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**Interactionism and Social Harmonization in Wonomulyo as the Multiethnic City**

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## INTERACTIONISM AND SOCIAL HARMONIZATION IN WONOMULYO AS THE MULTIETHNIC CITY

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### Abstract

*This study aims to (1) analyze the meaning of symbolic interactionism in multiethnic community members in the Wonomulyo District and (2) describe the sociometric form of symbolic interactionism in multiethnic communities in the Wonomulyo District. This research is qualitative research using a sequential exploratory design, namely qualitative-quantitative. Collecting data using in-depth interview techniques, observation, and literature study. Data analysis used a three-step technique: reduction, categorization, and conclusion. The results are (1) the interactionism in multiethnic society is built on openness, friendship, and kinship, and everyone likes this attitude so that social harmony is built; (2) The sociometric form of symbolic interactionism in Wonomulyo as a multiethnic city that Javanese as the dominant culture, namely open attitude, friendship, and kinship created social harmonization. The conclusion is that dominant culture plays a role in shaping societal tendencies, such as the harmonious Javanese culture, which is conditioning the culture of the Wonomulyo people always to be harmonious.*

**Keywords:** *Culture; Social Harmonization; Symbolic Interaction; Mean; Wonomulyo.*



## **A. Introduction**

Social interaction is an integral part of human life that shows oneself as a social being. Social interaction is a dynamic reciprocal relationship between individuals and individuals, individuals and groups, or between groups (Kamanto, 2004; Setiadi & Kolip, 2011; Soekanto, 2019). On a broad scale, social life can take place with mutual interaction between individuals with one another. The interaction occurs between individuals in the same group and different groups in various interaction patterns. This situation reveals a social life where interaction dynamics are expected to create a dynamic and conducive relationship climate for creating balance or harmony between various individuals and groups (Masdar et al., 2014; Ali@Mat Zin, 2023; Kusumaningrum, 2023).

Social interaction occurs because the symbols connect the interaction actors, and they interpret the symbols similarly (Ritzer & Goodman, 2004). The symbol is the interaction's theme, which lasts a long time. All interactions always have mutually agreed-upon symbols, and these agreements are unconsciously accepted through the continuity of long and continuous interactions (Halim & Zainuddin, 2020). In a multiethnic heterogeneous society, at first glance, there will be no good social interaction because of differences. On the other hand, the heterogeneity of society also creates solid social integration where the interaction process between heterogeneous populations can create social harmony between them (Hidayat, 2013; Sirait, 2014; Wulandari et al., 2017).

Conformity of understanding and perception about what and how they should treat each other and how the community's social life goals are achieved as social glue is urgent in such heterogeneous societies so that people will be happy to live in such an environment (Susiyanto, 2020; Ibrahim et al., 2022). Empirically, various regions in Indonesia, especially big cities inhabited by various ethnicities such as Jakarta, Makassar, Surabaya, and Bandung, are rarely heard of open conflicts between ethnicities with significant escalations, but instead, the multiethnic



communities are integrated as a symbol of their interaction (Anriani et al., 2019; Rahmat, 2014).

The Wonomulyo sub-district, a transmigration destination in the 1930s from Java and a newly opened area, is an opportunity for anyone to come to Wonomulyo. Currently, has a heterogeneous population from various ethnic groups in Indonesia. In its development, the integration between the local population (Mandar and Bugis tribes) and the Javanese as migrants appears harmonious, even with other ethnic groups, and there is little chance of ethnic conflict between them because their culture teaches social harmonization. It is increasingly essential, as the community development process has brought about various developments.

Furthermore, one of the manifestations of ethical policy in transmigration was the launch of a project known as the "Mapilli Agricultural Colonization Project in the Mandar Region", which lasted from 1937 to 1941. Wonomulyo, which is very Javanese, originated from transferring people from Java to Sulawesi through the project. Javanese people who came from various regions such as Ponorogo, Ambarawa, Blitar, Kediri, Madiun, Kebumen, Ngawi, Magelang, Tulungagung, Yogyakarta were brought to the Mandar area, especially in the area now called Wonomulyo.

The uniqueness of village names in the Wonomulyo sub-district is based on the regional origin of its inhabitants, such as Arjosari, Kebunsari, Bumiayu, Bumimulyo, Sidorejo, Sidodadi, Campurejo, and Sugiwaras. During this period, local transmigration from the Bugis ethnic group of Sidenreng Rappang (Sidrap) also arrived, followed by the Mandar and Toraja ethnic groups. Initially, the Bugis were settled in the eastern part of Tumpiling, adjacent to the Javanese settlements. Later came another group of Bugis who settled in the western part, now better known as Ugi Baru. In the existence of this community, new settlement areas began to emerge or emerge which gave a distinctive characteristic of the people in it, and it turned out that the population came from areas with different socio-cultural backgrounds, thus making the Wonomulyo community



very heterogeneous, both in terms of religion, ethnicity, and socio-culture (Levang, 2003; Ali & Abo-Elmagd, 2023).

The level of pluralism in the population of the Wonomulyo subdistrict occurs in the center of the subdistrict or the area of the Sidodadi neighborhood. In rural areas, especially villages in former colonization enclaves, the population is still dominated by Javanese ethnicity, then other ethnicities such as Mandar ethnicity, Bugis ethnicity, Toraja ethnicity, Makassar ethnicity, and Chinese ethnicity. The openness and harmonization of inter-ethnic relations in Wonomulyo can also be seen in various other interactions, such as neighborhood relations, community relations, and government relations, especially in the economic and agricultural fields (Masdar, 2010; Kusumaningtyas et al., 2022; Sidik@Mat Sidek, 2023). The same can be seen in religious and socio-cultural activities, such as inter-religious harmony in holding traditional feasts for each ethnic group that are also attended by various ethnic groups outside their ethnic group. Despite the differences, the unity between them is maintained.

