



Hybrid Music Preferences and Bicultural Identity Negotiation: The Role of Situational Contexts and Personality Traits

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Introduction

In an era of globalization and cultural hybridity, individuals increasingly navigate multiple cultural identities, integrating elements from distinct traditions to form a dynamic and context-dependent sense of self (Berry, 1997; Benet-Martínez et al., 2002). Music, as a powerful form of personal and cultural expression, plays a crucial role in this process, allowing individuals to negotiate and affirm their cultural affiliations across different settings (Demes & Geeraert, 2014; Swann et al., 2009). For bicultural individuals—those who identify with two or more cultural backgrounds—music preferences can serve as both a reflection of identity and a tool for identity negotiation, shifting according to situational contexts (Hong et al., 2000; Amiot et al., 2007).

Bicultural identity is inherently fluid, with individuals engaging in *cultural frame switching*—adjusting their behaviors, attitudes, and preferences based on environmental cues (Cheng et al., 2006; Verkuyten & Pouliasi, 2006). Research suggests that music can act as a trigger for this process, activating different cultural frames and influencing behavioral responses (Mok & Morris, 2010). For example, second-generation immigrants may engage with traditional music in familial settings while preferring hybridized or globalized genres in social and professional contexts, reflecting the flexible nature of bicultural identity construction (Schwartz et al., 2010; Nguyen & Benet-Martínez, 2013). Despite these insights, existing research predominantly focuses on monocultural genres and their effects on identity, overlooking the impact of *hybrid music*—a fusion of cultural styles (e.g., K-pop incorporating traditional instruments)—on bicultural identity negotiation.

Moreover, while music's psychological and behavioral effects are well-documented, studies often examine them in isolation, failing to consider the moderating role of situational contexts (Rentfrow & Gosling, 2003; North & Hargreaves, 2008). For instance, aggressive music may enhance motivation in a gym setting but be perceived as disruptive in a workplace environment. Similarly, individual personality traits influence how people engage with and respond to music, yet little research has explored how key traits—such as *narcissism*, *grit*, and *emotional intelligence (EI)*—mediate the behavioral effects of music. These traits are closely linked to self-regulation, emotional processing, and identity curation (Petrides et al., 2010; Campbell et al., 2011; Duckworth et al., 2007), suggesting their potential role in shaping how individuals engage with hybrid music.

This study seeks to bridge these gaps by investigating the interplay between hybrid music preferences, situational contexts, and personality traits in shaping bicultural identity expression. Specifically, it aims to:

1. Examine how situational contexts (*gym*, *workplace*, and *social settings*) moderate the behavioral effects of hybrid music.
2. Explore the moderating role of narcissism, grit, and emotional intelligence in shaping individuals' engagement with music and its influence on identity negotiation.

By integrating insights from music psychology, personality theory, and bicultural identity research, this study contributes to a deeper understanding of how music serves as a psychological and social tool for identity construction in an increasingly hybridized world.

Review of Literature

Bicultural identity is not a static construct but a fluid and dynamic process in which individuals navigate between two cultural frameworks, adapting behaviors, values, and self-concepts in response to different situational cues (Benet-Martínez et al., 2002; Mok & Morris, 2010). This phenomenon, known as *cultural frame switching (CFS)*, allows biculturals to selectively activate different aspects of their identity depending on environmental and social triggers (Hong et al., 2000; Verkuyten & Pouliasi, 2006). While existing research has extensively explored CFS in the context of language and visual cultural cues, music remains an understudied yet powerful medium for identity negotiation. Music not only reflects cultural background but also actively shapes self-perception and emotional responses, influencing how individuals engage with their heritage and host cultures (Demes & Geeraert, 2014; Swann et al., 2009). Hybrid music, in particular—characterized by its fusion of musical elements from different cultural traditions—plays a crucial role in this identity negotiation, as it provides an avenue for individuals to seamlessly integrate multiple cultural influences into their self-concept (Nguyen

& Benet-Martínez, 2013; Vihalemm & Masso, 2017). However, while hybrid music has become increasingly prominent in globalized media, little research has examined its role in shaping bicultural identity, especially in relation to *situational contexts* and *individual personality traits*.

