

THE WAY OF LIFE OF SINO-INDIAN FAMILIES

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- all my lovely friends who helped me.
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Life is so full of challenges that you cannot climb the ladder of success with your hands in your pocket.

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SYNOPSIS

The study concentrated on interethnic marriage of the Chinese and Indian ethnic groups. The focus of study is the way of life of five Sino-Indian families from Georgetown, Penang.

Chapter One presented the proposal of this research, the objective, scope, methodology, concepts and theories as well as problems encountered in research.

Chapter Two discussed the characteristics of the Sino-Indian family. Basic characteristics were illustrated like the ethnic affiliation of each partner, the family composition and the type of marital union.

Chapter Three dealt with the extra-familial relationship (in-laws and relatives) and the social interaction of the Sino-Indian family with the society around them.

Chapter Four displayed the way of life of each Sino-Indian family involved in this research in the areas of performance of rites and rituals, participation in religious activities, medium of communication (language), preference and preparation of food.

The final chapter presented the findings of this research, the significance of this research to the individual and society and the potential areas for future studies.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 : INTRODUCTION

" For sociologists in particular, the question of interethnic marriage holds a special appeal because of its significance in understanding the inner dynamics of society".

(RIAZ HASSAN, 1974 : 1)

Malaysia is a poly-ethnic society with three dominant ethnic groups (Malays, Chinese and Indians) and other minor ethnic units (Kadazans, Ibans, Eurasians, Bidayuhs, et cetera). These aggregates of people essentially share a common culture (national language, song, education) and interconnected differences that distinguish one discrete culture from others. Each ethnic of man possesses his own culture so that the members of one ethnic group behave differently from the members of other ethnic groups.

It is expressed that in plural societies like that of Malaysia, the road to communal harmony lies in marriages across communal lines. Racially mixed family is an essential feature of race relations (BENSON SUSAN, 1981 : 1). Sociologists have long taken into account the incidence of intermarriage as the final solvent of the cultural barriers

and the best index of assimilation. Intermarriage is defined as the marriage of persons deriving from those different in-groups and out-groups than the families which are culturally conceived as relevant to the choice of a spouse (GOODE, WILLIAM ; 1964 : 57). Sanusi Osman in his research on interethnic marriage in Malacca stated that the percentage of interethnic marriages are high in Malaysia among the minority group (1981 : 4).

This study evolves around this phenomenon of interethnic marriage and a deeper analysis is conducted in the cultural aspects of these marriages. Therefore, in the subsequent chapters, we will study the cultural role played by these families in our heterogeneous society.

1.2 : OBJECTIVE OF RESEARCH

The aim of this research is twofold. One objective is to trace the way of life of the Sino-Indian family. A Sino-Indian family has an Indian and Chinese as partners in marriage. Thus, having two distinct cultures in the household, there is a possibility that a Sino-Indian family may portray a way of life that is predominantly Indian, Chinese or a mixture of both, Indian and Chinese. So, the first aim is to see this way of life led by the five families involved in this research.

However, the way of life of one Sino-Indian family

may vary from the way of life of the other family. Therefore, the other objective of this study is to determine the reasons for this variation. One main characteristic that is assumed to determine this way of life corresponds to the type of marital union that these families facilitate. This type of marital union by DeJager (discussed later in theory) is determined by the degree of cultural involvement of each spouse in these marriages.

The other factors that are seen are the extra familial relationship and the social interaction with the society around them. So, the aim here is to see if these factors can be regarded as determinants of the way of life of a Sino-Indian family. These are the objectives of this study of the way of life of a Sino- Indian family.

1.3 : SCOPE OF RESEARCH

In this mini-dissertation, five Sino-Indian families were chosen as units of analysis. This study concentrates on the family structure as the family is a crucial organism in the transmission of culture from one generation to another. The families in this context is Sino-Indian, one partner is Indian while the other is Chinese.

The main focus is the way of life of these Sino-Indian families. 'Way of life' here refers to the cultural

aspect like the involvement in religious activities, celebration of festivals, performance of rites and rituals, the language used as the medium of communication and the preparation and preference of food. All these aspects represent the way of life of the Sino-Indian families.

The other aspect of research concerns the factors that are assumed to determine the way of life of these families. One of them is the marital type. This marital type is determined by the degree of cultural involvement of each spouse in these marriages. The other factors include the extra-familial relationship meaning the interaction and relationship of these families with their families and kin. The reactions of the parents of these couples are seen towards this interethnic marriage.

The other area is that of the interaction with the community around them like friends and the neighbourhood. An intense interaction is taken to be of great influence to the way of life. So, all this covers the scope of this research.

1.4 : PLACE AND DURATION OF RESEARCH

The place that has been chosen for this research is Georgetown, Penang. Penang Island lies at the northern extremity of the Straits of Malacca. Georgetown is the capital of Penang, its government centre and financial

heart. The city's kaleidoscope of changing colours and activities are varied and exciting (CECILIA TAN, 1986 : 5).

Two reasons have prompted the writer to choose Penang as the location of this research. One is that Penang is the writer's hometown. Hence, the writer is not only familiar with the surrounding areas but also the people. This would be important in fieldwork.

The second reason is because Penang which has half a million people is an interesting multi-ethnic society of Chinese, Malay, Indians, Eurasians and et cetera. This contributes to the wide variety of customs and culture.

Consequently, five families from Penang were chosen as units of analysis. These five families live in different areas in Penang. The places are Minden Heights and Glugor in the Jelutong District, Cheeseman Road in the Air Itam District and Bukit Jambul in the Bayan Lepas district. All these areas cater for the middle income group (RM 1000 - RM 3000) and are areas of multi -ethnic neighbourhood.

DURATION OF RESEARCH

Fieldwork began on the 15th of May and was completed on the 3rd of July. Ten days were spent in each family's house, doing direct observation and interviewing. One month was spent on pre-fieldwork (pilot study, library research and research proposal). Another one and a half

month (July and August) were spent in analysing the data, arrangement and literature review.

1.5 : CONCEPTS AND THEORIES

Concepts make up an important segment in this research. So, important concepts and theories used in this research are defined here.

CULTURE

A culture is the way of life of a specific group. It is something which is learnt through experiences in early life. An individual would develop strong emotional attachments to his culture. Edward B. Tylor defines this concept of culture as :

" Culture is that complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, law, morals, customs and any other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of society."

