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Brief report

Exploring the double-edged sword of cultural variability in interactions with family versus friends

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ABSTRACT

Cultural variability (CV) refers to the tendency to vary/adjust the influence of a single cultural identity on one's social interactions and behaviors from day to day. CV has different influences on interpersonal interactions, positive for some interactions but with adverse effects for others; hence, we aimed to further explore these associations by considering immigrant status and ethnic orientation as potential moderators. Hierarchical regression using daily diary self-reports of U.S. emerging adults ($N = 242$) revealed that cultural variability is a double-edged sword only for first- and second-generation immigrants rather than for nationals (3rd generation and later). That is, CV predicts positive family interactions for both groups, but negative interactions with close friends only for immigrants, especially those with strong ethnic orientation. Cultural variability adds a new dimension to our understanding of cultural identity as dynamic, domain-specific, and nuanced in its associations with adaptation.

Cultural variability (CV) refers to the tendency to vary/adjust the influence of a single cultural identity on one's social interactions and behaviors from day to day (e.g., 'playing up' Hindi language use with ethnic Indian peers one day and 'playing [it] down' in a multicultural group of peers the next: Ferguson, Nguyen, & Iturbide, 2016). A recent mixed-methods study with a multicultural sample of U.S. emerging adults demonstrated that CV can be a double-edged sword for interpersonal interactions: greater CV around family is associated with better quality family interactions, whereas the opposite is true for interactions with friends (Ferguson et al., 2016). The purpose of this brief report is to further explore the associations between CV and interaction quality in the United States by considering immigrant status and ethnic orientation as potential moderators. Relative to nationals,² first- and second-generation immigrant youth may have a greater need for CV to improve cultural fit with others in their social networks (Ward & Chang, 1997). It is also possible that strong orientation to one's heritage culture may accentuate the interpersonal effects of CV by providing more points of connection with parents (positive), but also more opportunity for friends to criticize CV as inauthentic (negative).

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E-mail addresses: gmlfergus@illinois.edu (G.M. Ferguson), nguyen39@uwm.edu (J. Nguyen), Maria.Iturbide@humboldt.edu (M.I. Iturbide), giray2@illinois.edu (C. Giray).¹ Present address: Department of Psychology, Humboldt State University, Behavioral and Social Science Building #440, 1 Harpst Street, Arcata, CA 95519, United States² Also referred to as the majority/mainstream or host country nationals.

Cultural context of the United States

The complex sociocultural fabric of the U.S. has been woven by successive waves of immigrants over centuries. In the earliest waves of U.S. immigration in the 19th and 20th century, 90% of immigrants were European and mostly White (Pew Research Center, 2013). These third- and later generation immigrants³ (henceforth “nationals”) now comprise a shrinking majority in the United States relative to first- and second-generation immigrants (henceforth “immigrants”) largely from Asia, Latin America, and the Caribbean, who represent 26% of the current population and a projected 36% by 2065 (Ferguson & Birman, 2016; Pew Research Center, 2015). There is also a hidden diversity to the U.S. White group: between 2000 and 2010, 2.4 million Americans of “Hispanic Some Other Race” origins changed their Census designations to “Hispanic White” (Liebler, Rastogi, Fernandez, Noon, & Ennis, 2014). U.S. nationals also include ethnic minority non-immigrants, such as indigenous Native Americans and individuals of African descent forced to the U.S. via slave trade.

Ethnic orientation,⁴ meaning the “preference for maintaining one’s heritage culture and identity” (Berry, 2005, p. 704) is also complex for U.S. immigrants and nationals. For immigrants, ethnic orientation may shift during acculturation (Berry, 2005; Ferguson & Birman, 2016). Because the immigration histories of most White U.S. nationals is distant and because U.S. society tends to emphasize national or “White” identity over unique ethnic group identities (e.g., German, Irish, etc.: Cornell & Hartmann, 2004), U.S. White individuals tend to have lower ethnic orientation than do people of color. This dynamic multicultural context sets the stage for CV.

