

IDENTITY DEVELOPMENT AMONG *BLASTERAN* (MIXED-RACE) INDIVIDUALS IN INDONESIAN SOCIETY

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ABSTRACT

This research examines the identity development of *blasteran* (mixed-race) individuals in Indonesia, focusing on how they navigate their cultural heritage and social integration within Indonesian society. Drawing from qualitative data, the study explores the experiences of seven informants, aged 19 to 22, who live in urban areas such as Jakarta and Bekasi. The informants, representing a range of mixed ethnic backgrounds, provide insight into the complexities of identifying as both Indonesian and foreign. The research investigates the personal experiences of these individuals, emphasizing how familial dynamics, societal expectations, and cultural influences shape their sense of self and belonging. Through phenomenological analysis, the study highlights how cultural, social, and familial factors contribute to the sense of belonging and self-acceptance of *blasteran* individuals. The findings reveal a nuanced understanding of identity, where mixed-race individuals experience a sense of pride and challenges reconciling their dual heritage. This study contributes to the broader discourse on race, ethnicity, and identity in Southeast Asia, particularly in post-colonial contexts. It underscores the importance of social acceptance and personal agency in developing a coherent mixed-race identity.

Keywords: Mixed-race, Biracial Individuals, *Blasteran*, Identity Development, Identity Development Theory, Multicultural Individuals, Mixed-heritage.

Introduction

Globalization has profoundly reshaped social, economic, and cultural landscapes, fostering increased intercultural interactions through advancements in communication, travel, and trade. In Indonesia, these developments have accelerated cultural exchanges, blending global and local influences, and challenging traditional norms. The resulting hybrid identities, particularly among younger generations, reflect the dynamic interplay of

local traditions and global values (Pieterse, 2001).

Indonesia, known for its rich diversity of over 300 ethnic groups and 700 languages, maintains unity under its national motto, *Bhinneka Tunggal Ika* ("Unity in Diversity"). This diversity, shaped by centuries of migration and trade, is further enriched by globalization and the rise of intercultural marriages. These unions bridge cultural and

ethnic divides, fostering a more cosmopolitan society while challenging existing norms. Intercultural marriages also contribute to the growing population of mixed-race, or *Blasteran*, individuals, whose unique cultural identities mirror Indonesia's evolving social fabric.

Mixed-race individuals in Indonesia navigate a complex landscape of multiple cultural influences. Growing up in diverse households, they often face identity challenges, societal expectations, and occasional marginalization while integrating elements from their dual heritage into a cohesive self-concept. These experiences underscore the dynamic nature of identity development in a multicultural and globalized world.

Studying the identity development of *Blasteran* individuals in Indonesia provides valuable insights into the broader social and cultural transformations. This exploration sheds light on how traditional and modern identities coexist and evolve amidst globalization and cultural diversity.

Methodology

This study employs a qualitative research methodology within the phenomenological framework to explore how mixed-race individuals *Blasteran* (mixed-race) in Indonesia develop their identities through their experiences of discrimination and stereotyping. Phenomenology is particularly suited to this research as it seeks to uncover the lived experiences and meaning-making processes of participants, focusing on the essence of their identity development.

The study uses a phenomenological approach to understand the subjective experiences of mixed-race individuals in Indonesia. This design emphasizes the participants' perspectives, focusing on their interactions with societal norms, cultural expectations, and personal heritage.

The participants for this study consist of 7 *Blasteran* (mixed-race) individuals residing in Indonesia, purposively selected to ensure they represent diverse ethnic, cultural, and social backgrounds. The inclusion criteria required participants to:

1. Self-identify as *Blasteran* or mixed-race
2. Currently living in Indonesia and part of Indonesian society
3. Mixed intercultural marriages between Indonesia and foreign countries. The parents are from Indonesia, and the other is from a different country (foreigner).

Data Collection

Data were collected through *semi-structured, in-depth interviews*, allowing participants to share their personal experiences and perspectives freely. The interview questions were designed to explore based on *Biracial Identity Development Theory* (Martin & Nakayama, 1999):

