

# The Impact of Interethnic Marital Relation on the Dynamics of Interdependence: A Phenomenological Finding from Javanese and Chinese Couples in Indonesia

Jony Eko Yulianto<sup>1\*</sup> and Faturochman<sup>2</sup>

1. School of Psychology, Universitas Ciputra Surabaya, UC Town, Citraland, Surabaya 60219, Indonesia
2. Faculty of Psychology, Universitas Gadjah Mada, Bulaksumur, Yogyakarta 55281, Indonesia

\*E-mail: [jony.eko@ciputra.ac.id](mailto:jony.eko@ciputra.ac.id)

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## Abstract

Javanese and Chinese Indonesians (Tionghoa) ethnicity both emphasize the importance of social harmony in their relations. Does it exist in intermarriage of these two ethnics? The present study describes the existence of interdependence and its dynamics in the marital relation between Chinese Indonesian women and Javanese men by applying qualitative method with phenomenology approach on 24 married couples in Solo and Yogyakarta. The result shows that interdependence manifestation in interethnic marriage includes identity establishment, the use of power, and the utilization of resources. Identity establishment consists of fused identity, layered identity, attributed identity, and value-focused identity. The use of power exists in variations of hierarchy, domination, and versatile. The utilization of resource shows the variations of communal-sharing, transaction, and domination. Interdependence dynamics between husband and wife manifest in interpersonal level which emphasizes the role of trust and distrust, intrapersonal level which is expressed in affection toward spouse, transcendental level which is voiced in the role of trust toward transcendental agents, and intergroup level which is pointed to role of meta-relational model of extended family.

## Pengaruh Relasi Perkawinan Beda Etnis pada Dinamika Interdependensi: Temuan Fenomenologis pada Relasi Perkawinan Perempuan Tionghoa dan Laki-laki Jawa

### Abstrak

Etnis Jawa dan Etnis Tionghoa sama-sama menekankan pentingnya harmoni sosial dalam sebuah relasi. Apakah harmoni ini tetap eksis pada perkawinan beda etnis yang melibatkan individu dari kedua etnis tersebut? Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mendeskripsikan eksistensi dan dinamika interdependensi pada 24 pasangan pelaku perkawinan beda etnis (perempuan Tionghoa dan laki-laki Jawa) dengan metode kualitatif pendekatan fenomenologi. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa manifestasi interdependensi terbagi menjadi tiga kategori, yakni pembentukan identitas, penggunaan kuasa, dan penggunaan sumber daya. Pembentukan identitas terdiri dari identitas yang melebur (fused), identitas yang berlapis (layered), identitas yang didasarkan pada kesamaan atribut, dan identitas yang berfokus pada tata nilai (value-focused). Penggunaan kuasa mencakup bentuk hierarki, dominasi, dan subordinasi yang bersifat fleksibel (versatile). Penggunaan sumber daya meliputi bentuk penggunaan bersama (communal sharing), transaksi (transaction), dan dominasi (domination). Dinamika interdependensi yang terjadi pada subjek penelitian ini terbagi menjadi sisi interpersonal yang terfokus pada peran kepercayaan dan ketidakpercayaan, sisi intrapersonal yang menyoroti afeksi individu terhadap pasangan, sisi transendental yang membahas kepercayaan subjek terhadap figur transenden, dan sisi antarkelompok yang menekankan pada peranan model meta-relasional keluarga besar.

*Keyword: Interethnic marital relation, interdependence, Chinese Indonesian women, Javanese men*

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## 1. Introduction

*“I believe in recognizing every human being as a human being—neither white, black, brown, nor red; and when you are dealing with humanity as a family, there's no question of integration or intermarriage. It's just one human being marrying another human being or one human being living around and with another human being.”*  
(El-Hajj Malik El-Shabazz)

As illustrated by the quotation above, discourse about interethnic marriage does not only point out interpersonal attraction or love, but it also involves stereotype, repulsion, and even prejudice between races. Globally, the frequency of intercultural contact are increasing rapidly with advances of technology, immigration, and ease of travel (Afful, Wohlford, & Stoelting, 2015; Clark-Ibanez & Felmler, 2004). As a result, many individuals are related to and internalize more than one culture (Miramontez, Benet-Martínez, & Nguyen, 2008; Nguyen & Benet-Martínez, 2010). Therefore, it is important to investigate the complexity of interethnic marital relation.

Indonesia is an archipelagic nation of more than 240 million people, and it is recognized as the most ethnically diverse country in the world. However, studies on intimate relation between ethnicity in Indonesia are relatively limited in number. Still, it seems that the approaches used to study the subject of interethnic marriages are mostly anthropological (Hariyono, 2006; Hohmann-Marriott & Amato, 2008), historical (Onghokham, 2009), sociological (Furtado & Theodoropoulos, 2010), and geographical (Utomo & McDonald, 2016). We argue that a more systematic effort in the multidisciplinary approach to comprehend the issue of interethnic marriage is necessary. One of the important, yet rarely used, approaches in Indonesia is psychological approach.

Some psychology researchers have contended that interethnic marriage recently focused on the social identity (Chen & Takeuchi, 2011), biculturalism (Nguyen & Benet-Martínez, 2013; Tadmor & Tedlock, 2006) and well-being (Yampolsky, Amiot, & de la Sablonniere, 2013) of interethnic married couples. Most of these explorations on the psychological dynamics use individual approach that ultimately study only one of the spouses, whereas interethnic marriage is a representation of an institution that is managed with intimate relational system (for review, see Fiske, 2012). This leads to the conclusion that psychological studies on the individual level of interethnic marriage are insufficient. Therefore, in the present study, we chose relational psychological approach to study the phenomenon of interethnic marriage.