The phenomenon seen in Wonomulyo shows that each ethnic group shows an open attitude toward other ethnic groups. In the market setting, for example, this openness can be seen in the familiarity of the various ethnicities selling in the market (Mubarrak et al., 2023; A. A. Z. A. Rahman & Abdul, 2023). Javanese, Buginese, Mandarese, and Torajans mingle without any distance. They are accustomed to sitting side by side, selling at the market, interacting, and communicating. The same goes for the shoppers who come to the market to shop; there is no impression that they differentiate who to shop with; for example, they shop only with their ethnic peers. Interaction relationships in the market are fluid, even though the people involved in these interactions come from various ethnicities. This situation is a form of adaptation and social interaction between these diverse ethnic groups.

This atmosphere of openness has led to cooperation in various fields of social, economic, and cultural life (Towoliu et al., 2020; Safarida et al.,



2023). The Bugis and Chinese dominate the economic, trade, and transportation sectors, while the Javanese, Toraja, and Mandarese mainly engage in agriculture. In the market, although there are minor distinctions, for example, the Javanese generally sell vegetables and agricultural products, the Mandarese sell fish, and the Buginese sell mixed goods, but communication and cooperation between them is peaceful because there is no competition between them. The composition of traders in the Wonomulyo market is illustrated below.

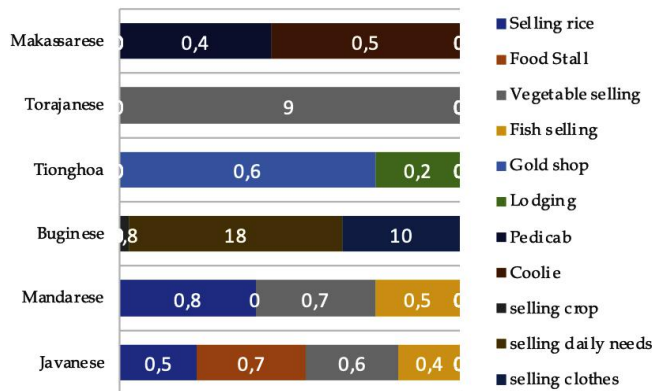


Figure 1. The composition of traders in the Wonomulyo market  
(Source: Result of initial survey, 2021)

Research on inter-ethnic interactions has been conducted, among others: (1) Inter-ethnic Social Interaction in Semarang Chinatown New Gang Market a Multicultural Perspective, which concludes that the functioning of social institutions is a factor causing integration and mutual understanding between ethnic groups (Setiawan, 2012; N. F. A. Rahman & Shapie, 2023); (2) Interethnic Symbolic Interaction in Yogyakarta. This research concludes that migrants in Yogyakarta who come from various ethnic groups still feel discriminated against (Tripambudi, 2017); (3) Multiculturalism: A Study of Interethnic Community Social Interaction in Mandor Village, Mandor Subdistrict, Landak Regency concluded that the form of social interaction is in the form of cooperation in the form of *gotong royong* and Joint Venture, accommodation in the form of tolerance

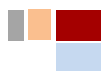


and assimilation. The value that develops is the value of mutual respect, respect, and help.

Multiculturalism is analyzed from the forms and values of social interactions that develop in the Mandor Village community; some phenomena are seen as a common language, problems, identity, and mutual respect (Wiyono, 2020; Mubarrak et al., 2023). The research above focuses on the form of interaction as a unifier, while this research examines symbolic interactionism in the process of interaction as a unifier. Therefore, the urgency of this research is focused on the meaning of symbolic interactionism of the Wonomulyo community. Thus, the objectives of this research are: (1) to analyze the meaning of symbolic interactionism in multiethnic community members in the Wonomulyo Sub-district and (2) to analyze symbolic interactionism sociometry in multiethnic communities in the Wonomulyo District. The contribution of this research is as a consideration for the government in building social harmonization in multiethnic areas.

## **B. Method**

This research used a mixed method with an exploratory sequential design (Bungin, 2015; Creswell, 2013; Tashakkori & Teddie, 2010). The design meant the qualitative method was used first, then the quantitative method. In the qualitative method, the informants were 6 people. Data collection used in-depth interviews about the meaning of symbolic interactionism (Ritzer & Stepnisky, 2021) and the form of sociometry (Azwar, 2017); observation of the social harmonization in Wonomulyo, and literature studies, while questionnaires were used as quantitative instruments. The questionnaire consisted of 15 items, and every item used Likert Scale by indicators (i) value '5' for the category strongly agree, (ii) value '4' for the category agree, (iii) value '3' for the neutral category, (iv) value '2' for the category disagree, (v) value '1' for the category strongly disagree. Questionnaires were distributed to 386 respondents determined using the Stratified Random sampling technique.





The respondents in the represent of 6 ethnics in Wonomulyo sub-district consist of 176 Javanese respondents, 86 Mandarese respondents, 75 Bugis respondents, 32 Toraja respondents, 9 Makassar respondents, and 5 Chinese respondents (Sinambela & Sinambela, 2021; Sugiyono, 2019). Qualitative data analysis uses a three-step technique (Miles & Huberman, 1999), namely data reduction, data categorization, and conclusion (Emzir, 2010). Quantitative data analysis used descriptive statistics with frequency tabulation (Albers, 2017).

### **C. Result and Discussion**

#### **1. Result**

Stereotypes, social prejudice, and the strength of the climate of social harmony among ethnic groups color inter-ethnic interactions. In other words, the signals that can be understood from the above are: (1) the element of stereotyping affects the strength of the climate of social harmony, but empirically, it was found that its contribution or influence is relatively small. Although small, the stereotype element can be stated as a positive factor that supports or strengthens the climate of social harmony; (2) although it is a factor that is classified as facilitating the realization of social harmony, the distribution of inter-ethnic stereotype values obtained shows that in general the stereotypes found among ethnic groups are varied. These variations include an ethnic group having a high or positive stereotype value towards one or several ethnic groups but having a low or negative value towards other ethnic groups.