Situational factors significantly influence music preferences and their behavioral effects. Studies suggest that individuals select music based on their immediate environment, using high-energy genres in performance-driven spaces like gyms, instrumental or ambient music in workplace settings for concentration, and socially engaging music in communal settings (Sloboda & O'Neill, 2001; Schäfer & Sedlmeier, 2010). The behavioral impact of music, however, is not uniform; rather, it is moderated by the interaction between the situational context and the listener's personal identity needs. For bicultural individuals, hybrid music may serve as a cognitive and emotional anchor, reinforcing cultural belonging in familiar environments while promoting social adaptation in culturally mixed spaces (Swann et al., 2009; Yoon et al., 2011). For example, a bicultural individual might gravitate towards traditional folk-inspired music in intimate family settings to affirm their heritage, while favoring hybrid or globalized genres in social spaces where cultural integration is emphasized (Cheng et al., 2006; Tadmor et al., 2012). Despite these insights, existing research has not sufficiently explored how *hybrid music preferences vary across situational contexts* and how they influence identity-related behaviors.

Beyond situational influences, individual personality traits further shape the psychological and behavioral responses to music. Narcissism, grit, and emotional intelligence (EI) have emerged as key traits that influence self-regulation, identity expression, and social interactions (Campbell et al., 2011; Rentfrow et al., 2011). Narcissistic individuals tend to favor music that enhances their self-image and social status, often selecting genres based on their capacity to project dominance and attract attention (Reeves et al., 2021; Krause et al., 2020). Since music serves as a self-expressive tool, narcissists may strategically use hybrid music to align with social trends and create an impression of cultural sophistication or global awareness, particularly in social settings where impression management is critical. Conversely, individuals high in *grit*—defined as perseverance and passion for long-term goals—tend to engage with music that enhances motivation and endurance (Duckworth et al., 2007; Strayhorn, 2014). Research suggests that gritty individuals use music strategically in high-performance contexts, such as gyms or workplaces, selecting genres that promote sustained effort and focus (Soutter & Hutto, 2020). However, little is known about whether bicultural individuals with high grit levels prefer hybrid music that resonates with both their cultural identities or whether they gravitate toward more universally motivating genres.

Similarly, *emotional intelligence (EI)* plays a crucial role in determining how individuals engage with music for emotional regulation and social adaptation. Highly emotionally intelligent individuals are more likely to select music based on its capacity to modulate mood and enhance interpersonal interactions (Petrides et al., 2010; Resnicow et al., 2004). Given that bicultural individuals frequently navigate complex social dynamics, those with high EI may be particularly adept at using hybrid music to reinforce identity coherence across different contexts (Mayer et al., 2016). For example, in multicultural social settings, individuals with high EI may opt for hybrid music that bridges cultural divides, fostering inclusivity and social harmony. However, existing literature has yet to fully explore how EI moderates the relationship between *hybrid music preferences and situational identity expression*.

Despite significant progress in understanding music's role in identity formation, key gaps remain in the literature. First, while prior research has extensively examined the impact of monocultural music on identity, the role of *hybrid music* in bicultural identity construction is largely overlooked. Second, existing studies fail to account for *situational moderators*, particularly how different environments (e.g., gyms, workplaces, and social settings) influence music's psychological and behavioral effects. Finally, while personality traits such as narcissism, grit, and emotional intelligence have been linked to self-regulation and music engagement, their role in shaping hybrid music preferences remains underexplored. To address these gaps, this study examines how situational contexts moderate the impact of hybrid music preferences on bicultural identity negotiation and how personality traits further influence music's behavioral and psychological effects. By integrating perspectives from *music psychology, personality research, and cultural identity studies*, this research aims to provide a more nuanced understanding of how music functions as a dynamic tool for identity expression and behavioral regulation.

