



Gambang Semarang and Chinese-Indonesian Identity: Implications for Multicultural Education

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Abstract

This study examines how the Gambang Semarang group, a mix of Chinese and Javanese performing arts from Semarang, Indonesia, helps Chinese-Indonesians find their identity and teaches about cultures. The research took six months. Used many methods, such as watching the group perform, talking to people, reviewing papers, and discussing with groups. These activities took place in a school, two community places, and 18 shows, with 42 people taking part. The study draws on Bhabha's ideas on space and Banks's five parts of multicultural education. It finds three ways people deal with their identity. First, mixing music styles. This is not equal because some groups have more power. Second, using language to help deal with memories. Third, showing who they are in temples, government places, and festivals. The study shows that the mix of cultures in Gambang Semarang is not equal but is a negotiated deal due to differences between Javanese and Chinese people. The group can help teach about cultures in many ways, but this is not always done well because schools do not adequately support it, and teachers are not prepared. The study contributes to the study of space by explaining how cultural mixing operates across domains such as history, rules, symbols, and personal relationships. It also introduces the idea of "hybridity," which connects cultural mixing with teaching. It offers ideas for incorporating mixed arts into teaching in Southeast Asia. It argues that teachers need training and guidelines that recognize mixed arts as important for learning and identity formation.

Keywords: Gambang Semarang; multicultural education; identity negotiation; Chinese diaspora; cultural hybridity

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INTRODUCTION

Hybrid performing arts in Southeast Asian coastal cities are frequently celebrated as evidence of intercultural harmony. However, their function as sites of diasporic identity negotiation remains critically undertheorized, particularly regarding

how such arts operate under the enduring shadow of historical power asymmetries rather than as neutral spaces of cultural fusion. Semarang, a principal node in Indonesia's Chinese diaspora network, exemplifies this tension: centuries of trade, intermarriage, and cultural exchange produced distinctive hybrid forms, yet these

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forms emerged within, and continue to navigate, the legacies of New Order assimilation policies that systematically suppressed public expressions of Chineseness. Although prior scholarship has recognized hybrid performing arts as arenas of identity negotiation (Hoon, 2021; Susanto, 2020, 2021), such studies have largely overlooked how these practices function across the interconnected sites of formal education, community studios, and public performance, where identity is simultaneously learned, negotiated, and displayed. This omission is consequential because these arenas are mutually constitutive spaces in which identity and pedagogy converge. This convergence remains unexamined, and that constrains both diaspora studies and multicultural education scholarship.

The Gambang Semarang ensemble offers an instructive case. Originating in the early twentieth century among Semarang's Peranakan Chinese community, this tradition combines Chinese melodic instruments (*tehyang*, *kongahyan*, *sukong*) with Javanese percussion (*gambang*, *bonang*, *demung*, *saron*) and occasional Western elements, producing a distinctive soundscape that reflects the city's multicultural history. Unlike many traditional art forms that have declined, Gambang Semarang has undergone post-Reformasi revitalization, evidenced by active performing communities, school-based curricular integration, and regular public performance, precisely the interconnected arenas that existing studies have overlooked. This study addresses that gap by examining the ensemble's role in identity negotiation and by evaluating its pedagogical potential for multicultural education.

To theorize this negotiation, the study integrates Bhabha's (1994) third-space framework, which foregrounds power and ambivalence in cultural hybridity, with Banks's (2022) five-dimensional model of multicultural education. This integration is strategic: Bhabha supplies a critical lens on power asymmetries that Banks's framework underspecifies, while Banks provides the pedagogical specifi-

city that Bhabha's poststructuralist orientation lacks. Complementary constructs: Allport's (1954) intergroup contact hypothesis, Goffman's (1959) dramaturgical performance theory, and decolonial pedagogy (Walsh, 2018) are applied selectively to analyze intergroup dynamics, contextual identity performance, and the legacies of assimilationist education, respectively. Together, these lenses enable a systematic examination of Gambang Semarang as both a site of identity negotiation and a pedagogical resource.