Cultural variability (CV)

In this section we will articulate our conceptualization of CV as a largely overlooked aspect of cultural identity, and describe its association with related constructs. First, aligned with existing perspectives, we view cultural identity as a type of social identity dealing with “the ideals and values of the cultural in-group with which the person identifies” (Schwartz, Montgomery, & Briones, 2006, p. 10). Although cultural identity encompasses ethnic and other social identities (e.g., gender), in this article we focus exclusively on ethnic-cultural identity. Second, we argue that the developmental period of emerging adulthood (18–25) is well-suited to the study of CV because cultural identity formation intensifies during this stage (Arnett, 2000). Due to record-high levels of migration and globalization, emerging adults in many countries, including the United States, now inhabit far more culturally heterogeneous societies than did previous generations (Humes, Jones, & Ramirez, 2011). Therefore, CV captures the cultural flexibility and daily calibrations needed for adaptation to these multicultural environments (Markus & Kunda, 1986). CV may be a mechanism by which individuals can maximize cultural fit (Ward & Chang, 1997) with individual family members and close friends.

What is CV?

CV is the *day-to-day variability* in how much influence one’s cultural identity (*cultural influence*) exerts on interpersonal interactions and behaviors. This conceptualization of CV resonates with the growing appreciation of cultural identity as dynamic, flexible, and domain-specific (e.g., Bauer, Loomis, & Akkari, 2013; Ferdman & Horenczyk, 2000). More scholars are assessing not only identification/orientation towards one’s ethnic culture, which is thought to be relatively stable save for a possible shift following migration, but also changes in one’s experience of ethnic or cultural identity across days and settings (see Noels & Clément, 2015; Yip, 2005).

Practically speaking, CV is operationalized by computing the standard deviation of self-reported cultural influence scores across multiple days, or by multilevel modeling the within-person variability of daily cultural influence scores nested within individuals. Ferguson et al. (2016) daily diary study of 242 U.S. emerging adults found evidence of CV among both first- and second-generation immigrants (e.g., self-reported cultural identities: ‘Chinese’, ‘Mexican’, ‘Asian’, ‘Black’) and also among nationals, most of whom had distant immigration histories (e.g., ‘French’, ‘German’, ‘Caucasian’, ‘Jewish’). Moreover, CV occurred in two domains – family interactions (CV_{Family}; e.g., ways of interacting with parents/siblings) and personal behavior/peer interactions (CV_{Behavior/Peers}; e.g., dress/appearance, language, ways of interacting with friends) – and CV_{Family} exceeded CV_{Behavior/Peers} (48% vs. 22% within-person variation). Ethnic minority youth experienced greater CV_{Family} than White peers and ethnic identity search positively predicted CV_{Family} (Ferguson et al., 2016). Findings from a mixed-methods cross-validation sample of 245 U.S. emerging adults confirmed that CV is agentic/purposeful as evidenced by a mean score of 3.12 on a 5-point scale when asked “How much did you intentionally control the amount of influence your cultural identity had on your life today?”. Results from this cross-validation sample also revealed that CV can be motivated by positive (group pride), neutral (course assignment), or negative (discrimination) reasons (Ferguson et al., 2016).

What isn’t CV?

Although related to other constructs in the areas of ethnic and cultural identity, CV is unique in important ways. CV is distinct from alternating/frame-switching between different cultural identities (LaFromboise, Coleman, & Gerton, 1993) because it focuses on

³ Third and later-generation immigrant groups – once immigrants, now settled – are also referred to as ‘ethnocultural groups’ (Berry, 2005).

⁴ Also referred to as cultural maintenance and cultural continuity, sometimes including contact with same-ethnic others (Sam & Berry, 2016).

variability in the influence of a *single cultural identity* on interactions and behaviors. CV is also different from ethnic salience (Yip, 2005) because it entails *agentic adjustments* to emphasize/de-emphasize cultural identity versus changes in mere awareness of ethnic identity. Additionally, CV predicts interpersonal interaction quality above and beyond ethnic salience and daily variations in ethnic salience (Ferguson et al., 2016). Finally, CV is conceptually and computationally similar to heritage identity variability (Noels & Clément, 2015) but captures variability in cultural identification *across time* versus across contexts.

CV and interpersonal interactions

Ferguson et al. (2016) found that CV is linked to interpersonal adaptation, but it is a double-edged sword in that CV_{Family} positively predicted family interaction quality whereas CV_{Behavior/Peers} negatively predicted friend interaction quality. On the one hand, playing up and down cultural influence in the family context is likely to facilitate positive family interactions because it involves adjusting one's display of culturally scripted norms (e.g., filial piety, physical closeness, expressed affection, formal language) depending on whether one is interacting with parents or siblings. On the other hand, CV may be negative around peers because youth peer groups work to maintain a cohesive social group identity (Nguyen & Brown, 2010; Tajfel, 2010) with which CV may interfere, or because CV may be perceived as inauthentic or assimilative 'selling out'.

