

Exploration and Commitment to Ethnic Identity among Malaysian University Students

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ABSTRACT

This research uses Phinney's (1992) Multiethnic Group Identity Measure (MEIM) to study in-group ethnic identification and other-group orientation among 364 tertiary students (Polytechnic, 292; University, 72) from four ethnic groups in Malaysia: Malay, Indian, Chinese, and Indigenous. The MEIM measures the four components of ethnic identity—affirmation/belonging, ethnic behavior, out-group orientation, and ethnic identity achievement, the last of which comprise exploration of, and commitment to, ethnic identity. The respondents had the highest score on affirmation/belonging, which is moderately associated with ethnic identity achievement. Other-group orientation had the lowest score but was still marginally positive. There were no significant differences in the strength of the ethnic identity components, as well as in the exploration and commitment constructs of ethnic identity achievement. However, the mean scores indicated that the Malay and Chinese respondents were inclined towards a foreclosed ethnic identity, whereas the Indian and Indigenous respondents seemed to be closer to an identity-achieved state.

Keywords: ethnic identity, exploration, commitment, ethnic identity achievement, affirmation, ethnic behavior, other-group orientation, Multiethnic Measure