ABSTRACT

This paper sets out to measure ethnic identification variables in a Malaysian context. Seven most widely accepted constructs of ethnic identity; language, friendship networks, religious affiliation, participation in clubs and organizations, endogamy, food preference and traditional celebrations were translated into nine constructs. Data collected was analyzed using exploratory factor analysis on three ethnic groups, Malay, Chinese and Iban in Malaysia. The findings indicate that ‘my language’ and ‘my friends’ can measure ethnic identification strength, with a caveat for religion for Malays.

Key Words: Ethnic, Ethnic Identification Strength, Malaysia, Malay, Chinese, Iban

INTRODUCTION

Ethnic marketing is enthusiastically promoted to cross-cultural marketers as the best method to obtain customers (Dunn, 1992; Mummert, 1995; Steere, 1995). Ethnicity is described as a dynamic and popular method of targeting (Armstrong, 1999; Cui, 1997; Fost, 1990; Kinra, 1997; Kumar, 2002; Livingston, 1992). However, this ‘gung-ho’ approach needs to be moderated by a better understanding of the very group that is targeted. The identification of ethnicity allows for the development of an in-group
measurement that is distinct and separate from other groups. This will then allow for better targeting.

It is apparent that ethnic identity can fade or be retained and be agreeable to change (Keefe & Padilla, 1987; Phinney, 1990). This fluidity is related to the concept of acculturation. For any marketer, an important issue in ethnicity is the strength of affiliation to a specific ethnicity and whether it has been diluted by the dominant culture, and if so, to what extent. This is known as acculturation, which is generally understood to be the acquisition or adoption of the host, main, or dominant cultural traits (Gentry, Jun, & Tansuhaj, 1995; Laroche, Kim, & Tomiuk, 1999; Laroche, Kirpalani, & Darmon, 1999), customs of an alternative society (Seitz, 1998), or a new culture (Andreasen, 1990; Hui, Laroche, & Kim, 1998).

This paper addresses an important knowledge gap by determining the factors that are important for ethnic identification in a Malaysian context. The scale is tested across three different ethnic groups, Malay, Chinese and Iban. The rest of the paper is organized as follows: first discussion of the relevant literature is presented; then the methodology is discussed; findings presented; and finally the paper concludes with a discussion of academic implications and areas for future research.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The Context

Malaysia is a multi-ethnic country in South East Asia. It has a population of 23.27 million, where the majority of the population is Malay (50%), followed by Chinese (26%), Indians (7.7%) and Iban (1.8%). However in Sarawak itself, the Iban are the majority (30.1%) followed by Chinese (26.7%) and Malay (23%) (Anonymous,
2004). Ethnic divisions are obviously visible in Malaysia and are based on language use (Platt, 1981; Watson, 1980), in both formal and informal situations (Abraham, 1999). The ethnic diversity in Malaysia is divisive with individual ethnicities having their own perception of social reality (Milne, 1978).

Malays are defined as people who speak Malay, lead the Malay way of life and are of the Islamic faith (Asmah, 1983) and endogamy seems to be the rule (Asmah, 1983; Purcell, 1965). They are believed to have migrated from Yunnan (Asmah, 1983) or Sumatra (Asmah, 1977). Malays are the largest ethnic group in Malaysia (Andaya & Andaya, 1982; Asmah, 1983; Mardiana, 2000). Malay social interaction is limited to the extended family unit with contacts with other ethnic groups such as Chinese and Indian limited for the purposes of trade (Nazaruddin, Ma'rof, Asnarulkhadi, & Ismail, 2001; Purcell, 1965). The Malay language belongs to the Austronesian stock with a number of regional dialects (Asmah, 1977; Asmah, 1983).