The results showed that the Javanese ethnic group showed a more friendly attitude, and it was proven by the choice of other ethnic groups who considered that the Javanese ethnic group was considered to have the friendliest attitude. It may be due to the typical character of the Javanese ethnicity, who are easy to get along with, especially in their speech, which can make others have a good impression of them.

In contrast to the Javanese, who were considered the friendliest, the Makassarese and Chinese were considered less friendly by the other



four ethnicities except by their ethnic peers. Some research subjects from the Chinese and Makassarese ethnicities acknowledged the friendliness of the Javanese. However, this does not indicate that the Makassarese and Chinese ethnicities are unfriendly at all but rather due to the lack of things that could make other ethnicities interact with them and their lack of population in Wonomulyo.

The research subjects' choice of ethnic order regarding friendly attitudes illustrates that the research subjects still perceive their ethnic peers as having friendly attitudes. It is natural because cultural similarities are always an attractive and unifying factor. However, other ethnicities, namely the Makassarese and Chinese, did not choose their ethnicity as the first choice; the Javanese ethnicity was chosen. As stated by Participant 1 (28 years old), a pedicab driver who reasoned why he likes Javanese people.

*"Those of us who work as pedicab drivers must be kind to everyone to have customers. Especially here, there are many Javanese people, and they are polite, so I also have to be nice to them. Many of my customers, especially near my house, are Javanese"* (Interview, January 10<sup>th</sup>, 2022).

The same thing was also stated by Participant 6 (44 years old), who considered Javanese people to be friendlier:

*"Almost every time my wife or I meet Javanese people, it could be because of the jamu seller who stops by the house or the seller of goods who usually stops by the house or other people who stop next door to eat or rest because next door is a fairly crowded warung in Wonomulyo. So, I often use this condition to get to know them"* (Interview in Kuningan, January 14<sup>th</sup>, 2022).

Based on the interview above, it can be interpreted that the intensity of interaction with a high frequency tends to cause sympathy or antipathy. What Participant 6 experienced through interactions with Javanese people created a good impression, so it was concluded by Participant 6 that Javanese people have a friendly nature. In addition to a friendly attitude, familiarity is a more profound quality in an interaction process. Familiarity indicates the dissolution of boundaries that are usually maintained in interaction. Humanly speaking, people still feel more familiar with their

ethnic peers. The percentage of the first choice of familiarity is more significant for each ethnicity. The choice of Javanese ethnicity is categorized as significant for the second-choice ethnicity, while the third and fourth-choice ethnicities are Bugis and Mandar ethnicity, respectively.

*Table 1. Tendency of ethnic groups' friendly attitude based on order (n=386)*

| <b>Voter ethnic group</b> | <b>The friendly attitude of ethnic groups based on order</b> |               |              |               |              |              |
|---------------------------|--|---------------|--------------|---------------|--------------|--------------|
|                           | <i>First</i>   | <i>Second</i> | <i>Third</i> | <i>Fourth</i> | <i>Fifth</i> | <i>Sixth</i> |
| Java                      | Java   | Mandar        | Bugis        | Toraja        | Makassar     | Chinese      |
| Mandar                    | Mandar   | Java          | Bugis        | Toraja        | Makassar     | Chinese      |
| Bugis                     | Bugis  | Java          | Mandar       | Toraja        | Makassar     | Chinese      |
| Toraja                    | Toraja   | Java          | Bugis        | Mandar        | Makassar     | Chinese      |
| Makassar                  | Java   | Makassar      | Bugis        | Mandar        | Toraja       | Chinese      |
| Chinese                   | Java   | Chinese       | Mandar       | Bugis         | Toraja       | Makassar     |

*Source: primary data processed, 2022*

Concerning ethnic preferences regarding familiarity, the Toraja ethnic group, the Makassar ethnic group, and the Chinese ethnic group chose the Javanese ethnic group in second place. In contrast, the Javanese ethnic group and the Mandar ethnic group set the Bugis ethnic group in second place for familiarity. The ethnics always considered less familiar are the Makassar ethnics and the Chinese ethnics.

In the ongoing interaction process, there must be mutual acceptance of each other's strengths and weaknesses for the relationship to last. For this reason, an open attitude between ethnic individuals is needed so that there are preconditions to fill each other's shortcomings. Concerning the data on the openness of each ethnic group in interacting, the Mandar ethnic group is considered the most open, followed by the Javanese and Bugis ethnic groups. Ethnic Chinese and ethnic Makassarese is just the opposite. When the data is broken down, Javanese sees more openness from Mandarese and Bugis. Only the Bugis ethnic group sees that there is also an open attitude toward other ethnic groups, although the percentage is small. It is precisely the Mandar and Javanese ethnicities who do not see an attitude of openness in the Makassarese and Chinese ethnicities, but for the Chinese, there is no openness for the Toraja and the Makassarese ethnicities.



Regarding the order of ethnic openness, it generally illustrates that the choice of openness remains in each ethnic group. The second choice, Javanese and Mandarese ethnicities, are considered the most open in interacting, while the third order is Bugis ethnicity, Toraja, Makassarese ethnicity, and finally, Chinese ethnicity.

Naturally, people will always prioritize the characters that exist in their respective ethnicities because, in ethnicity, humans form their habits and characters. The second choice, which always sets the Javanese ethnicity, shows the similarity of cultural values that exist in it. The research “Stereotypes in Chinese and Javanese Interethnic Relations” results reinforce the existence of Javanese ethnic characters in interactions that contain elements that everyone favors most. These characteristics include sociability, gentleness, politeness, loyalty, and high tolerance.