Several studies presumed that interethnic marriage is a type of marriage that is vulnerable to relational problems.

Cools (2006), for example, argued that cultural problems that emerged in interethnic couples are as follows: language, communication, adapting spouse, friends, raising children, female-male roles, visibility, and tradition. Another discourse that should be addressed is the partners' level of awareness and sensitivity, how they negotiate work, and their narrative about race (Killian, 2012), and to what extent the acculturation between couple is well formed (see Kim, Benet-Martínez, & Ozer, 2010; Nguyen & Benet-Martínez, 2013).

Confucius stressed the importance of relational quality, which is commonly known as Confucian-relationism, in various aspects of social life (Hwang, 2006). He explained how the role of positive affections between parents and children is important as a crucial component for a balanced and harmonious life (*yin-yang*) in the Chinese family (Tao, Zhou, Lau, & Liu, 2013). Ensuring that the relation of parents with children as well as husband with wife has attained the finest quality is a very important matter as it is considered as one of the five Cardinal virtues taught by Confucius (Hwang, 2006).

Historically, conflict in marital relation between Indonesian-Chinese Women and Javanese Men generally rises because of prejudices from both sides, whether it is from the indigenous toward the Chinese (Setianto, 2010; Sudjarwoko, 2008), or from the Chinese toward the indigenous. Carey (1984), in his report of study on Javanese people's perception toward Chinese people, wrote that the majority of Javanese *priyayi* (nobles, aristocrats) believed that interethnic marriage between Chinese and Javanese should not be done because of *usia abu*. They believed the Chinese ethnicity has older ash compared to the Javanese; as a result, the personal quality of the offspring from the Chinese and Javanese marriage tends to be identical to the Chinese ethnicity. Furthermore, some Javanese people believed that marrying Chinese is a taboo because it could lead to great calamities. The tragic death of the crown prince of Mangkunegara VIII, Gusti Kanjeng Pangeran Harya Raditya Prabokusuma, was believed to occur because of his decision to marry a woman of Chinese descent (Carey, 1984).

On the other side, the Indonesian-Chinese also have a tendency to be prejudiced toward indigenous people, particularly the Javanese (Hariyono, 2006). This prejudice is noticeable. For example, there is a prejudice that Javanese men like to take advantage of Chinese women, are imprudent in managing the assets, like to marry more than one woman, and poor. Probing back even further, pessimism about the marriage between Chinese and indigenous people, especially with the Javanese, has been depicted in the literary works in the form of novels written by poets of Chinese descents in the beginning of the twentieth century (Hariyono, 2006).

The high resistance to interethnic marriage, including in marital relation between the Indonesian-Chinese and Javanese, has made marital relation prospect an important issue to be considered by those involved (as a review, see Martinovic, van Tubergen, & Mass, 2009). They are not only expected to be able to integrate individual differences formed from the effects of ethnic distinction, but also to work together to overcome the resistance presented by public, particularly parents and other first ring family elements (Gaines Jr, Clark, & Afful, 2015). This area comprises conflict in the intrapersonal level such as affection conflict that includes differences in expressing love, loyalty, and sexual relationship, differences in personalities and characters, as well as in view of life.

Conflicts in the interpersonal level include the matter of distributing roles in the household, economical factors, power, and communication; whereas the intergroup level concerns the relation with the main family and society. The complexity of this conflict once again asserts the importance for the couple to work together in every aspect. The failure of conflict management tend to result in intense loneliness felt by married couples from two different cultures (Yum, 2003). Fiske's (2000) study about *Theory of Complementary Relational* discovered the urgency for individuals with different cultural background to collaborate in a complementary way in managing cultural diversities, thus making them more adaptive in managing conflicts in the relationship. Inability to collaborate will make the couple unable to understand diversity as a certainty and thus be caught in various cultural extremisms toward one particular side.

The intergroup level that becomes a unit of analysis in this study is related to the interdependent relation between Chinese female and Javanese male couples and their environment. This shows that marital relation is not a dyadic relation but rather meta-relational (see Fiske, 2012). The couples are not focused only in the intrapersonal and interpersonal areas of conflict but also in the effort to overcome prejudices and to show their autonomy. In the Chinese-Javanese interethnic marriage, the importance of interdependent behaviors in dealing with external conflicts is highly related to the Chinese and Javanese people's orientation that prioritizes social harmony (Yao & Ho, 1993).

Therefore, married couples with different ethnicity backgrounds are required to have stronger and more prominent relational scheme than their individual scheme. Strong relational scheme tends to enable research subjects to understand their relational standing with their spouse, as well as their relational standing among other relations (Afful, Taff, Stoeting, 2015). A couple who has relational scheme tends to be more effective in demonstrating efforts to work together. The contextual situation of interethnic marriage is heated up with conflicts with parents and surroundings. This was

further affirmed by the result of studies that stated that individuals from Chinese ethnicity are known to have strong ethnic association (Hariyono, 2006), tend to have higher need to dominate (Solomon, Knobloch, & Fitzpatrick, 2004), tend to have higher self-protection (Hepper, Sedikides, & Cai, 2013), and tend to have different social value orientation with the indigenous people (Hariyono, 2006). Therefore, it could be concluded that it is important to study the extent of the couple's capability to work together interdependently.