The Chinese in Malaysia are mainly descendants of immigrants from the southern coastal provinces of China (Lee & Tan, 2000; Nazaruddin et al., 2001). The Chinese tend to be urban, but are nearly everywhere, in town and village alike (Purcell, 1965). In 1957, there was 2,332,963 Chinese (37.1%) in Malaysia (Nazaruddin et al., 2001) and while the number has increased, the percentage is now at around 26%. Mandarin is the written and spoken language learnt at school but there are numerous spoken dialect groups (Lee & Tan, 2000). The Chinese have been economically dominant in the commercial sector (Andaya & Andaya, 1982; Chew, 1941; Mardiana, 2000), with daily contact with other races for trade purposes (Purcell, 1965). They are followers of various religions and practice endogamy (Asmah, 1983; Hodder, 1959; Purcell, 1965).
The Iban are a riverine group of rice cultivators inhabiting the interior hill country of Sarawak and parts of Indonesian Borneo (Freeman, 1955). The name “Iban” is from the Kayan language and means “immigrant” (Freeman, 1958). The most common Iban settlement is the longhouse, comprising 4 to 50 independent family units. They are classless but very status-conscious. The Iban religion revolves around augury, omens and rice with a small number converted to Christianity (Low, 1848; Pringle, 1970; Roth, 1896). The Iban have long been in contact with other groups and are well known for their social encouragement of initiative and free collective participation (Freeman, 1981). The Iban speak a dialect of Malay (Malayan subfamily, Austronesian family) that is distinct from other Bornean languages (Noriah, 1994).

*Ethnicity*

Ethnicity is seen as crucial in examining and understanding the functioning and viability of most contemporary societies including multi-cultural societies like Malaysia (Abraham, 1999). Ethnicity refers to the way people are grouped together by their language, custom, religion, race and territory (UNRISD, 1999). In Malaysia, race (thus ethnicity for the government) is viewed as a biological concept, though most sociologists would disagree with this (Shanklin, 1993) and would argue that this is a social and political classification.

Ethnicity is both the appearance of homogeneity of a human population group and the belief of members of a population group that they belong to one another (Anonymous, 2001). Ethnicity involves a common cultural heritage, a sense of peoplehood that is passed from one generation to another, a sense of belonging and the expression of cultural heritage (Renzetti & Curran, 1998). Another alternative is the view that ethnicity is a construction of identities, through social experiences (UNRISD, 1999).
This sameness has a common thread in nearly all definitions of ethnicity, of either common origin or shared cultural traits (Hui et al., 1998). Ethnic groups are seen as a segment of a larger society whose members are thought, by themselves and/or by others, to have a similar origin and to share important segments of a common culture (Barth, 1969; Keyes, 1976; Vallee, 1982; Yinger, 1985). Various authors have raised questions as to how ethnicity should be defined (Burton, 1996; Deshpande, Hoyer, & Donthu, 1986; Hui et al., 1998). Since Weber (1961) pioneering work on ethnicity, there has been much confusion over its constructs. It is agreed, at a basic level, in sociology and anthropology, that ethnicity is a concept that refers to the character or quality encompassing various indicators that are used to assign people to groups (Gordon, 1964). Ethnic origin is a de facto characteristic of a person and is constructed by various biological characteristics, such as skin color (Devos, 1975; Fishman, 1977a, 1977b; Penaloza, 1994). Ethnicity is more than just paternity, but also patrimony (the legacy of collectivity) and phenomenology (the meaning people attach to their descent as members of a collectivity) (Fishman, 1977a, 1977b). Nevertheless, this is quite different from ethnic identity, which utilizes a more subjective view. However, studies in DNA do not support a biological separation and indicate that there are no clear breaks delineating racial groups (Marshall, 1998).

Previous studies have utilized either one construct (Garcia & Lega, 1979); two constructs (Constantinou & Harvey, 1985); three constructs (Hogg, Abrams, & Patel, 1987); three or more (Aboud & Christian, 1979); or four or more constructs (Caltabiano, 1984; Driedger, 1975; Makabe, 1979) to determine ethnicity. Researchers have employed many methods to determine ethnicity such as by surnames (Mirowsky & Ross, 1980), country of origin (Gurak & Fitzpatrick, 1982; Massey & Mulan, 1984), paternal ancestry (Alba & Moore, 1982), language spoken at
home (Massey & Mulan, 1984), location of the city (Cervantes, 1980), area of residence (Wallendorf & Reilly, 1983) and self identification (Saegert, Hoover, & Hilger, 1985). The seven most widely accepted constructs of ethnic identity are language, friendship networks, religious affiliation, participation in clubs and organizations, endogamy, food preference and traditional celebrations (Driedger, 1975; Phinney, 1990; Rosenthal & Feldman, 1992).

