

The Bidayuh Cultural Identity “Issues” of the Progeny of Mixed Marriages

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ABSTRACT

The study investigates the complexities surrounding the cultural identity of Bidayuh progeny from mixed marriages. It aims to explore how these individuals navigate their heritage, balancing Bidayuh traditions with influences from other cultural backgrounds. Through qualitative methods, including interviews and participant observations, the research examines the perceived 'issues' related to identity, community acceptance, and cultural continuity. Findings indicate that while mixed heritage progeny often experience identity conflicts and societal pressures, they also contribute to the dynamic evolution of Bidayuh culture. The study highlights the need for inclusive cultural policies that embrace diversity within the community, fostering a more integrated cultural identity.

Keywords: *Bidayuh, Cultural Identity, Heritage, Mixed-Marriage, Progeny*

INTRODUCTION

The conjugal view defines marriage as the union of a man and a woman who naturally (inherently) fulfill their permanent and exclusive commitment to each other by bearing and raising children together (Girgis, George, & Anderson, 2012). However, the revisionist understanding of marriage maintains that it is the union of two people (whether of the same sex or of opposite sexes) who commit to romantically [loving] and caring for each other, as well as to [sharing] the burdens and benefits of domestic life. It is essentially a union of hearts and minds, enhanced by whatever forms of sexual intimacy both partners find agreeable (ibdi). In any case, culture determines the nature of the marriage individuals enter into. Culture, on the other hand, is not static or invariable; it is in a constant process of evolving. In many instances, culture dictates the communal or societal marital structure—endogamy or exogamy.

According to Wikipedia's most recent version (March 2018), Bidayuh is a collective term for various indigenous people in southern Sarawak. According to the above source, the Bidayuh are Sarawak's second-largest Dayak ethnic group, after the Iban, and one of the major Dayak tribes in West Kalimantan. Campbell, Chuah, and Ting (2012) paraphrasing the 2009 Department of Statistics Malaysia of Sarawak, the Bidayuh are Sarawak's fourth largest ethnic group, after the Iban, Chinese, and Malay, accounting for 8% of the state's population based on the 2000 census. Based on their geographical locations and dialects, Campbell, Chuah, and Ting (2012) identified four major groups of Bidayuh: the Bau-Jagoi in Bau District, the Biatah in Kuching District, the Bukar-Sadong in the Serian District, and the Salako-Lara in the Lundu District. Within these major groups, there are sub-groups. Conversely, with the advent of industrialization, urbanisation, and migration, exogamy appeared to be a more preferred marriage arrangement, especially in relation to mixed marriages. Indeed, the upward trend of mixed marriages, or intermarriages, is many

decades old. The idea of intermarriage is no doubt exogamous, where one marries out of their own community to another of a completely different culture, customs, traditions, and law. Different kinship systems and kin's roles come with different cultures and communities; hence, when two people marry into different kinship systems, they may or may not clash with one another.

Kinship, according to the 1973 Scheffler work, talks about how kinship and descent describe one's egocentric system of social identity and status in their kinship system or descent system. When a society unites to establish social ties, they recognize their shared ancestry through shared descendants, leading to a somewhat egocentric relationship between them. Therefore, when members of a society marry into another's kinship, the members of that particular kinship in one way or another will treat that person marrying into the kinship as an "outsider." Society only created this rule of descent to identify each member with a specific category of their kin for private or specific purposes.

Certainly, over the years, the issue of inter-ethnic, mixed, or intermarriage¹ in Malaysia has been acclaimed and studied abound (see Tan (1993), Tan et al. (2008), Pue & Sulaiman (2013)). The products of these marital unions are identified differently in Malaysia. For example, Pan-Asian (Pacific-Asian/Asian-Americans), Eurasians (European-Asians), Kristang (Portuguese Malaysians), or even local terms such as Mamak (Indian-Malay), Chindians (Chinese-Indians), Baba Nyonya (Chinese-Malay), and so forth, have been created solely due to inter-kinship marriages. Amongst these studies, many examined how intermarriage was studied, the history of intermarriage, the cultural context for the couples marrying exogamous from their families, and so forth, but none (at least to the best of our knowledge) explored the issue of self-identity in relation to the offspring of Bidayuh and Iban, Chinese, or other non-Malayu² ethnic groups of Sarawak. For these children, the idea of selflessness and detachment from their own "ethnic identity" brings about an identity crisis. The aim of this study is to critically examine how Bidayuh of mixed-parentage identify ethnically and why they identify as they do.

