
‘Not fully one thing’: an interpretative phenomenological analysis of multicultural identity through the experiences of Franco-British emerging adults in the UK

Abstract

In today's globalising world, multicultural identity configurations are increasingly prevalent. Transformative Theory of Biculturalism has recently been conceptualised to capture the dynamism and complexity of multicultural identities beyond additive models. This study considers this theoretical framework in relation to experiences of being a Franco-British emerging adult in the UK, using a phenomenological bottom-up approach. Six self-identified Franco-British participants (age 18-27) were interviewed about experiential aspects of their identity. An interpretative phenomenological analysis generated two master themes: the dynamic interaction of identity and context, characterised by subthemes of adapting, re-negotiating, sense-making; and the embodied multicultural self, explored in subthemes on the eclipsed self, and the whole self. Themes were related to the framework, qualitatively supporting a transformational multicultural identity experience. The study concludes with directions for future research within the framework, including expanding on the finding of hybridising identity through language.

Key words: *transformative theory of biculturalism, multicultural identity, hybridisation, language, phenomenology*

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INTRODUCTION

In today's globalising world, multicultural identity configurations are increasingly prevalent (Hermans & Dimaggio, 2007; Vedder & Phinney, 2014; West *et al.*, 2017), rendering paramount the need to understand such identities, their construction, and related psychological phenomena. Amid research demonstrating the dynamism of this experience (Doucerain, Dere, & Ryder, 2013; Vedder & Phinney, 2014), West *et al.* (2017) put forward a Transformational Theory of Biculturalism, which continues to be built upon.

Biculturalism research at the turn of the 21st Century often used Berry's bilinear acculturation model (Berry, 2008; Amiot *et al.*, 2015; West *et al.*, 2017), which expanded on the pre-existing zero-sum unilinear model, according to which one cultural identity gave way to another (West *et al.*, 2017). Empirical findings supported Berry's "acculturation strategies" model (Nguyen & Benet-Martínez, 2013). However, this additive conceptualisation of cultural identity could not account for individual differences in biculturalism, nor psychological processes involved (Doucerain, Dere, & Ryder, 2013; Yampolsky, Amiot, & de la Salbonnière, 2013; West *et al.*, 2017). Phinney and Devich-Navarro's (1997) seminal mixed-methods study with bicultural adolescents found that whilst most participants identified as bicultural, they varied in how they navigated this with blended and alternating biculturalism, suggesting differences in how cultural identification is experienced. Several frameworks were subsequently developed to explore identity integration as an individual difference, by level of integration achieved (BII, Benet-Martínez & Haritatos, 2005) and by style of integration (CDMSII, Amiot *et al.*, 2007; MULTIIS, Yampolsky, Amiot, & de la Salbonnière, 2016). CDMSII and MULTIIS models demonstrated that *how* identities relate to each other is a stronger predictor of wellbeing than integration alone (West *et al.*, 2017).

Drawing on research highlighting the dynamism of bicultural experiences and increases in individuals identifying with two or more cultural identities (Yampolsky, Amiot, & de la Salbonnière, 2013; Doucerain, Dere, & Ryder, 2013; Vedder & Phinney, 2014; Hong *et al.*, 2016), West *et al.* (2017) proposed their "Transformative Theory of Biculturalism" (TTB), applicable to multiculturalism more broadly. Their model builds on additive frameworks (cf. Berry's acculturation strategies), suggesting the very socio-cognitive processes of negotiating both cultural identities are a crucial aspect of bicultural experiences beyond the

cultural identities themselves, resulting in a unique whole greater than the sum of its parts (2017). These processes include – but are not limited to – integrating, hybridising, and frame-switching.

Integrating ties to the relationship between cultural identities (Benet-Martínez & Haritatos, 2005; Yampolsky, Amiot, & de la Salbonnière, 2016) and how self-concept coherence and harmony are achieved (Yampolsky, Amiot, & de la Salbonnière, 2013; West *et al.*, 2017). TTB encompasses existing findings on integrating, including connecting identities through their similarities and/or identifying with a larger identity group encompassing other identities to cohesively connect them (West *et al.*, 2017). Hybridising in TTB is the process whereby a bicultural individual mixes their cultures creating a unique new identity, beyond the ways in which the cultures overlap, highlighting the transformational aspect (West *et al.*, 2017). Finally, frame-switching describes adapting to cultural context using pre-existing knowledge (Hong *et al.*, 2016; West *et al.*, 2017). TTB expands on this, emphasising the very process of switching in relation to contextual factors, beyond responding to a frame, drawing a parallel with language-switching whereby the process of switching impacts cognitive changes, rather than merely knowing the languages (West *et al.*, 2017). Recent findings demonstrated the social costs of frame-switching (West, Muise, & Sasaki, 2021) whereby individuals doing it may be perceived as less authentic, particularly in Western societies. West *et al.* (2017) predict regular engagement in these processes will impact the bicultural self by increasing: the ability to adapt self-concept through life (hybridising); the complexity of self-concept and social identities (integrating); and flexibility in self-concept and separation of social identities (frame-switching).

TTB is in its early stages. Quantitative research elaborating on TTB found support for multicultural identity styles (alternative and hybridising) and for multicultural bilinguals having greater context-sensitivity (Ward *et al.*, 2018; Schwarz *et al.*, 2019; Treffers-Daller *et al.*, 2020). Recent research that did not outright situate itself in the TTB framework found bicultural identity conflict decreases over the lifespan (Lilgendahl *et al.*, 2018), and support for a move from binary conceptualisations to hybrid and fluid identity construction models (Giboi & Nath, 2023). Belgrade *et al.* (2022) were the first to qualitatively explore the TTB model with ten US-based multicultural individuals. Their findings supported a transformational hybrid multicultural identity (HMI) continuously shaped by navigating socio-cultural contexts, beyond added cultural identities.