*Ethnic identity*

Ethnic identity is a concept that is answered by the questions “What am I?” and “What am I not?” (Aboud & Christian, 1979; Brand, Ruiz, & Padilla, 1974). It is a concept that refers to who a person is and is one of the many aspects in the identity of a person (Frideres & Goldenberg, 1982). The word identity conjures up many aspects that have to be considered, though in the case of this study, it must be limited to specific qualifiers of the word, ‘ethnic’ identity. Ethnic identity refers to one’s identification to a specific ethnic group (Dashefsky & Shapiro, 1974; Driedger, 1978). In order for such identification to occur, a sense of common ancestry, based on shared individual characteristics or shared socio-cultural experiences (Driedger, 1978; Kitano, 1985), or a sense of shared values and attitudes (White & Burke, 1987), or feelings of belonging and/or commitment (Masuda, Matsumoto, & Meredith, 1970; Ting-Toomey, 1981), must exist. When this occurs, ethnic identity will tell a person the correctness of one’s actions and at the same time allow for one to assess the correctness of an outsider’s behavior (Frideres & Goldenberg, 1982). This is the reason for asking respondents for their reactions to a company that has produced ethnically targeted advertising in this study.
Language has always been an important criterion in determining ethnic identity (Aboud & Christian, 1979; Bergier, 1986; Devos, 1975; Felix-Ortiz De La Garza, Newcomb, & Myers, 1995; Giles, Taylor, Lambert, & Albert, 1976; Schermerhorn, 1970; Vallee, 1982). Most research measures also gauge media consumption (Bergier, 1986; Garcia & Lega, 1979; Keefe & Padilla, 1987) and the family context (Connor, 1977; Makabe, 1979; Masuda et al., 1970; Pierce, Clark, & Kaufman, 1978; Teske & Nelson, 1973; Valencia, 1985). Language is important from the perspectives of proficiency, preference and use (Olmedo, 1979). Media consumption on the other hand can be seen as a private activity, determined by one’s own choices and preferences and therefore will have little conflict with his/her own culture of origin (Lee & Tse, 1994b). Malaysian subcultures (i.e. Iban and Chinese) still use their ethnic languages even though they are fluent in the dominant language (Malay). This effect was also described for Hong Kong and Mexican migrants to the USA and Canada (Lee & Tse, 1994a; Penaloza, 1994). On the other hand, social use of language is more subject to the language of the dominant culture (Hui et al., 1998; W. Lee, 1993).

Other researches have utilized ethnic social interaction as a dimension for determining ethnic identity (Bergier, 1986; Connor, 1977; Dashefsky & Shapiro, 1974; Felix-Ortiz De La Garza et al., 1995; Garcia & Lega, 1979; Keefe & Padilla, 1987) while others have also noted the importance of religious affiliation (Dashefsky & Shapiro, 1974; Hirschman, 1981). Cultural aspects and cultural behavior had also been assessed (Hui et al., 1998).

METHODOLOGY
In order to determine the strength of that self-identification with ethnicity, this study used the seven most widely accepted constructs of ethnic identity (Driedger, 1975; Phinney, 1990; Rosenthal & Feldman, 1992). The seven constructs were used to obtain a comprehensive report of ethnic identity. The scale was operationalised with nine items in a seven point Likert scale as shown in Table 1.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Code</th>
<th>Statement</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>EIS1</td>
<td>I strongly identify myself with the above stated ethnicity.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EIS2</td>
<td>I always speak my ethnic language at home.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EIS3</td>
<td>I speak my ethnic language fluently.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EIS4</td>
<td>Most of my friends are from my ethnic group.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EIS5</td>
<td>I always prefer to socialize with my ethnic group.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EIS6</td>
<td>I follow the religion of my ethnic group.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EIS7</td>
<td>I must marry with people of my own tribe, social group, or community.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EIS8</td>
<td>I always prefer my ethnic group food rather than any other.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EIS9</td>
<td>I always celebrate my ethnic group festivals.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A total of 1173 respondents from Sarawak, Malaysia, were obtained from a larger study that was testing consumers’ perceptions towards the use of language in advertising. This sample consisted of 376 Iban, 405 Malay and 392 Chinese respondents. A Likert Scale of 1 to 7 was used where 1 = strongly disagree to 7 = strongly agree.