PROBLEM STATEMENT

Graham, as cited in Stewart and Goldfard (2007), criticizes the U.S. Census Bureau's "check on" racial and ethnic classifications, a practice she completely rejects, claiming it serves only to promote "nice demography." She argues that it is a form of discrimination towards those who are born of parents of different "races," and because of such debates on the ticking of one box, the 2000 U.S. Census hence permitted the ticking of multiple racial and ethnic classifications. Within the United States, approximately 17% of marriages occur between spouses of different races and/or ethnicities, while 1 out of every 7 children born identify as multiracial. Research suggests that, compared with monoracial couples, multiracial couples are at increased risk for negative relationship outcomes including divorce or separation. Although little research explores why these disparities exist, one possible reason is heightened conflict caused by greater differences in partners' values and beliefs (Craft, Rowley, & Perry-Jenkins 2022).

From my personal observations and interactions with children of intermarriages, the biggest issue regarding mix-marriages or inter-kinship marriages is not centred around the married couples themselves.

¹ The terms intermarriage, inter-ethnic marriage and mixed marriage are used interchangeably in this study.

² The exemption of Bidayuh/Malay couples in this study is based on the understanding that by law (Sharia law to be precise), an individual(s) married to Malay is automatically identified as a Malay-Muslim, and as such, he or she must abide by the norms governing Islamic devotees. Among the non-Malay groups, inter-ethnic marriages are generally much more common than among Malays. However, it also seems that migration is the preferred option for the number of Malaysians who either marry across ethnic lines or acquire foreign spouses while studying or working abroad. This particularly applies to Malay women who are either not particularly religious or who see no reason why their spouses should convert (see Malaysiakini, August 1, 2007).

Instead, it revolves around the difficulties encountered by their children as they navigate the complexities of growing up with two distinct cultural backgrounds. As previously mentioned, state documents or forms frequently include ethnic categories, particularly in the demography section. Consequently, children born from mixed intermarriages often find themselves perplexed as they do not belong entirely to either of the major ethnic groups. Consequently, they are compelled to select the "Others" category. Selecting the "Others" option typically prompts individuals to question their authentic identity. Additionally, it induces a psychological state of identity crisis. In addition, according to Ong (2007 and 2009), the Malaysian government's efforts to bring the country together are hindered by the fact that its politics and policies are based on ethnic divisions, potentially causing rifts among Malaysians. Being born into two separate kinship systems may or may not impact a child's self-identity during their learning process. One's self-culture is an integral aspect of self-identity, and over time, it fosters a feeling of affiliation with a specific community. Based on the information provided, we have formulated the following questions: How do the offspring of Bidayuh engage in social interactions or form marital unions with their parents? What is the reason for their choice to identify racially in the manner that they do?

RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

- i. To critically assess how people with mixed-parentage identify
- ii. To determine factor(s) influence the way children of Bidayuh mixed-parentage identify ethnically.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Children of mixed marriages or intermarriages may face a number of challenges as they navigate their dual cultural and ethnic identities. These challenges can include: Confusion and identity struggles: Children of mixed marriages often have to navigate between different cultural traditions, languages, and values. This can lead to confusion and identity struggles as they try to reconcile their diverse backgrounds. Children of mixed marriages may face discrimination and prejudice from both sides of their heritage. This can be due to stereotypes, a lack of acceptance, or ignorance about their mixed heritage. Cultural disconnection: Children from mixed marriages may feel a sense of disconnection from both sides of their heritage. They may feel like they don't fully belong to or fit in with either culture, which can lead to feelings of isolation and failure to fully embrace their cultural heritage. Another challenge that children from mixed marriages may face is a lack of community support. Often, they struggle to find a sense of community and belonging. They may not have access to communities or support systems that understand and embrace their unique experiences, making it challenging for them to fully explore and celebrate their mixed identity (see Craft, Rowley, & Perry-Jenkins 2022). The 'Marriage Help Services' in Santa Clara, CA, made the following argument:

Raising multicultural children within a mixed marriage presents its own set of challenges. Nurturing their identity and navigating diverse cultural influences require a delicate balance. Cultural factors can significantly impact marital satisfaction, highlighting the importance of open dialogue and continuous efforts to bridge gaps

Cultural identity is a vast topic that cuts across social science and humanities disciplines, and there are various ways to understand or discuss it. At this juncture, the multiple approaches to identity will be marginal. Yet, it is vital to explore why individuals identify the way they do. According to the 1982 work by V. Gecas, the notion of identity is based on social class and self-esteem. Huntington's (2004) work provides a similar denotation on identity, arguing that social construction shapes an individual's identity. Although this notion is one of his four points, it enlists ideas on how an individual(s) identifies. Others include the nature of grouping, multiple identities, and identity as a product of continuous interaction.