*Table 2. Friendly attitude of ethnic groups based on order (n=386)*

| <b>Voter ethnic group</b> | <b>The friendly attitude of ethnic groups based on order</b> |               |              |               |              |              |
|---------------------------|--|---------------|--------------|---------------|--------------|--------------|
|                           | <i>First</i>   | <i>Second</i> | <i>Third</i> | <i>Fourth</i> | <i>Fifth</i> | <i>Sixth</i> |
| Java                      | Java   | Bugis         | Mandar       | Toraja        | Makassar     | Chinese      |
| Mandar                    | Mandar   | Bugis         | Java         | Toraja        | Makassar     | Chinese      |
| Bugis                     | Bugis  | Java          | Mandar       | Toraja        | Tionghoa     | Makassar     |
| Toraja                    | Toraja   | Java          | Bugis        | Mandar        | Makassar     | Chinese      |
| Makassar                  | Makassar   | Java          | Bugis        | Mandar        | Toraja       | Chinese      |
| Chinese                   | Java   | Chinese       | Mandar       | Bugis         | Toraja       | Makassar     |

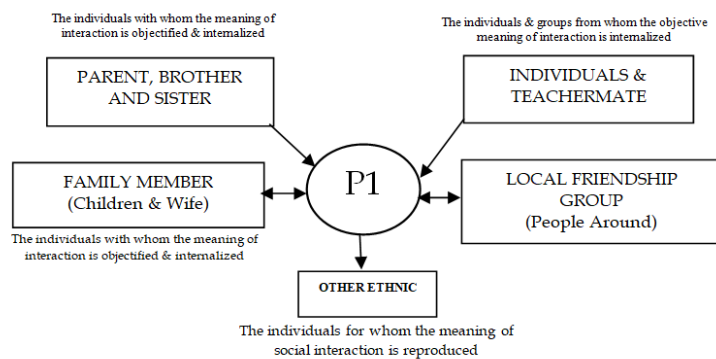
*Source: Primary data processed, 2022*

The table above shows that Javanese and Bugis ethnicities are the friendliest after their respective ethnicities. Whereas the Bugis, Javanese, and Mandarese ethnicities perceive that the Chinese, Makassarese, and Toraja ethnicities are the least friendly. These perceptions are born from their interactions and indicate a loud voice, loud when speaking, somewhat haughty. Chinese respondents (n=5 people) chose Javanese and non-Chinese as the friendliest ethnicities because interaction with Javanese dominates their daily lives compared to fellow Chinese, whose population is tiny and lives far apart.



Symbolic interactionism sociometry form. This section describes the relationship map between informants and other individuals who influence informants. Participant 1's sociometric relationship (Javanese ethnicity). Figure 1 shows Participant 1's sociometric map, which shows Participant 1's relationship with 5 parties with whom Participant 1 interacts in terms of relationships that show how the symbolic meanings of the social environment and interactions with other ethnicities are internalized, objectified, and reproduced. The five parties were comprised of parents and siblings, Participant 1's nuclear family members, coworkers, local friendship groups, and other ethnicities.

Participant 1's parents and siblings, like Participant 1 herself, are individuals with successful family backgrounds in the past, and even today, Participant 1's siblings are successful people in their work and professional lives. From successful parents as government officials and public servants, Participant 1 internalized the objective meaning of a simple lifestyle from his parents and the tradition of working as a public servant. The simple lifestyle was not only internalized by Participant 1 but also by other relatives of Participant 1. Participant 1's children and wife are the individuals who directly internalize not only the meaning of social interaction with other ethnic groups but also.



*Figure 2. Sociometric map of P1 (Javanese ethnic participant)*

The meanings of inter-ethnic social interaction that P1 internalizes from her parents and siblings are then developed through individual



teacher colleagues and local friendship groups. Her associations with other ethnicities in the social environment of Sidodadi Village are individuals with whom the symbolic meanings of social interaction are objectified and internalized.

Towards other ethnics in the social environment around the house and workplace, P1's interaction behavior implies the following: (1) P1's interaction and existence are internalized as the meaning of building social relations; (2) P1's behavior and existence reproduce the meaning of social harmony where the interaction that occurs is a form of building a sense of togetherness.

P2's sociometric relationship (Bugis ethnicity). Figure 2 shows P2's sociometric map showing P2's relationship with five parties with whom P2 interacts in terms of relationships that show how symbolic meanings in interactions with other ethnicities are internalized, objectified, and reproduced. The five parties consist of parents and siblings, nuclear family members, business partners, and close kin groups (cousins, nephews, and uncles). P2's parents and siblings, like P2 herself, are individuals with simple and hardworking family backgrounds in the past. Even today, P2's siblings successfully educate their children to have jobs. From parents who are simple, frugal, calculating, and hardworking, P2 internalizes the objective meaning of simple life from her parents and traditions as hard workers. Simple life turned out to be not only internalized to P2 but also to other P2 siblings.

Participant 2 also internalized many interactions and experiences of doing business when he lived with his uncle in Pinrang Regency. P2 saw how his uncle treated customers well, built social relationships with customers not only as a matter of sellers and buyers but as a human relationship, and strengthened relationships with fellow business people. When P2 decided to get married, her parents married her to her cousin. P2's in-laws are also traders, so these conditions further strengthen P2's internalization to become a businessman. P2's business partners are also



internalized and objectified, with which P2 establishes interdependence in terms of work and mutual benefit.

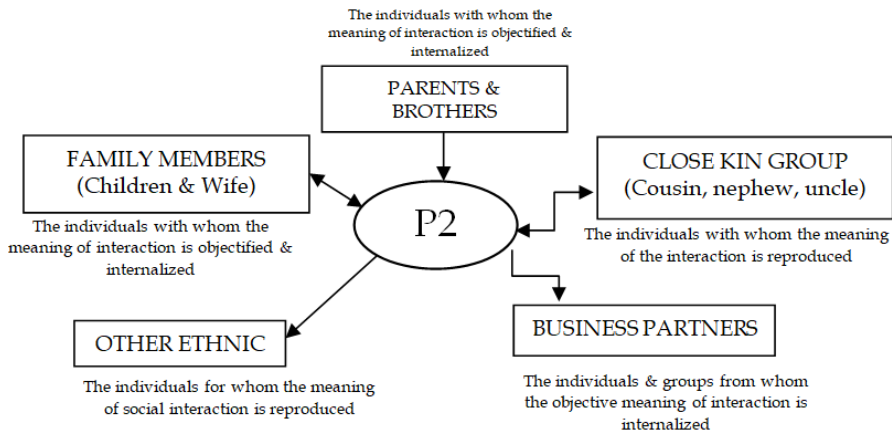


Figure 3. Sociometric map of P2 (Bugis ethnic participant)

The meaning of social interaction internalized by P2 from her parents and siblings then develops through individuals and business partners. P2's associations with other ethnicities in the social environment of the Wonomulyo market are individuals with whom the symbolic meanings of social interactions are objectified and internalized.