They noted however that a limit to their results was the possible shared sense of experience brought about by discussion groups, a possible confounding factor in participants self-identifying an HMI.

West *et al.* (2017) suggest future research exploring TTB ought to consider the bicultural individual and their relationships, groups, and social institutions to further understand how self and social context amount to a transformative biculturalism, and expand this exploration beyond biculturalism in North America, informing the bottom-up phenomenological approach of this study centring the individual in their lifeworld. Vedder and Phinney (2014) noted the process of bicultural identity formation begins in childhood with familial transmission and exposure to an ever-growing social sphere outside the home, incorporating developmental psychology to bicultural and social identity theory frameworks. Arnett (2000) introduced the concept of “emerging adulthood” defined today as the 18-29 age group (Arnett, Benvenuti & Mazzoni, 2023), an important period in self-identity construction and negotiation. In a similar critique to that of bilinear acculturation models, Arnett (2014) argued existing developmental frameworks such as Erikson’s psychosocial development model (1968, cited in Arnett, 2014, p. 56) are limited by their assumption of universality, omitting consideration of the extent to which a socio-cultural context permits exploration for identity formation. Arnett therefore suggests narrative qualitative explorations of identity construction are crucial in future research to generate knowledge on this topic, particularly in relation to emerging adulthood in the twenty-first century (2014). This project proposes, to the best of the researcher’s knowledge, the first emic exploration of TTB through the experiences of multicultural emerging adults in a European context.

In 2023, the UK attracted 38 million tourists (Visit Britain, 2024) and continued to be a professional and educational destination for many (Home Office, 2024). London is one of the world’s major global cities (WEF, 2022; MMF, 2023), and the UK is thus a key European region to consider in bicultural research. French and British identities have been explored as separate groups with research into reducing prejudice between the two groups (Eller & Abrams, 2004), and into phenomena that may have influenced events like the Brexit referendum from a psychological perspective (Andreouli, Kaposi, & Stenner, 2019; Veltri *et al.*, 2019), though none exploring experiences of being dually Franco-British in Britain in recent years. Despite a conflict-ridden shared history, France and the UK signed *L’Entente Cordiale* in 1904, ushering in an era

of improved diplomatic relations and migratory corridors between the two (INSEE, 2020; MEAE, 2021), with the British Isles counting between 200,000 and 250,000 French citizens (MEAE, 2021).

Drawing on social, cultural, and developmental psychology, this project aims to contribute to multiculturalism research by exploring TTB qualitatively in a European context through the experiences of Franco-British identities among emerging adults in Britain. A phenomenological framework was chosen to explore both narrative and experiential aspects in a bottom-up approach and address the following research question:

What are emerging adults' experiences of being Franco-British in Britain?

METHODOLOGY

Design

Exploring Franco-British identities in Britain during emerging adulthood requires a centring of participants' experiences as they are lived and understood. The study is therefore underpinned by an interpretivist phenomenological ontology, whereby knowledge and meaning are rooted in interpreted reality (McAvoy *et al.*, 2022). The chosen perspective for epistemological inquiry is a phenomenological approach, best suited to exploring experiences of the embodied self and one's lifeworld (Langdridge *et al.*, 2022a). Data were collected through individual semi-structured interviews conducted by the researcher, who subsequently generated exploratory comments and themes through Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA, Pietkiewicz & Smith, 2014; Spiers & Smith, 2019), relating to phenomena organically uncovered conversationally with each participant. The semi-structured format permitted an interview schedule relating to the overarching exploration whilst allowing participant experience to guide the conversation.

Participants

The focus population is Franco-British emerging adults in Britain. Participants were recruited through purposive sampling via an alumni network of French schools in the UK, accessed through friends and acquaintances, and a London-based professional network, the *Association pour le Progrès du Management*, accessed through a family member. Six participants (Table 1; pseudonymised to protect anonymity) opted-in by emailing their interest and were sent an information sheet (Appendix A) and informed consent form to

return signed (Appendix B), reiterating their right to withdraw at any stage. Inclusion criteria were self-identification as French-British in order not to have the scope of this identity limited by the researcher (West *et al.*, 2017; Yardley, 2017); living in Britain over the past decade without leaving for over two years, ensuring relevant lived experience for the topic explored; and being 18 to 29 years old, the bracket of emerging adulthood (Arnett, Benvenuti, & Mazzoni, 2023).

Participant	Age	Location	Background	Education	Languages
Charlotte	27	Norfolk	French mother, British father, born in the UK, French-British citizen	French system in the UK (3 to 18), British university	English, French
Alice	23	London	French parents, born in France, moved to the UK as infant, French citizen	British nursery, French system in the UK (5 to 14), British system (14 to 18), British university	English, French
Paul	23	London	French-Spanish mother, British father, born in the UK, lived in France (4 years; childhood) & Belgium (2 years; adolescence), French-British citizen	French system in the UK (5 to 18), British university (year abroad in France)	English, French, Spanish
Olivier	20	London	French parents, born in the UK, French citizen	British system (3 to 18), British university	English, French
Nina	18	Surrey	Slovakian mother, French father, born in Slovakia, moved to the UK at 8 years old, French-British citizen	British system (8 to 18), planning on attending British university	English, French, Slovakian
Jean-Pierre	26	London	French mother, Greek-Scottish father, born in the UK, lived in France (1 year; adulthood) French-British citizen	French system in the UK (3 to 14), British system (14-18), British university	English, French

Table 1: Participants

Materials

The interview schedule pertained to how participants experience their Franco-British identity. Open-ended questions were devised by the researcher and refined through two pilot interviews. Questions included: “How have you made sense of your cultural identity growing up?”, “How do you navigate being bicultural from a language perspective?” (full schedule in Appendix C).