Immigrant status as a potential moderator

In order to keep the focus on the primary hypotheses, immigrant status was treated as a control variable in Ferguson et al. (2016) analyses assessing the association between CV and interpersonal interaction quality. However, it is plausible that immigrant status may function as a moderator here given its moderation of the effect of heritage identity variability on social hassles with ingroup and outgroup members (Noels & Clément, 2015). Compared to nationals, immigrants are likely to experience a greater need for CV when interacting with first-generation immigrant parents (play up cultural identity) versus siblings (strong heritage cultural identity at home tied to a sense of belonging to parents' origin: see Bauer et al., 2013). Additionally, by virtue of being in the numerical minority, immigrant youth are more likely than nationals to have friends from a different ethnic group (Schwönwälder et al., 2016). Although managing a more culturally diverse peer network requires greater CV from immigrants, playing up/down cultural identity is not always well-received by same-ethnicity immigrant peers (Abbey, 2002).

Ethnic orientation as a potential moderator

Ethnic orientation can be considered the stable counterpart of (dynamic) CV. Having a stronger ethnic orientation may accentuate the positive interpersonal effects of CV on family interaction quality through better communication (e.g., better heritage language skills), points of connection (e.g., greater cultural knowledge), and appreciation of parents' backgrounds/values (e.g., shared cultural values). However, having stronger ethnic orientation also means that playing up/down cultural identity will be more noticeable, thus inviting more criticism from close friends who police social identity within the peer group. Additionally, immigrants sometimes project their own identity ambiguity onto peers and cause distress, such as a Chinese American taunting a peer about being a Twinkie ('yellow on the outside, white on the inside': Abbey, 2002).

Hypotheses

This study builds on prior findings regarding CV and interpersonal interaction quality (Ferguson et al., 2016). We hypothesize that first- and second-generation immigrant status and strong ethnic orientation will moderate – specifically, accentuate – the positive effects of CV_{Family} on interaction quality with family (Hypothesis 1) and the negative effects of CV_{Behavior/Peers} on interaction quality with friends (Hypothesis 2).

Method

Elaboration upon the methods described below can be found in a prior publication utilizing the same dataset (Ferguson et al., 2016).

Participants and procedure

Participants in this daily diary study were 242 undergraduate students ($M_{\text{age}} = 19.95$ years, $SD_{\text{age}} = 1.40$; 71% female); 63% had at least one college-educated parent and others had less educated parents. Overall, 43% were classified as 'immigrants' (≥ 1 foreign-born parent; first-/second-generation immigrant) and 57% were classified as 'nationals' (self and parents US-born; 3rd+ generation). The ethnic composition included 35.5% European American/White (3.5% of those were immigrants), 28.9% Asian (100% immigrants), 12.4% Black (20% immigrants), 6.6% Hispanic/Latino (69% immigrants), 16.6% Mixed/Other (35% immigrants). Participants completed an initial (Day 1) survey containing all measures. On Days 2–8, participants were emailed a link to a shorter survey with a subset of these measures. Participants received a US\$25 gift card and those who completed all surveys were entered into a single US\$100 gift card drawing.

Measures

Day 1 only

Cultural identification. Participants selected all ethnic/cultural groups with which they identified based on an adaptation of Umaña-Taylor, Yazedjian, and Bámaca-Gómez (2004) instructions (see Appendix). Overall, 80.6% selected only one cultural identifier (77% immigrants, 83% nationals). This study utilizes each participants' self-reported primary cultural identity.

Ethnic orientation. The ethnic orientation scale of the Multidimensional Acculturation measure (Haenni Hoti, Heinzmann, Müller, & Buholzer, 2015) assessed preference for cultural maintenance and contact with one's primary ethnic culture (e.g., [participant's ethnicity] *should maintain their own traditions*; 9-item, $\alpha = 0.79$). Participants ranked each item on a 5-point scale (1 = *not true at all*; 5 = *totally true*).