The population from which the sample was sourced was everyone in Sarawak, Malaysia, that identified themselves as Malay, Iban or Chinese at the time of the study. Convenience sampling was utilized with individual subjects representing individual sampling units. This method has been suggested as satisfactory for theory-testing purposes (Mittal, 1995).

In order to obtain the required number of respondents, the author obtained assistance from the Ministry of Unity, Sarawak, Malaysia. Most of the questionnaires (1000 copies) were distributed via the Ministry of Unity to its ‘Taibika Perpaduan’ (Unity Kindergarten) program teachers. Only 800 questionnaires were returned (response
rate of 80% \([(800/1000)*100 = 80\%]\) due to refusal and lack of time. The author and other enumerators distributed the remaining portion of the questionnaire (200 copies) plus an extra 380 copies at various locations in Kuching, Sarawak (e.g. villages, housing areas). The final response rate was 74\% \([(1173/1580)*100 = 74\%]\); where 1173 is the total number of questionnaires collected (800 copies in the first batch and 373 copies in the second batch) and the 1580 consist of the initial distribution plus the total number of questionnaires sent out the second time (580).

Respondents were selected on the basis of opportunity and availability. The interviewer approached them at their homes or offices. In cases where it was uncertain whether the respondents belonged to one of the ethnic groups in the study, they were asked to indicate their ethnicity. If they were not of the ethnic group studied, the author or enumerator then thanked them and left. If the respondent qualified, they were then greeted and asked if they were willing to be interviewed or to answer the questionnaire. Most respondents in the first phase of the data collection read and answered the questionnaire privately. Others, especially the older respondents and those met at the various villages in the second phase of data collection, preferred the questionnaire to be read to them by the enumerator and they indicated their answers.

**FINDINGS**

Table 2 provides a brief respondent profile for the three ethnic groups studied and an overall picture. Table 3 depicts the findings for the factor analysis. Table 4 depicts the means. A principle components extraction through SPSS on the 9 items for a sample of 1173 respondents was used to estimate the number of factors with forced eigen values that exceed one.
For Malay respondents, the KMO was 0.851, indicating that the sampling adequacy which should be greater than 0.5 for a satisfactory factor analysis to proceed was acceptable (Anonymous, 2006a, 2006b). Bartlett’s test Chi-Square was significant ($p = 0.000$) at 1430.30. Total variance explained was 60.94% out of 2 components.

For Chinese respondents, the KMO was 0.906, indicating that the sampling adequacy which should be greater than 0.5 for a satisfactory factor analysis to proceed was acceptable (Anonymous, 2006a, 2006b). Bartlett’s test Chi-Square was significant ($p = 0.000$) at 2286.16. Total variance explained was 61.07% out of 1 component.

For Iban respondents, the KMO was 0.881, indicating that the sampling adequacy which should be greater than 0.5 for a satisfactory factor analysis to proceed was acceptable (Anonymous, 2006a, 2006b). Bartlett’s test Chi-Square was significant ($p = 0.000$) at 1916.42. Total variance explained was 68.98% out of 2 components.
### Table 2: Respondent Profile

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variables</th>
<th>Overall</th>
<th>Iban</th>
<th>Malay</th>
<th>Chinese</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>1173</td>
<td>376</td>
<td>405</td>
<td>392</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender (%)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>40.6</td>
<td>47.3</td>
<td>32.3</td>
<td>42.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>59.4</td>
<td>52.7</td>
<td>67.7</td>
<td>57.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age Scale (%)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17 – 19</td>
<td>6.6</td>
<td>9.6</td>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>7.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20 – 29</td>
<td>47.1</td>
<td>46.8</td>
<td>44.9</td>
<td>49.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30 – 39</td>
<td>29.2</td>
<td>26.1</td>
<td>34.3</td>
<td>27.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40 – 49</td>
<td>14.3</td>
<td>14.1</td>
<td>15.6</td>
<td>13.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50 – 59</td>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>2.7</td>
<td>2.7</td>
<td>2.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>60 – 69</td>
<td>.3</td>
<td>.8</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Highest Level Of Education Achieved (%)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No Formal Education</td>
<td>1.7</td>
<td>3.5</td>
<td>1.2</td>
<td>.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Primary School</td>
<td>5.4</td>
<td>10.6</td>
<td>5.2</td>
<td>.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Secondary School</td>
<td>68.4</td>
<td>68.1</td>
<td>75.6</td>
<td>61.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diploma</td>
<td>16.3</td>
<td>10.9</td>
<td>14.3</td>
<td>23.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Degree</td>
<td>7.7</td>
<td>6.1</td>
<td>3.5</td>
<td>13.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Postgraduate</td>
<td>.6</td>
<td>.8</td>
<td>.2</td>
<td>.8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Table 3: Varimax Factor Analysis for Ethnic Identification Strength

