

# Integration's Impact on Mixed-Gendered Batak-American Students' Perceptions of Batak Toba Gender Norms

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## Abstrak

Batak Toba adalah salah satu budaya etnis patriarki di Indonesia, dengan standar gender yang ketat diterapkan di kalangan masyarakatnya. Nenek moyang orang Indonesia Batak Toba-Amerika yang hidup di bawah norma gender Batak dan Egalitarian mungkin mempunyai sudut pandang berbeda mengenai standar gender etnis mereka akibat integrasi di Amerika. Tujuan dari penelitian ini adalah untuk mengetahui pengaruh asimilasi terhadap persepsi nenek moyang campuran Batak Toba-Amerika terhadap norma gender etnis Batak Toba. Penelitian ini merupakan salah satu contoh etnografi digital. Untuk memecahkan masalah penelitian, penelitian ini menggunakan asimilasi tersegmentasi Portes dan Zhou. Akibatnya, asimilasi mempengaruhi perspektif campuran nenek moyang orang Batak Toba-Amerika terhadap norma gender Batak, menyebabkan mereka lebih menyesuaikan diri dengan norma gender Egalitarian Amerika dan struktur keluarga Egalitarian Amerika sebagai akibat dari sumber daya manusia.

**Kata Kunci :** *Asimilasi, Perspektif, Batak – Toba Amerika, Norma Gender*

## Abstract

Batak Toba is one of Indonesia's patriarchal ethnic cultures, with severe gender standards applied among its people. Belended ancestor of Indonesian Batak Toba-Americans who live under both Batak and Egalitarian gender norms may have a distinct viewpoint on their ethnic gender standards due to integration in America. The purpose of this study is to determine the effects of assimilation on blended ancestor of Batak Toba-Americans' perceptions of Batak Toba ethnic gender norms. This study is an example of digital ethnography. To solve the study issues, the research used Portes and Zhou's segmented assimilation. As a result, assimilation influences blended ancestor of Batak Toba -American perspectives on Batak gender norms, causing them to conform more to American Egalitarian gender norms and American Egalitarian family structure as a result of human capital.

**Keywords:** *Assimilation, Perspective, Batak – Toba American, Gender Norms*

## INTRODUCTION

"America is White and Black and Latino and Asian. America is mixed. American is immigrants." – Jose Antonio Vargas [13] After a long racist Chinese exclusion acts in 1882 [2], a new light came for Asian-American when Federal Law called Immigrant Nationality Act was signed in to law by President Lyndon B. Johnson in 1965 (Lee, 2016) which gave them rights to be treated as a citizen in the United States [2]

After the immigrant nationality act was passed, the coming of Asian immigrants from different parts of Asia increased, included immigrants from Indonesia. The first Indonesian immigrant wave happened in 1965 (Schaefer, 2012). About 30.000 immigrants came at that time, and later the same amount number came again in 1972 Vol. 23 (2) August 2022 p-ISSN 1411-5190 | e-ISSN 2541-4496 63 (Schaefer, 2012). Voluntary immigrants dominated the migration although some were asylum seekers that need protection from the new order tyranny (Schaefer, 2012).

With the progressive Indonesian-American populations throughout the years, the population of Indonesia grew from 30.000 people in 1965 to 140.000 people in 2015 (Budiman, 2021). California

becomes the center of Indonesian-Americans with 21,000 populations living in the South part of California in 2015 [4]. This amount of the population created a lot of Indonesian communities in the Southern part of California, one of them is the Batak Communities [8]

Batak culture is patriarchal. The ethnic group follows the father's lineage, and many of their ideals are tied to patriarchal society's gender conventions. Those gender norms include the right of inheritance on male, active roles in the family, which is dominated by male, the custom of "female belongs to her husband family lineage" once she is married off, and the married custom where the groom pays the bride's price to her family [

There is a confrontation between Batak culture and American egalitarian society because of Batak's concept, which leads further into patriarchal traditions. The egalitarian culture of the United States promotes freedom and equality within each individual, whereas the Batak cultures maintain a patriarchal structure in which men predominate the roles and power within the culture and family. The teaching of egalitarian culture through education in the United States, as well as the progressive movement on gender equality in America, may result in distinct mindsets and opinions among Indonesian Batak-American immigrants, particularly among second-generation immigrants who were born and reared in the country. These circumstances raise the question of whether second-generation Indonesian-Batak immigrants retain their culture and customs or fully integrate into the American egalitarian culture. Particularly about gender standards in Batak cultures, which are diametrically opposed to the American egalitarian society.

