then these other options come up. So this little tree branches start to come out").

CV appears to serve utilitarian functions, and identities were sometimes played up/down not just to adapt to existing circumstance but to actively create positive outcomes for the participants (e.g., Aniloc: "I'm obviously Hmong. But I'm trying to be an American where I am social on media"). The overall effect was a collective portrait of CV that was a conscious and agentic process and laced with positive affect:

(Do you think you do it [play up hip hop] consciously or on purpose?) I do it on purpose, actually. (Okay. So when it's done on purpose, what is, what's going through your mind?) In my mind,

it's actually excitement. And I actually feel like an educator when I do it consciously. Because I feel like oh, I'm doing it with the intention that people can see me do it. So like people can learn about it at the same time. So I kind of have a goal when I do it intentionally. (Timothy)

### Question 3: Management of Tricultural Identities

In the interviews, participants were not given cues regarding how to discuss the changes in their cultural identities (i.e., their CV); therefore, the language they used to describe these changes in identity was essential to the phenomenology of CV. These movements were figuratively and literally conveyed as a process of "shrinking" or "enlarging" identities as participants described changes using the identity circles as symbolic representations of identity movement. In some cases, participants literally used the software program to move their identity circles during the interview process. In these narratives, we also find elements of the previous themes, as the nature of CV becomes increasingly clarified in this culminating phase of phenomenological analysis.

*Shrinking/enlarging identities.* Playing up/down identities was most often described by participants as altering the size of the identity circles. Interestingly, for many participants, the movement largely pertained to identities other than their primary ethnic identity (that of highest centrality). Shrinking/enlarging SEAA CV did not diminish the centrality of SEAA as evidenced by SEAA Centrality scores, the narratives, and the similarity in size of the identity circles

And the American would be a little expanded. So that way I could feel like I am really trying to fit in. (*Right. But it looks like the circles still really overlap.*) Right. Yeah. Definitely. Because I still would express my interest in Cambodia and how much, how I am Cambodian. And I would not downplay that. If someone asked me what my ethnicity is, which I get often, I would tell them I'm Cambodian . . . And I wouldn't downplay it. (Lizzie)

Similarly, Timothy reports shrinking his identities largely in respect to the cognitive attention that he diverts toward that identity in the moment: "So for me, what might be happening is I shrink the other circles so that I can focus more on the one circle that I didn't shrink. For example, I would focus more on the Hmong-American aspects . . ."

Whereas it may be presumed that "shrinking" one identity necessarily makes the other identities appear relatively larger, participants were explicit in stating that the identity for which CV is engaged is the primary focus of the changes—that is, they used CV to "right size" the importance of one identity in response to the sociocultural context, not to affect the non-moving identities. Therefore, CV appears to occur independently for each cultural identity.

*Rotating/flipping identities.* For three participants, CV changes were more complex and the process of identity changes were

more similar to identity alternation—but with different effects to the participant’s overall experience of CV. Despite the overlap in Danny’s identity circles, he discussed focusing only on one identity at a time by pushing the other identity to the figurative rear of his sense of self:

When the occasion comes, I play that part more than the other one. With my Asian, like Asian friends, I do not reference anything about hip hop unless someone talks about it. That’s when I come in. That’s when [that side] does come in, but not as huge. (*So are they really pretty separate, these two parts of yourself?*) Yes. Yes, I do flip flop between them. And I do try not to let two things collide with each other. Because sometimes, mostly some bad things might come out, or how people view me. One slip of my tongue, like if I start referencing any like hip hop, then my jargon might change a little bit. And then people start, Asian community, or Asian people start judging a little bit more. Judging me, how I talk.

In contrast to Danny’s experience of alternation/compartmentalization, John discussed the ways his SEAA fits within his dancer/hip hop identity and even if it may vary from day to day, it fits well together. It’s just something that the Asian-American, being Asian-American and being a dancer is kind of like, in a way it’s like this is me and this is what I do. It’s kind of like that. They just fit together. I don’t have to switch because I feel that they’re just two different things.

However, both Danny and John had the largest hip hop identity circles, and both discussed the important role that hip hop served in helping to connect them to Asian culture. On the other hand, Peach also discussed CV in terms of identity compartmentalization but did not have the buffer of the hip hop identity to alleviate her previously described negative affect experienced with CV. Therefore, it appeared that even if high SEAA CV for these participants was problematic in their daily lives, especially for Danny’s in-group membership or in Peach’s challenges managing her SEAA and American identity, negative affect or emotional distress as a result of CV may be buffered by a superordinate, more central hip hop identity—from which Peach does not benefit.