Procedure

Participants partook in audio-recorded semi-structured interviews via MS Teams lasting 52 to 63 minutes. The debrief outlined the purpose of the research as understanding bicultural identity experiences using a bottom-up approach (Appendix 4). Recordings and informed consent forms were stored in a password protected folder, with a back-up in a password protected external drive. Interviews were transcribed manually and analysed using IPA (Pietkiewicz & Smith, 2014; Spiers & Smith, 2019), beginning with bracketing from interview to write-up, abiding to Husserl’s ‘epoché’ concept (Langdridge *et al.*, 2022b). In line with IPA methodology, transcripts were analysed separately for full bracketed immersion (Pietkiewicz & Smith, 2014; Spiers & Smith, 2019). This was done by incorporating van Manen’s approach of holistic,

selective, and detailed readings (1990, cited in Langdridge et al., 2022b, p. 12), in line with Pietkiewicz and Smith's (2014) notion of flexible guidelines to IPA, to ensure a thorough understanding of the whole and its parts. Exploratory comments of phenomena rooted in conceptual and lifeworld dimensions were made over several readings in the margins and entered in a table (one per participant), from which emergent themes were generated as part of clustering themes (Pietkiewicz & Smith, 2014). Individual themes were then considered collectively to generate a "master table" of cross-participant aspects of experience (Spiers & Smith, 2019). The analysis was conducted with analogue methods, and MS Word and Excel.

Quality Assurance

In line with Yardley (2017), the researcher sought to apply commitment and rigor methodologically, ground the analysis with evocative examples for transparency, and remain sensitive to the multitude of ways being Franco-British can be experienced.

Reflexivity

The researcher acknowledges she is herself from a multicultural background, including French (and familiar with Britain), informing her academic pursuit of this topic. This rendered bracketing particularly effortful during the research process but was instrumental to establish rapport with participants, who could speak French when needed during their interviews.

ANALYSIS

The analysis generated two master themes pertaining to participants' experiences of being Franco-British in the UK: the dynamic interaction of identity and context, specifically by adapting, renegotiating, and in identity sense-making; and the embodied multicultural self, feeling eclipsed and feeling whole.

Dynamic Interaction of Identity and Context

Adapting: self to environment

Participants relayed an awareness of adapting themselves to different socio-cultural environments, navigating different spaces and adjusting how they relate to others behaviourally and linguistically. This process was further contingent on familiarity. In everyday spaces, which for participants are in the UK, this

ability is seamless, marked primarily by speaking English in professional and educational environments, and a hybrid of one's languages with family or childhood friends:

"I'm working at a pub right now, and they're all quite British and I feel I've adapted to that, and if I hang out with my friends from school, then I sort of do the whole bi[-cultural] thing, like we can speak like three languages at the same time sort of... I feel I've become quite good at... "hopping" between different parts of my identity." (Paul)

This acquired ability to hop requires a certain knowledge of the environments, tied to both the space (university, the pub) but also the people within it, and how to relate to them. Indeed, some participants adjust to their interlocutors, for example, by "matching" their "certain humour" (Alice). Others described a reversed approach:

"whenever someone asked me where I was from and they were English I'd always say French, and if a French person asked, I'd always say English" (Charlotte)

adapting to social environments through difference. Thus, the self is dynamically adaptable to environments as both an in-group and an out-group member, in a process informed by familiarity of spaces and sociality therein. In non-everyday contexts, such as in France, the temporal dimension is an important aspect of adapting. Whilst able to eventually embody French aspects of their identity, some participants require an immersion period before fluency in culturally congruent behaviour and language is re-achieved, rendering salient dormant aspects of identity:

"when I was in France, for the first few weeks I was like "urgh" ... I have to speak in French all the time, I have to wear nicer clothes... but once that initial period fades... I definitely feel comfortable again and I spend less time thinking about... how I consider myself within that environment." (Jean-Pierre)

The process of adapting oneself to the environment is one of spatial familiarity, relational and linguistic knowledge, and temporal immersion. The environment, in turn, interacts with identity in a way that can challenge it.

Challenges and re-negotiation: environment towards self

Participants described moments of incongruence between their cultural self-concept and immediate environmental experiences. This related to a social dimension heavily embedded in geographical spaces:

monocultural environments in the UK and in France. Some incongruences were punctual and understood as a general aspect of bicultural experience, whilst others were more existentially impactful on how participants understand themselves.

Punctual incongruences were experienced in France, with participants being perceived as not quite French and thus feeling more British, or even foreign:

“I definitely feel more British when I’m in France... I sound French, but... people can feel that I am not from there.” (Alice)

demonstrating the social influence on corporeal experience of self. These instances of misalignment do not lead to an internal negation of the French aspect of self; however, they illustrate how sociality influences the experience of identity at a given moment.