(ENCYCLOPAEDIA OF SOCIAL SCIENCES, 1968 : 555)

Therefore, culture can also be seen as a context in describing human behaviour.

ETHNIC

This term ethnic is derived from the Greek word 'ethnos' meaning tribe or race. In antropological

literature, the term ethnic group is generally understood as

"A social group which within a larger cultural and social system, claims or is accorded a special status in terms of a complex of traits which it exhibits".

(DICTIONARY OF SOCIAL SCIENCE, 1964 : 243).

Members of the same ethnic group can be said to share fundamental cultural values.

FAMILY

The family is an institutionalized bio-social group made up of adults, at least two of which are unrelated by blood and of the opposite sex, are married with children (DICTIONARY OF SOCIAL SCIENCE, 1964 : 257). When two persons of different sexes marry and produce children, they form the a family unit. This concept of family is an institution found in all human societies. There are several forms of family : nuclear family, extended family, biological family and simple family.

MARRIAGE

A marriage is understood as a union formed by two persons, a man and a woman. It is also known as the mating arrangement approved in society with special reference to the institutionalizing relationships of husband and wife .

1.5.1 : THEORY

DeJager, (RIAZ HASSAN, 1974 : 57) in his study of socially mixed marriage, used a scheme to differentiate between types of interethnic unions. Theoretically, according to him, nine possible marital combinations can be formed. These combinations result from witnessing the intermarrying partners' degree of cultural involvement. The degree and intensity of cultural involvement is referred to by the distinction of full, peripheral and nominal members of a particular ethnic group. Table 1.1 illustrates this typology of interethnic marriage.

TABLE 1.1 : TYPOLOGY OF INTER ETHNIC MARRIAGE

WIFE'S ETHNIC ROOTED -NESS		HUSBAND'S ETHNIC ROOTEDNESS		
		N.MEMBER	P.MEMBER	F.MEMBER
		(1)	(2)	(3)
	N.M	ACCOMODATION	ACCOMODATION	ASSIMILATION
	P.M.	ACCOMODATION (4)	ACCOMODATION (5)	ASSIMILATION (6)
	F.M	ASSIMILATION (7)	ASSIMILATION (8)	CONFLICT (9)

SOURCE : RIAZ HASSAN

N.M/N.MEMBER = NOMINAL MEMBER

P.M/P.MEMBER = PERIPHERAL MEMBER

F.M/F.MEMBER = FULL MEMBER

This is a typology that is formed of the nine possible marriage combinations according to the strength of cultural involvement of each marriage partner. In types (2), (4), (5) which is accommodation (a pattern of compromise) complete cultural homogenization is less likely. Accommodation at this point, can be defined as a process of compromise characterized by toleration (SILLS , 1968 : 478).

In this type of union, cultural compromise would probably happen whereby both partners make concessions to accommodate each others culture. The compromise cultural mixture achieved from this combination will be transmitted to the offspring. Therefore, for the purpose of this study, the families that fall into this category of 'Accommodation' are believed to have a culture that mirror an intermixture of two cultures in their way of life.

The inclination towards cultural homogenization would be more obvious in types (3), (6), (7), (8). In these unions, which is termed 'assimilation', a partner is willing to adopt the cultural patterns of the other. This concept of assimilation was not defined by DeJager in his study. Therefore, for this study, 'assimilation' is taken to refer to the process whereby a person is assimilated or absorbed into the more dominant group or culture. So, this would mean that the families that fall into this category show the predominance of the culture in their way of life depending

on who the full member is.

The cultural involvement of each spouse which was divided into three divisions represent the strength and intensity. Nominal members are those who are non-culturally involved his/her culture. Peripheral are those at mid-point while full members are those who are fully involved in his/her own culture. This scheme is relevant to this study of intermarriage. This type of marital union is assumed to characterize the way of life of the Sino-Indian family.

In relation to this feature of intermarriage which involves the process of ethnic assimilation, there is this feature of 'behavioural assimilation'. 'Behavioural assimilation' is defined as

" the inclusion and omission of spesifiable attitudes and cultural behavioural patterns by individuals or group as a result of physical or symbolic contact between or among individuals"

(RIAZ HASSAN, 1974 : 2)

In the context of this study, ' behavioural assimilation' is also assumed to take place in the domestic domain of the families.

1.6 : METHODOLOGY

Methodology is an important aspect of fieldwork.

In this research, the following methods have been employed.

INTERVIEW

Interview, was the main method used in this research. This was done on a semi-structured basis where open-ended questions and close-ended questions were asked at the same time depending on a particular situation. Open-ended questions give more flexibility while close-ended questions provide answers that are easier to code and analyse.

PARTICIPATION OBSERVATION

Direct observation was done on the five Sino-Indian families to study their way of life. This was also done on a semi-structured basis where there is a combination of structured and unstructured studies. In a structured study, the behaviour that is to be identified is identified whereas in an unstructured study, the natural occurrence of a particular situation is observed. So, in using this, the writer is able to quantify and simultaneously, has a natural setting (able to quantify without the accompanying artificiality of a structured study).

LIBRARY RESEARCH

The library was used extensively by the writer. It provided ideas and materials on this subject of intermarriage, gave definitions for concepts and words and had been of great assistance.

1.7 : PROBLEMS IN RESEARCH

The main problem concerned the reluctance of Sino-Indian families to be respondents. Only with the assistance of friends and relatives, finally five families were picked as units of analysis. The other problem was that of time. The time that was allocated for fieldwork had been short and insufficient. Interviews and observation had to be contained within a very short time leaving very little or no time for gaining much rapport with the respondents and for the retesting of any ambiguity.

The final problem involves the relationship with the respondents. At first, they seemed quite unresponsive and cautious. However, luckily they finally accepted the idea that they were units of analysis for a very short research. The problems faced in this research were taken more as challenges than obstacles because what is life without challenges.

CHAPTER TWO

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SINO-INDIAN FAMILY

2.1 : INTRODUCTION

This chapter attempts to present some of the characteristics of the Sino-Indian families in this research. Basic characteristics like ethnic affiliation of each spouse in the marriage, the ethnic group of the children and the family composition are displayed. In the same instance, the type of marital union that these families represent is shown with the view that this feature will influence the way of life of these Sino-Indian units. The types of marriage are based on DeJager's theoretical discussion of the scheme of different combinations of inter ethnic marriages (RIAZ HASSAN, 1974 : 57).

