

“I DON’T WANT TO BE CALLED *ANAK AMAH*”: THE IDENTITY CONUNDRUM OF BIRACIAL FILIPINO-MALAY BRUNEIANS

*Chang-Yau Hoon**

Institute of Asian Studies, Universiti Brunei Darussalam,
Jalan Tungku Link, BE1410 Brunei Darussalam
E-mail: changyau.hoon@ubd.edu.bn

*Maria Fermin***

Department of Political and Social Sciences, Institute of Sociology,
Freie Universität Berlin, Kaiserswerther Str. 16-18,
14195 Berlin, Germany
E-mail: miafermingarc@gmail.com

Published online: 25 July 2022

To cite this article: Hoon, C.-Y. and Fermin, M. 2022. “I don’t want to be called *anak amah*”: The identity conundrum of biracial Filipino-Malay Bruneians. *International Journal of Asia Pacific Studies* 18 (2): 227–254. <https://doi.org/10.21315/ijaps2022.18.2.10>

To link to this article: <https://doi.org/10.21315/ijaps2022.18.2.10>

ABSTRACT

Using qualitative data collected from interviews with Filipino-Malay Bruneian biracial informants, this article examines the identity conundrum that is grounded in their individual liminal experiences. Growing up in a bicultural family in a conservative society, the Filipino-Malay Bruneian identity is a complex phenomenon as they negotiate their Muslim identity while preserving their Filipino culture. By narrating the shifting identity and boundary crossing among the Filipino-Malay Bruneian individuals, this article discusses the ways they respond to the dominant discourse in the Bruneian social and cultural contexts that perceive identity as singular, fixed, and essentialist. It unpacks the different dimensions of their life experiences, including their struggles with persistent racial and class stereotype of being “anak amah” (child of a maid). Finally, the article analyses how our

informants negotiate identity conflicts in their everyday practices and provides nuanced insights into the complexity of the Filipino-Malay Bruneian identity.

Keywords: Brunei Darussalam, biracial identity, Filipino migrants, stereotypes, identity conflicts

INTRODUCTION

Stereotypes based on economic and sexual bodies of Filipina migrant workers have reduced these women to “maids” (referred to as *amah* in some countries in Southeast Asia) or sex workers and entertainers (Zahedi 2010). In particular, the occupational prevalence of female domestic helpers among Filipino migrant workers has perpetuated the *amah* stereotype of Filipinas based on their gender and inferior socioeconomic position. Consequently, in the context of Brunei Darussalam (hereafter, Brunei), biracial children of a local Bruneian and a Filipino spouse are often caricatured as *anak amah* (child of a maid). The liminal status of the Filipino-Malay Bruneian as an outsider-insider is underscored by their excluded bodies in the society based on race, gender, language, religion, and class status. Yet, their biracial identity has made them amenable in the Filipino (Tagalog speaking) communities both in the global diaspora as well as in the Philippines. The identity conundrum of these Filipino-Malay Bruneian subjects is thus reflected in their struggle to be accepted as they negotiate their belonging between “here, there and elsewhere” (Shams 2020).

To reduce unemployment, the Philippines saw labour export as an opportunity for economic development (Constable 2003). This phenomenon later developed into a chain of continuous labour migration and established a culture of emigration in the country (Castles 2004). Simultaneously, the discovery of oil and gas in Brunei in 1929 and the subsequent development of a hydrocarbon economy in the country had generated large demand for labour that encouraged immigration of Chinese, Filipino, Bangladeshi, and Indonesian workers (de Vienne 2015). The Filipino population in Brunei had reached almost 21,000 in 2014, which was equivalent to 5% of the country’s total population of around 400,000 people (Castilla 2014). While most of the Filipino migrants in Brunei work in the service industry as servers and domestic helpers, they are also engineers, managers, academics, teachers, designers, and medical professionals (Castilla 2014; Mani 1996). Such diversity of occupation is also reflected in the profile of our informant’s Filipino parent (see Appendix One for more details on the informants).

Transnational marriages of Filipino migrants demonstrate a crossing of not only ethnic and racial but also religious boundaries (Zahedi 2010). As an inevitable consequence of migration, interracial marriages have led to the product of biracial Filipino-Malay Bruneian individuals in Brunei. However, since Brunei practices a patrilineal system for its official racial classification of individuals (Hoon and Sahrifulhafiz 2021), it is not possible to provide the exact population number of Filipino-Malay Bruneians in the country. According to state classification, a person who has a Filipina mother and a Malay father, which is commonly the case, are categorised as Malay to follow the father's "race".¹ While children born of inter-racial unions are the embodiment of hybridity (Mackie 1998), the state gives little recognition to mixed-race individuals (Castles 2004).

This article focuses on the hybrid identity of individuals born of a Filipino and a Malay Bruneian parent, who grew up or spent most of their lives in a bicultural Filipino-Malay household in Brunei. All our informants are first generation Filipino-Malay Bruneians who hold Bruneian citizenship. The Filipino parents of the informants in this study were originated from Luzon, the Northern island of the Philippines; they were formerly Christians (Roman Catholics) and spoke Tagalog. They were migrant workers in Brunei until they were married to a local Malay Muslim.

In the tradition of the Malay Bruneian community, mixed marriages were discouraged due to the community's need to maintain "pure" lineage to prevent passing their inheritance to outsiders (Trigger and Wahsalfelah 2011). While it is a common practice for Malay cultural gatekeepers to insist on an essentialist and unchanging notion of identity, the Malays in Brunei are never a homogeneous group. The Brunei Constitution recognises seven indigenous groups (*puak jati*) i.e., Belait, Bisaya, Brunei, Dusun, Kedayan, Murut, and Tutong as part of the Malay race (*bangsa Melayu*) that comprises the dominant population of Brunei (Maxwell 2001). Such incorporation involves a systematic assimilation of these diverse ethnicities into a singular Malay racial majority.² Under the institutionalised national ideology of Melayu Islam Beraja (MIB or Malay Muslim Monarchy), concrete cultural, religious, racial, and language boundaries have been imposed by the state with a purpose to draw nationalist lines of inclusion and exclusion (Ho 2021a).

Marriage between Muslims and non-Muslims is not legally permitted in Brunei and non-Muslims must convert to Islam if they wish to marry a Muslim (Library of Congress n.d.). While intermarriage has been gradually accepted by the local Malay society, the caveat is for the non-Malay/Muslim

counterpart to embrace the religion and culture of their Malay spouse (Hoon and Sahrifulhafiz 2021). As all our informants have a Bruneian parent who is a Malay Muslim, their Catholic Filipino immigrant parent must first convert to Islam for the marriage to be approved by the authorities in Brunei. This is like the case of Malaysia where mixed Malay couples are required to adhere to the dominant Muslim Malay culture (Tan et al. 2008: 41). Cultural elements derived from a non-Malay spouse can be integrated into the family's cultural practice if they do not contradict Islamic teachings (Pue and Sulaiman 2013: 271). With the state ideology of MIB, Islam is deeply imbedded in the Malay culture and forms an integral part of the Bruneian Malay identity (Bernstein 1997). Converting to Islam will correspondingly mean assimilating into the Brunei Malay culture and becoming a Malay (Ho 2019).