1. Early awareness of their identity
2. Individual identity struggles
3. Identity commitment and exploration

Theoretical Framework

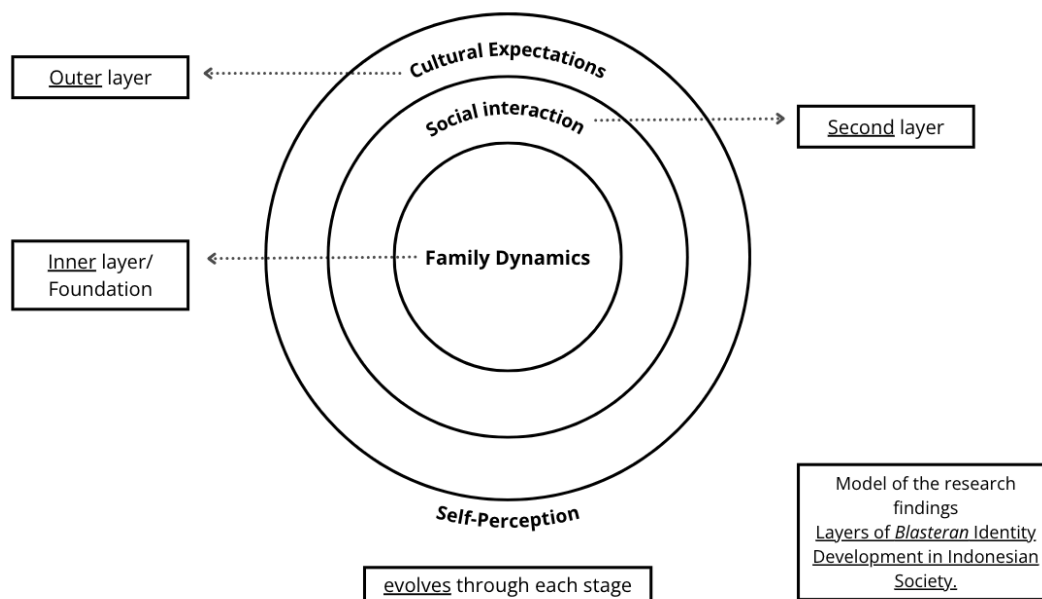
The study is grounded in *Biracial Identity Development Theory* (Martin & Nakayama,

1999) to provide a lens for understanding the stages of identity formation and the influence of cross-cultural interactions. *Face negotiation theory* (Ting-Toomey, 1988) further informs the analysis by examining how participants navigate social expectations and maintain their self-identity in diverse settings.

Results and Findings

This study highlights the complex journey of identity development among *Blasteran*

(mixed-race) individuals in Indonesia, framed through Martin and Nakayama's (1999) Biracial Identity Development Theory. The narratives of the informants reveal a dynamic process spanning early awareness of identity, individual struggles, and eventual commitment and exploration. The findings provide insights into how family dynamics, social interactions, cultural practices, and self-perception shape the experiences of mixed-race individuals.



Early Awareness of Identity

Family dynamics serve as the foundation for identity awareness, with informants experiencing cultural diversity within their households. Parental expectations and interactions create the first framework for understanding cultural differences and values. Social interactions, such as peer relationships and exposure to societal perceptions, reinforce awareness of distinctiveness. Experiences of curiosity, stereotyping, and "othering" foster resilience and self-reflection. Religious and cultural influences from family members,

particularly mothers, play a significant role in shaping informants' early understanding of identity.

Individual Identity Struggles

Informants frequently grapple with a sense of belonging, often feeling dislocated or pressured to choose one cultural identity over another. These struggles are compounded by societal expectations and external perceptions. Family dynamics and cultural expectations create additional layers of complexity. Differing parenting styles and familial

conflicts, such as divorce or loss, influence informants' identity development processes. Experiences of discrimination and stereotyping further challenge identity development. However, informants demonstrate resilience by reframing adversities and building supportive relationships.

Identity Commitment and Exploration

Informants embrace their mixed heritage as a source of strength, viewing it as a privilege that enriches their perspectives and adaptability. Supportive relationships with family and friends reinforce this pride. Engagement in cultural practices, such as celebrating diverse traditions and learning multiple languages, fosters a deeper connection to their heritage. Socioeconomic status emerges as a significant factor, providing informants with access to multicultural environments and resources that facilitate cultural integration. Physical appearance and societal perceptions influence self-perception, with many informants evolving toward confident acceptance and pride in their unique features.

Self-Perception and Reflection

Informants' journeys of self-discovery involve active reflection on their mixed-race heritage, transforming feelings of alienation into a source of empowerment. Their reflections emphasize the value of embracing diversity and advocating for the recognition of mixed identities. Personal narratives highlight the transformative power of integrating multiple cultural influences into a cohesive sense of self, enabling informants to navigate and thrive in diverse environments.

Conclusion

The identity development of *Blasteran* individuals in Indonesia is a multifaceted and evolving process shaped by familial, social, and cultural factors. Early awareness, identity struggles, and eventual commitment reflect the challenges and opportunities inherent in navigating mixed-race identities. These narratives underline the resilience and adaptability of *Blasteran* individuals as they integrate diverse experiences into a cohesive and empowered sense of self. This study contributes to the understanding of identity development in multicultural societies, offering valuable insights into the experiences of mixed-race individuals within the broader context of globalization and cultural diversity in Indonesia.

Limitations

This research focuses on a small sample size, limiting its generalizability. However, the phenomenological approach prioritizes depth over breadth, offering nuanced insights into the lived experiences of *Blasteran* individuals in Indonesia. Future studies may benefit from a larger, more diverse sample or a mixed-methods approach for broader applicability.

This methodological framework ensures a comprehensive exploration of the identity development of mixed-race individuals in Indonesia, contributing to the understanding of multicultural identity development in a globalized context.

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