Existential incongruences occurred in participants who understood themselves a certain way on the cusp of emerging adulthood and entered new cultural long-term environments:

“university was quite... an eye-opener, ‘cause [previous experience] was in multicultural environments, where it was pick-and-choose your identity, very easily, and it doesn’t really matter, whereas when I got to university, it was like “Oh God” ... it’s not pick-and-choose, it’s “you are multicultural whether you like it or not”” (Paul)

Particularly, the clash was marked for participants educated in the French system all the way through, wherein they gravitated towards their British identity. Upon navigating predominantly British contexts, a sudden awareness of being an out-group member despite in-group membership permitted an understanding that one aspect of identity is inextricable from the others, leading to an overall self-understanding as multicultural and culturally competent in various ways. This importantly points to the central role of context in participants’ identity construction beyond incorporating aspects into the self, as it permitted re-evaluating and making sense of one’s self-concept dynamically through experience.

Identity sense-making: self and context

Participants relayed their cultural identities changed over time as they made sense of themselves adapting and reacting to various socialized contexts (familial, educational, socio-cultural, spatial):

“When I was little, I’d associate myself a lot more with being English than French. But as I’ve grown up... I’ve come to like, now refer to myself more as French than English... As I’m older, I understand my family more and... I find myself more French” (Olivier)

suggesting both the interactional process with context and the increased awareness gained with growing up permit a coherent self-construal. Some participants described integrating their identities over time, through all-encompassing identity labels, such as “European” or “global citizen”:

“I’m over trying to pretend I’m either British or I’m French... I’m European basically” (Paul)

providing internal congruence and authenticity through a super-ordinate identity. Identity construction was also achieved by integrating aspects in both cultures resonating with one’s personality, internally and in everyday life, through interactions. The process permits a coherent multicultural identity, and corporeally a strong sense of self and belonging:

“[in France] you’ll be around people who... love nature and... cheese and... you’ll find a link to... an aspect of their identity and how they live their lives, and you’ll associate that with being French... in England, I’ll... be walking the dog and going for a pint, or having a roast dinner... and I’ll be so comfortable and happy, and feel such a sense of self in that situation... and the moment you associate that with being British, then you feel very British... with both nationalities, there’s so many aspects to culture, and that sense of identity that... you cherry pick it” (Charlotte)

marking moments of in-group belonging through food culture and outdoors activities, without negating context-related dynamism. The latter was understood by some participants as the very essence of being multicultural, with a unique all-encompassing, dynamic identity:

“the languages, the culture, and the heritage is all combined into one identity, so I never feel fully one... they fluctuate depending on the environment, the people I’m with, the language I’m speaking... it’s kind of like a pie chart and like one increases, the other decreases, but there’s never 100% of one” (Nina)

illustrating that despite adapting to environments, participants’ identity always remains a complex whole of which aspects may be rendered salient with external stimuli.

Embodied Multicultural Self

Eclipse of the Self

Participants noted the imperceptibility of their French identity when speaking English, with five participants explicitly referring to their British accent. Jean-Pierre however noted that upon introducing himself, he is nominally perceived as French. The accent can be construed as an extension of their embodied self: they are all “heard” as British. This eclipse was experienced differently by participants, with some relishing the reveal of their full selves:

“I sound British, and everywhere I go, it’s just like a party trick, I’m like “Yeah, I’m French”” (Alice) and finding other people engage with surprise and interest in their identity upon discovering their multiculturalism. For others, this eclipsed aspect feels like a secret, creating a felt difficulty when relating to others:

“when I’ll tell people that I’m French, it almost feels like I was hiding something from them... with my job as well, I end up working in [Francophone countries] a little bit, and I almost feel like a spy” (Charlotte)

The eclipsed aspect of identity is experienced as something that could or should be disclosed in certain contexts, creating an intra-personally felt distance with others as both a group infiltrator, but also insofar as the awareness of not being a “full” in-group member is only known to the individual. This connects to the idea of belonging, and the possibility to be whole in one’s multicultural identity.

Full Constellation of the Self

Participants described experiences of feeling whole, pertaining to relational dimensions. They all described multicultural social groups, especially during school, permitting being all cultural aspects of themselves, or choose which they identified with:

“at [school] [a lot of people were] ... from a mixed background... especially my close friends, most of them are either... half-French/English or French-[and]... Iranian, or French-something else... I think within that environment, you don’t necessarily notice that many differences” (Jean-Pierre)

without having to reckon with their identity in social context. Importantly, the mixed background is the shared identity, rather than a specific combination. This permits an ability to *be* in the world rather than *thinking about how* one is in the world, which participants described as an aspect of feeling at home:

“at university the year I really felt like I had a home, I was living with three of my friends, and they were international as well... and I remember feeling very at ease... being Spanish, being French, being English, in all kinds of ways... just being yourself really, not having to have that... identity switch” (Paul)

A common aspect of not having to identity switch for participants was mixing languages when speaking, or *Franglais*, occurring at home for most of them. This could be within a conversation, replying in English to French, or contracting them within a sentence. Participants described this as “natural” and sometimes necessary:

“sometimes in the middle of a sentence, I’ll forget how to say a word in English... but I know how to say it in French... it’s a very natural flow, it just continues on” (Nina)

and touched on the relational depth and whole self-expression this permits:

“I grew up with my best friend... We can... perfectly, without thinking, speak both French and English... I don’t think our friendship would be the same if we couldn’t speak both languages. There are different emotions and different sayings, and... different cultural references in each different language, which adds... different perspectives to conversations” (Alice)

demonstrating that Franco-British multiculturalism, in some experiences, is an identity greater than the sum of its parts, with its own dialect, and aspects of this experience relate to the broader identity of being multicultural, regardless of the cultural combination.