In contrast, 88% of Filipinos are Christians (approximately 80% Catholics and 8% Protestants), and the Filipino identity is often conflated with being a Christian. The Filipino culture has a long history of entanglement with Christianity since Spanish colonialism in the 1500s, especially in Luzon (del Castillo 2015). The 400 years of colonial influence from the Spanish and American had significantly transformed the Filipino identity. The deep impact of Hispanisation, Christianisation, and Westernisation has consequently excluded the Philippines from the widely held definition of what or who are considered as “Malays” in the “Dunia Melayu” (or Malay World) that has its geographical centre in the Malay Peninsula, which defines Malays as categorically Malay speaking as well as Muslims (Curaming 2011).³

In her study of the mixed Japanese-Filipino identity, Seiger demonstrates the importance of “dominant understandings and practices of multiculturalism as a frame for ‘mixed’ ethnic identities to develop” (2019: 404). However, not all countries with a diverse population adopts a multicultural policy (Castles 1995; Hoon 2006). Brunei is a case in point. The national philosophy of MIB is instrumental in assimilating the population into the dominant Malay Muslim culture and in marginalising “undesirable elements” such as Christianity, which are seen as an “outside threat” to the Malay identity (Bernstein 1997; Curaming 2011).

Having the baggage of Western and Christian influences, the Filipino migrants who married local Malay Bruneians often had to grapple with the insurmountable task of negotiating between assimilating into the Malay Muslim culture and preserving and transmitting their cultural heritage

to their children. The sharp contrast in the two opposing cultures is often manifested in the identity conundrum of the culturally mixed Filipino-Malay Bruneians as this article will demonstrate. Their half-Filipino background and the accompanying racial stereotypes continue to subject them to cultural, linguistic, and religious marginalisation and deny them to be fully accepted as a Malay in spite of their Malay proficiency and Muslim familial orientations. In light of this, the article explores the liminal identity of Filipino-Malays who grew up in a Muslim household while maintaining some aspects their Filipino culture, and the ways in which they negotiate the two cultural worlds that they inhabit. Specifically, it examines issues related to language, race, positionality, stereotypes, and interreligious practices of these biracial individuals.

METHODOLOGY

This study uses a qualitative approach that encompasses auto-ethnography and in-depth interviews. The data are collected by the second author, who identifies herself as a biracial Filipino-Malay Bruneian female. Through the prism of the researcher's personal experience and her bicultural upbringing, the researcher can shed rare insights into the complex reality of mixed-race informants albeit some extent of subjective interpretation is unavoidable (Chang 2008). The practice of reflexivity has encouraged the acknowledgement of the researcher's subjectivity in the research process (Fook 1999). It has also helped to prevent the researcher's personal bias from affecting the validity of the data and allowed for the researcher to exercise conscious distancing when collecting and analysing the data (Salzman 2002).

The data in this study were collected from interviews conducted by the second author with 12 Filipino-Malay individuals (six males and six females) between 20 and 30 years old, based in Bandar Seri Begawan, the capital city of Brunei. Eight of the informants have Filipina mothers and four have Filipino fathers. The informants were either born in Brunei or have lived here since a very young age. As humans tend to affiliate more with other people who share similar characteristics (Bordens and Horowitz 2008), the researcher was able gain access to the Filipino-Malay community through her personal network. The researcher has also used snowball sampling to recruiting informants outside her direct contacts.

All data collection was based on open-ended interviews in the form of casual conversations conducted between October and December 2019. Follow up interviews with some informants were conducted for clarifications between January and February 2020. The interview questions encompassed aspects of the informants' demographic and background information, family history, self-identification, national sentiments, biracial experience, and cultural affinity and practices. The tone of the interview was informal to provide a comfortable setting for the informant to share detailed information (Alshenqeeti 2014). Since some of the informants were personal contacts of the second author, they have established rapport with the researcher and were comfortable to share their stories (Mathers et al. 1998). This was further enhanced by the researcher's bicultural upbringing, which allowed her to empathise with her informants and gain their trust.

After data collection, the authors identified general patterns and discourses and conducted triangulation to ensure the validity of the data (Mathers et al. 1998). While the small sample size may not be representative of the entire Filipino-Malay community in Brunei, the in-depth interviews with the informants have provided insights into highly personal experiences and their perception of their identity. As the data contain private and confidential information, pseudonyms are used to refer to all the informants to maintain confidentiality and anonymity.

DISCUSSION

Victor Turner's (1969) theory on liminality can be used to describe the anti-structure of the *neither here nor there* positioning of a Filipino-Malay Bruneian individual, who constantly live life on the margin. This betwixt and between description of a biracial body is also illuminated in Hoon and Sahrifulhafiz's (2021) study of the Chinese-Malays in Brunei, which examined the different forces that define the boundaries of exclusion and inclusion, belonging and nonbelonging among mixed race individuals. It is important to conceptualise the identity of multiracial individuals as multiple and dynamic rather than singular and monolithic. To this end, Brunnsma et al. (2013: 481) developed the concept of an "identity matrix" to explain the sociological process in which multiracial individuals construct and deploy their identity as "strategic and agentic in interactional, political, cultural, physical (embodiment) and institutional contexts".

For the informants in our study who have multiple selves attributed to their biracial status, their liminality and interstitiality are illustrated in their straddle positioning, which works contrary to the constructed boundaries of race to which they are subjected to within the nation. Hoon (2021) argues that hybridity can be empowering when one is able to traverse two or more cultural worlds but can also be disempowering when “authenticity” is concerned, especially when authentication is based on essentialised characteristics defined and guarded by cultural gatekeepers. In other words, while our informants may have the benefit of crossing racial boundaries and accessing multiple cultural worlds, they can still experience exclusion when failing to authenticate in either culture.

Ien Ang’s (2001) diasporic experience in her monumental autoethnographic monograph, *On Not Speaking Chinese*, describes the complicated entanglement of diasporic identity with ancestry, origins, and the politics of their imagined “homeland”. This results in a negotiation of multiple selves, such as the experiences of Chinese Bruneians (Ho 2021b). Like the Chinese diaspora in Brunei, the Filipino diaspora informants show that their identity is intertwined with their imagined homelands, in this case, of Brunei and the Philippines. Their entanglement with the Bruneian identity is expressed when they experienced Islamophobia abroad, while their Filipino identity is invoked when they encountered derogatory stereotypes on Filipina migrant workers such as *amah* (maid), gold diggers, and prostitutes (Constable 2003; Hilsdon 2007; Zahedi 2010). The following sections will discuss the contingency of language, physicality, location, stereotypes, and interreligious practices in the definition of their multiple selves.

Language as Tool for Inclusion and Exclusion

As a cultural symbol, language expresses the reality in which meaning is shared among its speakers (Samovar et al. 2014). More importantly, it provides access to group membership. Nine out of 12 of our informants are trilingual: they speak English, Malay, and Filipino. Those who were able to speak the Filipino language (Tagalog) have performed code-switching when talking to other Filipinos, Filipino-Malays, or anyone who is able to speak the language. The ability to speak Tagalog has allowed our informants to access the Filipino culture and community, such as reading literature written in Filipino, consuming Filipino popular culture in the media, having a conversation with their Filipino or half-Filipino friends and relatives, and

sharing affinity with other Filipinos either in Brunei, the Philippines or in the diaspora.

While not all our informants can speak the language, those who are able to speak Tagalog revealed that they feel closer to their Filipino identity. As expressed by our female informant, Denise:

Being bilingual helps a lot! I always get extra food if I order in Tagalog when the workers are Filipinos. It feels good to speak in my native language with *my people* (the Filipinos).