2.2 : BASIC CHARACTERISTICS

This study was conducted on five intermarried (Sino-Indian) families from Penang. These families are of the middle-income group (RM 1000 - RM 3000) with good educational background (with at least SPM qualifications). The term 'Sino-Indian' is used to represent these five families whereby one partner is Chinese and the other Indian. The family type of these families is the 'nuclear

type'. A nuclear unit is the family type that contains one married couple and unmarried children (KLEIN, 1978 : 49).

There are no Christian families involved in this study. The five families are of the Hindu and Buddhist faiths. At this point, it is appropriate to know the ethnic affiliation of each spouse in this marriage. This is presented in Table 2.1.

TABLE 2.1 : ETHNIC AFFILIATION OF EACH SPOUSE

UNITS OF ANALYSIS	ETHNIC AFFILIATION		CHILDREN'S ETHNIC GROUP
	FATHER	MOTHER	
FAMILY A	INDIAN	CHINESE	INDIAN
FAMILY B	INDIAN	CHINESE	INDIAN
FAMILY C	INDIAN	CHINESE	INDIAN
FAMILY D	INDIAN	CHINESE	INDIAN
FAMILY E	CHINESE	INDIAN	CHINESE

The above table showed the ethnic affiliation of each spouse in the marriage. The ethnic group of the children is also displayed because in the theoretical sense, the ethnic group of the children follows the ethnic affiliation of the father be it a mixed- marriage family or a non mixed-marriage family. Therefore, the children of Family A, B, C and D whose fathers are Indians are categorized as Indians while while the children of Family E

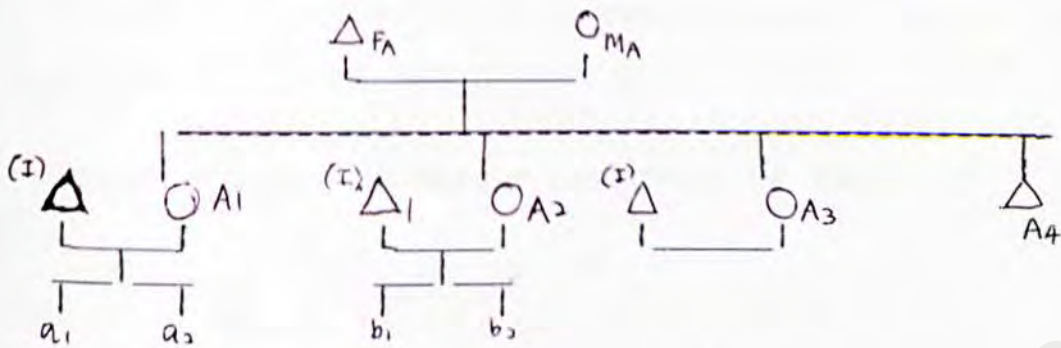
are Chinese, following the ethnic group of their father.

However, it should be stated here that this theoretical ethnic classification does not constitute the way of life of these Sino-Indian individuals. This is said because the children of Family B who are classified as Indians in the real sense do not live a life that is predominantly Indian. They speak fluent 'Hokkien' (Chinese dialect) and also perform Chinese rituals in temples (to be elaborately discussed in the subsequent chapters).

Now we come to another feature that is the family composition. The family composition of each Sino-Indian family is presented in Diagrams 2.2 (a), (b), (c), (d) and (e). Family A has 6 members in the family represented by Husband A/Father A (Indian), Wife A/Mother A (Chinese) and four children (A₁, A₂, A₃ and A₄). A₁, A₂ and A₃ are married and therefore form the sub-families. This is all presented in Diagram 2.2 (a). The ethnic group of the husbands of A₁, A₂ and A₃ are indicated in brackets. The ages of A₁, A₂, A₃ and A₄ are as following, 34, 32, 28 and 24 respectively. A₁ has two children, A₂ also has two children while A₃ has no children yet.

In the diagram, the children of A₁ and A₂ are represented by the alphabets of a₁, a₂, b₁ and b₂. This whole composition of Family A is illustrated by Diagram 2.2 (a) which shows the family structure of Family A.

DIAGRAM 2.2 (a) : STRUCTURE OF FAMILY A

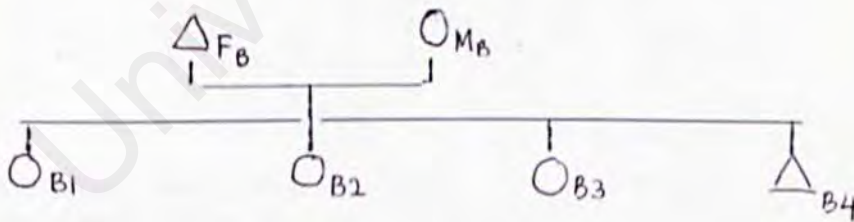


F_A - Father/Husband A
 M_A - Mother/ Wife A
 a_1 - daughter of A1
 a_2 - son of A1
 b_1 - daughter of A2
 b_2 - son of A2

(I) - Indian

Diagram 2.2 (b) shows the structure of Family B which has six members, Father B (Indian), Mother B (Chinese) and four children (B1, B2, B3 and B4).

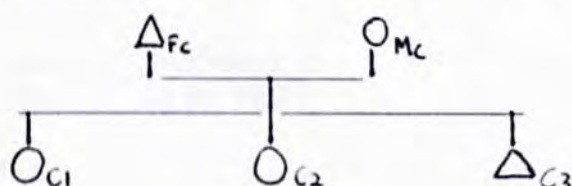
DIAGRAM 2.2 (b) : STRUCTURE OF FAMILY B



F - Father/ Husband B
 M - Mother/ Wife B
 $B1$ - daughter
 $B2$ - daughter
 $B3$ - daughter
 $B4$ - son

Diagram 2.2 (c) shows the family structure of Family C which has five members, Father, Mother and three children (C1, C2 and C3).

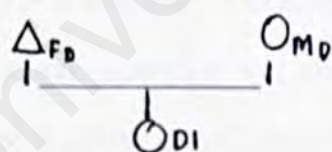
DIAGRAM 2.2(c) : FAMILY STRUCTURE OF FAMILY C



F_c - Father / husband C
 M_c - Mother / Wife C
 C_1 - daughter
 C_2 - daughter
 C_3 - son

Family D is composed of only three members, Father D (Indian), Mother D (Chinese) and D1. Diagram 2.2 (d) displays this structure of Family D.