Three limitations characterize the existing literature. First, romanticized interpretations of cultural fusion have under-analyzed power relations, leaving diasporic ambivalence, the repressive legacy of New Order assimilation policy, and the ongoing regulation of minority cultural expression largely unexamined. Second, cultural preservation, identity performance, and pedagogy have typically been treated as three separate domains rather than as interrelated processes. Third, although the pedagogical potential of hybrid arts is often acknowledged, few studies apply evaluative frameworks or postcolonial theory to substantiate this potential.

This study makes three interrelated contributions. First, it refines Bhabha's third-space theory by specifying how hybridity arises from particular historical conditions of inequality rather than from culturally neutral fusion. Second, it extends Banks's framework by demonstrating that its five dimensions cannot be adequately understood without analyzing the power relations that shape educational practice. Third, it develops the construct of "pedagogical hybridity," denoting how hybrid arts function simultaneously as sites of cultural negotiation and as instruments of social transformation. Accordingly, the study pursues three aims: (a) to describe the ensemble as a site for the negotiation of Chinese-Indonesian identity; (b) to examine the social mechanisms through which this identity is constructed; and (c) to evaluate the ensemble's potential as a resource for multicultural education.

Literature Review

Indonesia's ethnic and religious diversity underscores the need for multicultural education (Jayadi et al., 2022; Máté & Hires-László, 2026; Prasetyo & Kasiyan, 2024), a need that is particularly salient with respect to local artistic and cultural practices (Purnawati et al., 2025). Structural approaches to multicultural education have been substantially shaped by Banks's (2022) five-dimensional framework comprising content integration, knowledge construction, prejudice reduction, equity pedagogy, and empowering school culture. Although widely adopted, the framework has been criticized for insufficiently theorizing the power relations that condition its application in practice (Slechter, 2018).

Cultural hybridity offers a complementary analytical lens for theorizing identity negotiation, particularly in post-colonial contexts such as Indonesia. Three concepts are central to this literature: hybridity, understood as the generative production of new cultural forms; ambivalence, denoting the simultaneous accommodation of and resistance to dominant norms; and the third space, which frames identity as an ongoing site of negotiation rather than a fixed position (Bhabha, 1994). These constructs have informed recent analyses of cultural politics across Southeast Asia (Hoon, 2021; Susanto, 2020, 2021; Wijaya, 2022), and the arts are increasingly regarded as important vehicles for intercultural dialogue (Sutrisno, 2023; Widodo et al., 2021). Research on multicultural music ensembles suggests that such groups cultivate interdependence and active listening by functioning as communities of practice (O'Neill, 2020). However, scholars have also cautioned against uncritically idealizing arts-based intercultural work (Powell, 2022).

Scholarly interest in Chinese-Indonesian performing arts, particularly Gambang Kromong, has grown as a lens for examining diasporic identity, yet substantial gaps remain. Existing studies tend to trace the revitalization of Chinese cultural

expression following Reformasi without integrating cultural preservation, identity performance, and pedagogical practice within a single analytic frame. Where teaching practice has been examined, attention has centered on how curricular materials can inadvertently reproduce inequitable power structures within classroom micro-interactions. The pedagogical value of the arts for intercultural education has been documented in international contexts (DeNora, 2019; Gonzalez, 2021), and Indonesian scholarship has further emphasized embodied, experiential approaches to multicultural teaching and learning, as well as the importance of adequate teacher preparation for implementing culturally responsive arts pedagogy. Collectively, this literature indicates that Chinese-Indonesian performing arts hold considerable potential for integrating identity and cultural preservation into education. However, this potential remains constrained by limited teacher readiness and institutional support.

The Gambang Semarang ensemble, which emerged in the early twentieth century as a fusion of Chinese, Javanese, and Western musical elements (Rachman et al., 2023), has received comparatively limited scholarly attention. Three gaps are notable: cultural preservation, identity negotiation, and pedagogical integration are rarely examined within a single study; educational applications of Chinese-Indonesian performing arts remain scarce; and, where such applications exist, they seldom draw on combined cultural-production and educational frameworks. The present study addresses these gaps directly.