## Discussion

Our in-depth interpretive phenomenological analysis of interview and other data provides insight into the ways CV—playing up/down the influence of a cultural identity on social interactions—is experienced by tricultural SEAA emerging adults. Results reveal that when these participants engaged in CV, they primarily experienced CV as emotionally neutral rather than distressing, and they employed a conscious cognitive decision-making process when determining how and when to adjust their cultural identities. Contextual factors and socio-environmental cues to engage CV informed this cognitive decision-making process, as did anticipatory cues. Surprisingly, CV to distance oneself from in-group members, particularly outside of school, was an emergent theme. Finally, playing down SEAA identity did not result in a loss of

centrality for the SEAA emerging adults engaged in hip hop. In this discussion, the utility of CV will be discussed and contextualized with other multicultural identity negotiation processes, and the importance of including nonethnic cultural identities, such as hip hop, in multicultural identity negotiation will be discussed.

### *CV is Necessary and Adaptive for Tricultural Emerging Adults*

Hiding one’s ethnic identity in public is associated with negative self-esteem and other psychological outcomes because it is akin to hiding one’s true self. Historically, this process was necessary for survival for some ethnocultural groups and resulted in cognitive burden, such as in Black Americans who must downplay their Black identities and play up Whiteness in order to present themselves as assimilated to the dominant culture in response to discrimination (e.g., Ogbu, 2004). However, results from this study find that downplaying an identity in a specific context on a single day is not always equivalent to downplaying the importance or centrality of emerging adults’ ethnic identity but rather, it can be an adaptive cognitive and behavioral process that directs attention toward, or diverts from, some aspect of one of their cultural identities.

For the SEAA emerging adults in this study, CV allowed participants to modestly adjust any one of their tricultural identities to fit in with those around them, educate others to overcome stereotypes of their ethnic group, or to distance themselves from their in-group when desired without sacrificing the core of who they are. Environmental and anticipatory cues informed participants of the need to adjust an identity. In particular, anticipation of being around predominantly White peers at school cued participants to engage in one of two assimilative or contrastive behaviors (Zou, Morris, & Benet-Martinez, 2008): (1) to adapt their dress and language to better fit in with peers, akin to code-switching to reduce the likelihood they would stand out or to draw attention away from their otherness or (2) to play up their ethnic identities to resist prejudice and discrimination.

Environmental cues have been examined as primes to ethnic salience and cultural frame switching (Yip & Fuligni, 2002; Benet-Martínez, Leu, Lee, & Morris, 2002, respectively). However, because of the finding that individuals engage CV due to anticipatory cues, it appears they may be taking precautionary measures to control the extent to which an ethnic/cultural identity *becomes* salient. In this manner, CV captures an agentic component to identity adjustment in addition to a reactionary response.

Downplaying one’s ethnic identity occurred more frequently than anticipated. This downplaying of identity is documented globally and historically, such as among Muslim girls in elementary school in Ireland (Devine & Kelly, 2006) and among African American children in the United States (e.g., Ogbu, 2004). However, the participants in this study also discussed playing down their identity among in-group members. Prior work suggests that this downplaying of ethnic identity

occurs when individuals, especially second-generation immigrant youth, feel stigma and shame over stereotypic actions of coethnic group members (Schmader & Lickel, 2006; Stroink & Lalonde, 2009). CV appears to be an important mechanism through which SEAA emerging adults protect their ethnic pride without loss to the quality of their relationships or to their ethnic centrality. That is, playing down one's Asian ethnic identity in certain contexts can be done while still maintaining that identity as a core facet of one's ethnic self. In-group distancing tends to occur when individuals rate negative attributes to be associated to the group (Hodson & Esses, 2002), for example, Danny's report that his SEAA elders were making (arguably racist) jokes that stereotyped individuals with dark skin such as himself. He chose to downplay his SEAA identity in order to distance himself from these actions, but doing so did not diminish the centrality of his Asian identity a personal characteristic.