Days 1–8

Cultural variability. Each evening, participants completed the 10-item Cultural Identity Influence Measure (CIDIM; see Fig. 1), an ipsative measure on which participants used a sliding scale ranging from 0% to 100% to rate the relative influence of each self-reported cultural identity on their interactions and behaviors that day, including non-ethnic identities such as gender or sexual orientation (see Ferguson et al., 2016 for measure validation). All questions use the stem, "Please indicate how much [insert item] was influenced by each of the below ethnic/cultural identities today. (Percentages must sum to 100%)." The extent of cultural identity influence is assessed in two domains: personal behavior/peers (8 items, $\alpha = 0.87$; e.g., media, music, language, appearance and the way one interacts with friends, romantic partners/crushes), and social interactions with family (2-items, $\alpha = 0.76$; e.g., the way one interacts with parents, siblings). CV_{Family} and $CV_{\text{Behavior/Peers}}$ scores are the standard deviations of these daily cultural influence scores for each domain (Ferguson et al., 2016 found this method to produce equivalent results to multilevel modeling). There were expected missing data because cultural identity did not influence some participants on some days.

Interpersonal interaction quality. Each day, participants rated the quality of their interactions with family (1-item) and close friends (1-item) on a 5-point scale (1 = *extremely positive*; 5 = *extremely negative*) and mean scores were calculated across the week. Thirty-one students did not have scores because they indicated 'no contact' with family (living on-campus) or friends (completed on holiday) across the eight study days.

Plan of analysis

Missing values analysis is described in Ferguson et al. (2016); data imputation was not performed. Two hierarchical regression analyses were used to predict CV_{Family} and $CV_{\text{Behavior/Peers}}$, respectively. Potential covariates were entered into Step 1 to avoid confounding associations: average parental education and the number of self-reported cultural identities; however, only significant covariates were retained in the final models. (In the case of no significant covariates, Step 1 contained major study variables instead). In Step 2, CV, Ethnic Orientation, and Immigrant Status (dummy-coded: 1 = first- and second-generation immigrants; 0 = 3rd+ generation immigrants) were entered to assess main effects. In Step 3, two 2-way interaction terms were entered (CV X Immigrant Status, and CV X Ethnic Orientation). Finally, a 3-way interaction term was entered into Step 4 (CV X Immigrant Status X Ethnic Orientation).

Results

Descriptive statistics for major study variables are displayed in Table 1, separated for immigrants and nationals. As expected, immigrants reported more diversity among close friends on Day 1 (43% reported interacting with close friends from a different ethnicity) versus nationals (25%).

Family domain

As shown in Table 2, there was a significant and positive main effect of CV_{Family} on interaction quality with family members ($\beta = 0.18$ $p = 0.02$). Contrary to Hypothesis 1, there were no other significant main effects or interactions.

Friends domain

There was a significant main effect of immigrant status on interaction quality with close friends ($\beta = -0.16$ $p = 0.02$) indicating that recent immigrants reported lower quality interactions. This main effect was, however, qualified by a significant 2-way interaction ($CV_{\text{Behavior/Peers}}$ X Immigrant Status: $\beta = 0.34$ $p = 0.00$) and 3-way interaction ($CV_{\text{Behavior/Peers}}$ X Immigrant Status X Ethnic Orientation: $\beta = -0.17$ $p = 0.02$), in support of Hypothesis 2. Separate analyses computed for immigrants versus nationals revealed that there was a significant $CV_{\text{Behavior/Peers}}$ X Ethnic Orientation effect only for immigrants ($\beta = -0.04$ $p = 0.02$). As depicted in Fig. 2, immigrants' $CV_{\text{Behavior/Peers}}$ negatively predicted their interaction quality with close friends, especially for those with high ethnic orientation (Fig. 2a); whereas there was no interaction for nationals (nor CV main effect for that matter: Fig. 2b).

(a)

Instructions: Please indicate how much THE WAY YOU INTERACTED WITH YOUR FRIENDS was influenced by each of the below ethnic/cultural identities today. (Responses must add up to 100%).