Denise addressed the Filipinos as “my people”, which indicates her sense of belonging with this ethnic group through the sharing of the same language. Her ability to speak Tagalog enabled her to share a diasporic Filipino identity and gave her the advantage of insider access to the Filipino speaking community in Brunei. A similar narrative shared by Matin further highlights this claim:

I feel more comfortable speaking the Tagalog language. It feels like you are at *home*. Maybe I miss the Philippines too much. Let’s go, let’s *return home!* (“*uwi na tayo*”).

This male Filipino-Malay informant stated that he felt at “home” when speaking Tagalog with his Filipino peers. His comfort in using the language signifies the space where he usually speaks Tagalog, which is at home with his family. Furthermore, the concept of “home” can be based on spatial imagination according to one’s sense of belonging rather than the reality of where one is currently situated. In this case, the Philippines has become the imaginary homeland of the informant where he felt the sense of belonging vis-à-vis Brunei where he currently resides.

The ability of our informants to speak both Malay and Filipino languages has become the key for them to access both cultures simultaneously. It has also enabled them to perform situational identity through code switching (Hoon and Sahrifulhafiz 2021; Nagata 1974); they use Tagalog when they were with their Filipino peers and code-switch to Malay when they were with their Malay peers. Code-switching has enabled them to reorient themselves according to different circumstantial requirements and use the preferred language with the counterpart with whom they are communicating (Nagata 1974). As language could be a device to ease their inner conflicts and to gain acceptance, their choice of language might also reflect their feeling of camaraderie or otherness with the interlocutor.

One's identity requires more than self-identification; it needs acceptance and affirmation from the in-group. While hybridity gives access to multiple group memberships, it can also magnify difference where authenticity is concerned (Hoon 2021). None of our informants ever had a formal education in the Filipino language because they grew up in Brunei where the formal languages they learned in school were English and Malay. Although the ability to speak Tagalog has given them access to the Filipino-speaking community, their nonnative competency in the language sometimes leads to questions about their authenticity as a "real" Filipino. For instance, two of our informants admitted to making frequent grammar and spelling mistakes when communicating through texts with their relatives on social media and felt othered when they were called out for their mistakes.

Another informant, Saiful, who identified culturally as more Filipino than Malay, felt that his lack of proficiency in Tagalog had alienated him when he was in the Philippines:

I never formally learned the language because I never went to school in the Philippines. So, I do not know how to use sophisticated Filipino words, I can only speak casual Filipino that is mixed with English. I misspell a lot of words, and make a lot of grammar mistakes too, and they would correct me most of the time. Sometimes, they would make fun of me...I felt this kind of distance, and then I realised, I am not really Filipino, because after all I am still a *foreigner*, I grew up in Brunei. I already *feel like an outsider here* (in Brunei), now I also have to *feel like an alien in the Philippines*.

For Saiful, the feeling of exclusion from the in-group was largely attributable to his insufficient proficiency in the Filipino language. His self-identification as Filipino while being excluded by the community puts him in constant liminality, as he is unable to belong in either the Filipino or Bruneian community. This characterises the constant dilemma faced by cultural hybrids; while being able to enjoy the best of both worlds can be empowering, it can also be concomitantly disempowering in communities where inclusion is based on fulfilment of certain cultural expectations (see Ang 2001; Hoon 2021).

On the other hand, those informants who were not able to speak Filipino stated that they identify more with the Malay identity. This cultural orientation invariably affects their access to the Filipino culture and community, resulting in a different experience from the Filipino-

Malay Bruneians who can speak Tagalog. This is exemplified in Andrew's interview excerpt:

I feel more Bruneian because my Filipino traits never really showed up enough for me to bring up that I am half-Filipino. I also can't speak Tagalog and I am not close with my relatives [in the Philippines] either. I remember when we were visiting them, I felt awkward as I did not understand what they were saying.

Due to not having linguistic access, he was not able to identify with his Filipino heritage. This excluded him from the Tagalog-speaking community and rendered him to be more Malay oriented.

Physicality of the “Mixed” Bodies

Other than language, physical characteristics also act as racial markers for social identification (Worchel 1999). As Luke (2003) argues, racialising practices tend to occur based on outward appearance and embodiment, i.e. dress and physical features. The biological characteristics and the appearance of individuals of mixed parentage can become a marker of difference. The Filipino-Malay bodies are liminally coordinated based on their encounters of in-between-ness, representing their unacknowledged existence in the singular-race category structure of Brunei. Race, language, and culture are so intertwined that any challenges to this firmly entrenched discourse, such as a person with a distinct physical appearance of a non-Malay speaking in Malay, can be seen as “unusual” (Kondo 2009). The mixed-race Filipino-Malay Bruneians may be seen as an anomaly because they fail to perform their identity according to normative racial expectations, and they can neither fit into essentialist notions of Malayness nor Filipinoness. This was described by Gee when she was talking to a friend who remarked on her distinctive appearance:

Wait, I don't know what *mix* you are, but you are definitely not *pure* Bruneian. You're *mixed* right?

Here, the term “mixed” removes the informant from the normative interpretations of the “pure” Malay race (Curaming 2011). The ability of the informant to speak Malay but does not look Malay has challenged the normative racial expectation which often conflates race and language (Ang 2001). Another similar liminal encounter was experienced by Carlos:

Recently I spoke to someone in Malay, and she was surprised that I could speak fluent Bahasa Brunei because she'd mistaken me for a Chinese or Korean at first, turned out I was just half-Filipino. Then, she said that *I don't look like other Filipinos*. What am I supposed to look like? A potato?

Here, Carlos recognises his liminality as his “East Asian” appearance was neither considered typical of a Bruneian Malay nor fit into what was perceived as the Filipino appearance. Based on the misconceptions of his body by others, he occupies a “third space” (Brunsma et al. 2013), where his appearance was not “typically” Malay nor Filipino. This experience with unfamiliarity was also encountered by Emma at a restaurant:

At a restaurant I ordered food in Tagalog, I always wanted to take the chance of speaking in Tagalog every time I met another Filipino person. The waitress was first amazed that a Bruneian can speak in Tagalog, then I told her that I am actually half-Filipina and she was so surprised. I think it's because I was dressed in *baju kurung* (a Brunei Malay traditional dress) and was wearing a *tudung* (veil) at that time...I don't think I look like *I'm half*, I look *more Malay*.

Emma's experience reveals a complex identity baggage that deflected from the normative structure of language and appearance (Brunsma et al. 2013). While she looks Malay and is officially classified as a Malay in her national identity card, her linguistic preference shows the multiple dimensions of her identity. Another interesting narrative on physicality was shared by Ciara when she was confronted about her physical distinctness:

I was with my friend Louis in Japan when we bumped into other Bruneians at the (train) station. And Louis asked me why I look so different from them. He noticed that the ladies were wearing *tudung* (veil) and I wasn't. I explained to him why I think I look different, and I brought up the *mixed-race* card. I told him *I am half-Filipina* so that's probably why we don't look and dress alike.

Indeed, identification is built around recognition of shared common origin and characteristics with another person or a certain group. Although Ciara shared a common origin with other Bruneians, she differed from the shared appearance and physical characteristics. This reinforces the fact that social

structure and existing discourses on a singular race have excluded those who were born “mixed” or are hybrid in their identity outlook.

