initiating a processed banana. After being processed, banana turns out to have higher economic value. However, people then found difficulty in marketing the processed banana because their area is far from the market. They see a marketing opportunity in Tawau City, Sabah, Malaysia, across the state border, and it is hard for them to go through the border. In the midst of difficulty, they are finally successful to cross the state border and market the processed banana. For the local people, state border is no longer considered as ‘sacred area’ and forbidden to enter to. Based on the research, it can be concluded that environment may seem to have limitation in fulfilling people needs, but then, there is actually hidden potential of natural resources that can be processed to meet their needs.

Keywords: economic value, to process, state border, state meaning.

THE DEVELOPMENT OF IDENTITY IN JAVANESE-WHITE AUSTRALIAN FAMILIES LIVING IN AUSTRALIA

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Despite significant numbers of marriages between white Australians and Indonesians (ABS, 2016; Heard, Khoo, & Birrell, 2009; Giorgas, & Jones, 2002; Gunawan, & Yahya, 2016), little research and literature explores the issues of race and culture inevitably raised in such relationships. A white Australian woman, I have been married to a Javanese man for 21-years and we have two teenage sons. In my PhD, I am exploring how Javanese-white Australian couples negotiate the diverse cultural morés, both in Australia and in Java, to develop their cultural identity as a couple, family and individually.


To gain an understanding of the way couples manage various cultural and socio-political influences in the development of cultural identity the study explored their engagement in domestic, family and spiritual life. Using purposive sampling and semi-structured interviews, I conducted 20 interviews with couples and individuals which focused on day-to-day life in Australia to investigate how couples from Javanese and white Australian backgrounds hybridised their cultures and how they perceive their identities in each society. Interim findings indicate multicultural societies such as Australia, support the integration of Javanese people making their life in Australia and developing unique identities which encompass relevant social and cultural practices and values. This paper will explore participants’ perceptions of the aspects of Australian and Javanese culture that facilitated their integration into Australian and Javanese communities, as well as noting factors that act as barriers.
Keywords: Cross-cultural marriage, Inter-racial marriage, Australian-Javanese identity, Australian multiculturalism, Cultural hybridism

BACKGROUND

The study of identity can make a significant contribution to society as Anthropology refocusses from fixed communities to virtual and peripatetic movements of people (Axford, 2014; Baker-Cottrell, 1973, 1990; Berkowitz-King & Bratter, 2007). To understand how cross-cultural relationships, negotiate and navigate the various hurdles and barriers, we must understand the process people undertake to amalgamate their lives and forge new identities. In this study, I draw on the substantial literature which has arisen from the USA and the UK in the previous millennia reflecting the strong multi-racial makeup of those societies (Baker-Cottrell, 1973; Berkowitz-King & Bratter, 2007; Cheng & Lee, 2009; Crawley, 1998; de Munck & Korotayev, 2007Fontaine & Dorch, 1980; Cross & Gilly, 2013; Harris & Kalbfleisch, 2000; Jankowiak & Fischer, 1992, Kong, 2012, McFadden, 2001; McFadden & Moore, 2001; Pascoe, 1991, for example). However, in the 21st Century Asian and Australian literature is more helpful in understanding the local context. A significant body of work was undertaken by Carmen Luke and her collaborators in the 1990s (Luke, C, 1994, 2003; Luke & Luke, 1998, 1999; Luke & Carrington, 2000) and which explored identity in offspring of Australian and Asian parents. Since then, Fozdar (with collaborators) has contributed further understanding exploring identity in mixed race (Fozdar, 2011; Fozdar & McGavin, 2017; Fozdar & Perkins, 2014; Fozdar, Wilding, & Hawkins, 2009; Sparrow, 2000). In very recent times, there have been specific contributions about relationships between Indonesians and Australians, most notably Winarnita Doxy (2015; Winarnita & Tanu, 2015) and Ida Bagus (2008) and Bicego (2016) and third culture children in Indonesia (Moore & Barker, 2011; Tanu, 2013).

The task of migration from Indonesia to Australia can be filled with challenges, hopes and fears. When that migration occurs in the context of cross-cultural marriage, the process of negotiation, adaptation and learning a new culture also come to the fore. The success of migration and marriage may be influenced by such things as the individual strengths of each partner in being patient during the long phase of a distance relationship, navigating the complex migration process, and the willingness to accept and adapt religious and cultural practices and beliefs, which may be different to one’s own.