This study is focused on Chinese women who married Javanese men. There are several reasons for choosing this specific subject. First is regarding the identity (Hogg, 2005). With the patrilineal kinship system, marriage with Javanese men will definitely cause various identity conflicts. The disappearance of *sei* or family name in the next generation is one of the main highlights that causes the older generation to strongly oppose and often become the main cause of conflict. Identity has become an important object of study in the researches on the interdependent collaboration of Chinese women who married Javanese men. The implication of identity assimilation is not limited to legal attribute such as family name. More than that, identity in the context of interethnic marriage also gives attention to individual's response in dealing with ethnic identity differences and the performance of ethnic rituals among the couple (see Hogg, 2005), and perceived authenticity and well-being (see Zhang & Noels, 2013).

The second reason is related to relational power. Solomon, Knobloch, and Fitzpatrick's (2004) study on the power of relation explained the role of power in directing individuals toward the tendency of dominating their spouse. On the other side, Javanese culture considers the husband as the head of family, and the wife is entrusted to take care of domestic functions, termed *konco wingking* (Magnis-Suseno, 2003). These contradictory empirical evidences proved that interdependence in the interrelated power relation is also a crucial issue that must be taken into consideration by interethnic married couples. Couple's inability to manage power relation will tend to lead to the failure of attaining equilibrium and ambivalent rules in the household (Chen, Fiske & Lee, 2009).

The third reason is regarding the use of resources. Subjects in this research gave phenomenological accounts that proved that ethnic prejudice regarding resources takes an important role in the relation of Chinese-Javanese interethnic marriage. Ethnic prejudice toward Javanese men who married Chinese women generally is about the subject of resources. For example, the financial management ability, claim of certificate of property ownership, and accusation that the men are enriching their own parents through the wives' wealth. Couple's capability to demonstrate interdependent

teamwork in managing resources is also an important feature in the Chinese-Javanese interethnic marital relationship (Tallman & Yin-Ling, 2004; Tichenor, 1999), since not all married couples recognize marriage as the integration of resources from both sides of the participants (Lauer & Yodanis, 2011; Yodanis & Lauer, 2007a; Yodanis & Lauer, 2007b).

Based on the arguments presented, we want to prove the social harmony in the marital relation between Chinese women and Javanese men. Research questions guiding this study are: (1) How is interdependency manifested in the marital relation between Chinese woman who marry a Javanese man? (2) How is the dynamic of interdependency in the marital relation between Chinese woman who marry a Javanese man?

## 2. Methods

**Approach.** The present study applied phenomenological approach to explicate the meaning, structure, and essence of interethnic marital relation according to the participants (Moustakas, 1994). Phenomenology has been chosen to develop composite description of the essence of the experience for all of the individuals through four steps, namely horizontalization, phenomenological reduction, imaginative variation, and synthesis (Moustakas, 1994).

**Research Site.** Solo and Yogyakarta has been chosen as research sites. What makes Solo and Yogyakarta unique in this context, however, is the degree to which these two cities represents bastion of indigenous Javanese cultural forms (Perlman, 1999).

**Participants.** Data were gathered from participants as the primary source. Subjects in this study were 24 Chinese females currently married to Javanese men. Specifically, the subjects in this study have a characteristic: they came from families with strong ethnic associations, thus still engaged in various ethnic rituals. In determining research participants, we also controlled the offsprings of the participants, making sure that every participant had no previous experience of inter-ethnic marital relation. All participants agreed to fill informed consent form as part of ethical clearance of the research.

**Data Collection.** We conducted several interview sessions with the participants from May 2013 to July 2013 in Yogyakarta as the first episode, and continued in July 2014 to September 2014 in Solo and Yogyakarta as the next episode. We strived to build trust with the subjects, considering the topic of the study.

Altogether, the general profiles of the subjects in this study are reported in this Table 1.

Table 1. General Profile of Participants

Pseudoname	Year of Marriage	Age When Getting Married	Occupation	City	Pseudoname	Year of Marriage	Age When Getting Married	Occupation	City
Tek-Tjiang and Aris	2000	26-28 y.o	Shop Owner -- Freelancer	Solo	Ong and Erfino	2004	33-33 y.o	Shop Owner -- <i>Tukang Sablon</i> (screen-printing craftsman)	Yogyakarta
Erlisa and Tri	2002	23-26 y.o	Teacher -- Civil Servant	Solo	Ani and Tomo	1976	20-23 y.o	Shop Employee – <i>Trah Kraton</i> (Kraton lineage)- PNS (Civil Servant)	Yogyakarta
Tan and Herry	2010	22-28 y.o	Unemployed -- Civil Servant	Solo	Lina and Indra	1998	29-35 y.o	Private Tutor -- Editor of a Book Publisher	Yogyakarta
Yen-yen and Vendy	2009	25-31 y.o	Shop Owner -- Shop Owner	Solo	Hwa and Erwin	1991	23-29 y.o	Toy Shop Employee -- Garment Factory Worker	Yogyakarta
Rien and Bambang	1997	33-34 y.o	Shop Owner -- Civil Servant	Solo	Hong and Setiawan	2010	25-27 y.o	Shop Owner – Freelancer	Yogyakarta
Tjioe and Warno	2000	31-33 y.o	Teacher -- Teacher	Solo	Liang and Priyanto	1999	25-25 y.o	Unemployed – Teacher	Yogyakarta
Chen and Kun	1996	30-33 y.o	Shop Owner -- Shop Owner	Solo	Tjen and Puji	1990	27-27 y.o	Unemployed -- University Lecturer	Yogyakarta
Yin and Herman	1992	27-28 y.o	Priest -- Priest	Solo	Ling-ling and Lasiman	1989	29-33 y.o	Shop Owner – Doctor	Yogyakarta
Steffy and Ari	2009	23-23 y.o	Journalist -- Civil Servant	Solo	Tantri and Raka	2008	22-26 y.o	Staff – Staff	Yogyakarta
Cindy and Edi	2012	23-25 y.o	Graphic Designer -- Private Staff	Solo	Retha and Angga	2010	24-24 y.o	Laundry Owner -- Civil Servant	Yogyakarta
Tjang and Wawan	2010	23-23 y.o	Teacher – Teacher	Solo	Wei and Triwibowo	1997	33-36 y.o	Civil Servant -- Civil Servant	Yogyakarta
					Kiong and Pudjo	1995	22-24 y.o	Unemployed – Priest	Yogyakarta
					Wen-wen and Kukuh	2000	28-29 y.o	Bakpia Shop Owner -- Lawyer	Yogyakarta