Objective(s):

- To analyze how hybrid music preferences reflect bicultural identity integration.
- To assess how situational contexts (gym, work, social) moderate music's behavioral effects.
- To explore the moderating role of narcissism, grit, and EI in music-behavior relationships.

Tools Used

Data were collected through surveys that included measures of bicultural identity integration (BII), personality traits (narcissism, grit, and EI), and music preferences across three situational contexts: gym, workplace, and social settings. Participants were asked to report their preferred music genres and their emotional and behavioral responses to hybrid and monocultural music in each context.

Ethical Considerations

This study adhered to strict ethical guidelines to ensure the well-being and protection of participants. Informed consent was obtained, with participants fully understanding the purpose, procedures, and their right to withdraw at any time without consequences. Confidentiality was maintained by anonymizing responses, ensuring data were stored securely and used only in aggregate form. Participants' privacy was prioritized, with sensitive information kept confidential. Efforts were made to minimize any emotional or psychological harm, and participants were debriefed after completing the

survey. Ethical approval was granted by the institutional review board, and cultural sensitivity was considered in both the survey design and the inclusion of music genres. Throughout the study, the rights, dignity, and well-being of participants were upheld.

Data Collection

Participant description

This study recruited 500 bicultural participants aged 18–45, with diverse cultural backgrounds. Participants were required to identify with two or more cultural groups and have exposure to hybrid music genres.

Data Analysis

Statistical analyses, including t-tests, regression models, and heatmap analysis, were used to examine the relationships between hybrid music preferences, bicultural identity, situational contexts, and personality traits. The tests were computed on SPSS software

Results

This study examined the relationship between hybrid music preferences, bicultural identity, contextual behavioral outcomes, and personality traits in a sample of 500 bicultural participants aged 18–45. The findings reveal significant associations between hybrid music engagement and identity integration, context-dependent behavioral variations, and the moderating role of personality traits.

Hybrid Music Preferences and Bicultural Identity

Analysis of hybrid music scores demonstrated a strong link between bicultural identity integration (BII) and hybrid music preference. As illustrated in **Bar Graph 1**, bicultural participants ($BII \geq 4$) exhibited significantly higher hybrid music scores ($M = 7.2$) compared to monocultural individuals ($BII \leq 2$, $M = 3.1$), $t(498) = 8.4$, $p < 0.001$. This finding supports the notion that hybrid music serves as a cultural bridge, facilitating identity integration by allowing bicultural individuals to reconcile aspects of their dual cultural heritage.

Context-Specific Behavioral Outcomes

Behavioral responses to hybrid versus monocultural music varied across different situational contexts, as shown in **Line Graph 1**. In gym environments, hybrid music significantly boosted energy levels ($M = 8.5$) compared to monocultural music ($M = 6.2$), supporting the hypothesis that hybrid music enhances motivation in physically demanding settings. Conversely, in workplace settings, hybrid music reduced focus ($M = 4.1$) relative to monocultural music ($M = 6.7$), indicating its potential as a cognitive distractor in professional environments. In social contexts, hybrid music increased prosocial behavior ($M = 7.8$) compared to monocultural music ($M = 5.9$), suggesting that hybrid genres facilitate social engagement and interpersonal bonding. These results confirm the situational nature of music's impact and reinforce **H2**, which posits that hybrid music influences behavior differently depending on the context.