P2 has always been considered a successful entrepreneur in the family environment, so he has always been the foundation of his extended family. P2 also invites many of his family to join him in learning and trying until one day he can be independent like he did before. Some of P2's cousins and nephews currently own businesses in several places, including Sidrap, Pinrang, and Polewali.

P3 sociometric relationship (Mandar ethnicity). P3's social relationships from the Mandar ethnicity in her daily life interact a lot with her coworkers at school, namely teachers. In addition, he also hangs out with his friends around the house, his parents and siblings, other family members, and other people from other ethnicities. It is illustrated in the following sociometric description.



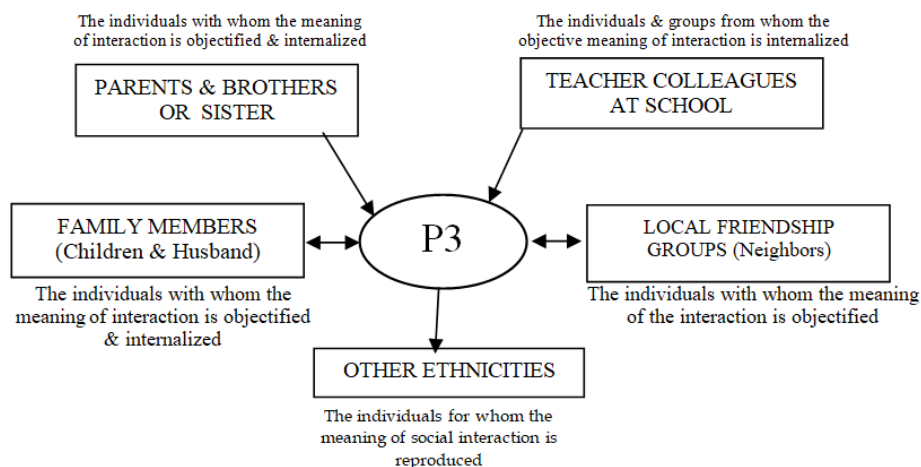


Figure 4. Sociometric map of P3 (Mandar ethnic participant)

Figure 4 above shows P3's sociometric map, which shows P3's relationship with 5 parties with whom P3 interacts, showing how symbolic meanings in interactions with other ethnicities are internalized, objectified, and reproduced. The five parties consist of parents and siblings, nuclear family members, coworkers at school, local friend groups, and ethnic others.

Participant 3 internalized a lot from her parents, who were teachers, "how to be human" and, as a garden worker, "being a hard worker". When living with her aunt in Polewali, she internalized the attitude of "discipline" because she lived in a house that was not hers. Her parents' hopes for her to become a teacher were finally realized. Currently, P3 is an integral part of the school where she serves. Every moment, P3 meets with students of various ethnicities and characters. Her status as an educator makes her neutral and wise in dealing with students who are mostly still unstable. In addition, as the wife of an official of one of the state-owned institutions in Mamasa Regency, she always has to "smile" a lot. P3's children are entering the final stage at one of the universities in Makassar.

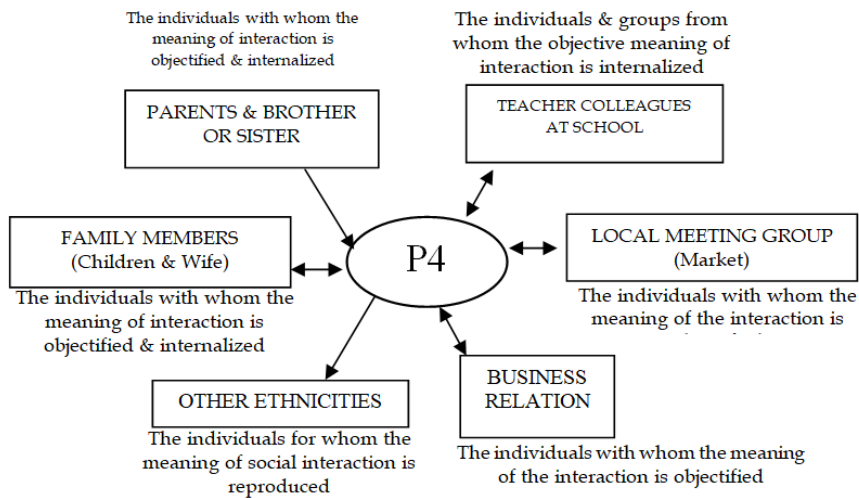
The social interaction field surrounding P3 makes her internalize interaction behaviors that must be reproduced. The school environment with educational and academic nuances (objectification) makes her behave





as an educator and academician (internalization). Moreover, P3 has many contacts with ordinary people not in her social field, giving P3 a mature and wise nature (reproduction), especially when dealing with student problems and treating them fairly and evenly.

Relationship sociometry of Participant 4 (Makassar ethnic). Figure 5 shows P4's sociometric map showing his relationships with the six parties he interacts with and how symbolic meanings in interactions with other ethnicities are internalized, objectified, and reproduced. The six parties are parents and siblings, nuclear family members (wife and children), co-teachers at school, a local group of friends at the market, business relations, and other ethnic groups.