METHOD

Research Design

This study adopted an interpretive qualitative paradigm, combining ethnographic and case study methodologies (Denzin & Lincoln, 2018). Ethnography enabled the examination of the ensemble as a cultural community (Beach, 2021; Jääskeläinen et al., 2023; Suharta et al., 2025),

while case study methodology facilitated in-depth analysis of the phenomenon within its natural context (Stake, 2020; Thomas, 2021; Yin, 2018). Six months of intensive fieldwork enabled the researchers to develop an understanding of tacit and implicit cultural practices that would not have been accessible through shorter engagement.

Research Sites and Participants

The study was conducted in Semarang across three interconnected sites. Within the formal education system, the research focused on a junior high school (referred to here as SMP Karangturi) that has integrated Gambang Semarang into its curriculum since 2018 and whose student body is approximately 70% Chinese-Indonesian and 30% of other ethnic backgrounds. Within community-based settings, the research focused on two studios, Sanggar Budaya Semarang and Rumah Gambang. Within public space, the research examined performances at Semawis Market, City Hall, and various public events, observing 18 public performances to capture how participants asserted multiple, context-dependent identities.

Using a combination of purposive and snowball sampling, 42 participants were recruited, including Chinese and non-Chinese artists, cultural historians, community leaders, and education officials (e.g., 5 Chinese artists, 3 non-Chinese artists, and 2 cultural historians).

Data Collection

Data were collected through methodological triangulation (Flick, 2022). Participant observation (Spradley, 2016) captured musical practice, social interaction, and contextual identity performance. Semi-structured interviews (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2018) addressed participants' personal histories, socio-cultural frameworks, perceptions and attitudes, and experiences of cross-ethnic educational interaction. Document analysis (Bowen, 2009) examined historical and contemporary song lyrics and notations, historical writings, and edu-

cational curricula and policy documents. Focus group discussions (Krueger & Casey, 2018) were subsequently conducted to validate preliminary findings.

Data Analysis

Data were analyzed thematically, following the stages of familiarization, coding, theme development, theme review and refinement, and reporting, supported by NVivo 12 software. Two researchers independently coded approximately 20% of the data to establish inter-rater reliability, achieving an agreement rate of 87%, which was judged adequate. Coding was guided by a synergistic analytic framework combining Banks's (2022) five dimensions of multicultural education with Bhabha's (1994) third-space theory, enabling attention to multiple perspectives, representational dynamics, and interpretive complexity.

Trustworthiness and Ethics

Trustworthiness was established through triangulation, prolonged engagement, member checking, peer debriefing, and audit trails (Holmes, 2022; Smith, 2021). The study protocol was approved by the research ethics committee of Universitas Negeri Semarang (Enworo, 2023). All participants provided written informed consent, and pseudonyms were used where requested. Limitations of the design include its single-case orientation, its six-month duration, and the qualitative rather than experimentally confirmed nature of the evidence regarding prejudice reduction.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Musical Hybridity as Negotiation: Power, Ambivalence, and Tension

The ensemble draws on a combination of Javanese instruments (*gambang*, *gong*, *bonang*, *demung*, *saron*), Chinese instruments (*tehyang*, *kongahyan*, *sukong*), and, more recently, Western instrumentation such as the violin. While this combination appears, on the surface, to be a striking multi-continental confluence, closer

inspection reveals a more complex process of negotiated adjustment rather than neutral fusion.

The *tehyan*, an instrument with a sharp, penetrating tone, is deliberately modified in Gambang Semarang practice to align with the tonal character of the *gambang*. A senior practitioner explained: “We alter the *tehyan* to match the slender scale of the *gambang*. The Chinese sound must not be too prominent, or the music will not be accepted as Semarang music” (Sugianto, personal communication, March 2025). The recurring characterization of the *Tehyan*’s unmodified tone as “too Chinese” illustrates how aesthetic judgment operates as a mechanism of power: Chinese musical elements are permitted to remain present only on condition that they are attenuated, an asymmetrical accommodation in which Chinese identity is tolerated but not foregrounded. A second musician situated this practice historically, recalling that his teacher had cautioned that overtly Chinese musical elements risked drawing official suspicion, and that musicians therefore learned to balance Chinese musical feeling with Javanese presentation as a survival strategy under the New Order. This account was corroborated in an online focus group discussion with a Chinese-descent artist on Tionghoa culture, illustrated in Figure 1.