Role of Non-Big Five Personality Traits

Further analysis explored the moderating role of personality traits—narcissism, grit, and emotional intelligence (EI)—on the relationship between hybrid music and behavioral outcomes. **Clustered Bar Chart 1** highlights the differential effects of these traits. Participants with high narcissism showed a weakened association between hybrid music and prosociality ($\beta = -0.18$, $p = 0.03$), indicating that narcissistic individuals engage with hybrid music for self-enhancement rather than social bonding. In contrast, grit was positively associated with increased focus ($\beta = 0.42$, $p = 0.001$), suggesting that high-grit individuals use hybrid music as a tool for maintaining cognitive endurance in task-oriented settings. These findings align with **H3**, demonstrating that personality traits significantly shape the behavioral effects of hybrid music.

Interaction Effects: Hybrid Music, Context, and Personality

To further examine the interplay between hybrid music, situational context, and personality traits, a heatmap analysis (**Heatmap 1**) investigated the moderating role of grit in workplace focus. Results indicated that **high-grit individuals maintained their focus while listening to hybrid music ($M = 6.9$)**, whereas **low-grit individuals experienced significant distraction ($M = 3.4$)**. These findings suggest that grit buffers the otherwise distracting effects of hybrid music in work environments, providing further evidence for the interaction between personality traits and music-driven cognitive outcomes.

Demographic Variations in Hybrid Music Preferences

Analysis of regional hybrid music preferences revealed distinct cultural variations in genre selection (**Pie Chart 1**). The most popular hybrid genre was **K-pop fusion (40%)**, followed by **Afrobeat-EDM (30%)**, **Latin jazz (20%)**, and **Bollywood-pop (10%)**. These findings highlight the role of localized musical traditions in shaping hybrid preferences, suggesting that cultural background influences how individuals engage with hybrid music styles.

Discussion

This study investigated the role of hybrid music preferences in shaping bicultural identity, contextual behavior, and personality-driven responses. Findings highlight the significant role of hybrid music in facilitating bicultural identity integration, its varying effects across different situational contexts, and the

moderating influence of personality traits such as narcissism, grit, and emotional intelligence. These results contribute to a growing body of research on cultural hybridity, music psychology, and the behavioral implications of identity-based preferences.

The strong association between hybrid music engagement and bicultural identity integration (BII) underscores the idea that music serves as both a cultural artifact and an identity tool. Consistent with previous research (Benet-Martínez et al., 2002; Cheng, Lee, & Benet-Martínez, 2006), bicultural individuals exhibited a preference for hybrid music, suggesting that such genres provide a unique space for identity negotiation. This aligns with bicultural identity integration theory, which posits that individuals with high BII seamlessly merge elements of their cultural backgrounds rather than experiencing identity conflict (Nguyen & Benet-Martínez, 2013). Hybrid music, by blending sonic elements from multiple cultural traditions, allows bicultural individuals to actively construct and reinforce their identity, reducing cultural dissonance and enhancing a sense of belonging. These findings also offer a fresh perspective on cultural frame switching (Hong et al., 2000), wherein bicultural individuals shift between cultural identities depending on environmental cues. Our study suggests that music itself can act as a cultural primer, activating specific identity schemas depending on its composition and context of use. This insight opens new avenues for future research exploring how music-based identity priming could influence self-perception and decision-making in bicultural populations.

The results support the hypothesis that the behavioral impact of hybrid music varies across different situational contexts. Hybrid music significantly enhanced energy levels in gym settings, distracted focus in workplaces, and increased prosociality in social environments. These findings align with situated cognition theories (Barsalou, 2009), which argue that cognitive and affective states are dynamically influenced by environmental cues. The gym-related findings are consistent with research on musical entrainment, which suggests that rhythmically engaging music enhances physical performance and endurance (Karageorghis & Priest, 2012). Hybrid music, with its diverse rhythmic structures and cross-cultural instrumentation, may provide an additional motivational boost by resonating with listeners' dual cultural identities. However, its negative impact on workplace focus suggests that the complex and dynamic nature of hybrid compositions may demand greater cognitive resources, reducing attentional capacity for task-oriented work. This is in line with research on music-induced distraction (Kämpfe, Sedlmeier, & Renkewitz, 2011), which suggests that music containing linguistic or culturally novel elements may increase cognitive load, leading to reduced focus. The enhancement of prosocial behavior in social settings reinforces the role of music as a social bonding tool (Boer & Abubakar, 2014). Hybrid music's fusion of familiar and novel elements may create a shared social experience, fostering openness and interpersonal engagement. Future research should explore whether exposure to hybrid music could enhance intercultural empathy and social cohesion in multicultural communities.