DISCUSSION

The present study identified two experiential aspects of being Franco-British in the UK as an emerging adult: the dynamic interaction of identity and context through adapting, re-negotiating, and resulting identity sense-making in space, over time, and relationally; and the corporeal experience in relation to sociality and

being wholly oneself. The master themes connect to one another, relating to navigating the lifeworld as a multicultural individual. The *Dynamic Interaction of Identity and Context* (theme 1) presents processes between the self and the world, which influence those explored in the *Embodied Bicultural Self* (theme 2) regarding the self in the world.

Theme 1's first sub-theme *Adapting to Environment* demonstrates participants' ability to adjust to cultural frames based on pre-existing knowledge (linguistic and cultural), or frame-switching (West *et al.*, 2017). The analysis revealed both everyday frame-switching within the UK and occasional environmental adapting to culturally known but non-everyday frames, wherein time is a crucial part of the process. In the latter, frame-switching relating to cultural behaviour followed a similar pattern to linguistic re-adaptation, suggesting a possible similar cognitive process relying on procedural memory and environmental stimuli, marking further potential parallels between biculturalism and bilingualism (West *et al.*, 2017). Frame-switching in "matched" and "reversed" adapting illustrates an ability to contextually distinguish one's cultural identities and position oneself accordingly by relating to the contextual in-group or out-group, consistent with previous findings on the process (West *et al.*, 2017). Importantly, this does not negate the internal identity felt, as explored in the *Identity Sense-making* sub-theme, where integrating and hybridising strategies are used to form a coherent whole, but in line with TTB, frame-switching was nevertheless a procedural aspect of Franco-British identity in participants (West *et al.*, 2017)

Incongruences in *Challenges and Re-negotiations* align with West *et al.*'s prediction of hybridising effects on the self (2017). The re-evaluation of and gained insight into identity through contextualised experiences during existential incongruences permitted an adjustment of self-understanding as a multicultural individual, echoing the predicted ability to amend self-concept by synthesising previous conceptions with new information (West *et al.*, 2017). In the case of punctual incongruences, hybridising occurred as a reaction to social perception, wherein the contextual out-group identity is rendered salient without overtaking the challenged in-group identity and there is an awareness of being somewhere in between. To occur at all and result in hybridising, incongruences are contingent on lived and gained experience, echoing Vedder and Phinney (2014) in the notion that cultural identity is multidimensionally formed by interacting in specific contexts at specific times in life. The present study found existential incongruences coincided with emerging

adulthood, suggesting identity conceptualisations from earlier life may be context-tested in this period, though not all multicultural individuals experience shifts in the same way. This echoes Arnett's (2014) notion that emerging adulthood is the possible apex of identity formation, following the intensification of identity development in adolescence. It further relates to Lilgendahl *et al.*'s (2018) finding of higher exploratory processing in young adulthood among multicultural individuals. The transformative process of multicultural identity is contingent on spaces navigated and social connections made, and *when* in life this occurs (Vedder & Phinney, 2014), as well as how conflicting aspects within these can be brought together through hybridising, which in turn becomes an aspect of the self in the ability to re-negotiate coherently (West *et al.*, 2017).

The sub-theme *Identity Sense-making* noted integrating as an experiential process. Consistent with previous findings on integration (West *et al.*, 2017), strategies identified included connecting cultural and personal identities to make sense of oneself by finding resonance with aspects present in each culture (e.g., socio-cultural traditions around food) to bridge an integrated whole, and adopting super-ordinate labels. Additionally, hybridising was identified for sense-making, with understandings that self-concept itself is a product of language, cultural heritage, and lived experience combining into a greater whole, never experienced as just one aspect of identity, despite shifting saliency, supporting TTB's (West *et al.*, 2017) conceptualisation of multicultural identity as akin to baking a cake, whereby the newly produced identity (cake) is distinct from its added cultures (ingredients). This further supports Belgrade *et al.*'s (2022) result of a Hybrid Multicultural Identity, supplementing it with the finding that HMIs can be developed and understood independently. Theme 1 identified instances of frame-switching, integrating, and hybridising in experiences and as aspects of being a Franco-British emerging adult, in line with the theoretical framework put forward by West *et al.* for TTB (2017).

Theme 2 explored embodied and relational aspects of identity experience. The first sub-theme, *eclipse of the self*, identified experiences of perceived full assimilation by others. A shared aspect was the sense of an imperceptible dimension of self, though participants differed in their emotional experiences. Positive experiences included ease at disclosing other aspects of identity, and interlocutors reacting with curiosity, which differs from the social cost of frame-switching identified by West, Muise, and Sasaki (2021) whereby

an individual is perceived as inauthentic. However, participants in the present study had mixed Western cultural identities, which may result in lesser perceptions of inauthenticity, rooted biases or prejudices. Additionally, this study only considered participants' perspective, and interlocutors may have unperceived reactions. Contrarywise, negative experiences of the eclipse pertain to intra-personal discomfort in how to relate to others, feeling one might be deceiving them in some way, or withholding an aspect of self. This echoes West, Muise, and Sasaki (2021) insofar as a hindrance to live fully as a multicultural individual is an additional social cost to frame-switching, though on an intra-personal level.