The Positionality and Situationality of Identity

Identity is relational and dialogical, it is constructed and maintained through an oppositional relation to the “other” (Hall 1996). With the ever increasing human mobility in a globalised world, the “self” and the “other” are constantly shifting. Individuals often experience the dialogical aspect of their identity when they were outside of the country and when negotiating their own otherness away from home. In a study on the multiple identities of second-generation Filipino-Americans, Espiritu (1994) examined the multiplicity and situationality of this minority. The author highlighted the intersectionality of race, gender, social class, and other distinctions in the ways they perform their identity. Our Filipino-Malay Bruneian informants recalled their experiences of their identity presentation beyond Brunei when they were studying in the United Kingdom, the most popular destination for Bruneian government to send their scholarship holders. Our interview data reveal that an unassuming but micro-aggressive question of “where are you from?” can be perplexing to our informants who have multiple identities, homes, and origins.

As mentioned earlier, the multiple identities of our biracial informants are characterised by their straddle positioning of liminality and interstitiality. Choudhry (2010) argues that multiracial individuals can choose to use their different racial identities depending on the benefits given to them according to the situation. Such choices are also contingent on the instrumental needs at a particular moment. Our informants felt that it was inconvenient to always have to prepare a long explanation about their multiple belongings. This is especially so when the “other” has an assumption that identity is singular or fixed. Hence, our informants play to their situational identity by selecting the “self” that is more favourable to present, depending on the circumstance and the person with whom they are interacting (Nagata 1974). This is shown in a narrative from Denise:

It was troublesome to explain where Brunei is, most of them don't even know Borneo Island. The conversation will usually be so dull and boring. But by saying that I am from the Philippines was a good conversation starter, especially if they have already been there.

We would talk about Cebu, Boracay Island, El Nido beach and all the popular places in the Philippines. It makes my life easier so I will just say that I am from the Philippines instead.

The excerpt shows that the informant's "self" is defined by different individuals and communities based on who the "other" is. While the "self" can be flexible as it seems, it can also be draining and confusing for the informants. Some of them felt that by privileging or "fronting" one aspect of their identity, they were denying their other affiliations. In some cases, the informants think that it is necessary to do so.

The Muslim identity was tragically tarnished after the 9/11 incident. It has been observed that hate crimes related to Islamophobia have risen in the United Kingdom (Abbas 2004). Our informant, Saiful, revealed that he refused to identify as a Bruneian when he was in the United Kingdom for personal safety. He preferred to identify as a Filipino and did not want to disclose his Muslim and mixed-Bruneian identity. He evoked his Filipino "self" as a sense of security for him when he was among the unfamiliar "other":

When I was in the UK, I went out and usually met new people on weekends, and that requires introducing myself right? I learnt my lesson the hard way. I was not supposed to reveal that I am a Muslim or from Brunei at certain times, because they (my acquaintances) are often prejudiced towards Muslims, and they heard about Brunei's law against LGBT. So, to avoid being assaulted by hate crime, I usually would just say that I was from the Philippines, depending on who was asking. I mean my friends know I am Muslim, but for people I just met I don't disclose my actual religion.

Identity is constructed through difference as it is co-created in relationship to others (Samovar et al. 2014); it is also a positional choice with which individuals wish to be associated (Modood et al. 1997). Such a choice is often informed by the cultural, economic, and political situation with which a person is confronted. In the case of Saiful, the choice to hide his Muslim orientation by resorting to his Filipino identity was seen as advantageous to shield him against Islamophobia. It is comprehensible that he might not want to bear the responsibility of defending something that he did not commit, such as suicide bombings or terrorist attacks.

To some of our informants, the denial of their Bruneian identity through the foregrounding of their Filipino origins is also a strategy to escape from the surveillance and moral policing of the Bruneian embassy and student community in the United Kingdom. A few of them revealed that they deliberately censored their Bruneian identity when they were participating in activities that were deemed *haram* or forbidden in Islam such as partying at bars and nightclubs. As these activities were also prohibited by the Bruneian government, our Filipino-Malay informants feared that their scholarship would be revoked if they were found out to be involved in such activities. While their multiple identities had the chameleon effect for them to circumvent state control, their identity conundrum was experienced when their participation in certain activities were curtailed to an extent that they had to deny their Bruneian “self”.

Gendered Racial and Social Class Stereotypes of the Diasporic Filipina Women

Name-calling and labelling are powerful tools in the othering process (Hoon 2008: 162), which can lead to violent consequences (see Ho 2020). In a study on transnational marriages of Filipinas in Iran, Zahedi (2010) notes that Filipina women have either been sexualised as sex workers or entertainers or reduced to image of “maids” due to the menial jobs they perform. The stereotypes based on their economic and sexual bodies have impacted the ways Filipinas are perceived and treated. Correspondingly, all our informants have experienced negative racial stereotyping in Brunei, and the stereotyping has almost always targeted the female Filipinas. All informants have heard of the stereotype of Filipina as *amah* (maid) at least once in their lives. Meanwhile, an informant came across the *pengikis* (gold digger) stereotype from her Bruneian relatives directed to her Filipina mother. Two other female informants have encountered the *pelacur* (prostitute) stereotype. As stated by Virginia:

When I was 10 years old, a kid told me to clean the classroom because Filipina means being an *amah*. I remember the teachers did nothing about it, that’s the saddest part. I still hear people calling Filipinas *amah* until this day.

A similar narrative was encountered by another informant, Marco, when he was in primary school. The derogatory *anak amah* label was directed towards him for having a Filipina mother. The name-calling later escalated into bullying, and he was forced to move schools to stop the bullying:

When I moved to a new school, I did not want to tell people that I am half-Filipino, even though there were many international students who went to that school. I was so traumatised from the bullying that happened in the previous school, I don't want to be called *anak amah*.

From these two narratives, this section seeks to address the stereotypes attached to the Filipina identity and how they affect the Filipino-Malay individuals in Brunei. It is necessary to examine the broader institutional arrangements, such as the increasing movement of female workers in Southeast Asia. Chang and Groves (2000) observe that more than half of all overseas workers from the Philippines were women, and the majority were engaged in domestic work. This also explains why eight out of 12 Filipino-Malay Bruneians informants have Filipina mothers, and only four out of 12 have Filipino fathers. Hence, most of the biracial informants, who were officially categorised as “Malay” have Filipina mothers. Rahman and Lian (2009) argue that there are great outflows of women migrants coming from poorer countries, such as the Philippines, working in economically better countries, and most of them are involved in gender-specific occupational niches such as domestic work. This shows that the attachment of the Filipina women's identity as *amah* directed to Marco for having a Filipina mother and to Virginia for being a half-Filipina was rooted from the country's economic conditions. As stereotyping is essentially an imagination of the “other” based on “myth and unconscious deformation of reality” (Gilman 1985: 35), the fact that Marco's mother and Virginia's father were both teachers, rather than *amah*, did not matter.