*Figure 5. Sociometric map of P-4 (Makassar ethnic participant)*

When P-4 first set foot on the Wonomulyo land, he intended to seek a better life. The principle of his life is that where the earth is, the sky is. At that time, P4 always understood this principle through adaptation behavior with others while learning to find his status. P4's educational background helped him socialize with everyone, including when he started working as a teacher in one of the secondary schools in Sidodadi. In this context, P4's internalization began with interaction and then a process of mutual



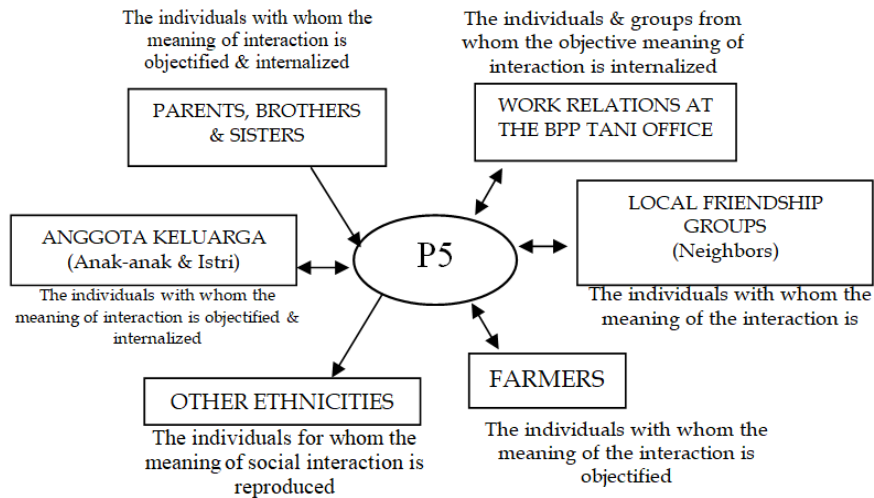
understanding with the school and ended with consensus. Since then, P4 has had a new social status as an educator, making her socialize more.

Her marriage to a friend from the same ethnic group made her life more challenging. P4 finally tried to open another activity by selling at the Wonomulyo market. The social terrain of the market has made her many friends and is increasingly recognized, especially in business relations, including customers from other ethnicities and fellow Makassarese. In addition, his religious knowledge made him active in one of the largest religious organizations in Wonomulyo. Besides being a teacher/educator, P4 works as a trader and preacher. All the statuses that P4 has are then internalized as a form of social community role. It means that this status has the consequence that he is a servant of the community through his field of knowledge. P4 also tried to strengthen the results of this internalization through socialization with all ethnic layers in Wonomulyo City.

There are implications of the results of P4's internalization on his interactions; P4 can adjust his status based on his condition in the form of interaction. For example, when he teaches, he is an educator. When he is in the market trading, he smiles a lot and greets people; when he preaches, he is gentle, and so on. It can be said that P4 can reflect himself either as "I" or as "ME" when he captures the meanings generated by the results of his interactions with others.

Relationship sociometry of P5 (ethnic Toraja). In this sociometry, there are 6 components with which the informants interact. These components are parents and siblings, family members, work relations in the office, neighbors, other ethnicities, and farmers. The components are depicted as follows.





*Figure 6. Sociometry map of P5 (ethnicToraja participant)*

Figure 6 above shows the sociometric map of P5, which shows his relationship with 5 parties with whom P5 has interactions that show how the symbolic meanings of the interactions that occur experience internalization, objectivation, and reproduction. The parties with whom P5 has relationships include his parents and siblings, his wife and children, work relations at the BPP Tani office, neighbors, farmers, and other ethnic groups.

Participant 5 is described as a person who easily adapts socially. He got this from the internalization of the upbringing of his parents and siblings when he was a child, coupled with the Toraja culture that likes the peace of life. In his family environment, P5 has internalized this from associating with his wife of the same ethnicity and his children. It is also reinforced by his neighborhood, inhabited mainly by Javanese ethnicity.

The perfect internalization results from the long interaction process around P5, which he then brings to his work environment at the BPP Wonomulyo Office, which is generally made up of educated people. P5 is the most senior in the office, so that he can establish equal interaction and communication with his coworkers. In his status as a field extension worker, P5 again interacted a lot with farmers in the Matakali sub-district,

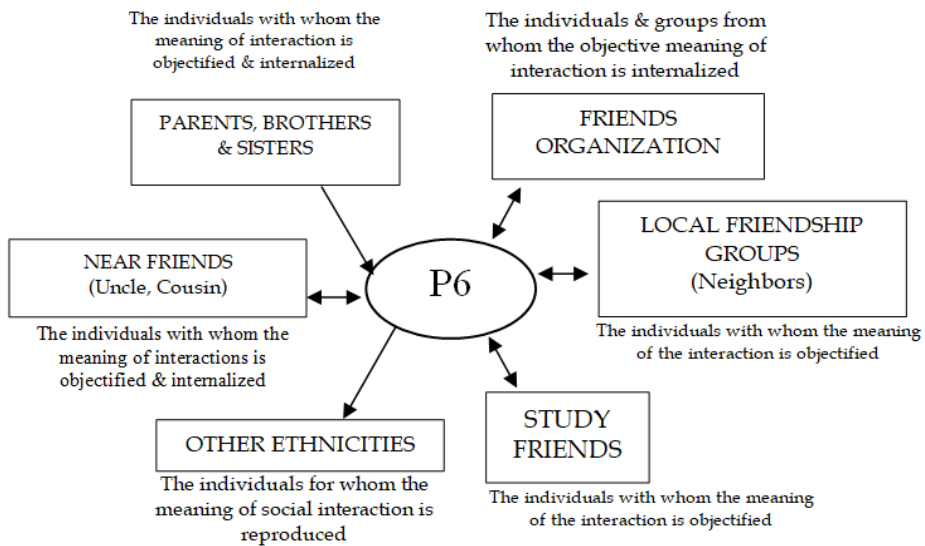


who were primarily ethnic Bugis and ethnic Mandar. P5 had no difficulty communicating because he understood several local languages, including Bugis and Mandarese.