In the sub-theme *Full Constellation of Self*, findings were consistent with Belgrade *et al.*'s (2022) and further in line with the TTB framework (West *et al.*, 2017). The analysis identified instances of feeling whole and home as devoid of conscious frame-switching, and an ability to be spontaneous in one's multicultural identity, behaviourally and linguistically. Relationally, multicultural friendship groups permit feeling whole in one's identity and lessen the strain of considering the self in relation to the environment, creating a wider in-group wherein a shared aspect of identity is implicitly understood, relating to Belgrade *et al.*'s "culturally heterogenous" contexts (2022). Unlike Belgrade *et al.* (2022), participants did not co-construct this understanding in a discussion group, rather they described this relational phenomenon during their interviews, some identifying it for the first time, suggesting an unthought but nonetheless experienced aspect. HMI is not contingent on having the same cultural combination, rather, the transformational aspect itself is the identity (West *et al.*, 2017; Belgrade *et al.*, 2022). However, when shared cultural aspects are involved, further hybridising can lead to cultural co-constructions, such as in the case of *Franglais*, a natural dialect for participants, permitting a full range for self-expression. This was often the dialect at home, but also a way to form strong bonds in later life when meeting bilingual multicultural individuals. Hybridising through language as an aspect of multicultural identity is an addition to TTB. What is construed as hybridising may in fact be very rapid frame-switching, though the frame realms are shared in the interaction, creating a wider co-constructed frame. This contributes to TTB by adding the consideration of inter-multicultural relationships and language in hybridising self-concept for fuller self-expression, and an important angle for future research, elucidating the psychological processes at play.

Limitations and Future Research

Using a bottom-up approach to explore Franco-British multicultural identities permitted the organic uncovering of phenomena relating to the TTB framework. However, this involved highly educated participants with cultural identities from Western, Educated, Industrialized, Rich, Democratic countries, possibly permitting greater scope for identity exploration and re-negotiation through freedom of movement, access to higher education, fewer discriminatory experiences, etc. (cf. [Arnett, 2014](#)), and bases in the UK (specifically in Southeast England), which adopts a policy of multiculturalism ([Uberoi & Modood, 2013](#)). Future explorations of TTB and HMIs should consider non-Western contexts, European countries with differing policies (e.g., France and *intégration* policy, [Zougbedé, 2021](#)), and biculturalism across the UK. The study is further limited in its findings supporting TTB insofar as it could not operationalise processes and predictions, which merit further investigation to validate the framework ([West et al., 2017](#)).

Following present findings, future quantitative research should consider the intra-personal effects of frame-switching on the individual (cf. [West, Muise, & Sasaki, 2021](#)) and whether in the case of HMIs, conscious frame-switching has an exhausting effect on individuals' cognition to better understand this process within TTB. Finally, the interaction between bilingualism and hybridising should be explored at the cognitive level to understand how it occurs, and further qualitative research may enlighten the relationship between hybridising language and ability for full-self-expression.

Conclusion

The present study found Franco-British emerging adults in the UK experience their identity as dynamically interacting with context, and as a whole greater than the sum of its cultures. These lived experiences incorporated frame-switching, integration, and hybridising as negotiation processes, supporting [West et al.'s TTB \(2017\)](#). Consistent with [Belgrade et al.'s \(2022\)](#) finding that HMIs thrive in multicultural and co-constructed contexts, the study further identified the role of language and bilingualism in the hybridising process, highlighting the need to consider how language, self, and culture interact at the intra-personal, relational and cognitive levels in future research on transformational multicultural identity.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A: Participant Information Sheet

D811 PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET

EXPERIENCES OF FRANCO-BRITISH EMERGING ADULTS IN BRITAIN: A PHENOMENOLOGICAL EXPLORATION OF BICULTURAL IDENTITY IN THE GLOBALIZING 21ST CENTURY.

CONTACT DETAILS

Researcher: Anna Mercier

Supervisor: Pam Davenport

INVITATION PARAGRAPH

You are being invited to take part in a research project which contributes to my Open University Psychology MSc (Conversion). Before you decide whether to take part, it is important for you to understand why the research is being done and what it will involve. Please take time to read the following information carefully.

This project is exploring experiences of being Franco-British in Britain among 18- to 29-year-olds and you have been invited to participate as a self-identified French-British individual living in Britain and in this age bracket.

GENERAL INFORMATION ABOUT THE RESEARCH STUDY AND COLLECTED RESEARCH DATA

Purpose

The purpose of this project is to explore what it means to be bicultural as this is experienced by Franco-British bicultural individuals. Specifically, the aim is to draw interpretations of what this means from actual lived experiences, to further contribute to a growing body of research on multicultural identities in today's context of globalization and its socio-cultural impacts.

Approval

In line with the framework of my studies, this research project has been approved by the D811 Module Team (the module of this masters running during the 2023-2024 academic year) and will be run under the supervision of Pam Davenport.

Format

The research for this project will be done through interviews conducted on Microsoft Teams, which will each last up to one hour. The overall process will be concluded by 30th May 2024.

WHAT WILL I BE ASKED TO DO IF I AGREE TO TAKE PART?

Step 1

It is entirely up to you whether or not you take part in this project, participation is **voluntary**. If you do decide to take part, you will have the right to withdraw (see below section "your right to withdraw from the study"). Once you have decided to take part, you will be given this information sheet to keep as well as an informed consent form to read carefully and return signed (this can be done electronically).

Step 2

Once you have signed the consent form, we will agree on a suitable time to conduct the interview. This will require a computer with a working microphone and camera as well as an email address to send the MTeams link to (you are able to join an MTeams video call as a guest). Please note the interview will require about **one hour of your time**. Your time is valuable, and the interview will be scheduled to accommodate your availability. There will be a debrief after the interview.