Indeed, Huntington (2004) highlights that individuals construct their own identities in relation to those of others, and their interactions with others in turn shape their own identities, resulting in an endless cycle of identity formation.

Datler, Wallace, and Spanning (2005), however, questioned the extent to which strong social institutions and classification systems that predate and are independent of any particular individual shape and control people externally. And to what extent do individuals have 'internal control, as creative actors shaping their social world'? Summarising Jamieson, 2002 (p. 519), these writers emphasised the importance of agency as opposed to structure. They observe that people view identity as a subjective achievement of rational individual subjects. The emphasis on the structure contrasts with the view of identity as "a reflection of individual membership in particular social categories or collectivities" (Williams, 2000, p. 55).

Nonetheless, the plural society theory argues that in heterogeneous societies, culture separates groups, with the only common place of interaction being the market. These societies often perceive positive outcomes for one community as negatively affecting another. This is different from a homogenous society where, for example, building a house of worship serves the whole community (see Gryboski 2016). Rockquemore and Brunnsma (2008) viewed the issue of identity as a little different from the above schools of thought. Rockquemore and Brunnsma (2008) noted that the symbolic interactionist way of looking at mixed heritage identity focuses on validation. Some individuals will find validation for the identities they present to others. Others will not have their initially presented identities validated. These writers observed:

Identities, as validated self-understandings, depend upon confirmation from others in order to be developed and maintained. Therefore, "biracial" identity as an emergent category of racial identification and classification has the potential to be established, stabilized, and proliferate in the micro interactional sphere, and yet it also may be denied, negated, and further marginalized. (2008, p. 21)

Citing Marx (1976), Gryboski partially disagrees with the above assertions of the plural society theory. He highlights the Marxist perspective, which argues:

The mode of production of material life conditions the social, political and intellectual life-process in general defines individual identity. It is not the consciousness of men that determines their being, but on the contrary, it is their social being that determines their consciousness (2016:31 cited in Marx 1976 p.3.)

On the other hand, PuruShotaam (2004, cited in Chui Yinn 2018) notes that despite some authors' arguments:

"ethnic group" is, but, a social ideology where when people say there are of a certain and most commonly single ethnic group, it is mostly untrue due to their heritage as well as environment such as learned and shared values, attitudes, behaviour and the way they see "ethnic" as a membership or as an identity What she says is that the terms of "Us" and "Them" are merely "proof" of cultural difference when in fact, it is just an ideology that was placed upon everyone as an identity and knowing that we belong somewhere or to a certain group or community.

Yinn (2018) acknowledged the PuruShotam argument and added that, when examining the concept of "ethnicity" in Borneo, the ways in which the people identify themselves and how the state identifies them

differ. This is due to the historical circumstances surrounding the origin of their names. Yinn asserts that the government imposed ethnicity on the Borneo people primarily as a means of easy dictation and authority application. In other words, ethnicity served as a political tool to exert control over the people, but over time, people abandoned this concept and began to use it as an identity, despite the fact that everyone is likely a “mixed blood” member of a different “ethnicity.”

This article uses the ideas and ideologies of the following theories as a context for understanding cultural identity. These ideologies are primordialism, instrumentalism, and symbolic interactionism. They are theoretical perspectives used to understand and explain the nature of ethnicity, identity, and group dynamics. Each perspective offers a unique lens through which scholars and researchers examine these complex phenomena of cultural identity. These perspectives are not mutually exclusive, and researchers often integrate elements from multiple perspectives to gain a more comprehensive understanding of ethnicity and identity. The specific context and research question at hand influence the choice of perspective. Primarily, the primordialism perspective emphasizes the biological and historical factors that create a sense of belonging among a particular group. On the other hand, instrumentalism asserts the malleability of ethnic identities and their strategic manipulation. While symbolic interactionism views ethnicity as a social construct that emerges through interpersonal communication and shared symbols, These differing understandings will be the basis of discussion in the conclusion section of this article.