As a minority resident in the Sidodadi neighborhood, AHM understands he must follow the majority. Therefore, AHM took a role in every community activity until he was finally recognized. That is the internalization effort shown by AHM about his social conditions to give birth to the objectivation process in the form of community role activities and as a form of reproduction, which is AHM's social interaction with other ethnic groups around his house, making him respected and respected.

Relationship sociometry of P6 (ethnic Chinese). Figure 6 shows ADI's sociometric map showing her relationships with the six parties she interacts with and how symbolic meanings in interactions with other ethnicities are internalized, objectified, and reproduced. The six parties are parents and siblings; close relatives such as uncles, aunts, and cousins in Jakarta; college friends in Makassar; neighbors near home; work relations in multicultural organizations; and other ethnicities.

ADI's parents are the first second-generation Chinese descendants to come to Wonomulyo. ADI is an only child and is expected to inherit his parents' business. ADI is currently running an internet cafe as an application of his computer science degree and showing his Chinese ethnicity's entrepreneurial nature. ADI has an uncle who lives next door to him and is married to a Javanese girl. He now has 2 daughters.



*Figure 7. Sociometric map of P6 (Chinese ethnic participant)*

During college, P6 was very concentrated on studying computer science and, at the same time, looking for his identity as an ideal student. Within four years, P6 earned a computer science bachelor's degree at STMIK Makassar.

Wonomulyo's highly heterogeneous social conditions moved P6 to devote himself to social good. She became involved in a multicultural organization that deals with ethnic unification through various intervention activities. The context of P6's family environment, which mixes with other ethnicities such as Javanese, Bugis, Mandar, and Toraja, makes him no longer considered Chinese by his neighbors. ADI himself feels like a Wonomulyo person, especially since he understands Javanese, Mandarese, and Bugis and does not know Chinese.

From the six cases of sociometric nets described above, there are several types of symbolic interaction relationships between participants and parties from their social environment, with which the symbolic meanings of the social environment are absorbed, objectified, reproduced, and internalized.



Table 3. Sociometric relationship matrix in the meaning of symbols that affect inter-ethnic social interactions

| No. | Elements of the social environment that influence and are influenced | Research Subject |    |    |    |    |    |
|-----|--|------------------|----|----|----|----|----|
|     |  | P1               | P2 | P3 | P4 | P5 | P6 |
| 1.  | Parents and siblings   | ↑                | ↑  | ↑  | ↑  | ↑  | ↑  |
| 2.  | Family members   | ↕                | ↕  | ↕  | ↕  | ↕  | ↕  |
| 3.  | Friendship groups (work & business)                                  | ↓                | ↓  | ↓  | ↕  | ↕  | ↕  |
| 4.  | Friendship groups (neighbors)  | ↕                | -  | ↕  | ↕  | ↕  | ↕  |
| 5.  | Relatives (cousins, uncles, etc.)                                    | -                | ↕  | -  | -  | -  | ↕  |
| 6.  | Other ethnicities  | ↑                | ↑  | ↑  | ↑  | ↑  | ↑  |

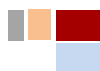
Source: Results of data analysis, March 2022

Symbol description:

- ↑ : Subject internalizes the symbolic meaning of social interaction.
- ↓ : Subject reproduces objective meaning to others about the symbolic meaning of social interaction.
- ↕ : The subject and the other party dialogue in objectivation of the symbolic meaning of social interaction.
- : There is no interaction.

Table 3 above shows the relationships between the six subjects and parties from their respective social environments. The table reveals the following: First, objectifying symbolic meaning, in this case, “relationship” from the social interaction process, mainly occurs in the interaction relationship between the subject (as an individual) and the friendship group. The interaction relationship between the subject and other ethnics dominates this objectivation process. The interpretation that can be proposed here is that the objectivation process of the meaning of inter-ethnic “relations” mainly occurs in general interaction relations with other ethnicities and friendship groups.

Secondly, the common experience of the six ethnic subjects is that in absorbing the symbolic meanings of inter-ethnic social interactions, they are all internalized by the objective meanings of their interactions with the environment of parents and siblings, as well as from the environment of friends (colleagues and business partners) and relatives (cousins, uncles). The interpretation that can be proposed is that individuals or groups that



are more established in internalizing a particular symbolic meaning tend to dominate the process of objectivation and internalization of symbolic meaning. Individuals or groups that are more experienced or established recognize and absorb the meaning of inter-ethnic social interaction.

## **2. Discussion**

The symbolic interaction theory perspective assumes that social balance will be created through the mechanism of the social interaction process. The interaction conditions are characterized by mutual interpretation of their characteristics between one another among various groups so that through such mechanisms, balance can be created or otherwise, there is no balance (Ritzer & Douglas, 2004; Johnson, 1990; Veeger, 1985). Social interaction is not merely an exchange of information but a process where individuals influence each other's perceptions and actions. Through this mechanism, social balance can be achieved; otherwise, imbalance occurs.

From this perspective, social interaction is seen as a dynamic and continuous process. Each individual brings personal and symbolic meanings into the interaction, which are then negotiated and interpreted collectively by the participants. For instance, when two people meet, they not only exchange words but also interpret body language, tone of voice, and situational context to understand the intentions and meanings behind those words.

This mutual interpretation process is referred to as the "definition of the situation." According to Herbert Blumer, a key figure in symbolic interaction theory, individuals act based on the meanings they assign to objects and events in their environment. These meanings originate from social interactions with others and can change through continuous interpretation. Thus, meanings and actions are not static but are always in flux and determined by the context of the interaction (Blumer, 2013).

When different individuals or groups meet, they bring a set of expectations and definitions of the situation that may differ. To achieve



social balance, there must be a negotiation process where each party tries to understand and adjust to the other party's definition of the situation. If this process succeeds, a shared understanding is created, allowing for harmonious and sustainable interaction. However, if this process fails, for example, due to irreconcilable differences in meaning or an unwillingness to compromise, social imbalance will occur (Goodchild & Cole, 2001; Sinha et al., 2023).