Your participation in this project will contribute to further understandings of what it means to be bicultural today through an exploration of the Franco-British experience in Britain, which has not been explored as such in recent years! Importantly, this study adopts a bottom-up approach starting from participant experience to understand the lived reality of biculturalism.

HOW WILL THE DATA I PROVIDE BE USED?

Data storage

Interviews will be recorded with an iPhone SE12. The mp4 files will be stored in a password-protected folder on a password-protected laptop. The recordings will be transcribed manually and the resulting transcripts (word.docx) will be stored in the same password-protected folder. A back-up of audio and transcribed data will be stored on a password-protected USB memory stick kept in a padlocked pencil case. Upon completion of the project, the data will remain safely stored on the memory stick 1st August 2024, at which point it will be permanently destroyed.

Confidentiality & Anonymity

During transcription, participants will be given a pseudonym, and all identifying data will be redacted (e.g., “when I went to the Open University” will become “when I went to [university]”). Quotes used in the final write-up of the analysis will be anonymized, and where necessary paraphrased.

Personal information

Signed consent forms and a word.docx containing participant email addresses (for communication purposes only) will be kept in the same password-protected folder as above. Signed consent form files will be re-named “Consent form - Participant 1”, etc. so as to not have participant names outside of the actual form. Both signed consent forms and the email address record will be permanently destroyed on 1st August 2024 along with the rest of the data.

YOUR RIGHT TO WITHDRAW FROM THE STUDY

You have the right to withdraw from the study at any time during your participation by leaving the interview (no explanation necessary). You have the right to ask for your data to be removed after your participation in the project by emailing me at [redacted] (no explanation necessary), up until 12th April 2024.

HOW DO I AGREE TO TAKE PART?

If you would like to participate, you can officially “opt in” by carefully reading, electronically signing, and returning the informed consent form by email.

DATA PROTECTION PRIVACY NOTICE

The research study complies with UK and General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR) and the UK Data Protection Act 2018. The data collected in this study is anonymous. That means when taking part in this study it is not possible to identify you individually.

You will be asked questions about being Franco-British, but this cannot be linked back to you as an individual.

The nature of the research is such that you will not be asked to disclose sensitive personal information. The experiment does not require you to disclose special category data (race, ethnic origin, political views, religious affiliation, trade union membership, health issues, or sexual orientation).

QUESTIONS, COMMENTS AND COMPLAINTS

If at any point you need more information about the study, or you have any concerns, please contact me by email at [redacted]. You can also contact the project supervisor Pam Davenport at [redacted]. If you wish to make a formal complaint, please contact the D811 module chair at [redacted].

THANK YOU

Thank you for taking the time to read this information sheet.

Appendix B: Informed Consent Form

D811 STUDENT RESEARCH PROJECT: PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM

INFORMED CONSENT FOR:

“Experiences of Franco-British emerging adults in Britain: a phenomenological exploration of bicultural identity in the globalizing 21st century.”

Researcher: Anna Mercier

Supervisor: Pam Davenport

Please highlight your choice by clicking inside the appropriate box

1. Taking part in the study

<p>I have read and understood the information sheet for the following study: “Experiences of Franco-British emerging adults in Britain: a phenomenological exploration of binational selfhood and identity,” or it has been read to me. I have been able to ask questions about my participation and my questions have been answered to my satisfaction.</p>	<p>YES <input type="checkbox"/></p>	<p>NO <input type="checkbox"/></p>
<p>I am aged 18 or over</p>	<p>YES <input type="checkbox"/></p>	<p>NO <input type="checkbox"/></p>
<p>I consent voluntarily to be a participant in this study and understand that I can refuse to answer questions I am not comfortable with and I can withdraw from the study at any time by contacting Anna Mercier ([redacted]) up until 12 April 2024, without having to give a reason.</p>	<p>YES <input type="checkbox"/></p>	<p>NO <input type="checkbox"/></p>
<p>I understand that taking part in the study involves participating in an audio-recorded interview lasting up to 60 minutes answering questions about and discussing my experience(s) as a French-British individual.</p>	<p>YES <input type="checkbox"/></p>	<p>NO <input type="checkbox"/></p>

I agree to the interview being audio recorded.	YES <input type="checkbox"/>	NO <input type="checkbox"/>
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2. Use of the information in the study

I understand that information I provide will be used for Anna Mercier's MSc Psychology (Conversion) research project report and any publications that arise from the study.	YES <input type="checkbox"/>	NO <input type="checkbox"/>
I understand that personal information collected about me that can identify me, such as my name or where I live, will not be shared.	YES <input type="checkbox"/>	NO <input type="checkbox"/>
I understand that my data will be stored in a password-protected folder on a password-protected laptop up until its destruction on 1 August 2024.	YES <input type="checkbox"/>	NO <input type="checkbox"/>
I agree to being quoted anonymously.	YES <input type="checkbox"/>	NO <input type="checkbox"/>

4. Signature

Name of participant [in CAPITALS] <hr/>	Signature <hr/> (electronic signatures are accepted)	Date <hr/>
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This research project has been approved by the D811 Module Team

Appendix C: Interview Schedule

Materials: recording device (phone), pen & paper, informed consent forms, participant forms, debrief forms, MS Teams, laptop

Research Question: What are emerging adults' experiences of being Franco-British in Britain?