Besides the stereotype of Filipinas overseas as *amah*, they are also stereotyped as *pengikis* or gold diggers. This was stated by our informant, Sam, who mentioned that her Malay Bruneian aunts made a distasteful remark about her Filipina mother as being a *pengikis*, who only married a local Bruneian for money and citizenship privileges. Chang and Groves (2000) assert that Filipinas are assumed to have underlying motives for working abroad, which is to find financial security by marrying the local man in the host country. While this might be true in some cases, it must not be generalised or racialised because there can be many reasons for

intermarriage (Constable 2003). Even if social mobility is an objective of intermarriage among overseas Filipinas, moralising the issue only shows a narrow, if not hypocritical, understanding on the notion of marriage. Arguing against the broadly acknowledged myth that marriage is grounded exclusively on sentimental love, Lee (2006) takes a utilitarian perspective in contending that marriage has always been a social contract for common reliance and mutual transaction between two parties. This is particularly so for individuals with limited social assets, such as poorer Filipina women. Thus, the stereotype of Filipinas as “gold diggers”, often masked under the defence of justice for the male “victim” who was presumably exploited, is really about racial and class prejudice.

In her study on Filipina migrants in the nightlife industries in East Malaysia, Hilsdon (2007: 178) argues that the “othering of migrant women as prostitutes and economic opportunists is circulated globally to represent all Filipinas, denying them positive and multiple identities”. In the present study, the *pelacur* (prostitute) stereotype was directed towards some of our female informants. As Emma stated:

There is always racist content in the jokes they make. They said Filipinas are prostitutes. It was just for laughs but I was emotionally hurt by this. They did not know I am half-Filipina because I never saw the reason to bring it up unless being asked, they thought I am *pure* Bruneian. So, I just kept quiet, and I did not tell them I am half-pinay.

A similar account was stated by Ciara, where she revealed that a fight happened on Twitter, a social media platform, between her and one of her Twitter followers in Brunei who went to the same college as she did. The follower made an unpleasant comment on one of her pictures, stating that she dressed too provocatively like a *pelacur* (prostitute). He supplemented the comment by saying that it is not surprising if she dresses like one, because she is Filipina. This moral policing has caused Ciara to feel excluded by her choice of appearance.

Global policies have created circumstances in which the demand for female labour is high (Loichinger and Cheng 2018). At the same time, migration is tightly controlled, driving women into illegal routes, such as prostitution as methods of survival (Mahdavi 2013). In fact, the image of the sexually submissive Filipina has been established in a long history of colonialism as well as poverty in the Philippines (Chang and Groves 2000). Sex tourism has been claimed to be an unwritten economic

development strategy for the Philippines government (Jeffreys 1999). Granted, it can be argued that the gendered, racialised, and sexualised stereotypes of Filipina women was a result of such post-colonial dynamics.

The political discourses of labour migration created a hierarchy of races based on an intersection of class, gender, race, and occupation (Lian and Ganapathy 2016). The ways in which the Filipina women are entangled to a racialised occupational niche of domestic and “entertainment” work reduces the Filipino “self” to one dimensional identity, i.e., the *amah*, the *pengikis* or the *pelacur*. The persistence of these stereotypes has prevented our informants to feel belonging in Brunei. Our informant, Virginia, who experienced such exclusion after recalling her experience of being picked on by classmates to clean the classroom as the duty of an *amah*, helplessly expressed that the incident made her feel “less of a Bruneian”.

Besides the racialised, gendered, and sexualised stereotypes of the Filipino identity, being a Filipino in Brunei is also stigmatised as having a lower social status. This explains why Marco and Emma refused to reveal their half-Filipino identity to their classmates when they were younger as they felt embarrassed by their Filipino bodies. However, as they grew older, they gradually accepted their Filipinoness due to an increasing social awareness about racism and a more sophisticated appreciation of mixed identity fostered presumably by the social media. As Marco revealed:

Back then social awareness was not a thing. I did not get any benefit for being half-Filipino as I do now, I got bullied instead when I was younger. But nowadays everybody wants to ride on social awareness (against racism) to look cooler, because it’s cool to be “woke” (socially awakened). So yes, I feel safer to identify as half-Filipino now.

His remarks on feeling “safer” refers to identifying as a mixed Filipino-Malay Bruneian without feeling stigmatised. This shows how the social media might have played a role in cultivating a more open minded, and hopefully, also a more tolerant and inclusive generation.

Negotiating Interreligious Practices and Interracial Romance

As discussed earlier, the Filipino culture has a long history of entanglement with Christianity since Spanish colonialism (del Castillo 2015). Religious practices that are embedded in the Filipino culture include celebrating Christmas and going to church. Some of our informants reveal their

preservation of such *cultural* practices even after their conversion to Islam. This was articulated by Marco:

My mom still goes to church, but I think going there is more about meeting her Filipino friends rather than praying. She usually vents out her frustrations about my dad or whatever it is to her church friends. I sometimes follow her to church, too. Honestly, I don't see the harm there, because mom needs friends, and I enjoy meeting Filipinos there. We share a common "outsider" trait.

Being cognisant of the prohibition for Muslims in Brunei to participate in activities of another religion, Marco took a defensive position in explaining that he sees no harm in going to church because his intention was not to pray. He insisted that the church attendance of his Muslim-convert mother serves a social, rather than religious, function. As Jabar argues, besides professing one's religious commitment, Filipino migrants go to church to "touch base with co-Filipinos...to deal with homesickness and emotional adjustments" (2015: 136). The church, thus, is an important site for socialisation and comfort for Filipino migrants, a sanctuary for them to feel familiar in a foreign country. The "outsider trait" that Marco mentioned further attest to the sense of otherness that he felt as a Filipino-Malay Bruneian, and the imagined diasporic identity that he claimed to share with other Filipino migrants who attended the church. This is despite the fact that he has a Malay Bruneian father and is officially categorised as a Malay by state institutions. The resort to the Filipino identity could be a result of his feeling of exclusion from the definition of the Bruneian identity based on the notion of singularity and essentialism. A similar sentiment was shared by Safwan:

I don't see a problem in going to church because it is just to show respect. And I also feel good when my family and I are together. But of course, I am still a Muslim. You know what I mean, right?

When Safwan was in the Philippines, he did not see going to a church as a threat to his Muslim faith. He states that he went to church out of respect for his Christian relatives and admits that he wanted to spend time with them. He argues that he was there as a visitor or a tourist and not a worshipper. Notwithstanding his attendance in both church and mosque, he stresses his identification as a Muslim and sees no conflict therein. His experience concurs with those of mixed Chinese-Malays in Brunei who

continue to pay respect to their ancestors as a *cultural* practice and cited that it is the intention (*niat*), rather than the act, that counts (Hoon and Sahrifulhafiz 2021).

Another activity that is religiously contested in Brunei is the celebration of Christmas. In 2014, Brunei was reported to ban Christmas decorations in public and celebration of Christmas because religious authorities claimed that they “could damage the faith (*aqidah*) of the Muslim community” (Parameswaran 2014). Under the Sharia Penal Code Order announced in 2013, Muslims are not allowed to participate in Christmas celebrations, including “wearing hats or clothes that resemble Santa Claus”, which will be punishable by a fine up to \$20,000 and an imprisonment up to five years, or both (Parameswaran 2014). However, Christmas is more than a religious tradition among the Filipinos. The colonial inculturation of Christmas into local Filipino culture has led to the “Filipinization” of the festival into an “accepted way of life” among the locals (Carbayas and del Castillo 2020: 39). Christmas has, thus, become a *culturally* significant practice that enhances communal identity and family values as Filipino ritualistically gather during Christmastime to reconnect with family and deepen family relations (Carbayas and del Castillo 2020). As such, our informants embrace Christmas as a time to bond with family, as expressed by Virginia:

Christmas is just a celebration with family members. I think we should not make it about religion. We were just bonding with our Filipino family. We always visit the Philippines during December and New Year’s Eve, so that means of course we celebrate Christmas with my grandparents.