### 3. Results and Discussion

**Manifestation of Interdependence.** Interdependence among interethnic couples is manifested in three different domains, namely identity establishment, the use of power, and the use of resource.

**Identity Establishment.** Lorenzi-Cioldi (2006) reported that group status influences processes of self-identification. Subjects of this research acknowledged that ethnic difference can and will be a source of conflict in their marriage (Yodanis, Laurer, & Ota, 2012). In interethnic marriage, each spouse at least has to play two different roles. First, he/she has to play a role as a spouse that has a responsibility to build a family with his/her husband/wife who is from ethnicity, and, second, to play a role as a descent of his/her ethnicity. Each spouse has to compromise his/her ethnic identity in order to build the family, hence the dilemma. Benet-Martinez and Haritatos (2006) posited this phenomena as Bicultural Identity Integration (BII). Four possible scenarios arose from the interviews regarding to this dilemma.

**Fused Identity.** To fuse in interethnic marriage means that each spouse tries to learn about his/her spouse ethnic value. For instance, Indonesian-Chinese wife tried to learn about the customs of Javanese people, while Javanese husband tried to learn about Chinese customs. Blending scenario implies the flexibility of ethnic identity of each spouse. Marriage is viewed as a way to combine two ethnic differences, and each spouse acknowledges the identity of the other as a part of his/her new identity (Figure 1).

Fusing among interethnic couples is based on strong self-consciousness of each spouse's ethnical identity. The stronger the self-consciousness of ethnical identity of each spouse, the better his/her awareness about the differences among them, and how that differences can potentially become a source of conflict. Understanding each other's customs is a way to show respect to the other ethnicity, while maintaining each individual standards and customs. For example, a Chinese wife made herself subject to certain Javanese customs. However, she could also explain why she would not do other Javanese customs as a way to maintain her Chinese standards.

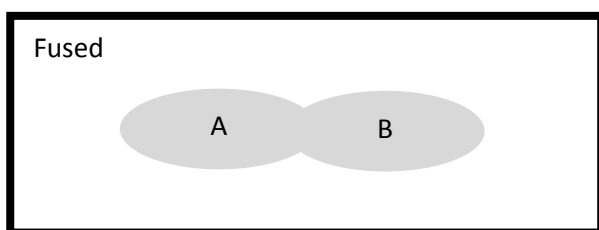


Figure 1. Illustration for Fused Identity

**Layered Identity.** In layered identity scenario, only one spouse agrees to learn the other's customs and traditions. For example, a Indonesian-Chinese wife agreed to learn the Javanese customs while the husband, whose family has descendant from a monarch (Javanese *kraton*), did not. As a result, the wife cognitively altered her view of her partner's ethnic identity by finding as much positive values of Javanese ethnic as she could to justify her decision to be involved in interethnic marriage. Being cast off her family when she decided to marry someone from different ethnic also means that she has to find another source of attachment (Figure 2).

This scenario also implies that only one spouse will have to adapt with his/her new identity, as the other views his/her spouse ethnical identity irrelevant. Layered identity allows the wife to show self-differentiation by still doing Chinese customs as much as her spouse allowed her to, while still trying to deal with Javanese customs. Self-differentiation helps [spouse in nested scenario] to maintain her ethnical identity, which leads to marriage satisfaction. Nguyen and Benet-Martinez (2013) conducted meta-analysis study on over 80 works and found that biculturalism level could be either integrated, partially integrated, and separated. The association between biculturalism and adjustment is moderated by how acculturation is measured, and the characteristic of the sample.

**Attributed Identity.** In orientation to attributed scenario, each spouse disregards their ethnic differences and focuses on their similar attributes. Couples in this scenario view differences as a source of conflict and unlike in blending scenario, they regard their ethnical identity as something less sacral. Consequently, they can no longer rely on the rules and customs in their ethnic to build their marriage. For example, religion is used as a base of similar attribute (Figure 3).

This scenario arises from Hogg's (2005) view that said that individual from different background can start a relation by finding similar attributes among them. These similar attributes, however, can be not in line with their previous conservative ethnic customs, such as not to marry someone from different ethnicity. Spouses who have younger marital age (e.g. Kiong and Pudjo, Lina

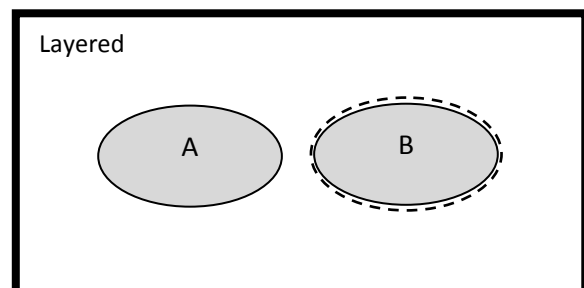


Figure 2. Illustration for Layered Identity

and Indra), not having bless from their parents for disobeying ethnical values, is viewed as acceptable for the sanctity of marriage, and true blessing can only come from God, which is facilitated by their religion. To rely on religious values only also means that religion will be the base of all aspects of life. From this view, marriage in this scenario is a form of transcendent self-development rather than just intergroup harmony (Martin & Erber, 2005).