Self-Reported Identities	0%	10%	20%	30%	40%	50%	60%	70%	80%	90%
Primary Cultural Identity: <u>French</u>	X (50%)									
Optional: Other Identity Please specify: <u>Education Level</u>	M (across 8 days) = Cultural Influence (CI) ← X → SD (across 8 days) = Cultural Variability (CV) (50%)									
Not Applicable (random unspecified influences, e.g., weather.)	X (0%)									ID#122

Instructions: Please indicate how much THE WAY YOU INTERACTED WITH YOUR PARENTS was influenced by each of the below ethnic/cultural identities today. (Responses must add up to 100%).

Self-Reported Identities	0%	10%	20%	30%	40%	50%	60%	70%	80%	90%
Primary Cultural Identity: <u>French</u>	X (60%)									
Optional: Other Identity Please specify: <u>Social Class</u>	X (40%)									
Not Applicable (random unspecified influences, e.g., weather.)	X (0%)									ID#122

(b)

Instructions: Please indicate how much THE WAY YOU INTERACTED WITH YOUR FRIENDS was influenced by each of the below ethnic/cultural identities today. (Responses must add up to 100%).

Self-Reported Identities	0%	10%	20%	30%	40%	50%	60%	70%	80%	90%
Primary Cultural Identity: <u>Korean</u>	X (100%)									
Optional: Other Identity Please specify: _____	X (0%)									
Not Applicable (random unspecified influences, e.g., weather.)	X (0%)									ID#109

Instructions: Please indicate how much THE WAY YOU INTERACTED WITH YOUR PARENTS was influenced by each of the below ethnic/cultural identities today. (Responses must add up to 100%).

Self-Reported Identities	0%	10%	20%	30%	40%	50%	60%	70%	80%	90%
Primary Cultural Identity: <u>Korean</u>	X (100%)									
Optional: Other Identity Please specify: _____	X (0%)									
Not Applicable (random unspecified influences, e.g., weather.)	X (0%)									ID#109

Fig. 1. Sample Cultural Identity Influence Measure (CIDIM) completed on Day 1 by (a) French-Identified Participant ID#122 and (b) Korean-Identified Participant ID#109.

Table 1
Descriptive Statistics and Inter-Correlations among Study Variables by Immigrant Status.

Variables	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	M (SD)
1. Parents' Education		0.01	−0.18 [*]	−0.10	0.12	−0.14	0.14	1.97 (0.51)
2. # of Cultural Identities Reported	−0.02		0.05	0.07	−0.13	−0.06	−0.09	1.17 (0.37)
3. Ethnic Orientation	−0.02	0.07		0.18 [*]	0.18 [*]	0.15	0.07	3.72 (0.65)
4. CV- Family Interaction	0.05	−0.08	0.07		0.44 ^{**}	0.18	−0.04	17.1 (15.49)
5. CV- Behavior/Peer Sociability	0.16	0.05	0.19	0.45 ^{**}		0.06	−0.13	9.68 (8.34)
6. Family Interaction Quality	0.09	0.02	0.03	0.20	0.12		0.25 [*]	3.81 (0.76)
7. Close Friend Interaction Quality	0.22 [*]	−0.02	0.15	0.19	0.27 ^{**}	0.28 ^{**}		4.30 (0.50)
M	1.88	1.23	3.96	10.01	8.95	3.84	4.14	
(SD)	(0.70)	(0.42)	(0.52)	(12.49)	(6.49)	(0.70)	(0.51)	

Note. Correlations for immigrants (1st and 2nd generation) are below the diagonal. Correlations for nationals (3rd or later generations) are above the diagonal. Parents' Education = average reported education of each participant's two principal parental figures. CV = Cultural Variability. Means reported for Family Interaction Quality and Friend Interaction Quality represent the average of those respective variables across all available days of the study.

* $p < 0.05$.

** $p < 0.01$.

Table 2
Cultural Variability, Immigrant Status, and Ethnic Orientation Predicting Interaction Quality with Family and Friends.