Figure 1. Online FGD with a Chinese Indonesian artist discussing the *guzheng*, *dahu*, and *zhonghu* in the ensemble. Source: Authors’ documentation.

Mapped onto Banks’s (2022) first dimension, content integration, these findings show multicultural content as dynamically interacting rather than statically

combined traditions; however, the adjustment is asymmetrical, with Chinese elements accommodating Javanese aesthetic norms considerably more than the reverse.

Textual Strategies: Language, Power, and Historical Trauma

Gambang Semarang’s most widely performed repertoire, exemplified by the eponymous song “Gambang Semarang,” foregrounds universal urban themes of conviviality, civic pride, and affection for the city rather than explicit references to Chinese heritage. Audience response at a performance at Semawis Market in April 2025 illustrated the resulting ambiguity: one Javanese attendee described the song as unambiguously “Semarang music, not Chinese,” while a Chinese attendee acknowledged its Chinese authorship while affirming that its message of civic belonging was what mattered. This thematic universalism functions inclusively, allowing the music to transcend ethnic boundaries while implicitly subordinating a distinctly Chinese narrative to a shared urban one.

The near-total absence of Mandarin from Gambang Semarang’s lyrics, in favor of Indonesian and Javanese, cannot be understood apart from Indonesia’s history of anti-Chinese policy. Under the New Order regime (1966–1998), public expressions of Chineseness, including language, script, personal names, religious practice, and cultural performance, were officially proscribed. An older artist recalled that speaking Mandarin in public during that period carried real risk, and that this history continues to shape older Chinese-Indonesians’ unease with public Mandarin speech. A younger artist, by contrast, framed the continued use of Javanese as constitutive of the tradition’s authenticity rather than as a historical constraint, illustrating how choices made under past political conditions continue to shape present cultural practice.

The adoption of high-register Javanese (*krama inggil*) further illustrates strategic accommodation: singing in formal Javanese signals respect for Javanese cul-

ture and forestalls perceptions that the ensemble represents an exclusively Chinese art form. However, this accommodation remains only partial. As one community leader observed, even as the sung lyrics are Javanese, the *tehyang*'s melodic character, or *rasa*, remains recognizably Chinese to attentive listeners. Across all 18 observed performances, including a temple festival in February 2024 where Mandarin might plausibly have been expected, introductions and lyrics remained in Indonesian and Javanese, respectively, out of continuing wariness toward government officials or non-Chinese guests, even as musicians conversed in Mandarin backstage. This divergence between backstage and onstage linguistic practice illustrates a persistent, if attenuated, boundary between private cultural expression and public performance.

Mapped onto Banks's (2022) second dimension, knowledge construction, the ensemble constructs an alternative narrative of Chinese identity that counters stereotypes of cultural exclusivity; however, this construction occurs under constraint, as it cannot directly assert Chinese specificity or challenge majority-culture dominance. A critical multicultural pedagogy would need to render both this alternative knowledge and the historical constraints that shape its expression visible.

Contextual Performance: Shifting Identities Across Settings

The ensemble's identity is not fixed but shifts systematically according to performance context. At temple events such as Chinese New Year or Cap Go Meh, performers foreground Chinese musical elements for an audience presumed to share that heritage, while still incorporating Javanese elements to recognize Javanese visitors and officials. At government events, such as performances for the mayor at City Hall, the ensemble instead foregrounds civic belonging, presenting cultural hybridity as evidence of loyal, unified Semarang identity rather than as a specifically Chinese contribution. The *kebaya encim*, though derived from Betawi dress traditions, is

similarly recontextualized as the emblematic attire of Semarang in these settings. At national cultural festivals, performers described explicitly framing their art as Indonesian rather than Chinese, illustrating how the same performance is discursively repositioned according to audience and institutional expectations.