Virginia does not perceive Christmas as a celebration that goes against her Muslim faith. This harks back to Safwan’s position on attending church discussed earlier. Although Virginia may think that Christmas is not about religion, the political discourse in Brunei considers Christmas to be against Islam and MIB. Her need to justify her participation in Christmas celebration highlights an example of the identity conundrum of a Filipino-Malay Bruneian who is trapped in the choice between family bonding and religious ideologies. Her liminality is expressed in her struggles in committing what she should not be doing as a Muslim but should be doing as a family member.

Finally, other than attending churches and celebrating Christmas, another activity that is generally frowned upon by Bruneians is dating a person from a different racial background. Bonam and Shih (2009) argue that progenies from a mixed-race household are more receptive to interracial relationship. Our interviews with Filipino-Malay Bruneians individuals show that six out of 12 informants have dated a person from a different racial background, i.e., non-Malay and non-Filipino. Our discussion here will focus on two female informants who are currently in long-distance interracial relationships. Both informants have a Caucasian boyfriend and have experienced disapprovals from their parents. The first informant, Ciara, is currently in a long-distance relationship with Louis who is French. Her dating experience is recounted below:

If I did not go to that club (in Manila) that night with the girls, I wouldn't have met him...I know it's not an easy route, at least one of us has to migrate for this relationship to actually have a stable future. I don't mind moving to Europe, even though my parents disagree with my plans, I don't feel like I belong here (in Brunei) anyway.

Similarly, Gee is also in a long-distance relationship with an Australian whom she met during one of her visits to the Philippines:

I met him in Manila. I was with my cousin and her friends in a bar when he approached me...My parents know about my relationship, and they tried to discourage me because they preferred that I stay in Brunei and marry a local.

Both informants met their foreign boyfriend in a nightlife venue in Manila, where they had frequented with their Filipino friends and relatives. Bærndt and Kolind's (2021) article on the youth culture of drinking and partying in Denmark sheds light on the agency of young Muslim women in navigating social exclusion from their peers and gendered social control from their family. Indeed, the female body has been subjected to regular scrutiny and social control in many societies (Howson 2013). Such regulation of the female body is even more accentuated when gender intersects with religion and the law as in the context of Brunei. As a conservative Islamic country, nightclubs and alcohol are prohibited by law in Brunei where such activities are strictly forbidden (*haram*). Furthermore, the state ideology that privileges Malay Muslim patrilineality has wittingly or unwittingly circumscribed children born to Filipino mothers to the social

peripheries of Brunei as *anak amah*. Taken in this light, Manila has become a site for our informants' nonconformity or resistance to the gendered social control to which they were subjected in Brunei.

While having a Caucasian boyfriend is not considered *haram* in Brunei, the social perception on such romance is often informed by a fear that the Malay Muslim girl would be “westernised”, drop out of faith and subsequently leave the Malay Muslim community. Both informants revealed that their parents did not approve their interracial relationships. It was unclear, however, if the disapproval was due to distance or racial and religious differences, or both. It is also likely that their disagreement stems from their own experiences as an interracial couple in Brunei, who may have faced challenges, such as racial stereotyping, social pressures for religious conversion, and value judgments from family and community. Sadly, for Ciara, the only viable option is to leave Brunei and live abroad. The challenges for our informants to decide for themselves their choice of spouse amid parental pressure further demonstrate the conundrum experienced by biracial individuals in Brunei.

CONCLUSION

This article has discussed the multiple, and often contending, positions of biracial Filipino-Malays within and beyond the nation of Brunei. Their identity conundrum is illustrated in their attempt to perform their official Malay Muslim identity while preserving their Filipino culture. While their mixed-Filipino identity has marginalised them as an insider-outsider and caricatured them as *anak amah*, many of them have expressed their pride in their Filipino heritage. The positive feelings of having a Filipino parent can be seen in our informants' everyday experiences as they defend their Filipino identity as something that gives them a sense of belonging, which they affectionately cherish. Nevertheless, such an identification has also contributed to their liminal experience as a cultural hybrid and their persistent struggle to identify themselves as just Bruneians in any circumstances.

By unpacking the different aspects of their life experiences, including their struggles with racial and socioeconomic stereotypes, this article has unveiled the ways in which Filipino-Malay Bruneians manage identity conflicts in their everyday practices. The interstitial space of hybridity has enabled this minority to circumvent restrictions imposed by the state

ideology and legal framework that strictly defined racial and religious identity in singular, fixed, and essentialist terms. Our study has discussed how our informants had strategically utilised their multiple identities and exercised their agency to manoeuvre in different contexts, particularly when they were outside of Brunei.

However, while the biracial individuals have the advantage of crossing racial boundaries and accessing multiple cultural worlds, they have also experienced marginalisation when failing to meet the expectations of either culture. The liminal experience of our informants is influenced by the power relations embedded in traditional identity categories such as race, language, class, gender, and religion as well as the intersections of these categories. Their half-Filipino background and the associated stereotypes continue to place them on the margin of Bruneian Malayness. It is unlikely that their identity conundrum will be resolved anytime soon if the dominant forces that govern the boundaries of inclusion and exclusion, belonging and non-belonging remain unchanged.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We express our gratitude to Dr Najib Noorashid for offering his kind help to proofread and copyedit this paper, and to the two anonymous reviewers for their critical reading and generous comments on the article.

COMPLIANCE WITH ETHICAL STANDARDS

Interview data were collected through informed consent of respondents in accordance with procedures standard in the Faculty of Social Sciences, Universiti Brunei Darussalam.

NOTES

- * Chang-Yau Hoon is an Associate Professor at the Institute of Asian Studies, Universiti Brunei Darussalam (UBD) and an Adjunct Research Fellow at the University of Western Australia. He was the Director of the Centre for Advanced Research at UBD from July 2017 to June 2022. Prior to this he was an Assistant Professor of Asian Studies and Sing Lun Fellow at Singapore Management University, where he was awarded the SMU Teaching Excellence Award in 2012 and SMU Research Excellence Award in 2014. He specialises in the Chinese diaspora, identity politics,

multiculturalism, and religious and cultural diversity in contemporary Southeast Asia. He is the author of *Chinese identity in post-Suharto Indonesia: Culture, politics and media* (2008), and co-editor of *Chinese Indonesians reassessed: History, religion and belonging* (2013), *Catalysts of change: Ethnic Chinese business in Asia* (2014), and *Contesting Chineseness: Ethnicity, identity, and nation in China and Southeast Asia* (2021).

** Maria Fermin is a MA graduate student in Sociology-European Societies at the Department of Political and Social Sciences, Institute of Sociology, Freie Universität Berlin. She completed her BA (Sociology and Anthropology) at the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences, Universiti Brunei Darussalam.