**Value-focused Identity.** In value-focused scenario, interethnic couples realize that different ethnic customs and traditions basically have the same, good value. Thus, rather than following certain ethnic custom, they try to find the essence of the rituals and understand what is good in it. Thus, this action renders the rituals and other technical differences as something less important (Figure 4).

Couples in this scenario view paying attention to ethnical customs as something that can lead to polarization between the different ethnics; polarization that can lead them to outgroup bias (Hogg, 2005). In turn, they try to view ethnic customs as something that will fade with time, and only true essence of ritual is permanent. Therefore, it is better to understand the value inside the customs rather than the rituals. Having a good understanding of the true essence of a ritual also means that they can transmit the value to their children without having to rely on the rituals. Thus, it will lessen the confusion in their children about his/her multiethnic nature.

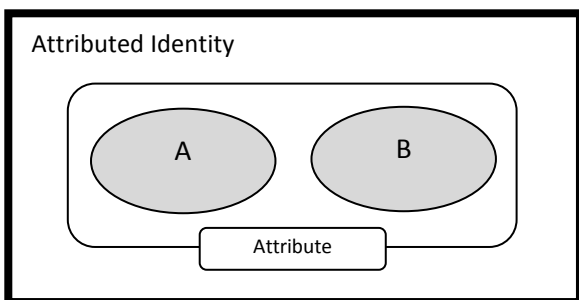


Figure 3. Illustration for Attributed Identity

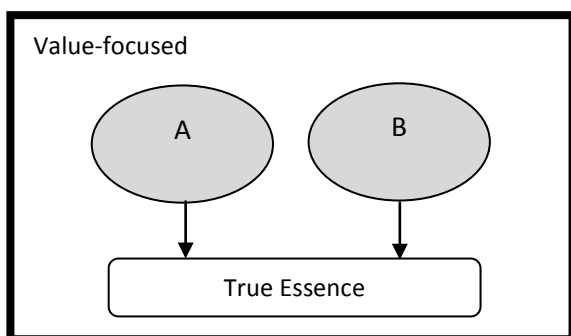


Figure 4. Illustration for Value-focused Identity

**The Use of Power.** The use of power in this research is closely related to the interdependence theme. Power relation dictates how the couple relates to each other as a manifestation of interdependence. Treas and Tai (2011) found that women take more responsibility if there is any different income level between couples. It clearly reflects the relation between relative resource and household management. But how is the use of power manifested in interethnic married couple in the present study? Three possible scenarios arose from the interviews regarding to present investigation:

**Hierarchy.** In this scenario, one spouse is superior compared with the other, and the domination is permanent (absolute). The superior spouse dictates the subordinate act in unequal, hierarchical manner (Figure 5).

Social status usually dictates which spouse is dominant. In Chen and Kun case, Chen’s status as kiosk owner from higher income family was considered higher than her husband, who came from low-income family and works as shirt maker. Domination can also come from family status, as seen in Ani and Tomo case, in which Tomo came from a monarch family.

Bentley, Galliher, and Ferguson (2007) argued that individual’s ability to use his/her power on his/her spouse will help him/her run the relation function of marriage. In the case of Ani, her husband’s hierarchical power was viewed as positive, and even made her came to view her identity no longer as Chinese, but Javanese.

**Domination.** In this scenario, the superordinate-subordinate relation is more flexible depends on the domain of power of each spouse. For instance, in the case of Kiong and Pudjo, Kiong was considered as the economy leader of the family, and her husband was considered as the spiritual leader as he was a priest of local church (Figure 6).

Each individual is more comfortable to lead in his/her power domain. These domains of power are agreed between the spouses as a manifestation of interdependence. As a result, one spouse will become interdependent with the other on certain domain, and vice versa. In this scenario, competence is a form of power. The more

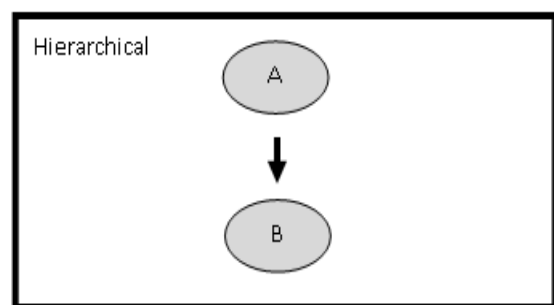


Figure 5. Illustration for Hierarchy

competent a spouse in certain domain, the more trustworthy he/she become to lead the other.

**Versatile.** In this scenario, a default leader between the couple is agreed from the beginning, but in certain situation, the subordinate spouse is allowed to take control. In the case of Lina and Indra, Indra was seen as the default leader but he would allow his wife to lead him in some agreeable situations (Figure 7).

Couples that belong in this scenario believe that a default leader is needed to maintain the order in the family. Nicoleau, Kang, Choau, and Knudson-Martin (2014) stated that flexibility is strongly related with focus in the relationship, especially in family with children. Flexibility covers three processes, namely mutual decision making, mutual accommodation regarding household tasks, and mutual giving of personal time.