The topic of second generations and their assimilation was raised before the arrival of the 1965's new immigrants, but after the post-1965's immigration era, the United States experienced more diverse economic, race, and ethnic among new immigrants. This has required assimilation scholars to rearrange their earlier theories of assimilation to fit the patterns shown by the "new immigrants". The classic assimilation theories cannot fit the patterns of their assimilation experiences as the classic theories are based on the late nineteenth and early twentieth European immigrant and their descendants [1] Classic scholars that work on the assimilation have often assumed that immigration in the United States entails adjusting to a more egalitarian and more "modern" culture where their outcome later becomes the same level as the white middle-class American. These theories were met with much criticism from Asian-American individuals, scholars, and organizations as this view reinforced the Model minority stereotype of Asians [8] One of the theories that rejected the classic theories is "Segmented Assimilation Theory" by Alejandro Portes and Min Zhou [11]. Here, Alejandro and Zhou argue that assimilation has not only a single pattern in their process and result but has different types of modes and results where the assimilation outcomes are depends on human capitals that second-generation immigrants have [9]

Studies about the assimilation of Second-generation Immigrants have been examined by many researchers, but their scopes were majorly limited to cultural identity identification, noting the impacts of ambiguous cultural identities for second-generation immigrants [10] and the factors of second-generation immigrants' downward assimilation outcome of [9]. There is also research that talks about ethnic gender roles as the factor of upwards assimilation outcomes like Lo [12]. She suggests that Hmong-American girls were impacted by racially constructed gender norms. In response to hegemonic and subordinated femininities, second-generation Hmong American girls pursue education to enter mainstream America and reject Hmong ethnic culture and femininity, but the research itself focuses on education outcomes instead of second-generation immigrants' perspective about ethnic gender roles. There is barely any research that talk about the impacts of assimilation on their gender norms perspective aside from Alumkai [10]. Although in his research, Alumkai focuses on the American Evangelical impacts rather than the Egalitarian culture impacts like this research. The previous researcher's objects are also mainly focused on the known ethnic groups like East Asian immigrants [1] or known Southeast Asian immigrants [13], but there is barely any research that talk about Indonesia- American immigrants or the Batak-American immigrants itself.

The goal of this study is to discover the effects of assimilation on blended ancestors of Batak Toba -American s of Batak Toba gender norms. To address the issue, the study investigates the effects of assimilations and the human capital that supports them by inquiring about the reasons that influenced them. Finally, the study describes the experiences of blended ancestors Batak Toba -American with Batak gender norms and family structure in order to validate the findings.