These context-dependent shifts indicate that each performance site functions as a distinct, unresolved space of negotiation rather than as a setting in which identity is definitively resolved: openness is required at the temple, loyalty at government functions, and national belonging at festivals, with no single performance able to satisfy all of these demands simultaneously.

Artistic Collaboration, Prejudice Reduction, and Pedagogical Potential

Rehearsal spaces function as contact zones approximating the conditions Allport (1954) identified as conducive to prejudice reduction: equal status, shared goals, cooperation, and institutional support. A Javanese drummer described how shared rehearsal, meals, and mutual troubleshooting of musical passages gradually rendered ethnic distinctions less salient than musical competence and interpersonal rapport. Another musician reported that participation had directly expanded his cross-ethnic friendships and altered his prior assumptions about Chinese-Indonesians.

The ensemble also contributes to the deconstruction of stereotypes. A cultural arts teacher at SMP Karangturi observed that students no longer categorized instruments or repertoire as belonging exclusively to one ethnic group, instead experiencing the music as shared practice. A member of the Chinese community similarly noted that public performance helped counter perceptions of the Chinese community as socially insular, presenting them instead as active civic participants.

These gains, however, are qualified. A Javanese musician noted that the relative equality experienced during rehearsal did not extend to broader social life, describing

the ensemble as “a bubble” whose internal norms did not straightforwardly translate into external inequities. Prejudice-reduction effects also appeared largely confined to direct participants, diffusing only gradually, if at all, to participants’ families and wider social networks; the evidentiary basis for this diffusion remains observational rather than systematically measured, and self-selection into the ensemble likely biases participants toward pre-existing openness to intercultural contact.

At SMP Karangturi, the ensemble is taught not merely as a means of building musical skills but as a platform for engaging students with the history of acculturation, the ethics of coexistence, and urban identity. The music teacher explained that many students of Chinese descent discover aspects of their heritage through this curriculum, a pattern reflected in student reflections: one student reported being surprised to learn the *Tehyan’s Chinese origins*. At the same time, another connected the music to a previously undiscussed aspect of a grandparent’s heritage, a classroom moment shown in Figure 2.



Figure 2. Students practicing Gambang Semarang as part of the local-content curriculum at SMP Karangturi. Source: Authors’ documentation.

Mapped onto Banks’s (2022) third dimension, prejudice reduction, the ensemble demonstrates plausible but not yet strongly evidenced effects, warranting caution against overstated claims. Mapped onto the fourth dimension, equity pedagogy,

the ensemble’s community-based learning models participatory and dialogical instruction, in which musical competence, rather than ethnic background, structures authority; however, these practices characterize community-based learning more consistently than formal classroom instruction, where large class sizes, limited instructional time, and constraints on teacher expertise present persistent challenges. Mapped onto the fifth dimension, empowering school culture, curricular integration has begun to reshape school climate by creating cross-ethnic dialogue spaces and repositioning the art from “ethnic property” to “shared heritage”; however, this transformation remains confined to a small number of schools, depends heavily on individual teacher commitment, and has not been evaluated systematically over time.

Table 1 summarizes the ensemble’s potential, degree of realization, and limitations across Banks’s five dimensions. Overall, the results showed that all the elements of multiculturalism found in the educational environment of the Gambang school in Semarang have the potential to develop, although it is currently only partially and unevenly. This is a limitation due to reliance on individual teachers as the driving force behind multiculturalism, a lack of institutional commitment and integration, and a lack of monitoring and evaluation in the educational environment.