George Herbert Mead, a pioneer in this theory, explained that the mind and self-consciousness of an individual develop through social interaction. He emphasized the importance of the "me" and the "I" in an individual, where the "me" represents social expectations and roles learned from interactions with others, and the "I" represents the individual's spontaneous response to these expectations. The process of social balance involves integrating the "me" and the "I" within the context of social interaction (Fabbrichesi, 2015; Adon, 2021; Côté, 2023).

Additionally, symbolic interaction theory also considers the role of "symbols" in social interaction. However, it is important to note that the social balance achieved through symbolic interaction is temporary and contextual. Any change in interaction or group composition can disrupt this balance and require a renegotiation of meanings and definitions of the situation. In complex and diverse societies, symbolic interaction becomes a crucial tool for understanding how individuals and groups adapt and create dynamic social structures (Langer, 2018; Ghahtarani et al., 2020).

Thus, the perspective of symbolic interaction theory provides deep insights into how social balance is created and maintained through the processes of interpretation and negotiation of meanings in everyday interactions. It highlights the importance of communication, perception, and symbols in shaping harmonious and balanced social relationships.

The results showed that the Javanese ethnic group showed a more friendly attitude, and it was proven by the choice of other ethnic groups who considered that the Javanese ethnic group was considered to have the





friendliest attitude. It may be due to the typical character of the Javanese ethnicity, who are easy to get along with, especially in their speech, which can make others have a good impression of them.

In contrast to the Javanese, who are considered the friendliest, the Makassarese and Chinese are considered less friendly by the other four ethnicities except by their ethnic peers. Some research subjects from the Chinese and Makassarese ethnicities acknowledged the friendliness of the Javanese. However, this does not indicate that the Makassarese and Chinese ethnicities are unfriendly at all but rather due to the lack of things that could make other ethnicities interact with them and their lack of population in Wonomulyo.

The research subjects' choice of ethnic order regarding friendly attitudes illustrates that the research subjects still perceive their ethnic peers as having friendly attitudes. It is natural because cultural similarities are always an attractive and unifying factor. However, there are also other ethnicities, namely the Makassarese and Chinese, who did not choose their ethnicity as the first choice but chose the Javanese ethnicity (Fakhria et al., 2023; Alotaibi, 2023; Masdar & Harifuddin, 2023).

This phenomenon can be further explained by considering the social dynamics and historical context of the regions involved. Cultural affinity often fosters a sense of comfort and trust, leading individuals to perceive their own ethnic group as more friendly and approachable (Taylor, 2002; Water, 2023). However, the preference for Javanese ethnicity by the Makassarese and Chinese respondents suggests a broader recognition of the social and cultural influence that the Javanese community holds.

The Javanese are known for their significant demographic presence and cultural impact in Indonesia. Their culture is often associated with politeness, harmony, and friendliness, which might contribute to their favorable perception by other ethnic groups (Rahmah et al., 2021). This cross-ethnic preference highlights the role of cultural reputation and social integration in shaping interethnic relationships.



Furthermore, the choice of Javanese ethnicity over their own by the Makassarese and Chinese respondents could also reflect a strategic social alignment. In multicultural societies, aligning oneself with a dominant or widely respected group can facilitate social mobility, access to resources, and broader acceptance. This suggests that, beyond cultural similarities, perceptions of power dynamics and social advantages also play a crucial role in these preferences.

To sum up, cultural similarities naturally make people within the same ethnic group feel more friendly toward each other. However, the fact that Makassarese and Chinese people are drawn to Javanese culture shows how complicated cultural reputation, social integration, and strategic social alignment are in how people of different ethnicities see each other and interact with each other.

#### **D. Conclusion**

The meaning of symbolic interactions in multiethnic communities in Wonomulyo District is reflected in the various ethnic attitudes exhibited by the residents. These attitudes, characterized by openness, hospitality, and friendliness, create an environment where individuals from different ethnic backgrounds feel a sense of happiness and mutual respect. This mutual respect is crucial in preventing social disharmony, as it encourages residents to engage positively with one another, fostering a sense of community and belonging. The shared symbol of social harmony becomes a vital element that all community members strive to maintain, recognizing its importance for their collective well-being and peaceful coexistence.

In the context of Wonomulyo, the sociometric form of symbolic interactionism is profoundly influenced by several key social structures, including neighborhoods, friendships, and workplaces. These social settings provide the primary arenas where individuals from various ethnic backgrounds interact and form relationships. Within these spaces,



the values and behaviors that promote social harmony are reinforced and perpetuated, contributing to a cohesive and integrated community life.

Javanese culture, with its emphasis on social harmonization and communal values, plays a particularly dominant role in shaping the socio-cultural landscape of Wonomulyo. This cultural influence is evident in the daily interactions and social practices of the community, where the principles of mutual respect and harmony are consistently emphasized. The pervasive presence of Javanese cultural norms helps to create a socio-cultural atmosphere that prioritizes the well-being of the community over individual interests, thereby fostering a strong sense of unity and solidarity among the residents.

Moreover, the influence of Javanese culture extends beyond mere social interactions to affect the broader cultural and social policies within the community. Traditional Javanese customs and practices often serve as a reference point for resolving conflicts and maintaining social order, ensuring that the community remains cohesive and resilient in the face of potential challenges. This cultural framework provides a stable foundation upon which the multiethnic community of Wonomulyo can build and sustain its social harmony.

In essence, the interplay of symbolic interactionism in Wonomulyo District highlights the critical role of ethnic attitudes and cultural influences in shaping a harmonious multiethnic society. The community's commitment to openness, hospitality, and mutual respect, reinforced by the dominant Javanese culture, ensures that social harmony is not just an ideal but a lived reality. This harmonious coexistence, supported by strong social networks and cultural values, enables Wonomulyo to thrive as a diverse yet united community.

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