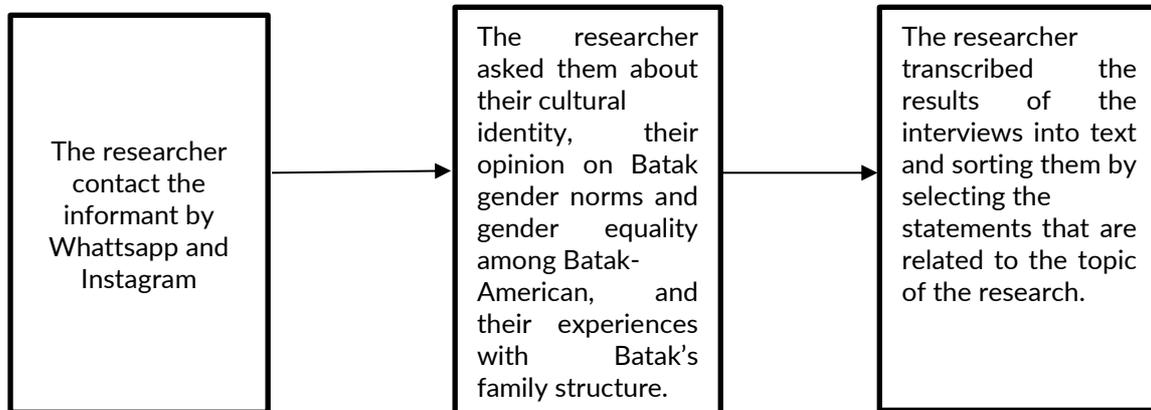
## METHOD

The impact of assimilation on second-generation Batak-American immigrants' perceptions of Batak gender norms is the main topic of this study. The data came from in-depth online interviews conducted with ten second-generation immigrants from Bangladesh.. Five female and five male interviewees, who are all residents of Loma Linda, San Bernardino County, Los Angeles, California, provided the interview results, which served as the research's data.

Purposive sampling was used in this study to select informants, and digital ethnography (Pink et al., 2015) was employed to gather data using online video calls during interviews. The interview results were

transcribed into text by the researcher, who then sorted them by choosing the statements that were pertinent to the study's subject.

A few procedures are followed in order to analyze the data once it has been gathered. (1) Analyzing the data that have been grouped according to the research topic; (2) Finding the statements made by informants regarding their opinions of Batak's gender norms (3) Analyzing data on the effects of second-generation Batak-American immigrants' assimilation on their perception of Batak gender norms using Portes and Zhou Segmented Assimilation Theory (4) Coming to a decision.



## RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Before discussing the data, this research needs to show the results of the interview. The results are divided into three parts based on the problem raised in the previous chapter: (1) The Impacts of Assimilation among Batak Toba -American Culture

(2) How assimilation affected blended ancestors Batak Toba-American gender.

(3) Segmented Assimilation among Blended Ancetors Batak Toba – Americans on Gender Roles Topic

### The Impacts of Assimilation among Batak Toba – American Culture

The interview data suggested that seven of the 5 correspondents were influenced by American egalitarian cultures in their perceptions of Batak gender roles and family structure. Blended ancestor saw Batak gender norms and family structure as "stuck up cultures" as a result of their assimilation with American egalitarian cultures. According to the three blended ancestor of Batak – American, their dissatisfaction stems from Batak Toba gender norms that prioritize men over women.

The blended ancestor who had not fully assimilated with Batak gender norms and family structure but believed in certain portions of the norms demonstrated that they believed in some aspects of the norms. Batak gender norms and family structure are no longer important, but they have adopted some aspects of the cultures, such as the idea of family immigration in Batak Toba families and the family structure in which man becomes the throne of the family. Meanwhile, the patriarchal society in which women were expected to follow the husband's family side and leave her family behind was deemed obsolete.

After reviewing the findings, it is possible to conclude that the effects of assimilation on second-generation Batak Toba Americans' perceptions of Batak gender norms are as follows: First, they regard Batak Toba traditional gender standards as a stuck-up society that is no longer relevant for their generation, and second, they have acclimated more to the American egalitarian culture, where partners have an equal connection. The research findings differ from those of [1], whose subject of study was suited to American evangelical culture.

### How Assimilation Affected Blended Ancestors Batak-American Gender Norms and Family Structure

These are the findings of a study on how assimilation affects second-generation Batak-American immigrants' perceptions of Batak gender standards and family structure. Based on the assertions of the informants, the results are divided into four categories.

According to the findings of the study, the liberal environment, family, oppression, and education are the tools that influenced second-blended ancestors Batak Toba -American perceptions of Batak Toba gender norms and family structure. Four informants indicated that growing up in a liberal atmosphere made them more open to gender equality, which influenced their perception of Batak gender norms as a stuck-up culture. Family influenced second-generation immigrants in two ways: one influenced their views to be more liberal, and the other influenced their mindsets to be conservative due to their exposure to traditional norms.

For oppression, the results suggest that informants who were oppressed by their gender due to the existence of Batak's gender norms tend to reject the idea of Batak's gender norms and Batak's family structure, as well as the uncomfortable circumstance that they encountered. These findings are comparable to [14], in which the blended ancestors of female among-Americans assimilate to white femininity as a rejection of indigenous gender standards. Meanwhile, on Education, informants report that their attitudes are more liberal as a result of the gender and knowledge classes they took in school.