Interviews Questions

Check in questions:

The first five minutes of the allotted time will be spent chatting and establishing a base rapport ahead of the question portion of the session; getting participants to settle down and checking in with them, reminding them the purpose of the interview and going over information.

1. How are you today / how are you feeling?
2. How do you feel about being here?
3. Reminder of consent and right to withdraw.
4. Reminder that there are no "wrong" answers and no need to disclose any sensitive personal information, participants are free to reveal as much or as little as they feel comfortable with.

Interview questions:

1. Can you tell me about your experience of being both French and British?

Probes: 'can you give me an example of this?' / 'what does [x] mean to you?' / 'how did that feel at the time / how do you feel about this now?' / 'can you tell me a bit more about this?'

Topics: binationalism as it is experienced, identity, social identity matrix
2. Can you describe your (recent) experience of living in Britain as a French and British individual?

Probes: 'can you give me an example of this?' / 'what does [x] mean to you?' / 'how did that feel at the time?' / 'how do you feel about this now?' / 'can you tell me a bit more about this?' / 'I wonder whether something specific comes to mind for this?'

Topics: binationalism as it is experienced, identity, embodiment, spatiality
3. How have you made sense of your national identity (or identities) as you've grown up?

Follow-up: What does being French and British mean to you?

Probes: 'can you give me an example of this?' / 'how did that feel at the time?' / 'how do you feel about this now?' / 'can you tell me a bit more about this?' / 'I wonder whether something specific comes to mind for this?'

Possible specific probes: Covid-19 pandemic and travel guidelines, Brexit referendum, "children of the internet"

Topics: identity formation, embodied experience in the world, binationalism, temporality
4. Can you tell me about a particular time or event that positively shaped your understanding of your cultural identity?

Probes: 'what does [x] mean to you?' / 'how did that feel at the time / how do you feel about this now?' / 'can you tell me a bit more about this?'

Topics: temporality, identity, self-understanding, self-construction
5. How do environments (university, professional, cities, countries, social settings) you find yourself in influence – if at all – your sense of self?

Probes: 'can you give me an example of this?' / 'what does [x] mean to you?' / 'how did that feel at the time / how do you feel about this now?' / 'can you tell me a bit more about this?'

Topics: physical world, geography, socio-cultural contexts, social identity theory, navigating the world

6. What does home mean to you?

Probes: 'can you give me an example of this?' / 'how did that feel at the time / how do you feel about this now?' / 'can you tell me a bit more about this?' / 'I wonder whether something specific comes to mind for this?'

Topics: home as a place, home as a time, home as a feeling; belonging, safety, comfort

7. How do you experience your identity in relation to others? / How do others understand your identity?

Probes: 'can you give me an example of this?' / 'how did that feel at the time / how do you feel about this now?' / 'can you tell me a bit more about this?' / 'I wonder whether something specific comes to mind for this?'

Topics: social identity, personal identity, being perceived/understood, belonging, reconciling the perception of others with one's self-concept

8. [I appreciate this may be an impossible question, but] can you tell me about times you've felt more British or more French or both/neither?

Probes: 'can you give me an example of this?' / 'how did that feel at the time?' / how do you feel about this now?' / 'can you tell me a bit more about this?' / 'I wonder whether something specific comes to mind for this?'

Topics: social identity, personal identity, being perceived/understood, belonging, reconciling the perception of others with one's self-concept

9. How do you navigate being bicultural from a language perspective?

Follow-up: Are there contexts in which you speak "Frenglish/Franglais"?

Probes: 'can you give me an example of this?' / 'how do you feel about this?' / 'can you tell me a bit more about this?' / 'I wonder whether something specific comes to mind for this?'

Topics: social expression, personal expression, being heard/understood, communicating, creating a language, consuming media

Pay close attention to sociality, spatiality, embodiment, temporality, language, concept, body language. Themes of group identity and personal identity, group identity salience, sense of self in a lived environment, binationalism, being in the world, finding oneself.

Check out questions:

1. How did you find this experience?
2. How are you feeling right now?
3. Reminder, you may withdraw at any time from this process if you should wish.
4. **Debrief:** the purpose of this research is to better understand experiences of bicultural identities amid globalization and its impacts. Belonging to several cultures can be experienced in numerous ways and it is especially important to understand these experiences in times of dynamic and shifting environments at the socio-cultural level.
5. What will you do after this interview?
6. Thank you for attending.

Appendix D: Participant Debrief Sheet

Debrief Form - Experiences of Franco-British emerging adults in Britain: a phenomenological exploration of bicultural identity in the globalizing 21st Century

Researcher: Anna Mercier

Supervisor: Pam Davenport

I would like to thank you for participating in this research project, your time is valuable, and your participation is greatly appreciated. The aim of this study is to explore how a bicultural sense of self, specifically Franco-British, is experienced at the personal, cultural, and social levels. I am hoping to contribute to the growing body of research into multicultural identities as these are experienced dynamically internally and in social environments in the twenty-first century.

Your data and information will be kept in a password-protected folder on a password-protected laptop. All data will be anonymized in the transcription, analysis, and final write-up.

Should you wish to withdraw, you may absolutely do so without explanation by contacting me at **[redacted]**.

If you have any further questions or queries, please contact me by email at **[redacted]**. Should you wish to make a formal complaint, please contact the D811 Module Chair at **[redacted]**.

If you would like additional support, here are some resources you may find helpful:

Samaritans - 116 123 (telephone helpline)

Shout - 85258 (texting helpline)

Thank you once more for your participation and contribution to my research into a topic I find greatly interesting. Have a wonderful day!