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variables</th>
<th>Malay&lt;sup&gt;a&lt;/sup&gt;</th>
<th>Chinese&lt;sup&gt;b&lt;/sup&gt;</th>
<th>Iban&lt;sup&gt;c&lt;/sup&gt;</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Language and Religion</td>
<td>Socialization</td>
<td>All</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I strongly identify myself with the above stated ethnicity.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I always speak my ethnic language at home.</td>
<td>.775</td>
<td>.821</td>
<td>.850</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I speak my ethnic language fluently.</td>
<td>.857</td>
<td>.764</td>
<td>.880</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Most of my friends are from my ethnic group.</td>
<td>.602</td>
<td>.834</td>
<td>.610</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I always prefer to socialize with my ethnic group.</td>
<td>.794</td>
<td>.819</td>
<td>.690</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I follow the religion of my ethnic group.</td>
<td>.759</td>
<td>.780</td>
<td>.714</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I must marry with people of my own tribe, social group, or community.</td>
<td>.827</td>
<td>.770</td>
<td>.845</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I always prefer my ethnic group food rather than any other.</td>
<td>.779</td>
<td>.748</td>
<td>.774</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I always celebrate my ethnic group festivals.</td>
<td>.687</td>
<td>.760</td>
<td>.713</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<sup>a</sup> Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis. Rotation Method: Varimax with Kaiser Normalization. Rotation converged in 3 iterations.<br> <sup>b</sup> 1 components extracted. Rotation converged in 3 iterations.<br> <sup>c</sup> 1 components extracted. Rotation converged in 3 iterations.
Table 4: Means of Variables

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variables</th>
<th>Malay Mean</th>
<th>Malay SD</th>
<th>Chinese Mean</th>
<th>Chinese SD</th>
<th>Iban Mean</th>
<th>Iban SD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I strongly identify myself with the above stated ethnicity.</td>
<td>5.17</td>
<td>2.01</td>
<td>5.03</td>
<td>1.57</td>
<td>5.74</td>
<td>1.82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I always speak my ethnic language at home.</td>
<td>6.12</td>
<td>1.46</td>
<td>5.18</td>
<td>1.63</td>
<td>5.93</td>
<td>1.76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I speak my ethnic language fluently.</td>
<td>6.43</td>
<td>1.17</td>
<td>5.31</td>
<td>1.55</td>
<td>6.12</td>
<td>1.63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Most of my friends are from my ethnic group.</td>
<td>5.44</td>
<td>1.77</td>
<td>5.10</td>
<td>1.52</td>
<td>5.29</td>
<td>1.92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I always prefer to socialize with my ethnic group.</td>
<td>4.69</td>
<td>1.88</td>
<td>4.76</td>
<td>1.49</td>
<td>5.02</td>
<td>1.99</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I follow the religion of my ethnic group.</td>
<td>6.22</td>
<td>1.49</td>
<td>4.58</td>
<td>1.72</td>
<td>5.13</td>
<td>2.17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I must marry with people of my own tribe, social group, or community.</td>
<td>4.50</td>
<td>2.02</td>
<td>4.55</td>
<td>1.66</td>
<td>4.16</td>
<td>2.38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I always prefer my ethnic group food rather than any other.</td>
<td>4.95</td>
<td>2.04</td>
<td>4.90</td>
<td>1.63</td>
<td>4.70</td>
<td>2.18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I always celebrate my ethnic group festivals.</td>
<td>6.17</td>
<td>1.53</td>
<td>5.32</td>
<td>1.64</td>
<td>5.85</td>
<td>1.84</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**DISCUSSION**

The means in Table 4 indicate all three ethnic groups score the least for ethnography. In the current multi-cultural context and modernization of Malaysia, the perception is that marriage is no longer limited to one’s own ethnic group. Nevertheless, this contradicts the situation in Malaysia, where due to culture and religion, inter-marriages is scarce (Davies, 2007). Yet, studies show that outside of Malaysia, Malaysians are openly marrying other ethnic groups (Bagley, 1972; Ziguras & Law, 2006).

