



CULTURAL
fluidity.

A
POV By



AHZUL
BE INSPIRED.™

DECEMBER 2025



what is

CULTURAL fluidity.

Multicultural marketing has been a priority for years, yet many brands still struggle to create truly resonant work. For all the industry buzz, why is there a **disconnect between intention and impact?**

At Ahzul, we believe **the challenge lies in a foundational assumption: that identity is a static state.** In reality, the modern multicultural consumer experience is defined by a fluidity and complexity that the traditional acculturation model alone cannot fully capture. While this model provides a valuable baseline, there is a significant opportunity to move beyond it and gain a more robust, dynamic understanding of cultural identity in motion.

To succeed today, brands need a new playbook for connecting with multicultural consumers. This **four-part series provides that playbook** by breaking down the essential components of modern identity:

•

01.

— **First**, we will establish the foundational principle of **Cultural Fluidity**, showing why we must view culture as an active, living force.

02.

— **Second**, we will add the critical layer of **Intersectional Identity**, revealing how a person's cultural self is in constant dialogue with the other roles they play.

03.

— **Third**, we will explore the **power of situation**, analyzing how context determines which elements of a person's identity come to the forefront.

04.

— And in our **final installment**, we'll introduce **how we bring these concepts to life in actionable and measurable ways through proprietary methodologies**—a series of essential tools designed to help you navigate this complex landscape with confidence and precision.



PART 1:

CULTURAL

fluidity.

Moving Beyond a Static State

Redefining How We Understand Culture in a Multicultural World

For decades, the concept of acculturation has been the dominant lens for understanding multicultural consumers in the U.S.

It's been useful, especially in helping brands recognize that culture matters. **But as our cultural landscape evolves, classifying multicultural audiences solely by acculturation risks oversimplifying the very people it was designed to explain.**

Acculturation typically positions consumers on a single linear spectrum, from 'unacculturated' to 'bicultural' to 'acculturated' or 'retroacculturated,' based on traditional indicators of language, and length of time in the U.S..

In doing so, it reduces identity to a fixed state—categorizing individuals into rigid buckets that they occupy for years. **Yet identity today is anything but fixed. It is situational, dynamic, and often deliberately hybrid. When we treat identity as static, we miss the real story of how culture lives, breathes, and influences people in their daily lives.**

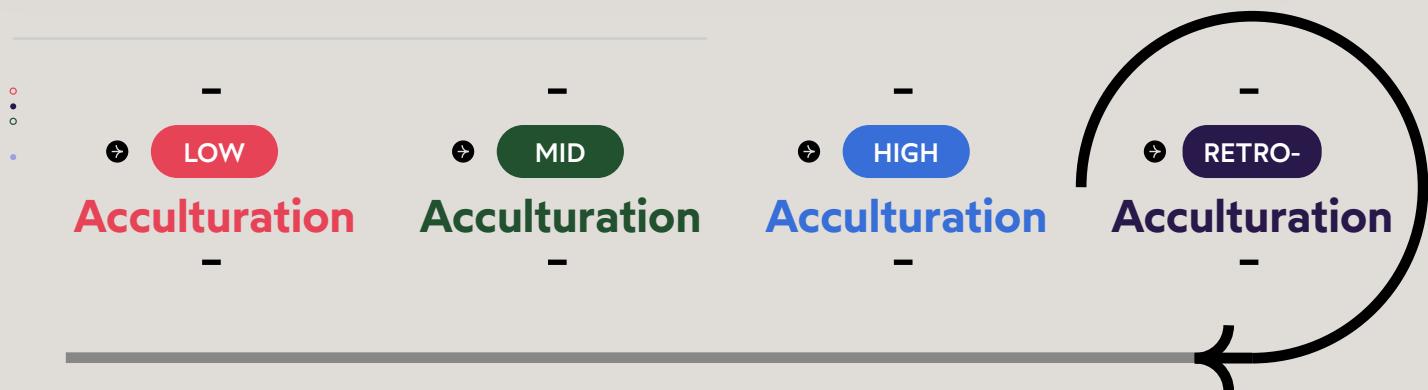




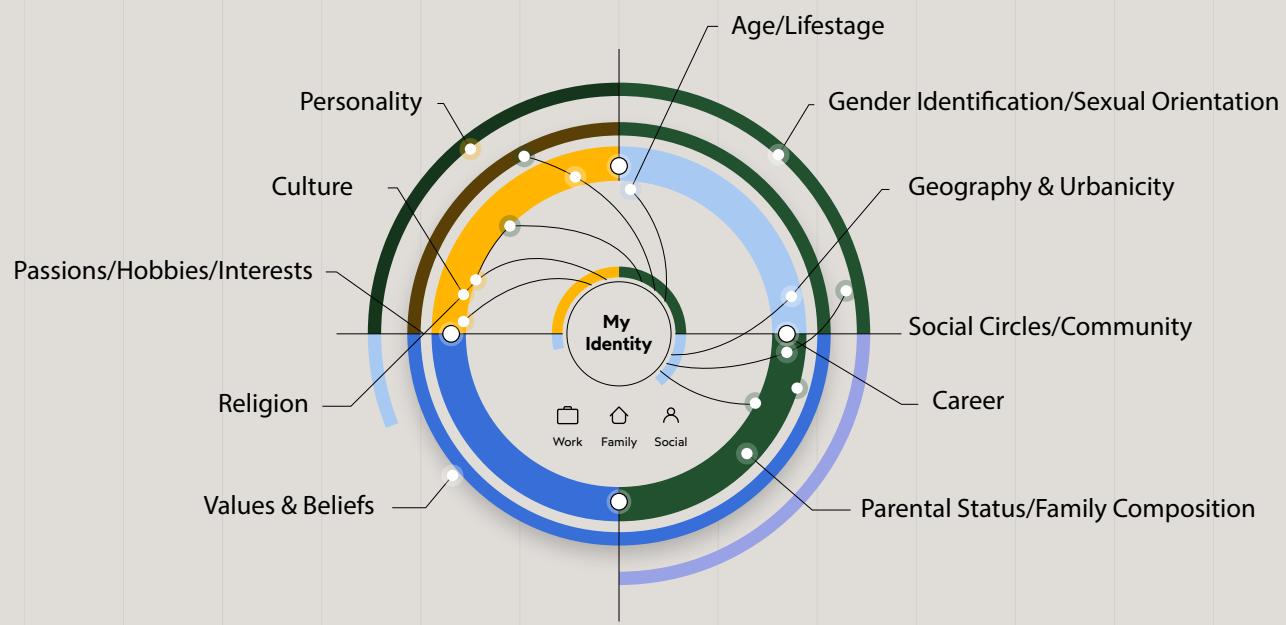
Today, we're excited to share
the first piece of the puzzle:

CULTURAL
fluidity.

Traditional Acculturation Model Vs. Cultural Fluidity



Cultural Fluidity Model



Multidimensional, dynamic, and context-dependent. A living ecosystem.

Identity as a Dynamic and Situational Process

The central tenet of Cultural Fluidity is simple: **cultural influence is dynamic.**

For multicultural audiences in the US, identity **is not a binary choice between being Hispanic, Asian, or Black or "American."** It's an **ongoing process of negotiation and expression that flexes based on situation and intention.**

It also highlights that **cultural identity and its manifestations are much more than just language and length of time in the U.S.** There are many different aspects (like values, traditions, food, music, etc.) that make up culture, and how strongly one connects to culture is not limited to any one thing in particular - something the traditional acculturation model does not take into account.

Someone might listen to Bad Bunny and U2 on Spotify, switch between English, Spanish and Spanglish depending on who they're talking to, scroll through social media that mixes Spanish-language, culturally relevant and mainstream content, eat chilaquiles for breakfast and try a new Ina Garten recipe for dinner, all in the same day. The next day might look different, or even more or less varied - and it varies greatly by person (even among two people who would both be classified as "low" or "high" acculturated in the traditional model). **These shifts aren't contradictions; they're authentic expressions of how culture works today. Context, not category, determines which aspects of identity surface and when.**

Our own research at Ahzul confirms just how fluid identity has become. In a recent study on Hispanic cultural fluidity that we led, **only 8% of Hispanics said they consistently remain in a single cultural mindset.** The vast majority move fluidly among several cultural orientations, engaging with different languages, values, and reference points depending on the occasion. On average, consumers navigated across **at least three distinct cultural mindsets** in their everyday lives, demonstrating that cultural engagement is no longer an endpoint but an ongoing motion.



Why CULTURAL fluidity. Matters

This evolution has **major implications for marketers, researchers, and strategists**. Traditional approaches that rely on fixed cultural labels, like “bicultural” or “acculturated,” **don’t fully represent how people actually experience their cultural worlds**. When we view identity as something to be measured once, rather than understood in motion, **we risk designing messages, products, and experiences that feel one-dimensional or outdated**.

Cultural Fluidity invites us to look not at who consumers are in a single moment, **but how they move through moments**. It acknowledges that cultural identity is activated differently across settings: at work, at home, with friends, online, or in moments of celebration and belonging.

This framework helps brands and researchers:

• DESIGN FOR CONTEXT

Recognize that the same person may respond differently to a brand depending on the setting, emotional state, or who they are with.

• SEE HYBRID IDENTITIES AS STRENGTH

Understand that cultural hybridity is not confusion; it’s creativity. People are crafting identities that draw from multiple cultural sources with purpose and pride.

• UNCOVER DEEPER EMOTIONAL TRUTHS

Move beyond surface-level demographics to understand why certain messages, visuals, or rituals resonate across cultural boundaries.



A Framework for the Future

Cultural Fluidity is not meant to replace acculturation; it builds on it. **It offers a more relevant, modern way to map how culture shapes attitudes, values, and behaviors in real time.** It reflects a truth we see across every multicultural segment: identity today is **complex, layered, and dynamic.** At its core, Cultural Fluidity recognizes that culture is alive. It evolves, flexes, and adapts, just like the people who live it.

WHAT'S NEXT: Intersectional Identity

A consumer's cultural identity **doesn't exist in a vacuum. It constantly interplays with other layers of who they are:** their community, family, passions, career, etc. Understanding Cultural Fluidity is only half the story; Intersectionality is the other vital half.

IN THE NEXT INSTALLMENT OF THIS SERIES (COMING YOUR WAY IN THE NEXT FEW WEEKS), WE'LL EXPLORE HOW THESE TWO FORCES COMBINE TO SHAPE MODERN MULTICULTURAL CONSUMER BEHAVIOR.

CULTURAL fluidity.

六

Johana M. Gomez

johana@ahzul.com
PRINCIPAL

↑

Holly Mourgues

holly@ahzul.com
SVP STRATEGY STUDIO



AHZUL
BE INSPIRED™