**The Utilization of Resource.** Resource is an important element that should be well managed in interethnic marital relation (Lauer & Yodanis, 2014). The utilization of resource also dictates how the couple relates with each other as a manifestation of interdependence. Three possible scenarios arose from the interviews regarding to present investigation:

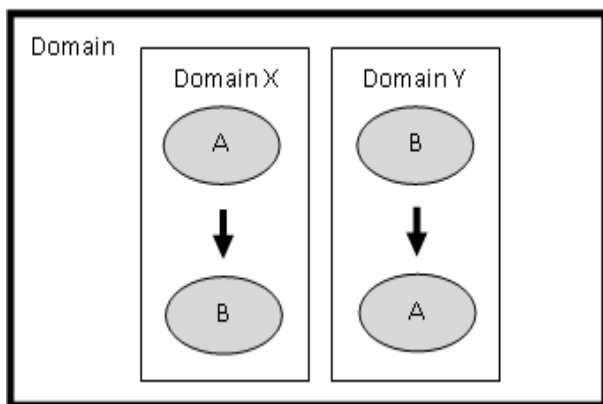


Figure 6. Illustration for Domination

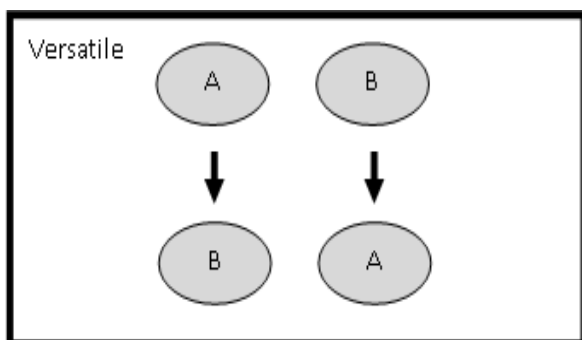


Figure 7. Illustration for Versatile

**Communal Sharing.** Communal sharing operates when people take joint responsibility for something. In the present study, the couple manifested communal sharing when each spouse acknowledged no boundaries between “what is mine” and “what is yours”. Resources from each spouse were gathered and could be used with consent of the other. In the case of Lina and Indra, Indra put his salary as common resource for the family, since Lina is not working. Indra became the breadwinner of the family, but Lina had to manage their finance (Figure 8).

In this scenario, not only the two individuals and their family blended together, but also their resources. Gain and loses become less important for the couple. When participants’ shared some aspect of their bodies, or when they acknowledged that their bodies shared something in common, it created a categorical bond among the social persons. Fiske (2012) called this *consubstantial assimilation*. Consubstantial assimilation is uniquely evocative; it motivates and commits people, binding couples emotionally.

**Transaction.** Transaction scenario is equivalent to that in the market. This scenario uses transaction system and market logic in marriage. In the case of Hwa and Erwin, for example, a motorcycle was bought and registered after Erwin’s name. Every time Hwa had to use the motorcycle for her own business, she had to pay for the gas herself, and when Erwin asked Hwa to transport him to his work, he would pay for the gas (Figure 9).

In the case of Hwa and Erwin, Hwa did not view this transactional system in gain-and-loses, market manner, but as a mean to defend their marriage. Using this system was easier than having an argument with her husband every time there was a financial conflict. Yodanis and Lauer (2014) stated that marriage today is individualized. Spouses normally engaged in interdependent and integrated behavior, but not clearly stated in this trajectory. Transaction relational schemata could be performed to protect marital relation from particular prejudice from external side. Money is seen as separate rather as joint asset (for review, see Ludwig-Mayerhofer, et al., 2011).

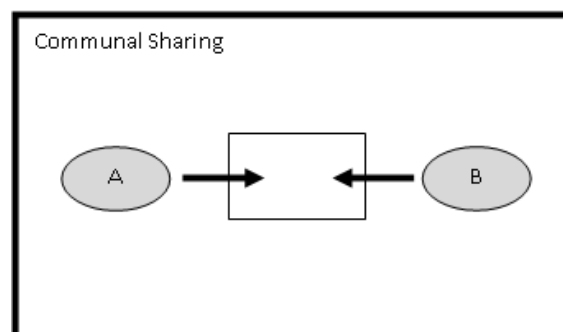


Figure 8. Illustration for Communal Sharing

**Domination.** In this scenario, one spouse has the power to manage and distribute the couple's resources. For instance, all of their possessions were registered under husband/wife name only. She also dictated when and how they used their resources (Figure 10).

Ong argued that they decided to use this system to prove that Erfino is a good husband (i.e. did not want to misuse his wife's fortune) and Erfino agreed with this system to prove his love to his wife.

**Dynamic of Interdependence.** Interdependence dynamic among interethnic couple runs within themselves (interpersonal), individual spouse in her/his relation with the other (intrapersonal), between the couple and higher being (transcendental), and between the couple and other people or groups (intergroup).

**Interpersonal Dynamic. Trust and Distrust.** Trust among interethnic couple plays an important role to help them act against common beliefs, cliché, and naiveté. In the case of Lina and Indra, Indra sometimes played the domestic role against his position as the head of family while letting his wife actualized herself by being a choir leader. The decision to put trust with the other was based on long evaluation of each spouse, even before they were married. Therefore, they believed they had known each other enough to put themselves in risky, ambiguous situation.

Trusting each other is not enough. They also have to manage their trust by constantly monitoring each own action and the other's. Monitoring is important to evaluate how effective their relation agreement and how far it has deviated from its original plan (Bijlsma-Frankema & Costa, 2005). Having a constant monitoring and evaluation can also help interethnic couple to come up with more effective cooperation form in their relationship. Consequently, with better cooperation comes greater trust among them (Ferrin, Bligh & Kohles, 2007), for cooperation and other form of interdependence are a manifestation of trust.

Distrust comes when one spouse deviates too far from their formal agreement. In the case of Hwa and Erwin, Erwin decided not to discuss his finance with her wife because she has a poor financial management. Hwa, in turn, decided not to discuss this problem further with her husband to avoid conflict.