Power, Ambivalence, and the Sedimentation of Hybridity

The modification of *Tehyan’s* tuning exemplifies how musical hybridity in Gambang Semarang is structured by power rather than by neutral exchange: Chinese sonic elements are rendered acceptable only through attenuation, indicating that the accommodation is asymmetrical. This asymmetry is discernible across four interrelated levels: historically, through the New Order assimilation policy; institutionally, through education policies that privilege Javanese and national narratives;

Table 1. Banks' Five Dimensions of Multicultural Education Applied to Gambang Semarang

Dimension	Potential	Realization	Limitations
Content Integration	Instruments and scales from multiple traditions are combined organically	Demonstrated in community practice; partially realized in schools with Gambang programs	Not systematically incorporated across most schools; integration is often superficial
Knowledge Construction	Lyrics construct an alternative narrative countering stereotypes	Students in Gambang programs show a nuanced understanding	Constrained by the majority-language expression, alternative narratives are undocumented in official texts
Prejudice Reduction	Cross-ethnic participation and counter-stereotypical themes	Participant accounts document friendship formation and cross-ethnic collaboration	Evidence is qualitative/observational; effects may not extend beyond participants; self-selection bias
Equity Pedagogy	Community practice models participatory, dialogical learning	Demonstrated in studio settings; partial transfer to innovative classrooms	Characterizes community learning more than formal classrooms; implementation constraints
Empowering School Culture	Curriculum integration creates spaces for cross-ethnic dialogue and shared pride.	Observable changes in participating schools' climate and peer relations	Limited to a few schools; dependent on individual initiative; long-term impacts unevaluated

symbolically, through aesthetic hierarchies that mark Chinese elements as requiring modification; and interpersonally, through everyday negotiation among musicians in rehearsal. Although Reformasi-era political liberalization has expanded Chinese-Indonesians' freedom of cultural expression, findings suggest that dispositions formed under earlier constraint persist independently of formal policy change, having been reproduced across generations as "tradition" rather than as historically contingent "accommodation." This finding extends Bhabha's (1994) third-space framework by specifying how hybridity operates across these interconnected levels of power and by demonstrating how historical power relations become sedimented within musical form.

The absence of Mandarin and the adoption of Javanese *krama inggil* similarly embody Bhabha's construct of ambivalence: simultaneous accommodation to linguistic hegemony, which secures the continued presence of Chinese cultural elements, and subtle assertion, through

the retention of Chinese musical feeling within Javanese linguistic form. This ambivalence, neither full resistance nor pure submission, characterizes cultural production under the postcolonial conditions that Chinese-Indonesians continue to navigate. Notably, its interpretation is itself generationally contingent: musicians who lived through New Order-era restrictions tend to frame the use of Javanese as a protective necessity, whereas younger musicians reinterpret the same linguistic practice as an authentic expression of Semarang identity. This generational divergence complicates Bhabha's model by showing that the meaning attributed to a given accommodation is historically situated and subject to reinterpretation across generations, shaped by the evolving relationship between Chinese-Indonesian and broader Indonesian communities.

In performance, the ensemble must continually balance competing demands, affirming ethnic heritage, achieving local acceptance, and demonstrating national belonging without any single performan-

ce fully satisfying all three. Identity, in this sense, is not a fixed possession but an ongoing performative accomplishment, renegotiated according to audience and context. These findings caution against romanticized accounts of hybridity that emphasize fusion while underanalyzing power asymmetry, and instead support a view of diasporic arts as sites of simultaneous accommodation and resistance whose operation varies meaningfully across different arenas of practice.

Pedagogical Potential: From Claim to Qualified Assessment

The evidence indicates that Gambang Semarang instantiates multicultural education in practice: it brings participants from diverse backgrounds into sustained collaboration, furnishes rich material for curriculum design, and is associated with reported shifts in participants' intercultural attitudes. At the same time, the evidence does not establish that the ensemble constitutes a readily transferable model; its effects have not been evaluated longitudinally, its classroom implementation remains uneven, and its long-term impact on prejudice reduction and intercultural competence has not been systematically measured. Consistent with Banks's (2022) emphasis on the conditions required for multicultural education to succeed, participation in arts programming does not automatically produce intercultural learning; well-designed curricula, adequately prepared teachers, and sustained institutional support are necessary conditions.