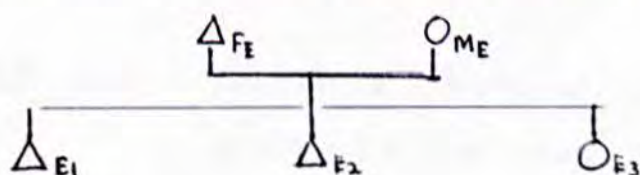
TABLE 2.2 (d) : FAMILY STRUCTURE OF FAMILY D






F_D - Father/ Husband D
 M_D - Mother/ Wife D
 D_1 - daughter

Family E, on the other hand, has five members, Father E, Mother E and the children (E1, E2 and E3). Father E is Chinese and Mother E an Indian. Table 2.2 (e) shows this family structure.

Table 2.2(e) : THE STRUCTURE OF FAMILY E



F_E - Father / Husband E
 M_E - Mother / Wife E
 E_1 - son
 E_2 - son
 E_3 - daughter

 - married to
 - Male
 - Female

So, the above showed the basic characteristics of the Sino-Indian families. At this point of discussion, we will analyse the type of marital union these families represent.

2.3 : TYPES OF MARITAL UNION

This part studies the type of marital union that each family facilitate. This is considered an important characteristic because it can give a general idea of the way of life of each family to be either predominantly Indian, Chinese or a mixture of Indian and Chinese. This 'type of marital union' refers to De Jager's theoretical discussion of the nine possible combinations that can emerge in an inter-ethnic marriage (typology of this is shown in Chapter One).

The degree of cultural involvement of each spouse in his/her own culture is crucial in determining this union. This degree is represented by three distinctions of

'full', 'peripheral' and 'nominal'. Table 2.3 illustrates this feature of types of marital union

TABLE 2.3 : DEGREE OF CULTURAL INVOLVEMENT OF EACH SPOUSE AND THE TYPE OF MARITAL UNION.

DEGREE OF CULTURAL INVOLVE -MENT	SPOUSE IN MARRIAGE		TYPE OF MARITAL UNION
	HUSBAND	WIFE	
	FULL (A)	NOMINAL (A)	ASSIMILATION
	PERIPHERAL (B)	PERIPHERAL (B)	ACCOMODATION
	FULL (A)	NOMINAL (A)	ASSIMILATION
	PERIPHERAL (D)	PERIPHERAL (D)	ACCOMODATION
	NOMINAL (E)	PERIPHERAL (E)	ACCOMODATION

From Table 2.3, we get a picture of the the types of marital unions these marriages constitute. As it is seen, there are two types of this union, 'Assimilation' and 'Accomodation'. 'Assimilation', in this context, is taken to mean a process whereby a person is assimilated/absorbed into a dominant group. 'Accomodation' refers to the process of compromise where both partners make concessions to accomodate each other's culture.

So, from the table, it can be observed that these five families fall into the two types. Family A and Family C, with a full member and a nominal member, are in the category of 'Assimilation'. Family B and Family D, with two partners

as peripheral members, and Family E with one as peripheral and the other, nominal, come under the 'Accommodation' pattern.

Husband A, who is a full member of his ethno-cultural group is the eldest son in his family. After the death of his father, he was expected to take over the central role of performing the religious rituals in his house. As the eldest son too, he was to be the head of the family and this dominant character of his was carried on to his own wife and children.

Being the full member, he is a dominant partner in marriage. Wife A, on the other hand, who is a nominal member of her Chinese ethnic group, before and after marriage, is assimilated into her husband's strong influence. As a result of this assimilation, the way of life reflects the culture that is more dominant and in this case, it is that of the Indian ethnic group.

As for the case of Family C whose Husband C is also a full member, there is the possible emergence of cultural homogenization and assimilation into the dominant culture. In this sense, it is of Husband C who is Indian. His 'full' involvement in his ethno-cultural group is a result of his strong influence in his family before marriage. Father/Husband C is the eldest in the family and is always moulded by his parents to play the role of the

head of the family when his father is not around (stated by Father/Husband C).

Hence, his (Father/Husband C) degree of cultural involvement has contributed to the display of the dominant characteristics of his own culture with his wife and children. In addition to this, Mother/Wife C who is a nominal (passive) member of her own culture can easily absorb the characteristics of her husband's culture. So, their marital type is appropriately 'Assimilation' and this is evidently shown in their way of life (discussed in Chapter Four) which is predominantly Indian (Father/Husband C's ethno-cultural group).

In relation to this, we see that the peripherality of the partners in Family B and D enables the process of accomodation where both partners make concessions to fit each other's cultural traits. This is said because a peripheral member is seen to practise more flexibility than a fully involved person with more room for accomodation. Evidently, the way of life of Family B and D as analysed and observed also display the way of life that reflects an intermixture of the cultural traits of the Indian and the Chinese. This implies that there have been a process of accomodation. One example to illustarte this point is seen in the performance of daily rituals. Having two altars in the house (Hindu and Chinese) they perform the Chinese

rituals of burning joss-sticks for the Chinese altar and incense and camphor (Indian sacred things for worshipping) at the Indian altar.

Thus, from the above presentation, it can be derived that this characteristic of type of marital union can constitute a significant role in determining the way of life as evidently shown by the five Sino-Indian families. This marital union is greatly influenced by the degree of cultural involvement of each of the individual member in the marriage and a full member will assert his dominance as illustrated by Husband A and C while nominal and peripheral members will be more accomodating like that of Families B, D and E.

CHAPTER THREE

EXTRA-FAMILIAL AND SOCIETAL EFFECTS ON THE WAY OF LIFE

3.1 : INTRODUCTION

The first segment of this research illustrated the basic characteristics of each Sino-Indian family involved in this study. Simultaneously, it also delineated that the type of marital union that they facilitate influences the family's way of life. This second section would focus on the other area of study that is the secondary relationship like extra-familial relationship (in-laws and relatives) and the social non-familial relationship (friends and neighbours). These factors are seen to be of influence to the Sino-Indian's way of life. Extra-familial relationship, that is the relationship between the couples of this research families with their kin, is taken as a crucial factor in influencing the way of life. This is because intensive interaction with any sides of relatives (Indian or Chinese) will indirectly cause certain cultural traits to be incorporated in the mixed-marriage 's family culture. The extra-familial relationship is seen in the context of the reactions towards the marriage and the involvement of these relatives in the lives of these Sino-Indian families. Social non-familial relationship on the other hand, refers to the

interaction of the members of these intermarried families with their friends and neighbours at the work place, school and place of residence.