### **Family structure and Gender Norms Experienced by Second-Generation Batak- American Immigrants**

Varied genders have varied perspectives on Batak Toba gender norms. One of the most prominent attributes required of female was the ability to perform domestic tasks. Meanwhile, for male informants, being expected to have a bright job, which two informants noted, and being expected to be a good role model in the family, which one informant mentioned, are what they encountered with Batak gender norms.

Blended ancestors Different types of family arrangements were encountered by Batak-American. According to the data acquired during the interview, the majority of the informants' mothers became the head of the household, which five informants experienced. This occurred as a result of their biological parents' divorce, as four of the five informants came from a divorced home. The second group includes informants who have a family with equal partnership parents, meaning that both parents have equal roles in the family, and two informants have this family condition.

The third group consists of informants from traditional Batak families, with two informants having a father as the family's head. The last one is the informant whose family has a "ambiguous" head of household.

### **Segmented Assimilation among Blended Ancetors Batak Toba – Americans on Gender Roles Topic**

#### **a. Upwards Assimilation Outcome and Its relation to Advantages Human Capital**

Human capital hinders second-generation immigrants' assimilation prospects, according to Portes and Zhou (1993). According to the findings of the study, most second-generation Batak-American immigrants have culturally adapted to the American egalitarian culture while discussing their views on Batak gender norms. The majority of second-generation immigrants saw Batak gender standards as stuck-up culture, whereas the rest saw Batak culture as stuck-up culture but still believed in some aspects of it.

The outcomes of the second research question reveal these factors, which are living settings. Because of the benefits of human capital, the findings of this study show that the outcomes of blended ancestors Batak-American assimilation are closer to the straight-line theory, in which second-generation immigrants directly assimilate into the dominant culture, family, gender discrimination, and education.

#### **b. Mixed Children vs Batak Toba Children**

According to the findings, there are discrepancies in the process of gender norm adaption in connection to the circumstances of the parents of blended ancestors Batak-American blended ancestors from interracial marriage tend to adapt their mindset to the egalitarian culture, in which all of them chose to follow American gender norms that are more progressive than Batak gender norms. Meanwhile, the majority of blended ancestors whose parents are both Batak have assimilated to American egalitarian culture but still believe in some gender norms. The circumstance arose as a result of parental disagreements. Second-generation immigrants with Batak Toba parents were taught to adapt to American society by their parents, but at home, they unconsciously followed and applied Batak Toba gender norms values such as dividing jobs based on gender and treating their children differently based on gender. Meanwhile, the offspring of mixed-race parents were raised with western values by their Batak Toba parents. Some parents initially rejected Batak Toba gender norms because some components contradicted their views. As a result, they married a foreign guy or lady to escape the norms.

#### **c. Gender Equality: Education and Career**

The labor force gender gap is not visible among Batak Toba-American is because they live in an immigrant vironment where their parents are compelled to work in order to survive economically. The respondents described how their families typically forced them to labor in certain occupations. Males have a variety of careers and specialties such as police, teacher, IT engineer, nurse, and musician, whereas females pursue nursing schools in contrast to their male relatives who have more diverse jobs.

Batak Toba women typically labor alone, which requires far more discipline than men. Similar to Lao's[15] research, this study discovered that female informants' resistance to gender oppression made them listen to their parents' decisions more in choosing school and occupation because it is easier for them to maintain an upwards assimilation outcomes into the mainstream middle white

society (Portes & Zhou, 1993) while also fulfilling the hamaraon (successful children) value (3H Batak's value) to demonstrate that they are more valuable than Batak's men.

**d. Patriarchy: Acceptance or Resistance**

The general consensus backed the concept of equal cooperation between men and women. The majority of the informants cite growing up in an American culture where both males and females are expected to contribute to the family's economic burden. The economic behavior of immigrants battling for an upward economic outcome is one of the aspects that assist them integrate to the white egalitarian culture in terms of gender roles.

**e. Blended Ancestors Batak Toba American and their views on the "Purchasing Women" symbol in the Batak's marriage process "Sinamot"**

Sinamot is one of the stages in Batak Toba marriage that takes place prior to the wedding procession. There are various problems in Sinamot because of the original sign as "tuhor ni boru" or "money to buy a woman." There is also the concept that providing money to the bride's family as a present for raising their daughter links with "transactions" that place woman as an object. Although the current Batak Toba people claim that the concept of sinamot is no longer associated with "buying women," but rather with a procession to build family relationships, the word "tuhor ni boru" remains.