**Power Visibility.** Power play comes when trust between spouses is violated. When one spouse deviates too far from their agreement, the other will reposition his/her trust and act to help his/her spouse to get back on track. In the case of Ong and Erfino, the action came in form of negotiation. Ong believed that her husband sent part of his salary to his parents, thus hurting the couple's finance. Ong then negotiated with her husband, asking him to let her handle all financial management in her hands, which was agreed. Negotiation is often based on strong argument and persuasion from the other party's past behavior. In Ong and Erfino's case, Erfino's past trust violation became a basis of his wife's argument.

On the other end, mutual trust can also lead to different kind of power play. In Lina and Indra's case, Lina (a bachelor in mathematics) decided to let her husband be the sole breadwinner of the family not because she had no competence in working (no power), but because she trusted him enough to give her power to him. In this case, dyadic communication played an important role (see Baldwin, Kiviniemi & Snyder, 2009; Leung, Lee, & Chiu, 2013).

**Intrapersonal, Transcendental, and Intergroup Dynamics. Relational Autonomy.** Fiske (2000) explained that different rules in different cultures come as a product of cultural coordination device; there is a group of individual who establishes these rules, and these rules then become a part of the identity of certain ethnicity. This means that interethnic couple can also establish their own rules as a form of autonomy. Two examples of rule redefinition will be given here: transcendental orientation and respect toward parent.

In the case of Yen-yen and Vendy, Ong and Erfino, and Lina and Indra, spirituality bypassed their ethnic difference. This means that ethnic differences were less important

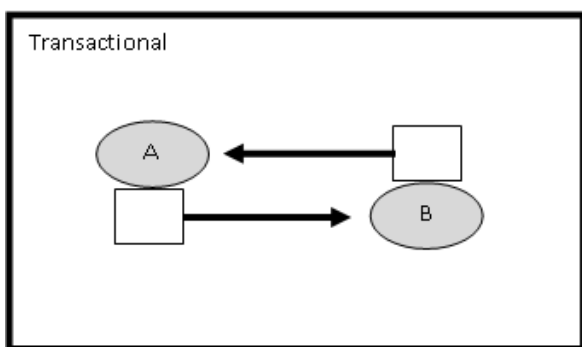


Figure 9. Illustration for Transaction

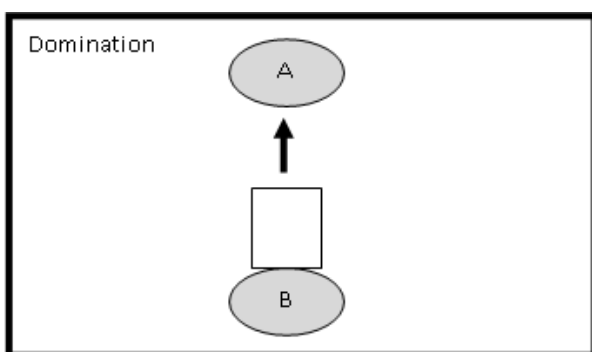


Figure 10. Illustration for Domination



than spirituality. Spirituality acted as the highest truth in their life, and this helps them established new rules to follow the spiritual path, and bypassed the ethnic rules that were not relevant.

Unlike other culture, respect in Chinese and Javanese culture is not earned, but expected (Costigan & Dokis, 2006). It is expected from children to respect their parents, and this concept is important in both cultures (Magnis-Suseno, 2003; Wang, Shao, & Li, 2010; Zailin & Shaoqian, 2009), amidst the conceptual and technical differences. Erfino and Ong redefined these concepts of respect by not obeying (which is default in both cultures), but rather criticizing their parent as a form of behavioral adjustment. For example, Ong criticized and taught better financial management system to her mother in law because she felt more competent in financial management.

**Falsifying the Cultural Prejudice.** The history of Chinese-Javanese relation in Indonesia is that of distrust, prejudice, and discrimination. Therefore, each spouse in interethnic couple had to give extra effort to falsify the stereotype against their group. For example, individual often tries to marry other from better financial condition to have better social status (Chen & Takeuchi, 2011). The difference between financial status between Chinese and Javanese has been a well-known subject of researches (Haryono, 2006). Javanese, for example, are often viewed as having poor financial management. Therefore, in the case of Ong and Erfino, Erfino gave his wife full power in financial management to falsify the stereotype against his group.

**Using Symbols and Metaphors.** Symbols and metaphors are effective ways to show autonomy. Using metaphors, abstract concept and mental process can be described in more understandable manner, which was the case in interviews with the interethnic couples. Christensen and Wagoner (2015) proposed seeing metaphor as a situated act of imagination in which the person experiences certain properties of the metaphor.

**Dynamics of Interdependence Diagram.** Four levels of interaction in interethnic couple have been discussed above. In interpersonal level, interaction in interethnic couple is explained as a form of interdependence. In intrapersonal level, each of the spouse's cognitive dynamics molds how his/her interdependence with the other. In transcendental level, the role of higher being is used to bypass the differences among the couples. Intergroup level discusses the role of other people outside the couple, particularly parents.

This section discusses how those four levels interact with each other. In intrapersonal level, affection towards spouse and willingness to falsify the stereotype motivated each individual to be involved in interethnic marriage.

These feelings outweighed the prohibition from their parents, other family members, religious leaders, and friends. Out-group prohibition affected the interpersonal dynamic in interethnic couple in the form of obstruction in marriage preparation (religious leader refuses to give bless), and cultural threat from friends (*kuwalat*; having a bad karma toward parent).