3.2 : REACTIONS OF FAMILY AND KIN

Intermarriage represents a deviation from the universal norm of marriage. In almost all societies, a large majority of people are predominantly endogamous (marry within the ethnic group or clan). Therefore, the decision to enter into an inter ethnic marriage tends to be a contributing factor to the breakdown of relations between an individual and his or her kin (BENSON SUSAN, 1981 : 75).

The reactions of the parents of the mixed-marriage couple towards their children's decision to marry outside their ethnic group constitute an important aspect. For the purpose of this study, three types or forms of reactions are focused on, immediate acceptance, initial opposition then acceptance and total/permanent opposition /ostracism. Acceptance is an important feature because if a person is accepted by the family and kin of his/her partner, the process of adjustment and accomodation would be less difficult. The cultural traits of the in-laws and relatives will be easier absorbed and learnt as a result of this interaction.

Immediate acceptance which refers to positive and

favourable response from the parents of these intermarried (Sino-Indian) couples is not found in this study. None of the five Sino-Indian families involved in this research received this kind of immediate favourable reaction from their 'families of origin'. The phrase 'family of origin' is used to denote the parents and siblings (either side) of the intermarried couples.

The second form of reaction is the 'initial period of opposition then acceptance'. This is when there is an initial period of objection and hostility then there is acceptance. Three of the intermarried couples from families B, D and E in this study experienced this reaction from their families of origin.

In the beginning, the parents of Father/Husband B and Mother/Wife B objected to their decision to marry outside their own ethnic group. But their parents eventually abandoned their attempts to change their childrens' minds when they realized that the end results would be complete loss of contact. This was mentioned by the Mother of Wife B in an interview with her. Mother/Wife B is the only child in her family and her mother did not wish to lose her in any way especially after the death of Mother/Wife B's father.

That is why, in the end, Mother/Wife B's decision to marry an Indian man was accepted by her mother

and her close relatives. Therefore, the children of Family B are close to their maternal grandmother and relatives (Chinese) who visit them quite often. In fact, Mother of Wife B was the central focus of caretaking because she looked after Mother/ Wife B and her infants during the confinement period after childbirth. Family B's members' interaction with this side of kin (Chinese) encouraged them to learn one of the Chinese dialect, 'Hokkien', and participate in religious activities like visiting the graves on 'Cheng Beng' (Hungry Ghost Festival) and visiting Buddhist temples on auspicious days.

As for the case of Father/Husband B, his parents too were not in favour of his idea of marrying a Chinese girl. However, when they realized that there was no way he was changing his mind and after seeing his wife-to-be (Wife B) in 'saree' (Indian traditional costume) several times, they finally accepted the idea. But, the members of Family B are not as close to the Indian side of kin because they (Husband B's parents and relatives) are staying in Johor while Family B is in Penang. Interaction and communication only occur on occasions like 'Deepavali' (the Festival of Lights) and 'Thaipusam'. Thus, the members of Family B are closer to their Chinese side of kin who are closer in contact and maintain a certain degree of closeness to the Indian side.

This 'initial period of opposition then acceptance' was also experienced by the couple of Family D. Father/Husband D's parents and close relatives objected to the idea of him marrying outside his clan(Ceylonese). Similarly, the parents and siblings of Mother/Wife D too opposed to the decision.

Despite all these opposition, they (Husband D and Wife D) registered themselves with the Registrar Department to make their marriage legal. They did not have any elaborate wedding ceremony. The period of acceptance only came, as recalled by Husband D, after the birth of D1 (the only child of Family D). After this, contacts with the two parties (Indian and Chinese) became more intensive. Occasions like Chinese New Year is spent with the family of Mother/Wife D while Deepavali is celebrated with the family and relatives of Father/Husband D.

However, Family D is closer to the Chinese side of kin who visits them more often than the Indian one. The mother of Wife D (Chinese) stays in their house quite often. As a result of an intensive interaction with her maternal grandmother and cousins, D1 picked up the 'Cantonese' dialect which she speaks fluently. The family of Husband D still keeps a low-intensity relationship with Family D. Therefore, the members in Family D are closer to the Chinese side than the Indian.

As for the case of Family E, the opposition was stronger from the side of Father/Husband E who is a Chinese. His family did not like the idea of him marrying an Indian woman. Although they have now accepted it, interaction is still kept at a low level. Father/Husband E only takes his family to visit his family on Chinese New Year and other important festivals. On the other hand, Mother/Wife E's parents were more sympathetic towards the couple. As a result of this, the sense of closeness was developed more with the kin of Wife E (Indian)

The active interaction of the children of Family E with their mother's side (Indian) has influenced their way of life. This is evident in the children speaking fluent Tamil (it must be remembered that these children are legally Chinese and have Chinese names and surname). They also wear a lot of Indian traditional attire like the 'Jeepa' (for the Indian male) and 'punjabi suit' (for the Indian female). Nevertheless, the children of Family E can also speak a fair amount of Cantonese. This was taught by Father/Husband E so that the children would not feel left out when communicating or interacting with the Chinese community especially with their own grandparents and relatives.

The 'total/permanent opposition' was faced by the couples of Family A and Family C. In this context, the

parents totally abandon any form of interaction and contact with their children. This impact of hostility was felt strongly by Mother/Wife A and Mother/Wife C. Their decisions to marry outside their ethnic group (Chinese) caused them to be rejected by their parents and relatives. The parents of Mother/Wife A disowned her and totally ended all forms of contact with her. In the same instance, the parents of Wife C too abandoned contacts with her. So, until today they have no news of their families of origin.

As for the parents of their husbands, the stage of acceptance only came before the wedding. Hence, in these two cases of Family A and Family C, they are only close to their Indian side of kin as the relationship with the Chinese side has been totally cut off. Thus, this is one of the reasons why the way of life of Families A and C are predominantly Indian (to be discussed in Chapter Four).

In relation to this, the couples of Family A and C also stayed with the husband's parents (Indian) after their marriage. This would contribute more to influencing their way of life because the absorption of the Indian cultural traits would be more intense. As for the Families of B, D and E, they stayed separately on their own after marriage as nuclear families.

At this point of discussion, it is accurate to state thus that the relationship of the Sino-Indian family

with their family and kin can be a contributing factor in determining their way of life. This way of life of each family would be discussed more elaborately in Chapter Four.