Once the Indonesian partner has arrived in Australia, the strength of the marital relationship is influence by the willingness to accept, negotiate and adapt cultural practices, how well couples can compromise, the level of support from extended family and community and the ability of each member of the partnership to remain focused on making their cross-cultural relationship a success (Safilios-Rothschild, 1969; Hohmann-Marriott & Amato, 2008). As children are added to the family tensions can emerge in relation to raising mixed children (Caballero, Edwards & Puthussery, 2008; Edwards & Caballero, 2008, 2015; Edwards, Caballero & Puthussery, 2010; Crippen & Brew, 2013; Heikkila, & Yeoh, 2011; Lehmliller, Graziano & VanderDrift, 2014; Song, 2017).

In my PhD research, I am investigating the way Javanese people married to white Australians and who live in Australia negotiate day-to-day domestic, familial and social activities in their relationships and how this impacts their identity living in Australia and their relationship to Java. In this case, I use the Anthropological and Sociological definitions, as influenced by Erikson, of identity as encompassing the way a person sees and understands them self as a member of society and their social groups (Leary & Price Tangney, 2003). Following in the footsteps of Cultural Theorist, Stuart Hall, I am particularly focused on learning which cultural customs were retained
by participants in their life in Australia, whether they adapted customs and whether any traditions were abandoned as part of the hybridisation process (Hall, 1994). I am also interested to learn of any new customs acquired, particularly in the context of the broader expat Javanese community and whether the couples’ relationship with Java changed as a result, particularly from the viewpoint of the white Australian.

OBJECTIVE

This paper/presentation will briefly outline discuss the foundations of identity research and the preliminary findings from the research project exploring some of the salient findings to discuss how people manage the cultural tensions that emerge in their relationships and find their Javanese-Australian identity.

DESCRIPTION

In 2018, I interviewed 20 white Australian and Javanese participants, either as a couple or as individuals representing a couple who were residing in Australia. Participants were from all over Australia and were interviewed in person, by telephone or using the video platform, Skype. Interviews were semi-structured with questions that were provided to participants prior to interview and interview lengths varied from approximately 90 minutes to 3 hours, depending upon how much the participants wanted to tell me.

FINDINGS

Purpose and snowball sampling was utilised to locate participants who were White-Australian and Javanese couples. Twenty interviews were conducted with couples and individuals across Australia, varying in ages from their 20’s to their 80’s, with the majority in their 30’s and 40’s, and who were married for 2 weeks to more than 60 years.

The couples did not necessarily consider their cross-cultural relationship in their daily activities. They were just like other couples – juggling domestic, parenting, professional and family demands. Like many couples, the participants held different expectations of domestic tasks such as cooking, cleaning and child care. For example, deciding who would stay at home to care for babies and children, who would be responsible for the cooking and cleaning, and who would engage in paid employment, or if they both worked outside the home, how they juggled it all. Javanese wives tended to take the initiative for decision making about domestic and family functioning, and often took on traditional responsibilities, although they may have pursued study and/or employment later in the marriage. Australian wives consulted their partners to divide tasks, particularly when she was working outside the home. Some Australian husbands reported that they enjoyed domestic tasks but were happy for their wives to take over though there was usually some negotiation that occurred early in the marriage. Javanese men married to Australian women experienced it differently. Often the Javanese male was required to undertake domestic duties upon arriving in Australia so that their Australian wife would be free to engage in employment and this required some adjustment to the Australian household.

In relation to extended family, Javanese partners in particular, made efforts to embrace their Australian spouse’s family and sighted the absence of their own as the main motivation for doing so. But this was not always straight forward. Some couples talked about parents not being supportive of the relationship. This was complex because on the surface it looked like prejudice
but deeper understanding revealed that wiser parents were concerned about the challenges which might emerge. Some parents were in favour of the relationship but were not in favour of their offspring converting to another religion, particularly Javanese. Some Australian parents had particular concerns about converting to a different religion and in a few cases, participants reported defying their parents or having never told them about the conversion. Ironically, many Australian parents had no concerns about religious background which is reflective of the broader Australian view of religion, and is a view which can be concluded to contribute to support the marriage, but conflicts with the view of most Javanese that religion is a central aspect of life. In many cases, Indonesian spouses were wholeheartedly accepted into the extended family and where this occurred, the participants reported settling in more easily which is reflective of the high value Javanese place on family relationships but all couples reported negotiation and the adopting and shedding of practices and beliefs to shape their own version of religious observation.