Malay and Iban respondents scored the highest for speaking their language fluently while Chinese scored highest for celebrating their festivals. Language has been shown to be an important criterion in determining ethnic identity (Aboud & Christian, 1979; Bergier, 1986; Devos, 1975; Felix-Ortiz De La Garza et al., 1995; Giles et al., 1976; Schermerhorn, 1970; Vallee, 1982). Malaysian subcultures (i.e. Chinese and Iban) still use their ethnic languages even though they are fluent in the dominant language (Malay). This effect was also described for Hong Kong and Mexican migrants to the
USA and Canada (Lee & Tse, 1994a; Penaloza, 1994). On the other hand, the subcultures use the dominant ethnic groups language in social settings (Hui et al., 1998; Lee, 1993). As such, it is an important indicator of ethnic identification strength that one speaks and is fluent in one’s ethnic language.

Interestingly, aside from language, this factor for both Malay and Iban include festivals. Festivals are tied in with language, as each group has a specific festival, “Hari Raya” for Malay and “Gawai” for Iban. As shown, the festival itself is language driven. This is the time where they return to their villages, embrace the old ways, and converse with the past. Nevertheless, for Malays, an additional factor comes to play, religion.

As expected, for Malays, religion is an important factor in determining ethnic identity strength. This may be because of the strong history of Islam, its enshrinement in the Constitution, and its use in Malaysian politics. The use of religious affiliation as a tool for measuring ethnic identity has also been supported by some researchers (Dashefsky & Shapiro, 1974; Hirschman, 1981)

The Chinese in Malaysia, being a non-dominant group, exerts itself through its festivals. Chinese New Year is celebrated vigorously. As a non-dominant ethnic group, they are aware of both their own language and the dominant group, Malay, language, and as such are not concerned as much on the issue of language (Brumbaugh, 1995, 2002). Their celebrations differentiate them. In fact, Chinese respondents see all variables as measuring ethnicity while Malay and Iban respondents see two different factors.

Socialization is another factor that is even more interesting as it discusses social contact. Other ethnic social interaction such as food, friends and endogamy stand out. (Bergier, 1986; Connor, 1977; Dashefsky & Shapiro, 1974; Felix-Ortiz De La Garza
et al., 1995; Garcia & Lega, 1979; Keefe & Padilla, 1987). For Malays, socialization involves friends, marriage and food. Ibans on the other hand see socialization as all that, plus religion. Most Ibans are Christians who meet in churches for worship as well as socializing. Simply put, ethnic identification or what I am can be measured by my friends and my language.

CONCLUSIONS

The study set out to determine the constructs of ethnic identification of three ethnic groups in Malaysia, namely Malay, Chinese, and Iban. The findings indicate that “my language” and “my friends” is sufficient to measure ethnic identification strength, with a caveat for religion for Malays. This study extends previous targeting knowledge by showing that there are likely to be variables that are not invariant across ethnic groups.

Managers looking into a multi-cultural country must first determine these groups, not just by classifications set under the broad umbrella of ethnicity. They must note what is the language and who are the friends of these groups. This will indicate the level of acculturation of each group, perhaps even allowing for further segmentation of the group itself.

The sampling that was carried out was based on convenience sampling and limited to Sarawak and thus may limit the generalizability of the findings. Nevertheless, it provides a sense of direction for future research.

There is a lack of replication research in marketing. One study found that replication research is generally endorsed in the sciences, but not so in the advertising/consumer behaviour / marketing literature (Madden, Caballero, & Matsukubo, 1986). This
inhibits further understanding of issues highlighted and investigated yet also calls for further replication of this study. The context may be different but replications should be carried out to test if other ethnic groups also create the same results.
REFERENCES