3.3 : SOCIAL FACTORS : FRIENDS AND NEIGHBOURS

The social circle of friends is an important field for interaction and communication. Active interaction and relationships can to a certain extent, be of influence to one's way of life. This is because one may absorb or learn the cultural traits of friends and apply them to his or her life. This is made possible because a lot of time is spent with friends at school, college, university or at the work place.

This is also evident in the case of Sino-Indians. D1 (the only child in Family D), for example, learnt to speak 'Hokkien' (one of the Chinese dialect) from her interaction with her Chinese school friends. Simultaneously, she also learnt more of her Hindu faith after following her friends to temples and religious talks. This had made her more involved in her Hindu religion (stated in interview with her). In this sense too, Mother/ Wife D (mother to D1) has learnt a lot from her Indian friends about Hindu rites and rituals and Indian cooking.

In the same instance, B1, who is in university and interacts with a lot of Indian friends and acquaintances has

absorbed some the Indian cultural traits that she never had the opportunity to learn at home. This included the Tamil language in which she understands a minimal amount of it now. On the other hand, B3 (sister of B1), who mixes with mostly Chinese friends has developed a strong liking for Chinese songs, movies and food.

This influence from friends is also apparent in E2 and E3. As a result of active interaction with Indian friends, they have become more involved in Hindu religious activities especially during festivals like 'Thaipusam'. In the same context, Mother/ Wife E's interaction with her Chinese neighbours has helped her in her domestic domain in the areas of Chinese cooking and boiling of Chinese medicinal herbs for any illnesses.

On the whole, it can be observed that, except for Family D, the neighbourhood of the Sino- Indian families are a multi-ethnic community (the neighbourhood of Family D is predominantly Chinese). Generally, it is also seen that the members of these families mix with people from all ethnic groups. In fact, some of their friends from school and work are of mixed-parentage too. Family D has two family friends who are also Sino-Indian.

The process of absorption or learning of cultural traits is likely to occur when there is an intense interaction with the individual or group or when there is a

strong desire to acquire those particular traits. This is seen in this context of the members of the Sino-Indian families whereby they learn and absorb to a certain extent the characteristics of their friends' cultural traits. Even though this community of friends and neighbours constitute a small fragment of influence on the way of life of these Sino-Indian families, it can in a way help them in filling up the empty spaces of their 'mixed' lifestyles and cope with burdens of isolation by some kins.

CHAPTER FOUR

THE WAY OF LIFE OF THE SINO-INDIAN FAMILY

4.1 : INTRODUCTION

The first two chapters dealt mainly with the factors that influence the way of life of the Sino-Indian family. This chapter will trace this way of life of the Sino-Indian family involved in this research. 'Way of life' here is taken to refer to these areas of observation, religious activities, rites and rituals, language, food and the celebration of festivals. The type of marital union had suggested the cultural inclination of these families (discussed in Chapter Two). From a direct observation done on these families, this cultural inclination is further proven. Table 4.1 illustrates this cultural inclination that have been observed of these five families.

TABLE 4.1 : CULTURAL INCLINATION OF EACH FAMILY

UNITS OF ANALYSIS	CULTURAL INCLINATION
FAMILY A	INDIAN
FAMILY B	MIXED (> CHINESE)
FAMILY C	INDIAN
FAMILY D	MIXED (> CHINESE)
FAMILY E	MIXED (> INDIAN)

> CHINESE - MORE CHINESE

> INDIAN - MORE INDIAN

From the illustration of Table 4.1, it can be seen that Family A and Family C show the inclination towards the Indian way of life. Conversely, Family B and D have a strong influence of the Chinese cultural traits while Family E shows the inclination of the Indian cultural traits.

For the purpose of this study, the phrase 'Indian way of life' refers to the lifestyle that displays the cultural characteristics that can correspond to the Indian ethnic group. On the other hand, the term 'mixed' shows the combination of the two (Indian and Chinese). So, a more elaborate and further description of these Sino-Indian families are presented in the individual family measures below.

4.2 : INDIVIDUAL FAMILY MEASURES

FAMILY A

Table 4.1 illustrates that the way of life of Family A is predominantly Indian. This is evidently portrayed by the members of Family A. In the house of Family A, there is an elaborate Indian altar in the special prayer room. The household religion is Hinduism. Therefore, all the religious activities and rites and rituals performed in the household and by the family members correspond to the Hindu religion which in a way is reflective of the Indian way of life. All

the children (A1, A2, A3 and A4) went through the Indian ritual shaving and the traditional name-giving ceremony when they were infants. In addition to this, A1, A2 and A3 who are married also had elaborate, traditional Indian weddings in accordance with Hindu the rites and rituals.

In tracing the way of life of Family A, it is apparent that Mother/Wife A is a strong contributing force. This is seen in the sense that she has learnt to live a typical Indian way of life, wearing the 'saree' (Indian traditional costume) whenever she goes out with the traditional 'putuu' (a blot on the forehead worn by Indian females) on her forehead. In addition to this, she also cooks mostly Indian food like 'thosai' (Indian pancake).

The children of Family A only converse in English and Bahasa Malaysia. However, they do understand a smattering of the Tamil language. Mother/Wife A who can speak 'Cantonese' (one of the Chinese dialect) only uses when it is necessary like in the market and sundry shops. In the area of celebration of festivals, Family A celebrates 'Deepavali' (Festival of Lights) and other religious festivals like 'Thaiponggal' and 'Thaipusam' which is associated with the Hindu religion.

So, on the whole, it can be deduced that Family A's lifestyle is predominantly Indian. They mirror, in the cultural aspects of their life, elements that

correspond to the Indian ethnic group.

FAMILY B

Generally, the way of life of Family B shows the mixture of the cultural elements from the Indian and Chinese groups. This is especially true in the areas of religious beliefs, activities, rites and rituals. In the household of Family B, there are two different altars, the Chinese altar with the statue of the 'Goddess of Mercy' and an Indian altar with the images of the Hindu gods and goddesses. Therefore, the religious activities and rituals involve these two faiths which are Hinduism and Taoism.

In relation to the above, it is observed that the members abstain from meat (follow a vegetarian diet) on Fridays following the Hindu religion. Simultaneously, they also follow a vegetarian diet on the fifteenth day of the full moon on the Chinese calendar. This indicates a mixture of both Chinese and Indian influence. The members of Family B, especially the parents, visit Chinese temples on auspicious days like the first day of the full moon and Indian temples on Tuesdays and Fridays which are holy days for the Indians.