### *CV is Complementary to Alternation and Code-Switching*

In bicultural models of identity development, when the two cultures are perceived as opposing or dissimilar, identity conflict is experienced (Stroink & Lalonde, 2010). Alternation is a useful identity process for individuals to better match their identities to the context, engaging in strategies such as code-switching in order to mitigate identity discord (De Fina, 2007). In this study, some tricultural emerging adults engaged both CV and identity alternation simultaneously, suggesting that they are complementary identity negotiation processes. When faced with potential cultural identity dissimilarity, little conflict ensued because participants adjusted the influence of one cultural identity to alleviate potential conflict such as playing down use of hip hop jargon with family. It appears CV may be one mechanism by which code-switching is achieved; that is, playing down one identity and playing up another is the way in which one switches from one behavior to the next.

It is also possible that these two identity processes co-occur in a staggered fashion or to fulfill different adaptation goals. For example, individuals may play down aspects of their ethnic cultural identity until they see a cue that the identity would be accepted by others, in which case they may play up the identity or even fully alternate to the identity or bring it to the forefront. It may also be possible that CV is engaged without identity alternation or code-switching, such that only one identity is adjusted while it is in the forefront, while keeping the other identities stable and in the background.

CV complements emerging work on perspectives on the inherent value of multicultural identities by presenting a process through which individuals can adapt and adjust their multicultural identities. For instance, Basilio et al. (2014) posit there are positive outcomes to facility/flexibility in navigating two cultural contexts (Mexican and White American) and CV captures the ways in which individuals have bi/tricultural identity flexibility. Future research can examine the association between CV and bicultural facility, both of which importantly emphasize the benefits of identity agency and flexibility.

### *Nonethnic Cultures as Third Cultural Identities: A Promising Area of Research*

The inclusion of a nonethnic cultural identity—hip hop—in this study is a novel and important contribution to the literature on tricultural identities. Unlike other identities, participants often held hip hop relatively stable (i.e., less CV) and hip hop was always the identity circle drawn to either overlap or encircle the other identities. These representations symbolize its utility in connecting or bridging the other identities, its importance as a third cultural identity, and how it encompasses other cultural identities within an individual's sense of self.

In this study, hip hop was used to help participants gain the trust and respect of ethnic and out-group group members alike, so they could develop relationships or educate others about SEAA culture. Creating hybridized identities helps emerging adults feel most like themselves (Bhabha & Rutherford, 2006), but rather than viewing hip hop as a singular blended identity, SEAA emerging adults engaged CV for their hip hop identities so it could coexist with their other identities and be played up/down for utilitarian purposes. The potentially adaptive benefits of CV for hybrid identities are evident, and this promotes our understanding of the agentic nature of identity development. Even in the most restrictive environments, individuals have been found to develop ways to be their true selves and transcend binary identity options. However, this can lead to political and sometimes violent consequences. This is exemplified by a group of Tibetan immigrant youth whose engagement in hip hop has been denigrated by elders, used as a tool for further oppression by the dominant culture, and resulted in internalized racism for those who assimilated notions of Tibetan Asians as model minorities and perceive youth who engage in hip hop as Tibetan underclass (Yeh & Lama, 2006).

### *Limitations and Future Directions*

The sample of this study is small and homogenous by design. They were also geographically similar, and future research must engage participants from a broader range of locations as local context is important to cultural identity development and especially to the nature of the hip hop "scene."

One participant declined to be interviewed because there was a large time lag between submission of their survey data and the request for interview. This participant was one of the first survey respondents, and it was necessary to await enrollment into the interview portion of the study until median scores on CV and Centrality could be computed in order to create a balanced sample of interview participants. To replace this individual, interviews were conducted with another participant with similar scores. In future studies with a similar population, existing CV and Centrality scores can be used to determine interview sampling and recruitment can occur more rapidly.

Previous studies of CV found that it exists even in monocultural individuals including those who are members of the White American dominant majority (Ferguson, Nguyen, & Iturbide,

2016). Future research can explore the phenomenology of CV in White monoculturals as a means to better understand how dominant group members conceptualize this racialized identity and the ways individuals work to play up/down their consciousness of belonging to a group that is societally privileged and whose salience varies greatly (Torkelson & Hartmann, 2010).

Finally, this study focused largely on CV in the peer group, as that was the primary site of engagement in hip hop. However, there was some discussion of the role of parents and family that merits further interrogation. Past research finds that CV impacts interactions with families and friends differently (Ferguson, Nguyen, & Iturbide, 2016), but the framework is traditionally for bicultural individuals. Future research can explore the ways CV functions for triculturally identified individuals within the family unit.