METHODOLOGY

One of the three fundamentals of social science research, exploration, ingrains this study (see Babbie, 2010). Sequel to the discussion in the literature review, identity, or how an individual identifies, is a social fact that is constantly entreating for deeper exploration through empirical data and analysis. To achieve a scientific understanding, the researcher employed a specific scientific method. This article utilized qualitative methods with in-depth interviews (and empirical observation) as the main research instrument to carefully collect quality data (Ibid.). Through interviews, we provided our respondents with a platform to freely discuss and express their own ideas about identity. Thus, we provided this research with quality data, details, ideas, and a range of responses. In this research, we chose the qualitative method as the data collection tool because it seeks holistic and largely narrative responses from the respondents. It aims to help researchers better understand the perceptions, motivations, and feelings behind our informants' actions. The qualitative method offered us a more complex textual description of 'human' issues, which often challenge the original beliefs, behaviours, emotions, and 'social' issues (Denzin and Lincoln, 2000).

To achieve pertinent and variation data, we imposed certain criteria on the selection of the research population. We chose our respondents based on their ability to clearly understand and answer our questions about self-identity and the reasons behind their identification. Respondents' gender, experience, education, religiosity, and rationality are some of the criterion that contributed to their selection. Significantly, we excluded respondents under the age of 16 from this research. This is because people under the age of 16 are more likely to be vague on how to identify. The research population consisted of both male and female Bidayu progeny, but more importantly, offspring of mixed or inter-ethnic marriages of Bidayuh and non-Bidayuh. These include married and unmarried men and women residing in Lundu. This research adapts the non-probability sampling technique. We collected data using purposive and snowball sampling techniques. The choice of these two sampling techniques is deliberate. Furthermore, resources and time were available, but the saturation point ultimately determined the sampling sizes. As previously stated, Lundu is the study area for this article. Lundu is a district located in the northwest of Kuching Division of Sarawak, Malaysia, and shares borders with the Indonesian Province of West Kalimantan. Lundu has different ethnic groups of Iban, Bidayuh, Malay Chinese, and Selako settlers, according to the population demography. What is wonderful about Lundu is that, although different ethnic groups settled very close together, there has been no friction between them from the beginning. They seek a better life, and each

person pursued their aim in a way that did not compete with the others (Steinmayer 2014). As a result, this article examines the many characteristics of Lundu—mix marriage. According to this Steinmayer (2014);

About 5,000 people live in or close to Lundu town. The total population of Lundu district was about 25,000 when figures last became available. People in Lundu make their living in traditional ways, by farming, fishing, planting cocoa, pepper, and rubber, although rubber is less important than it was.

FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS

Similar to any form of matrimony, mixed marriages possess their own assortment of benefits and drawbacks. It is crucial to acknowledge that the particular advantages and disadvantages might significantly differ based on the individuals and their distinct circumstances. The situation becomes considerably more intricate when considering the offspring of such partnerships. The cultural identity of individuals born from mixed marriages is more complex. An important discovery derived from the field data is the malleability of identity among the offspring of families with mixed marriages. Evidence suggests that cultural identity is not always static and has the potential to be flexible. The results also revealed that the offspring of interracial marriages may experience varying degrees of cultural identity adaptation at different life stages or in different social environments. Individuals may exhibit a stronger inclination towards a particular component of their identity at a given time, and subsequently transition to emphasising a different aspect at a later stage. Accordingly, the respondent simply identified herself as Emma, a female about 24 years old, single, and with a university degree in humanity. She explained:-

“I am half Chinese and half Bidayuh, my father is Chinese, although I have not seen in him ages, I feel chineses sometimes”. I really donno know why”, I guess as people always say blood is thicker than water”. Emma continues, so,...sometimes I present myself as a Chinese, if I am neigiating something with Chinese, but if visit government office, I am Bidayuh... Whether, am I taking advantage of my identity, I’ll say no, I am both ...and I may as well enjoy both sides” (Emma 6th June 2023).