This feature of intermixture was also evident in the performance of childbirth rites. All the children of Family B, when they were infants went through the traditional Chinese full moon celebration and the

traditional Indian name-giving and ritual shaving of hair. In relation to this, in the celebration of festivals, two main festivals are celebrated by Family B, Chinese New Year and Deepavali. On Chinese New Year, the traditional hanging of the red banner is also practised. Chinese families usually hang a red banner on their doorway on Chinese New Year as a symbol of prosperity and good luck.

Family B's inclination towards the Chinese cultural traits are observed in the areas of language and food. Children of Family B speak 'Hokkien' (a Chinese dialect) fluently and is the common language for communication in the household besides English. As for food, Mother/Wife B, most of the time, cook Chinese food. Indian food like 'thosai', 'dhall curry', 'vadai' (Indian traditional cake) and other types of Indian food are always eaten outside the house. However, the members of Family B, when asked their preference for food (choice between Indian and Chinese), chose Chinese food (except for Father/Husband B).

Thus, all that is illustrated briefly characterizes the way of life of Family B. To one extent, they portray an intermixture of the cultural traits of the Indian and the Chinese but in some aspects, it is more of Chinese than the Indian.

FAMILY C

Table 4.1 shows that the cultural inclination of Family C is Indian meaning that the way of life of this family is predominantly Indian. The contributing force of this is significantly that Father /Husband C (Indian) is a strong and dominant member of this family. The areas of religious activities and beliefs, rites and rituals, celebration of festivals and food all show the influence of the Indian cultural traits.

Family C's household has an elaborate Hindu altar. On Fridays, special prayers will be held in the house to worship the Hindu gods and goddesses. On occasions like this, 'Bhajans' (hymns to worship the deities) are sung. Hence, in Family C, the performance of any rites and rituals will pertain to the Hindu religion like the pregnancy rites, daily rituals and others because Hinduism is the household religion.

In the area of food, there is also a strong Indian influence. This is seen in the food cooked by Mother/Wife C which is typically Indian like, 'Thosai', 'apolam' (Indian pancake) which are served for breakfast. Generally, it has been observed that the food preference and food served in the domestic domain of Family C show an Indian influence.

In the area of oral culture, the children of

Family C understand a smattering of the Tamil language as a result of interaction with their paternal grandparents (Indian). However, in the household, English is used as the medium of communication. Mother/Wife C who can speak her native dialect of 'Hokkien' does not use it often unless the situation calls for it. The brief observation of Family C gives an evident example of their inclination towards the Indian way of life.

FAMILY D

Table 4.1 illustrated that the cultural inclination of Family D is towards the Chinese. At this point, we see that this is evident mainly because of Family D's closeness to their Chinese side of kin and their family interaction with the society around them which is predominantly Chinese. Nonetheless, there is also a display of the mixture of the cultural traits of the Indian and the Chinese.

The evidence of the feature of intermixture is observed in the domain of rites and rituals, the celebration of festivals and religious beliefs and activities. Like that of Family B, the house of Family D also has two different altars, the Chinese and the Indian. This implies that the religious rites and rituals that are performed are of the two faiths, Hinduism and Taoist. From the observation, it is

also seen that the members in Family D celebrate both the religious festivals of Indian and Chinese. An example of this is the celebration of 'Thaipusam' (Indian) and alternatively 'Cheng Beng' (Hungry Ghost Festival).

In the aspect of oral culture, the members in Family D, specifically Mother D and D1, use 'Cantonese' (Chinese dialect) as the communication language. In addition to this, D1 also speaks 'Hokkien' (another Chinese dialect) to her friends. D1 learnt the 'Hokkien' dialect from her friends in school. In the domain of food, Mother D had stated that she tries to cook a mixture of both like for example; 'bak kut teh' (herbal Chinese soup) and 'dhall' (green beans) curry. But, when asked of preference, Chinese food was picked to Indian food.

Therefore, a general perception of the way of life of Family D would be that of an intermixture of Indian and Chinese with some aspects like language showing the strong influence of the Chinese.

FAMILY E

The way of life of Family E is an interesting feature of study. Although the children of Family E are 'supposed to be' Chinese (they have Chinese surname and names), most aspects of their way of life reflect more Indian cultural traits. One strong force that contribute to

this is undoubtedly, their closeness to their Indian side of kin (grandparents and cousins).

Another contributing factor would be the degree of cultural involvement of Husband E in his ethno-cultural group. Being a nominal member, he does not impose his cultural influence on his children and wife except in the area of language. Children of Family E speak a fair amount of 'Cantonese' which was taught by their father. But, in relation to this, the children have a fluent command of the Tamil language. The children had picked up the Tamil language from their mother and relatives. The preference for food of the members of Family E is towards Chinese food. But in the household, Mother E cooks a mixture of both the Chinese and the Indian. Whenever the children or the whole family go out to eat, it usually for Chinese food.

In other areas like religious beliefs, activities and rites and rituals, there is a strong Indian influence. All the children have chosen Hinduism as their religion even though theoretically they are supposed to be Buddhists following the ethnic affiliation of their father (Chinese). The children and mother of Family E only visits Buddhist temples when it is required of them to go, with their father or paternal grandparents (Chinese). However, being a nominal member of his ethno-cultural group, Father/Husband E, is not strongly involved in his religion and therefore only visits

the Buddhist temple on once or twice a year (stated by Father/Husband E) on auspicious days like 'Wesak day'.

In the celebration of festivals, Family E celebrates both, the Chinese New Year and Deepavali. On Chinese New Year, they visit Father/Husband E's family in Kuantan. In the performance of religious activities in the domestic domain, there is a strong display of the Indian influence. In the household, there is only the Hindu altar. Thus, the religious activities and rituals pertain to that of the Hindu religion. The children of Family E are also given Indian names (their Indian name comes before their Chinese surname and name) and a name-giving ceremony was held for each one of them in the traditional way (ritual shaving of hair by a temple priest and prayers held). At this point, we can conclude by stating that Family E's way of life can be characterized by a predominantly Indian influence with a small fragment of the Chinese influence in language and preference for food.