Variables	Interaction Quality with Family						Interaction Quality with Close Friends							
	Step 1		Step 2		Step 3		Step 1		Step 2		Step 3		Step 4	
	β	SE _b	β	SE _b	β	SE _b	β	SE _b	β	SE _b	β	SE _b	β	SE _b
Parental Education	−	−	−	−	−	−	0.19 ^{**}	0.06	0.19 ^{**}	0.06	0.18 ^{**}	0.06	0.18	0.05
CV _{Family}	0.18 [*]	0.00	0.16	0.01	0.16	0.01	−	−	−	−	−	−	−	−
CV _{Behavior/Peers}	−	−	−	−	−	−	−	−	−0.03	0.00	−0.16 [*]	0.01	−0.14	0.01
Immigration Status ^a	−0.04	0.11	−0.07	0.18	−0.06	0.19	−	−	−0.16 [*]	0.07	−0.41 ^{***}	0.07	−0.38 ^{***}	0.10
Ethnic Orientation	0.11	0.09	0.11	0.09	0.11	0.09	−	−	0.13	0.06	0.13	0.06	0.12	0.05
CV _{Family} X Immigration Status	−	−	0.04	0.19	0.02	0.19	−	−	−	−	−	−	−	−
CV _{Behavior/Peers} X Immigration Status	−	−	−	−	−	−	−	−	−	−	0.34 ^{**}	0.01	0.34 ^{**}	0.01
CV _{Family} X Ethnic Orientation	−	−	−0.01	0.01	−0.03	0.01	−	−	−	−	−	−	−	−
CV _{Behavior/Peers} X Ethnic Orientation	−	−	−	−	−	−	−	−	−	−	−0.04	0.01	0.03	0.01
CV _{Family} X Immigration Status X Ethnic Orientation	−	−	−	−	0.05	0.01	−	−	−	−	−	−	−	−
CV _{Behavior/Peers} X Immigration Status X Ethnic Orientation	−	−	−	−	−	−	−	−	−	−	−	−	−0.17 [*]	0.02 [*]
Model F	3.04 [*]		1.82		1.60		8.55 ^{**}		4.16 ^{**}		4.48 ^{***}		4.73 ^{***}	
R^2	0.03		0.02		0.02		0.04		0.07		0.10		0.13	
$R^2\Delta$	−		0.00		0.00		−		0.03		0.04		0.02	
ΔF	3.04		0.03		0.29		8.55 ^{**}		2.64		4.84 ^{**}		5.69 [*]	

Note. ^a Immigrants (1st & 2nd generation) = 1; Nationals (3rd or later generations) = 0. CV_{Family} = Cultural Variability in the family domain. CV_{Behavior/Peers} = Cultural variability in personal behaviors and peer sociability.

* $p < 0.05$.

** $p < 0.01$.

*** $p < 0.001$.

Discussion

Cultural variability (CV) – playing up/down a single cultural identity in daily interactions and behaviors – can be a double-edged sword linked to more positive family interactions but less positive peer interactions (Ferguson et al., 2016). This study explored immigrant status and ethnic orientation as potential moderators of these associations and results corroborated expectations for the friends domain (Hypothesis 2), but not the family domain (Hypothesis 1). Specifically, findings revealed that CV around family is beneficial for immigrants and nationals regardless of how strongly oriented they are to their ethnic culture. However, CV predicted lower quality interactions with close friends only for immigrants (first-/second-generation), especially those with strong ethnic orientation.

The finding that exercising greater CV around family is equally adaptive for immigrants and nationals underscores that ethnic culture is salient and important even for U.S. nationals (Torkelson & Hartmann, 2010). Emerging adults who utilize CV with family may benefit from better communication and smoother relations by increasing cultural fit with each family member (Ward & Chang, 1997).

On the other hand, playing up/down cultural identity with friends and in personal behaviors (e.g., changing appearance) relates to problems in close friendships. This is even more problematic for immigrants with stronger ethnic orientation. For immigrant youth

