Tracing ethnic socialisation of Chinese in Malaysia to Chinese-medium school

Abstract: The study examined the ethnic socialisation by comparing the influences of the family and school on the development of ethnic identity. The participants were 397 Malaysians of Chinese descent with Malay, Chinese and English educational backgrounds. Familial ethnic socialisation was moderate and similar for the three groups. They were similar in the resolution and affirmation dimensions of their ethnic identity. The role of Chinese-medium school in ethnic socialisation is evident in the greater exploration of ethnicity by the Chinese-educated participants. This group also valued Chinese-medium education and the Chinese language, Chinese name and Chinese festivals as markers of Chinese identity. However, the other two groups did not believe in marking their Chinese identity. Considering that ethnicised identity is a given in Malaysia, the findings suggest that the Chinese who did not have Chinese educational background may be migrating from Chinese ethnicity to notion of the Malaysian race (Bangsa Malaysia).

Keywords: ethnic socialisation, Chinese-medium primary school, familial ethnic socialisation

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