4.3 : GENERAL PERCEPTION

Therefore, having analysed the individual measures of the way of life of each Sino-Indian family, we see the extent to which the degree of cultural involvement and the relationship with family and kin can influence their ways of life. Two families, A and C live a predominantly Indian way

of life similar to that of any uniculture Indian family. Family E show a strong Indian influence while Families B and D display features of intermixture as well as more Chinese cultural traits than that of Indian. Hence, these five individual measures have given a general perception of the different ways of life that can be led by mixed-marriage families specifically Sino-Indian families.

CHAPTER FIVE

CONCLUSION

5.1 : CONCLUSION : THE FINDINGS

This study had attempted to trace the way of life of five Sino-Indian families and to determine the conditions that play a part in their way of life. Generally, from this research, it is found that two Sino-Indian families (A and C) are predominantly Indian with no inclusion of any Chinese influence while the other three families display the feature of intermixture of Indian and Chinese.

The conditions that were used to determine the way of life of each family also displayed their significance. The findings showed that the families that showed the dominance of one culture (Family A and C showed the dominance of the Indian influence) are in the 'Assimilation' marital type, are close to only their Indian family and kin and interact quite intensely with the Indian community (friends and neighbours). Hence, the members of these two families live a predominantly Indian way of life despite the fact that in their domestic domain there are two people with two differing original cultures and way of life. Thus, it is apparent at this point to say that the characteristic of marital type and the closeness and

interaction with relatives and friends can have a strong effect on the way of life of a Sino-Indian family as shown evidently by these two families.

The other type of marital union that is 'Accomodation' is predicted to show the feature of intermixture. This was evidently shown by the other three Sino-Indian families of this research. They fell into this marital type and their way of life apparently displayed this feature of intermixture which also proves that they are involved in the process of accomodation as mentioned by DeJager in his theoretical framework. At this juncture, it is appropriate to recall another objective of this study that is to examine the conditions that determine the ways of life.

Although the marital type gives us a general idea of the Sino-Indian way of life, there are other social factors that were assumed as determinants like the extra-familial relationship and the interaction with society. This is further proved by the findings shown by the other three Sino-Indian families that displayed the feature of intermixture. Even though each family (B,D and E) showed the incorporation of the Chinese and Indian cultural traits, each of these families vary in their task of 'inclusion and omission'. What is meant by this is that two of the three families (B and D) had more elements of the Chinese

influence while Family E had more influence of the Indian influence. Therefore, the conditions that were assumed to determine this variation that is the relationship and interaction with family, kin and society, proved to be true.

Families B and D which have more Chinese influence are closer to their Chinese relatives and grandparents. Conversely, Family E which display more elements of the Indian side, are closer to their Indian side of relatives. This is because, as it is assumed in the earlier chapters, intense interaction can help the process of absorption of cultural traits like language and involvement in religious activities. Therefore the assumption that extra-familial relationship can have an effect on the way of life is apparently true.

On the other hand, the effect of society around these Sino-Indian families also showed its significance in determining their way of life in certain aspects like language and participation in rituals and religious activities. This is proven by D1 who had learnt 'Hokkien' from her friends and B1 who acquired knowledge of her religion from the interaction with her friends.

Thus, at this point of discussion, where the findings have equated with the aims of this study, it is appropriate to conclude that the way of life of a Sino-Indian family is determined by various factors and the important factors that have proven to be of strong influence

are the type of marital union that they facilitate, the extra-familial relationship and the interaction with friends and neighbours.

The type of marital union had proved to be an important factor to give a general idea of the family's way of life but it has to be remembered too that this type of marital union depends solely on the degree of cultural involvement. In this research, none of the Sino-Indian families were at conflict because no two partners in the marriage had been full members.

This degree of cultural involvement was also made more significant by the inclusion of Family E. Family E's children are 'legally' Chinese because they follow the ethnic affiliation of their father who is Chinese but they have not been exposed to the Chinese cultural traits because their father is a nominal member who is not involved at all in his own culture. So, this is to prove a point why the degree of cultural involvement has been used as a determinant in examining the way of life.

So, as a final conclusion, it is accurate to state that this way of life of the Sino-Indian family had been of great interest and difficulty. The way of life of a family, worse, of a mixed-marriage family, is a complex feature because different families live different lifestyles. This is like when one is examining a cut diamond with its many

facets, each facet reflects a different character even though they belong to one stone.

5.2 : SIGNIFICANCE OF THE RESEARCH

This research had been effective in showing the different cultural patterns of a mixed-marriage family. 'Different cultural patterns', in this context, refers to the cultural inclination of each family and the cultural traits that they portray in their everyday life. In observing this, we see its significance in helping us understand the inner dynamics of our multi-ethnic society. If we can understand how two people of two distinct cultures can form a happy unit, then we can comprehend, in the macroscopic level, the inter-ethnic relations of our Malaysian people. This is the significance of this study to an individual in this country of poly-ethnicity.

This study has also made us realize that our way of life depends a great deal on our family and the society around us. As an individual, it is always of importance that we reserve a small fragment of our lives to accommodate our family and friends. In addition to this, this study has also conveyed a message that compromise and tolerance is fundamental in the process of adjustment with people of all ethnic groups and creed to ensure a harmonious and stable way of life.

5.3 : AREAS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

Intermarriage is a very interesting field of investigation. Like the marriage itself, this subject of intermarriage is a complex phenomenon. It has a wide scope of different dimensions to it and this provides a strong basis for future study.

Other areas that are potential for future studies include the identity formation of these mixed-parentage children, the biological implications of this union, the amalgamation of religion, the reasons for venturing into intermarriage and the divorce rates of these marriages.

The study of identity is an important feature because it induces the position of the mixed-parentage child in the social structure of society. For mixed-parentage child to pick his or her cultural identity is a difficult task because they are always faced with the problem of an ambiguous identity. A mixed-parentage child (Sino-Indian) was asked in the process of research, "If Malaysia were to be divided into three ethnic territories, Malay, Indian and Chinese, which territory would you choose?". Unsure of her own identity, the mixed-parentage child could not answer the question. This question leaves us with the impression that the subject of identity opens wide a field for examination.

The area of divorce rates amongst mixed-marriage couples also seem to be of interest. The implication of this

would be how many of these marriages succeed and how many fail. The reasons for these marriages too can be an interesting area as there must be some reasons why two people of different ethnic group and religion would want to indulge in such a complex situation.

Thus, it can be concluded that intermarriages offer many areas of research. In a plural society like Malaysia, intermarriage would become a very common phenomenon in years to come when we move towards a more challenging society.

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