- ¹ This system was inherited from the colonial administrative racial classification practised when Brunei was a British Protectorate from 1888 to 1984 (Maxwell 2001). A comparable system is used by the neighbouring countries of Singapore and Malaysia that share a similar colonial legacy, where “race is understood to be patrilineal and inherent in one’s biological makeup....[In] postcolonial governments of the two countries...race has retained its role as the prime apparatus of administration and control” (Reddy and Gleibs 2019).
- ² Guneratne notes that even though there is no historical validity to the concept of racial or cultural purity, the perception of cultural purity is nevertheless an indispensable “precondition for the development of nationalist sentiments” (2002: 20). The impurity, mixture, fusion, and lack of authenticity that hybridity manifests are threatening to the state, as the state perceives this as a force that might undermine the sovereign identity of the nation, which is usually constructed in terms of cultural purity and authenticity. Therefore, to such governments, “hybridity, whether ethnic or cultural, has to be suppressed, and becomes the site of anxiety” (Silva 2002: i).
- ³ The definition of what constitutes a Malay and the geographical scope of the Malay world is complex as it encompasses cultural, religious, political, and social contestations. Benjamin (2002) has provided a comprehensive discussion to unpack these concepts.

REFERENCES

- Abbas, T. 2004. After 9/11: British South Asian Muslims, Islamophobia, multiculturalism, and the state. *American Journal of Islam and Society* 21 (3): 26–38. <https://doi.org/10.35632/ajis.v21i3.506>
- Alshenqeeti, H. 2014. Interviewing as a data collection method: A critical review. *English Linguistics Research* 3 (1): 39–45. <https://doi.org/10.5430/elr.v3n1p39>
- Ang, I. 2001. *On not speaking Chinese: Living between Asia and the West*. London: Routledge.
- Bærndt, M. F. and Kolind, T. 2021. Drinking and partying among young Muslim women: Exclusion in the context of a normalized youth drinking culture. *International Journal of Drug Policy* 93: 103170. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.drugpo.2021.103170>

- Benjamin, G. 2002. On being tribal in the Malay world. In *Tribal communities in the Malay world: Historical, cultural and social perspectives*, eds. Benjamin, G. and Chou, C., 7–76. Singapore: ISEAS Publishing. <https://doi.org/10.1355/9789812306104-004>
- Bernstein, J. H. 1997. The deculturation of the Brunei Dusun. In *Indigenous peoples and the state: Politics, land, and ethnicity in the Malayan Peninsula and Borneo*, ed. Winzeler, R. L., 159–179. New Haven, CT: Yale University Southeast Asia Studies.
- Bonam, C. M. and Shih, M. 2009. Exploring multiracial individuals' comfort with intimate interracial relationships. *Journal of Social Issues* 65 (1): 87–103. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1540-4560.2008.01589.x>
- Bordens, K. S. and Horowitz, I. A. 2008. *Social psychology* (3rd ed.). Saint Paul, MN: Freeload Press.
- Brunsmas, D. L., Delgado, D. and Rockquemore, K. A. 2013. Liminality in the multiracial experience: Towards a concept of identity matrix. *Identities* 20 (5): 481–502. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1070289X.2013.827576>
- Carbayas, A. N. V. and del Castillo, F. 2020. Christmas in the Philippines: Beyond popular religious tradition. *Asia Pacific Journal of Multidisciplinary Research* 8 (2): 35–40.
- Castilla, C. 2014. *Filipinos in Brunei*. Bandar Seri Begawan, Brunei: Ads Allure Advertising Sdn Bhd.
- Castles, S. 2004. The factors that make and unmake migration policies. *International Migration Review* 38 (3): 852–884. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1747-7379.2004.tb00222.x>
- . 1995. How nation-states respond to immigration and ethnic diversity. *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* 21 (3): 293–308. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1369183X.1995.9976493>
- Chang, H. 2008. *Autoethnography as method* (1st ed.). New York: Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315433370>
- Chang, K. A. and Groves, J. M. 2000. Neither 'saints' nor 'prostitutes': Sexual discourse in the Filipina domestic worker community in Hong Kong. *Women's Studies International Forum* 23 (1): 73–87. [https://doi.org/10.1016/S0277-5395\(99\)00088-6](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0277-5395(99)00088-6)
- Choudhry, S. 2010. *Multifaceted identity of interethnic young people: Chameleon identities*. London: Ashgate Publishing.
- Constable, N. 2003. A transnational perspective on divorce and marriage: Filipina wives and workers. *Identities* 10 (2): 163–180. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10702890304328>
- Curaming, R. A. 2011. Filipinos as Malay: Historicising an identity. *Melayu: The politics, poetics and paradoxes of Malayness*, eds. Mohamad, M. and Aljunied, S. M. K., 241–274. Singapore: NUS Press. <https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctv1qv383.14>
- de Vienne, M.-S. 2015. *Brunei: From the age of commerce to the 21st century*. Singapore: NUS Press. <https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctv1qv2xt>
- del Castillo, F. A. 2015. Christianization of the Philippines: Revisiting the contributions of baroque churches and religious art. *Mission Studies* 32 (1): 47–65. <https://doi.org/10.1163/15733831-12341379>

- Espiritu, Y. L. 1994. The intersection of race, ethnicity, and class: The multiple identities of second-generation Filipinos. *Identities* 1 (2–3): 249–273. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1070289X.1994.9962507>
- Fook, J. 1999. Reflexivity as method. *Annual Review of Health Social Science* 9 (1): 11–20. <https://doi.org/10.5172/hesr.1999.9.1.11>
- Gilman, S. L. 1985. *Difference and pathology: Stereotypes of sexuality, race, and madness*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press.
- Guneratne, A. 2002. What’s in a name? Aryans and Dravidians in the making of Sri Lankan identities. In *The hybrid island: Culture crossings and the invention of identity in Sri Lanka*, ed. Silva, N., 20–40. Colombo: Social Scientists’ Association.
- Hall, S. 1996. Who needs identity? In *Question of cultural identity*, eds. Hall, S. and du Gay, P., 1–17. London: SAGE Publications Ltd. <https://doi.org/10.4135/9781446221907.n1>
- Hilsdon, A.-M. 2007. Transnationalism and agency in East Malaysia: Filipina migrants in the nightlife industries. *The Australian Journal of Anthropology* 18 (2): 172–193. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1835-9310.2007.tb00087.x>
- Ho, H. M. Y. 2021a. Localisation of Malay Muslim identity in Brunei Darussalam: A modern nation’s cultural and economic goals. In *Engaging modern Brunei*, eds. Ho, H. M. Y. and Deterding, D., 127–143. Singapore: Springer. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-33-4721-2_8
- _____. 2021b. Chinese Bruneian identity: Negotiating individual, familial and transnational selves in Anglophone Bruneian literature. *The Wenshan Review of Literature and Culture* 14 (2): 1–34. [https://doi.org/10.30395/WSR.202106_14\(2\).0001](https://doi.org/10.30395/WSR.202106_14(2).0001)
- _____. 2020. The violence of othering and (non-)indigenous revival: Aamnton Alias’ The last bastion of Ingei: Imminent as postcolonial speculative fiction of Brunei Darussalam. *SARE: Southeast Asian Review of English* 57 (1): 55–79. <https://doi.org/10.22452/sare.vol57no1.6>
- _____. 2019. Women doing Malayness in Brunei Darussalam. *Southeast Asian Review of English* 56 (2): 147–165. <https://doi.org/10.22452/sare.vol56no2.14>
- Hoon, C.-Y. 2021. Between hybridity and identity: Chineseness as a cultural resource in Indonesia. In *Contesting Chineseness: Ethnicity, identity, and nation in China and Southeast Asia*, eds. Hoon, C.-Y. and Chan, Y., 167–182. Singapore: Springer. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-33-6096-9_9
- _____. 2008. *Chinese identity in post-Suharto Indonesia: Culture, politics and media*. Brighton, England: Sussex Academic Press.
- _____. 2006. Assimilation, multiculturalism, hybridity: The dilemmas of the ethnic Chinese in post-Suharto Indonesia. *Asian Ethnicity* 7 (2): 149–166. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14631360600734400>
- Hoon, C.-Y. and Sahrifulhafiz, S. 2021. Negotiating assimilation and hybridity: The identity of Chinese-Malays in Brunei Darussalam. *Journal of Chinese Overseas* 17 (1): 31–57. <https://doi.org/10.1163/17932548-12341433>
- Howson, A. 2013. *The body in society: An introduction* (2nd ed.). Cambridge, England: Polity Press.