However, some respondents view the issue of being born into a mixed marriage as very challenging and sometimes confusing to identify. This is very obvious, as growing up with multiple cultural influences can sometimes lead to identity challenges or confusion. Children of mixed marriages may grapple with questions about where they truly belong or how they fit into both cultures. About half of the respondents in this study have, at one time in their lives, experienced confusion about their identity. Jenny reports that at home, surrounded by my mother’s family members, I feel like a Bidayuh. However, as I grow older, people outside my family consistently speak Mandarin to me. When I inform them that I am not Chinese, they often express disbelief and occasionally use obscenity. "Yet, when I speak Bidayuh to some people, they're baffled and ask about where and how I learned to speak Bidayuh." Another respondent says, "It's hard to juggle the two cultures." The people around you don't make it easier. A third respondent shared, "I love being mixed, but I hate having to explain to people that I am a product of a mixed marriage and the comments that follow." And male respondent Alex jokely added, “There is no textbook on how to fit in both. My parents did not help much.” He continues:

Actually, they sometimes created more confusion.for example, I’ll be speaking with my mother in English, and if for some reason she became angry, she’ll automatically switch to Badayuh in anger. And my father does that too...and both knew I am not good with any of the languages. The botton line, it is very confusing (Ales 6th June 2023).

Growing up with multiple cultural influences can sometimes lead to identity challenges or confusion. Children of mixed marriages may grapple with questions about where they truly belong or how they fit into both cultures. Some respondents echo this concern about where they belong or how they can fit into the two or even one. One of my friends always teased me, according to a respondent. He often joked:

Which part of your body is on your mother's side, and which is on your father's? My response has always been that I am for both. When he is drunk, the joke can sometimes appear insolent. However, I am aware that he is engaging in meaningless street talk." But I know my younger sister and mom hate my friend for such a comment.

The respondent, along with a few others, expressed concerns regarding societal attitudes towards mixed marriages, which can lead to feelings of isolation or misinterpretation. Indeed, I avoid associating with those who regularly mock my family heritage, regardless of their insistence that it is merely a jest. Consistently elucidating it to them can be challenging. The preceding section indicates that children born to parents of different ethnic backgrounds may encounter external preconceptions and prejudices from individuals who lack comprehension or acceptance of their unique heritage. Frequently, this resulted in seclusion and misinterpretation.

Children may struggle with a sense of identity, feeling torn between the cultural backgrounds of each parent. They may find it challenging to answer questions like "Where are you from?" or "What is your cultural identity?" It's crucial to understand that there is no universal solution for how to describe the cultural identity of people from mixed marriages. Their path to understand and embrace their cultural identity is very unique and personal, impacted by a number of different causes. Support from their families, exposure to both cultures, and individual decisions all help to shape their distinctive cultural identity.

Being a product of a mixed marriage is not excessively perplexing. The cultural identity of individuals born into mixed marriages can be highly diverse, influenced by various aspects such as the cultural backgrounds of their parents, the upbringing environment, and their personal encounters. Certain individuals may possess a strong identification with the cultural backgrounds of both their parents and perceive themselves as bicultural or multicultural. They can actively engage in and commemorate the rituals and traditions of both cultures. Evidence from the field suggests that children born to parents of different ethnic backgrounds frequently develop a consciousness of and admiration for diverse cultures. They may have the opportunity to be exposed to other languages, cuisines, cultures, and customs from both sides of their family. Based on feedback from our participants, discussing 'racial disparities' in Malaysia, especially in Sarawak, can give the impression that these persons lack an understanding of the value of variety. A specific participant expressed, "Being born from parents of different ethnic backgrounds, I consider myself extremely fortunate." I had the opportunity to commemorate both Gawai and Chinese New Year in the same household and calendar year. I have relatives on both sides, and that is aesthetically pleasing and emotionally satisfying. Why do people exhibit such a lack of awareness or understanding when it comes to diversity? Furthermore, one participant confidently stated,

"As a product of mixed marriage, my culture is mixed—I am Chinese and Bidayuh. And for me, that's good. I have varieties to choose from." But more importantly, I am a Sarawakian and a Malaysian. My siblings and I grew up speaking both languages and celebrating both cultures. So, it's good, lah!! Another respondent agreed, saying, "My parents are an open-minded couple." I suppose it's because they're well-educated, or perhaps for other reasons, but they consistently believe that two is better than one. Cultural integration is frequently part of the socialization process in many mixed families. Others may choose to integrate aspects of both cultures into their daily lives, creating a unique cultural identity that reflects a fusion of their parents' backgrounds. They may adapt and combine elements from each culture in a way that feels most authentic to them. However, some individuals may feel a stronger connection to one parent's

culture than the other, leading them to primarily identify with that culture. Factors such as upbringing, exposure, and personal interests can influence this preference.