Given a burgeoning understanding of identity intersectionality beyond its origins in Critical Race Theory (see history in Hancock, 2016), developmental science must develop ways to assess the simultaneous changes in multiple identities, and how they intersect or affect one another (Purdie-vaughns & Eibach, 2008). The study sheds light on the phenomenology of a still-novel construct and opens the doors for deeper examination of an identity process with clear adaptive function for tricultural individuals.

## Appendix

### Individual Interview Questions

Icebreakers: What kinds of things do you like to do in your spare time? (follow up to clarify activities, especially nature of involvement in hip hop activities and how participant became involved in hip hop)

As you know, this study is about cultural identity. On the survey you listed \_\_\_\_\_ (fill in) as the preferred term you like to use to describe your cultural identity. Is there another term you prefer? \_\_\_\_\_. This is the term I will try to use when we talk about your identity for the rest of the interview.

Is there any reason in particular why you choose to go by this term?

### ID Map Task

We're going to do something a little different for this part of the interview. I need you to pull up this Internet address (also sent to your email): [http://www.readwritethink.org/files/resources/interactives/venn\\_diagrams/](http://www.readwritethink.org/files/resources/interactives/venn_diagrams/)

This page represents your cultural identity. I'd like you to use these circles to represent each part of your cultural identity. The circles can be any size you want them to be (let me show you how to change the size). You can also add more circles—but the program only allows us to have three circles. If you think you want more, we can switch to paper. You can also move the circles around so that they are placed anywhere on the page (demonstrate this). So, just take a few minutes now to draw your cultural identity, then I'll ask you some questions.

*Composition/parts of cultural ID (use diagram for these questions).*

1. How many parts (aspects) are there to your cultural identity and what are those parts? (Participant should label the circles online; if "American" label is used, ask: What do you mean by "American"?)
2. Are there other cultures that are a part of who you are? Are there any other cultures that influence your identity each day? (*add circles as needed*)
3. Let's look at each of these parts of your cultural identity—please describe each one and tell me a little more about that part of your identity.
4. *If multiple cultural parts:* How does it feel to have many parts to your cultural identity?
  - Does having many parts to your cultural identity ever help you (e.g., in school, with friends, with family, with private thoughts and feelings)?
  - Does having many parts to your identity ever create problems for you (e.g., in school, with friends, with family, with private thoughts and feelings)?

*If single culture (one circle):* How would you feel if you had many parts to your cultural identity?

- Would having many parts to your cultural identity ever help you (e.g., in school, with friends, with family, with private thoughts and feelings)?
- Would having many parts to your identity ever create problems for you (e.g., in school, with friends, with family, with private thoughts and feelings)?

*Cultural identity blendedness/separatedness/conflict.*

5. Sometimes the parts of our cultural identities can overlap. Do any parts of your cultural identities overlap? Can you show me with these circles? (*Skip to 6 if participant has already drawn overlapping circles*)
6. Can you tell me more about these overlapping circles? What does it "feel like" to you to have overlapping parts of your identity?
7. Do you ever feel like the parts of your cultural identity are *separated from* each other? Please tell me more about that.
8. Do you ever feel like the separate parts of your cultural identity are *in conflict* with each other? Please tell me more about that.
9. Do you ever feel like the parts of your cultural identity are *in balance* (or blended, if participant uses this term) with each other? Please tell me more about that.

*Cultural identity influence/variability.*

10. How much do you feel your cultural identity or parts of your identity changes each day? In what ways does it change?
11. Are there any times that you find yourself "playing up" or "playing down" (emphasizing/de-emphasizing) different parts of your cultural identity? Can you tell me

more about those times? When do you do it? What are some of the reasons for doing so?

12. *If hip hop was not drawn as a circle earlier in the interview:* As you know, we are interested in learning more about how people think hip hop and culture are related. In what ways does hip hop overlap with being \_\_\_\_\_ for you? In what ways is your cultural identity separate from hip hop culture?

### Author Contributions

Jacqueline Nguyen contributed to conception and design; contributed to acquisition; drafted the manuscript; critically revised the manuscript; gave final approval; and agreed to be accountable for all aspects of work ensuring integrity and accuracy. Gail M. Ferguson contributed to conception and design; contributed to data interpretation; critically revised the manuscript; gave final approval; and agreed to be accountable for all aspects of work ensuring integrity and accuracy.


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### Open Practices

Data and materials for this study have not been made publicly available. The design and analysis plans were not preregistered.

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