The issues emerging from their being from different cultures tended to arise in the course of decision making which led to tension and conflict in, which was consistent with research of other Asian and Western couples (Atkeson, 1970; Abassi & Singh, 2006; Bodenmann, Kaiser, & Hahlweg, 1998; Deep, Salleh & Othman, 2017; Heikkila & Yeoh, 2011; Kline, Zhang, Manohar, Ryu, Suzuki & Mustafa, 2012; Rohrlich, 1988; Safilios-Rothschild, 1969; Wilkins & Gareis, 2005). The couples’ ability to overcome these issues seemed to boil down to their ability to understand the different ways people deal with conflict. It was often reported that the Javanese partner would shut down emotionally and withdraw, sometimes becoming quite angry and that Australians wanted to openly ‘talk it out’ and make up. In each case, they reported a deep understanding of one another’s cultural mores and demonstrated a strong commitment to working through the issues together. This study did not examine what happens when couples don’t work it out and their relationship ends, but anecdotal evidence suggests that some Australian women find it difficult to cope with the Javanese cultural demands and ways of managing communication.

Also interesting, was to explore what is it about the participants that make them so committed to their relationships despite the challenges? And this revealed the ‘feel good’ part of the research. In every case, the couples viewed their partner’s culture as a very positive aspect of their union and spoke in glowing terms about the opportunities to their mixed children. They viewed the cultural and religious customs as very important to their Indonesian-Australian identities, no matter how much or how little they took on those practices. Australian spouses in particular, valued the Javanese traditions and worked hard to incorporate them into their own and their children’s experiences which added to their ability to engage with their spouse’s family in Java and the expat community in Australia. This supports the research undertaken by Monika Winarnita who found that Australian husbands experienced greater engagement with the Indonesian community when they learnt to speak Bahasa Indonesia, ate Indonesian food and participated in community activities.

Anecdotal observation reveals that sometimes it is difficult for young people to feel comfortable straddling these two divides of their identity. Issues such as being Muslim in predominantly white Anglo societies such as Australia (Luke & Luke, 1999, p223) can be fraught for young people. This was not borne out in my research. I also did not seek to deeply study the identity formation of third space children, that is children of cross-cultural marriages. That is a study domain in its own right and deserves much greater attention than I could give in my thesis.
CONCLUSION

I came to this study curious to find whether my marriage was different to other Javanese-Australian marriages – whether the types of challenges we experienced were similar to others and how other Australian spouses viewed the rich cultural experiences of their Javanese spouses. All the participants spoke to the challenges of cross-cultural marriage and the need for patience, compromise and an open heart and mind. I was surprised to hear of so many challenges, and heartened to hear that they were indeed similar to my lived experience. This led me to ponder what qualities people who enter such marriages might have. Perhaps one quality that stood out was having a curiosity about the world beyond their doorstep and a high threshold for challenging themselves to new experiences. Australians tended to have a strong affection for Indonesia and many of the participants met their future Javanese spouse whilst working or studying in Indonesia or during a vacation, others met while studying in Australia. Similarly, Australian participants reported a strong affection for Java and a sense of acceptance and belonging. This may be due to the multicultural mix of ethnic groups which form Indonesia and which provide its people with a sense of acceptance and open mindedness about different philosophies of life, including those informed by religion, geographic location and culture. Surprisingly, despite varying levels of engagement with the Indonesian community in Australia, all participants reported a strong interest in raising their children with a solid connection to Indonesia generally and Java specifically, and their heritage and culture. Eating Indonesian foods and learning the Indonesian language were most often cited by parents as being important to pass onto their children. And where couples did not have children, most valued strong links to family and community in Indonesia and continued to visit regularly.

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MODERNITY AND CULTURAL VALUES IN MINAHASANS SOCIETY
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Having strong historical and cultural influence with the Wests, the Christian majority society of Minahasa maintain great dissimilarities with the rest of the Indonesians. Applying multi-sited ethnography, this study questions in what ways do distinct historical, socio-cultural and political situatedness, as well as actors’ mental maps of the global world play out in everyday basis? And how are local cultural values are contested in this fast changing of global order?