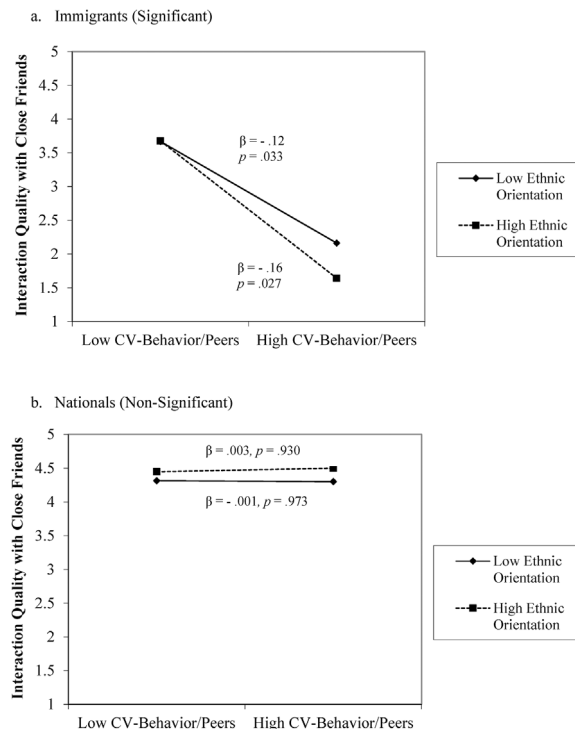


Fig. 2. Immigrants' (2a) and Nationals' (2b) Cultural Variability Predicting Interaction Quality with Close Friends as Moderated by Ethnic Orientation.

with strong ethnic orientations to begin with, CV (including playing down cultural identity) may be more noticeable and draw more criticism from close friends who are trying to protect the peer group's collective identity (Nguyen & Brown, 2010), an important task for simultaneously promoting the status of their own cultural group and protecting against racism and discrimination. Despite immigrant youths' greater need for CV to manage more culturally heterogeneous peers groups relative to national peers, CV may be less accepted by close, same-ethnicity friends. In-group youth with weaker ethnic orientations may also project their own identity ambiguity onto high CV immigrant friends causing interpersonal tensions, particularly among the strongly ethnically oriented friends for whom the charge of identity ambiguity is especially false (Abbey, 2002).

Our results contrast with those of Noels and Clément (2015) among immigrant emerging adults in Canada for whom strong heritage identity importance was an asset that nullified the association between heritage identity variability and (peer) in-group hassles. Our differing findings may be due to the type of variability studied (i.e., within domain vs. across domain). That is, CV in interactions with friends may invite more criticism/hassles from close friends because they can observe the playing up/down of cultural identity occurring amongst them, whereas heritage identity variability involves shifts between settings which are less observable by close friends. Both studies, however, attend to the complexity and variability of culture and ethnicity in daily lives and emphasize the need for situational specificity.

Limitations and future research

Our study was limited in a few ways that can be improved in future studies. Our U.S. immigrant sample was culturally diverse but nationals were largely White college students with a single cultural heritage. Studies with non-university emerging adults, African American, or bi-/multi-cultural individuals may yield different results. Additionally, emerging adults may not be fully aware of the extent to which they make daily identity adjustments, thus, other-reports and observations of individuals' CV would be useful complements. Finally, it may be interesting to assess family and friend perceptions of the effect of CV on interactions, along with the immigrant status and ethnic group of each close friend.

Conclusions

Cultural variability adds a new dimension to our understanding of cultural identity as dynamic, flexible, and domain-specific. Our current findings suggest that cultural variability, while used by immigrants and nationals, presents unique complexity as a double-edged sword only for immigrants. That is, CV predicts positive family interactions for all, but negative interactions with close friends only for immigrants, especially those with strong ethnic orientation.

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Appendix A

Cultural Identity Prompt Adapted from Umaña-Taylor et al. (2004).

The U.S. is made up of people of various ethnicities and cultural groups. Culture refers to both one's biological race, national ethnicity, AND the traditions, beliefs, and behaviors associated with groups that one chooses to integrate into one's sense of self. Some examples of the ethnic cultures people may identify with are Mexican, Cuban, Nicaraguan, Chinese, Taiwanese, Filipino, Jamaican, African American. In addition, some people may identify with more than one ethnic culture. Please use the following list of categories to select the ethnic and cultural identities that best describe you—even those that aren't part of your biological or national origins. Please select ALL that apply

- ☐ African (specify, if desired): _____
- ☐ African Caribbean (specify, if desired): _____
- ☐ African American, Black
- ☐ Latino/Hispanic–Central or South American (specify, if desired): _____
- ☐ Other Hispanic or Latino origin (specify): _____
- ☐ European American, White (specify, if desired): _____
- ☐ East Asian (specify, if desired): _____
- ☐ Southeast Asian (specify, if desired): _____
- ☐ Pacific Islander (specify, if desired): _____
- ☐ Asian Indian
- ☐ Middle Eastern (specify, if desired): _____
- ☐ American Indian (specify, if desired): _____
- ☐ An ethnic identity not on this list (specify): _____
- ☐ Another ethnic identity not on this list (specify): _____

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