The diverse range of cultural experiences can provide a unique perspective from which to observe the world. Individuals with diverse ethnic backgrounds may possess enhanced abilities to overcome cultural barriers and possess a deeper understanding of nuanced cultural distinctions. Many children of mixed marriages have access to a wide range of cultural holidays and events, which may be both educational and enjoyable. Language plays a crucial role in shaping both culture and identity. Certain individuals possess the ability to communicate in multiple languages, including those spoken by their parents, while others may only be proficient in one language to the extent of comprehending another. Certain individuals may actively engage in investigating and researching the diverse cultural origins they possess in order to gain a deeper understanding of both aspects of their heritage.

CONCLUSION

When collecting data in the field, the researcher identified three prominent identification theories. Those concepts are primordialism, instrumentalism, and symbolic interactionism. Primordialism suggests that an individual's innate features and emotions strongly influence the formation of social identities such as ethnicity, nationality, or religion. Individuals inherently and instinctively develop deep connections to their specific social groups as a result of common historical events, cultural legacy, and biological influences. Primordialism suggests that these identities are inherent, old, and resistant to alteration. Fenton (2010) states that anthropologists who adopt a primordialist approach, like Geertz, are not referring to biological connections but rather to social connections. Fenton (2010) argues that a distorted representation of 'primordial' attachments, often used as a weak argument, has rendered the debate unproductive. Gryboski (2016, p. 84) also supports this viewpoint. The significance of this point remains unrecognized or unclear. However, during the process of gathering data, around five participants expressed that, despite having parents from different cultural backgrounds, they felt a more profound cultural affinity towards the Bidayuh culture due to their upbringing as Bidayuhs. This was unequivocally exemplified by the respondents' upbringing with a single mother of Bidayuh ethnicity.

According to them, their father left the family when they were merely toddlers. Thus, their close ties to their maternal family shaped their identity. Yet, for one major reason, there were six respondents who vehemently identified with their father side of the family. They do not want to be viewed as the product of an 'unfathered child'. According to one respondent, "I adore my mother, but I don't want society to think she had me as a result of an extramarital affair or moonlighting with my father." In this sense, members' perceptions of society influence their respective cultural identities. Conversely, instrumentalism argues that social identities can be changed and influenced by strategic manipulation. This viewpoint suggests that individuals and groups strategically utilise their identities to attain particular objectives, such as acquiring political influence, economic benefits, or social acknowledgment. Put simply, people can utilise their identities as instruments to promote their own or group objectives. Although it is not evident whether a significant number of respondents deliberately employ their identities to accomplish particular objectives, several responses indicate otherwise.

Nevertheless, it is crucial to note that both viewpoints are not contradictory, and in numerous instances, a blend of both fundamental and instrumental influences can impact the development of one's identity. Academics frequently discuss the degree to which each viewpoint truly represents the intricacies of identity dynamics. The understanding of identity can be influenced by the unique situation and the identities being studied. The data from the field strongly supports the second option. In addition, the long-standing connections and affiliations between the Badayuh and other ethnic groups have led to the development of symbolic interactionism to some extent. In summary, symbolic interactionism emphasises the ever-changing nature of human interaction and the significance of symbols and meanings in influencing

our perception of ourselves, society, and culture. It has shaped people's comprehension of how individuals traverse social environments and build their sense of self.

Indeed, the results revealed that a significant number of participants in the study held the belief that the most effective method of identification is not aligning oneself with the racial backgrounds of their parents, but rather embracing a 'multiracial' identity. As per one participant:

Each person has multiple facets to their heritage, which can include things like ethnicity, nationality, religion, language, and more. These different facets contribute to a person's overall identity. However, in different situations, certain aspects of their heritage might become more prominent or important to them.

Factors such as personal experiences, relationships, the environment, and societal expectations can influence this emphasis on different parts of heritage. It's a way for individuals to navigate their identity in a complex and diverse world, adapting to various situations while staying true to their authentic selves. For example, this respondent states that because of his light skin complexion, people often identify him as Chinese. Although he does not consider this to be a problem, it does become an issue when he makes claims to inheritance such as belonging to a "native land." In such a matter, he identified himself as Bidayuh.

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