In observing Batak Toba traditional marriage procession, the bulk of second-generation Batak-American immigrants adopt more egalitarian American society. The reason for this is the sign underlying the process that presents women as property of family and males; while in current society they no longer accept the symbol literally, the theory behind it still causes second-generation immigrants to regard it as "stuck up" culture.

**f. Intuitions of Marriage**

Within the difference of the ideal marriage among respondents, the result of their view about marriage is segmented where some of the informants that are dominated by women choose the egalitarian way as their ideal of marriage while the male informants are the divergent outcome by mixing Batak Toba values and egalitarian values as their ideals.

**g. Family Structure of Blended Ancestors Batak- American**

The majority of respondents reported that their mother takes over as leader of the family. However, it occurred as a result of the parents' divorce, and it did not destroy the patriarchal structure of the Batak family because the father was still the head of the household prior to the divorce.

The father as the head of the household is the second circumstance of the family structure that second-generation immigrants face. The father was still the head of the household in the traditional family, while the mother handled much of the management and decision-making.

The third type of family structure is one in which both parents have an equal role in the household, sometimes known as an equal partnership. This is an example of an egalitarian family arrangement, in which the mother and father share equal household chores.

**h. Gender Bias in Parental Attitudes**

As a result, most blended ancestors have successfully integrated into egalitarian cultures. They assimilated to egalitarian cultures (for gender norms and family structures) as a result of four factors: a liberal living environment (liberal state), a liberal family, gender oppression (which they experienced), and schooling (where they learned gender equality).

Furthermore, Batak Toba gender norms experienced by second immigrants are as follows: women tend to conduct domestic chores, adhere to Asian beauty standards, and are obedient to parents. Then there are males who are breadwinners and role models. Mothers become breadwinners in the majority of the informants' families as a result of divorce, while the rest are conventional patriarchal families.

The majority of blended ancestors are classified according to their human capital advantages (education, living environment, and economics). When compared to entirely Batak Toba offspring, mixed children are more liberal. Because Batak Toba society values careers, the labor gender gap is not as visible, but women have less freedom in choosing a vocation. Women tend to regard marriage as an equal relationship. Meanwhile, males continue to be leaders, albeit with equal communication and economic opportunity.

This study differs from previous ones in two ways. First, previous research only focused on the effects of gender norms on second-generation immigrants' educational levels and cultural identity (whether they are more American or ethnic culture), rather than their perspective on ethnic culture gender norms. Second, studies similar to this one focus on how evangelical culture in America influenced them (second-generation immigrants), rather than the egalitarian culture. Third, there is little research on Indonesian immigrants (particularly Batak). As a result, it is important since the Batak

people were among the first Indonesian ethnic groups to arrive in the United States and establish an ethnic community.

## CONCLUSION

According to the findings of the study, integration affects second-generation immigrants' perspectives on traditional Batak-Toba gender norms and family in many ways. The consequences of assimilation are diverse, but the straight-line theory holds that children of immigrants are acculturated into the normative structure of American egalitarian culture. Assimilation affected them in several ways, including habitats, family, oppression, and education. Meanwhile, in terms of gender roles, females encountered more roles in which they were expected to know how to handle domestic duties; yet, in terms of family structure, they shockingly experienced their mother as the head of the home, with the exception that this occurred due to the divorce. According to these findings, the research follows the segmented assimilation theory proposed by Portes and Zhou (1993). According to Portes and Zhou, successful integration results of second-generation immigrants are related to the human capital that second-generation immigrants have, of which second-generation Batak-American immigrants hold the human capitals in this study.

Because this study was limited to only five second-generation Batak-American immigrants who live in the same location, the results are limited and do not adequately represent second-generation Batak-American immigrants. Thus, future research can expand their study to a wider research group in order to obtain more accurate findings on the effects of assimilation on the perspectives of second-generation Batak-Americans on Batak ethnic gender norms or other Batak culture features.

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