Personality traits played a crucial role in moderating the effects of hybrid music on behavior. High narcissism weakened the link between hybrid music and prosociality, suggesting that narcissistic individuals may engage with hybrid music for self-enhancement rather than social bonding. This aligns with prior research on narcissism and self-concept (Campbell, Brunell, & Finkel, 2006), which suggests that narcissists selectively engage with cultural elements that reinforce their perceived uniqueness rather than those that promote social cohesion. Conversely, grit strengthened the relationship between hybrid music and focus in workplace settings, indicating that individuals high in grit may actively regulate distractions and maintain cognitive control despite the presence of complex auditory stimuli. This supports Duckworth's (2016) conceptualization of grit as a predictor of sustained effort and resilience in cognitively demanding situations. The observed buffering effect of grit suggests that music's impact on attention is not absolute but contingent on individual differences in perseverance and self-regulation. These findings have important implications for personalized music recommendations. While hybrid music may enhance focus for individuals with high grit, it could be counterproductive for those with lower grit levels. Future studies should explore whether music-personality congruence models can optimize music selection for productivity, social engagement, and well-being. The regional variations in hybrid music preferences (e.g., K-pop fusion, Afrobeat-EDM, Latin jazz, Bollywood-pop) highlight the localized nature of hybrid music engagement. These differences may be driven by factors such as cultural exposure, media influence, and generational shifts in music consumption (Tzanetakis, 2018). The popularity of K-pop fusion, for example, reflects the globalization of Korean pop culture and its widespread adoption among younger, bicultural audiences. This suggests that hybrid music preferences are not uniform but shaped by transnational media flows and socio-cultural affiliations.

Practical Implications and Future Directions

The findings suggest that hybrid music playlists could serve as a tool for bicultural identity therapy, helping individuals navigate cultural conflicts and strengthen identity integration. Music-based interventions could be developed to reduce acculturative stress and enhance psychological well-being in migrant and bicultural populations.

Given that hybrid music may reduce focus in professional settings, organizations may benefit from context-aware music policies, such as curated work-friendly playlists or hybrid music restrictions in high-concentration environments. Personalized music recommendations based on personality traits (e.g., allowing high-grit employees more flexibility in music choice) could improve productivity. Additionally, The prosocial effects of hybrid music suggest that it could be leveraged as a tool for intercultural bonding and community engagement. Music festivals, educational programs, and media campaigns promoting hybrid genres may foster greater cross-cultural understanding and inclusion.

Limitations and Future Research

Despite its contributions, this study has limitations. The reliance on self-reported behavioral ratings may introduce biases related to subjective perception and recall. Future research should incorporate physiological and neurocognitive measures (e.g., EEG, heart rate variability) to assess real-time behavioral and emotional responses to hybrid music.

Additionally, while the study established causal links between hybrid music, behavior, and personality, experimental studies with controlled auditory conditions could strengthen these findings. Longitudinal research could also explore how hybrid music preferences evolve over time and whether they predict long-term identity development in bicultural individuals.

Conclusion

This study provides compelling evidence that hybrid music preferences play a crucial role in bicultural identity integration, shape behavior across contexts, and interact with personality traits to influence cognitive and social outcomes. By bridging distinct cultural elements, hybrid music acts as a dynamic medium for identity negotiation, emotional regulation, and social connection. As cultural hybridity continues to expand in an increasingly globalized world, understanding the psychological and behavioral impact of hybrid music remains a critical area for future inquiry.

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