Autonomy among the couples helped them combat these external forces. Autonomy took form in actions that were often against the teaching of Javanese customs, such as forcing parents to agree, running away, deciding not to address their parents as grandparents for their child, and addressing father in law as 'sir' instead of 'dad.' Autonomy in interethnic couple was also manifested in more abstract forms, such as using metaphors and symbols in the interviews. Having a good marital autonomy helped the interethnic couple to combat external forces against them, either physical or psychological forces.

#### 4. Conclusion

This research finds three manifestations of interdependence among interethnic couple, namely: identity establishment, the use of power, and the utilization of resource. Three of them are manifested differently in the relation within the couple (interpersonal), individual spouse in her/his relation with the other (intrapersonal), between the couple and higher being (transcendental), and between the couple and other people or group (intergroup). Marital autonomy plays an important role to combat external disagreement from outside and maintain relation among the couple in the inside. From the results, it can be concluded that interethnic marriage is an integration media to build an interdependence model in many aspects of live. Chinese woman or Javanese man is considered as individual whose represents her/his clan or ethnic group. Therefore, interethnic marriage is seen as relational and social rather that grounded on interpersonal level.

It is important to remember that marriage for most people is a sensitive issue, especially in a debatable context such as interethnic marriage. It is understandable that each subject in this research had their own resistance when it came to personal issues. Therefore, building rapport played an important role in the beginning, within, and after the interview process.

It is also interesting to note that most of the interethnic marriages in this research came from relational conflict among the individual (i.e. disagreement between parent and child). Therefore, one has to be very careful not to overgeneralize results from this research to wider interethnic couple population.

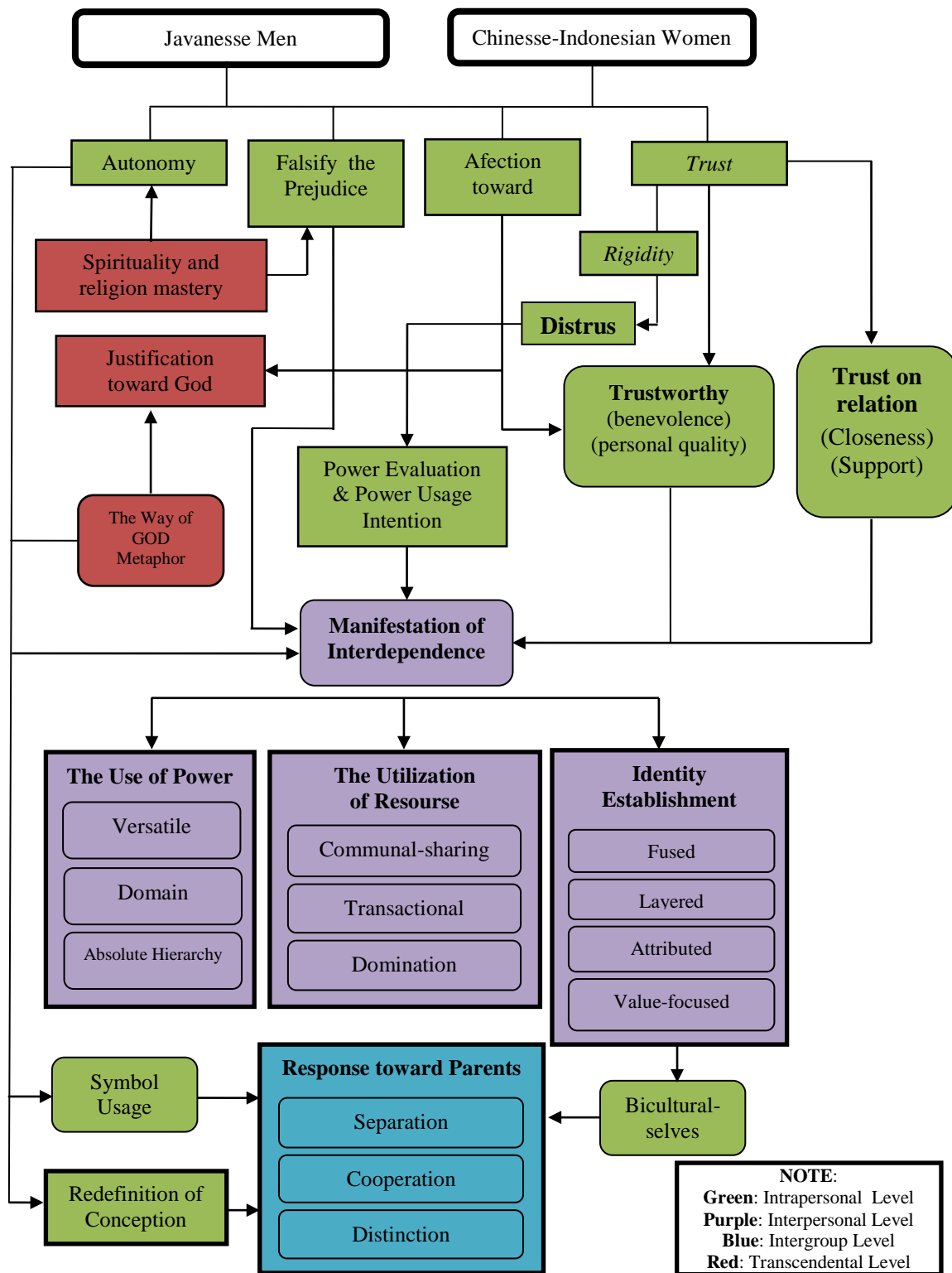


Figure 11. Dynamic of Interdependence Diagram

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