Comparison with related hybrid performing arts situates these findings within a broader regional pattern. Gambang Kromong in Tangerang, which employs Hokkien in ritual contexts, differs from the Javanese-inflected form of Gambang Semarang. However, both traditions face comparable challenges in sustaining relevance, securing institutional support, and balancing continuity with innovation. Comparison with government-sponsored Chinese arts programming in Singapore, where artists gain institutional resources

in exchange for adherence to state cultural agendas, highlights a contrasting Indonesian pattern in which Gambang Semarang has developed with greater artistic autonomy but correspondingly less predictable support. Similarly, whereas Chinese temple performances in Malaysia (Tan, 2020) tend to retain stronger ethnic specificity, Gambang Semarang's temple performances display more pronounced Javanese blending, plausibly reflecting Indonesia's distinctive history of cultural incorporation.

These comparisons point to shared structural challenges confronting hybrid arts across Southeast Asia: tension between authenticity and accessibility, reliance on individual commitment rather than institutional policy, exclusion from formal curricula, absence of systematic evaluation, and difficulty transmitting tradition intergenerationally. This study's findings reveal a persistent gap between the pedagogical potential of hybrid arts and their realization in formal education. In community settings, Gambang Semarang fosters cross-ethnic collaboration and mutual respect; in schools, however, integration remains uneven and, at SMP Karangturi, dependent on individual teacher and principal commitment rather than institutionalized policy. Narrowing this gap would require embedding culture-based education within formal school policy, training teachers to engage explicitly with questions of identity and power, and sustaining funding for community-school partnerships; absent these measures, promising local practices are likely to remain isolated rather than contributing to more inclusive urban education.

Limitations

This study's single-case, six-month design constrains the generalizability of its findings, though qualitative case study methodology is well-suited to generating contextually rich understanding rather than statistical generalization (Stake, 2020; Yin, 2018). The three identity-negotiation mechanisms identified here, musical hy-

briduity, textual strategy, and contextual performance, may plausibly extend to other Southeast Asian hybrid arts traditions, such as Gambang Kromong in Tangerang or Keroncong Tugu in Jakarta. However, the specific operation of power within each tradition likely varies with local history, policy environment, and demographic composition. Future comparative research is needed to examine the extent to which these mechanisms generalize across contexts. Despite these limitations, the study provides a detailed account of identity negotiation within a specific hybrid arts tradition, an integrated theoretical framework that combines third-space theory and multicultural education, and a qualified assessment intended to guide future research and educational practice.

CONCLUSION

This study demonstrates how the Gambang Semarang ensemble constitutes a lived, everyday site for negotiating Chinese-Indonesian identity, offering insight into how the arts can mediate ethnic, local, and national belonging under conditions of persistent power asymmetry. Three mechanisms structure this negotiation: musical hybridity, in which Chinese elements are reshaped to align with majority aesthetic preferences, indicating that hybridity operates within rather than outside power relations; textual strategy, in which the deliberate avoidance of Mandarin in favor of Javanese communicates both the historical pressure toward assimilation and the continued presence of Chinese cultural influence; and context-dependent performance, in which identity shifts according to setting, revealing ongoing tension rather than a stable, final synthesis. Collectively, these findings underscore the complex, dynamic character of Chinese-Indonesian identity and the capacity of the arts to serve as a vehicle for its ongoing negotiation. The ensemble further demonstrates meaningful, though only partially realized, pedagogical potential across all five of Banks's (2022) dimensions,

constrained chiefly by limited institutional structure, reliance on individual initiative, and minimal systematic teaching support.

Based on these findings, three recommendations are proposed. First, Semarang's municipal education authorities should incorporate Gambang Semarang across all levels of formal schooling, developed collaboratively by artists, teachers, and curriculum designers, positioning the ensemble not merely as a music lesson but as a vehicle for teaching the city's history of acculturation and identity. Second, structured professional development should be provided to equip teachers to use Gambang Semarang pedagogically to address identity, heritage, and intergroup cooperation. Third, municipal government should establish sustained, rather than ad hoc, funding to support community groups in maintaining the tradition, producing new work, and staging public performances. Implementing these recommendations would support intergenerational transmission of cultural knowledge and strengthen Semarang's identity as an inclusive, culturally pluralistic city.

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