- Jabar, M. A. 2015. Religious experiences of Filipino Catholic women migrants in Japan: The case of the Kaagapay Oita Filipino Association. *Asia-Pacific Social Science Review* 15 (1): 135–140.
- Jeffreys, S. 1999. Globalizing sexual exploitation: Sex tourism and the traffic in women. *Leisure Studies* 18 (3): 179–196. <https://doi.org/10.1080/026143699374916>
- Kondo, D. K. 2009. *Crafting selves: Power, gender, and discourses of identity in a Japanese workplace*. Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press.
- Lee, N. Y. 2006. Gendered nationalism and otherization: Transnational prostitutes in South Korea. *Inter-Asia Cultural Studies* 7 (3): 456–471. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14649370600849322>
- Lian, K. F. and Ganapathy, N. 2016. The politics of racialisation and Malay identity. In *Multiculturalism, migration, and the politics of identity in Singapore*, ed. Lian, K. F., 99–112. Singapore: Springer. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-287-676-8_6
- Library of Congress. n.d. Prohibition of interfaith marriage: Brunei. <https://www.loc.gov/law/help/marriage/interfaith-prohibition.php#brunei> (accessed 24 August 2021).
- Loichinger, E. and Cheng, Y.-H. A. 2018. Feminising the workforce in ageing East Asia? The potential of skilled female labour in four advanced economies. *Journal of Population Research* 35: 187–215. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12546-018-9203-1>
- Luke, C. 2003. Glocal mobilities: Crafting identities in interracial families. *International Journal of Cultural Studies* 6 (4): 379–401. <https://doi.org/10.1177/136787790364001>
- Mackie, V. 1998. Japayuki Cinderella girl: Containing the immigrant other. *Japanese Studies* 18 (1): 45–63. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10371399808727641>
- Mahdavi, P. 2013. Gender, labour and the law: The nexus of domestic work, human trafficking and the informal economy in the United Arab Emirates. *Global Networks* 13 (4): 425–440. <https://doi.org/10.1111/glob.12010>
- Mani, A. 1996. Filipino migrant workers in Brunei Darussalam. *Philippine Sociological Review* 44 (1–4): 194–209.
- Mathers, N. J., Fox, N. J. and Hunn, A. 1998. *Trent focus for research and development in primary health care: Using interviews in a research project*. Sheffield, England: Trent Focus Group.
- Maxwell, A. R. 2001. Malay polysemy and political power: Census categories, ethnicity and citizenship in Brunei Darussalam. *South East Asia Research* 9 (2): 173–212. <https://doi.org/10.5367/000000001101297379>
- Modood, T., Berthoud, R., Lakey, J., Nazroo, J., Smith, P., Virdee, S. and Beishon, S. 1997. *Ethnic minorities in Britain: Diversity and disadvantage* (PSI report no. 843). London: Policy Studies Institute.
- Nagata, J. A. 1974. What is a Malay? Situational selection of ethnic identity in a plural society. *American Ethnologist* 1 (2): 331–350. <https://doi.org/10.1525/ae.1974.1.2.02a00080>
- Parameswaran, P. 2014. Brunei explains its Christmas celebration ban. *The Diplomat*, 31 December 2014. <https://thediplomat.com/2014/12/brunei-explains-its-christmas-celebration-ban/> (accessed 24 August 2021).

- Pue, G. H. and Sulaiman, N. 2013. ‘Choose one!’: Challenges of inter-ethnic marriages in Malaysia. *Asian Social Science* 9 (17): 269–278. <https://doi.org/10.5539/ass.v9n17p269>
- Rahman, M. M. and Lian, K. F. 2009. Gender and the remittance process: Indonesian domestic workers in Hong Kong, Singapore and Malaysia. *Asian Population Studies* 5 (2): 103–125. <https://doi.org/10.1080/17441730902992059>
- Reddy, G. and Gleibs, I. H. 2019. The endurance and contestations of colonial constructions of race among Malaysians and Singaporeans. *Frontiers in Psychology* 10: 792. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2019.00792>
- Salzman, P. C. 2002. On reflexivity. *American Anthropologist* 104 (3): 805–811. <https://doi.org/10.1525/aa.2002.104.3.805>
- Samovar, L. A., Porter, R. E., McDaniel, E. R. and Roy, C. S. 2014. *Intercultural communication: A reader* (14th ed.). Boston, MA: Cengage Learning.
- Seiger, F. K. 2019. ‘Mixed’ Japanese-Filipino identities under Japanese multiculturalism. *Social Identities* 25 (3): 392–407. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13504630.2018.1499225>
- Shams, T. 2020. *Here, there and elsewhere: The making of immigrant identities in a globalized world*. Redwood City, CA: Stanford University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1515/9781503612846>
- Silva, N. 2002. Introduction: The hybrid island. In *The hybrid island: Culture crossings and the invention of identity in Sri Lanka*, ed. Silva, N., i–vii. Colombo: Social Scientists’ Association.
- Tan, J.-P., Baharuddin, R., Juhari, R. and Krauss, S. E. 2008. Socio-demographic characteristics of intercultural marriage: A study of a multi-ethnic community in Malaysia. *European Journal of Social Sciences* 5 (4): 30–44.
- Trigger, D. and Wahsalfelah, S. N. H. 2011. Indigeneity in society and nature: The ambiguous case of Brunei. *Janang: Jurnal Akademi Pengajian Brunei* 1 (12): 74–90.
- Turner, V. 1969. *The ritual process: Structure and anti-structure*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press.
- Worchel, S. 1999. *Written in blood: Ethnic identity and the struggle for human harmony*. New York: Worth Publishers.
- Zahedi, A. 2010. Transnational marriages of Filipinas and Iranian men: Adjustment and social integration. *Women’s Studies International Forum* 33 (2): 70–80. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.wsif.2009.09.010>

APPENDIX ONE

Particulars of the informants

No.	Informants (pseudonym)	Filipino parent	Filipino parent's occupation
1.	Denise (F)	Mother	Assistant Nurse
2.	Saiful (M)	Mother	Housewife (former domestic worker)
3.	Andrew (M)	Mother	Teacher
4.	Gee (F)	Mother	Restaurant manager (former waitress)
5.	Emma (F)	Mother	Housewife (former domestic worker)
6.	Marco (M)	Mother	Teacher
7.	Safwan (M)	Mother	Housewife (former flight attendant)
8.	Sam (F)	Mother	Housewife (former domestic worker)
9.	Ciara (F)	Father	Doctor
10.	Virginia (F)	Father	Teacher
11.	Carlos (M)	Father	Engineer
12.	Matin (M)	Father	Office manager