THE MULTIPLICITY OF ETHNIC IDENTITIES: INDONESIANS IN MELBOURNE

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ABSTRACT

This research aims to demonstrate how the Indonesian migrants in Melbourne construct their Indonesian identity based on the theoretical perspective of George Herbert Mead, Erving Goffman, and Fredrik Barth. To collect the data the researcher used the qualitative research method composed of participant observation and in-depth interviews. The quota sampling and the snowball sampling were carried out to select the key informants, that is, the Indonesian migrants who come from various socio-cultural backgrounds, most of them being Malay Indonesians who have lived in Australia for a long time. The results of the research indicate that the Indonesian identity in Melbourne is composed of several categories, each of which having its respective boundary. Thus, ethnic identity is dynamic and fluid to fit a particular situation. Some of the subjects performed impression management and passing in their interaction with others.

Key words : Ethnic boundary, ethnic category, impression management, passing

MULTIPLISITAS IDENTITAS ETNIK: ORANG INDONESIA DI MELBOURNE

ABSTRAK

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengetahui bagaimana identitas Indonesia dikonstruksi oleh orang-orang Indonesia di Melbourne, Australia, berdasarkan perspektif teoretis dari George Herbert Mead, Erving Goffman dan Fredrik Barth yang saling melengkapi. Untuk menjaring data penelitian, digunakan metode penelitian kualitatif yang terdiri atas pengamatan terlibat (*participant observation*) dan wawancara mendalam (*in-depth interview*). Pengambilan sampel quota (*quota sampling*) dan sampel bola-salju (*snow-ball sampling*) dilakukan untuk memilih para informan kunci, yakni para migran Indonesia yang terdiri atas berbagai latar-belakang sosial budaya, namun kebanyakan adalah orang Melayu (di Indonesia disebut pribumi) yang sudah lama menetap di Australia. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa identitas Indonesia di Melbourne terdiri dari beberapa kategori yang masing-masing memiliki batas etnik (*ethnic boundary*). Subjek penelitian aktif mengkonstruksi identitas etnik mereka. Jadi, identitas etnik bersifat dinamis dan cair, sesuai dengan situasi yang dihadapi. Sebagian subjek

penelitian melakukan pengelolaan kesan (*impression management*) dan *passing* dalam interksi mereka dengan orang lain.

Kata kunci : batasan etnik, kategori etnik, pengelolaan kesan, *passing*.

BACKGROUND TO THE RESEARCH

Until recently adjustment of migrants in a foreign country whose culture is different from their original culture has been approached mainly by Structural-Functionalism, with positivistic methods, particularly using questionnaires. Sociological study in race relations has long been preoccupied by an assimilationist perspective, based on the view that forces for assimilation cannot be avoided as they are required elements in the development toward modernisation (Lal, 1986; Darroch and Marston, 1984:128). However, the assimilation perspective has long been unreliable, suffering from what Robert Blauner termed "a managerial bias," that is, "gauging the histories and attitudes of an immigrant people in accordance with the social wishes and group interests of the dominant race" (Lyman, 1970:12). Banton (1981:15-16) shows that a lot of studies of migrants indicate that total assimilation never occurs to the migrant group or their descendants.Rather, as Armstrong (1986:104) suggests, "In the ethnically-diverse and competitive environment of the modern city, ethnic awareness tends to be heightened, and ethnicity is likely to become not less but more relevant as a basis for people's relating to one another. Studies from around the world and from cities in both developing and developed countries show this to be the case."

In studying the migrants' adaptation to their new environment, sociologists and social psychologists have focused on the migration motives that induce people to migrate and live in a new country, the process of adaptation and its determinants. This approach has to a large extent emphasised how variables such as biological and demographic characteristics of the subjects being studied (sex, age, ethnicity, religious affiliation, social status, levels of income, levels of education, foreign language capability, length of residence, etc.), influence or correlate with the extent of their adaptation.

A perspective relying on macro-cultural forces alone is insufficient to an understanding of ethnicity (De Vos and Romanucci-Ross, 1975:vi). Methodologically, contemporary interethnic relations are best understood by an approach which takes into account the subjective meaning of behaviour in a social context (Berreman,1975:91).These methods transcend group statistics to an interpretation of what has really been experienced by the individual.Such methods need to tap first-hand accounts of the migrants by the researcher through intimate involvement with them.

So far there have been very few studies of the Indonesian migrants in Australia, although they are large in number. Based on the interpretive

perspective suggested above, it is challenging to find out how the migrants have adjusted to the immediate foreign environment and how they symbolically construct their social worlds in the course of their contact with the host society.

RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

This study aims to delineate the multiplicity of ethnic identities among Indonesian migrants in the Melbourne metropolitan area, Australia. First, it will show what Indonesian ethnic categories exist as perceived by the subjects and later it will demonstrate how the subjects have been active in constructing their ethnic identities in the course of their intercultural adjustment in the new country. It is proposed that while ethnic identity of Indonesians in Melbourne is composed of several categories, it is also dynamic and fluid as situation demands, that is, to fulfill a certain purpose, whether it be personal, social, economic, or ideological.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The theoretical perspective used in this study incorporates the ideas of George Herbert Mead (1934), Erving Goffman (1959), and Fredrik Barth (1969), all of which should be seen as complementary. While some of Mead's ideas have been elaborated by Goffman, Goffman's ideas have been developed by Barth. Thus, Barth's approach to ethnic identity owes much to the concepts and directives for social research from symbolic interactionism (Lal, 1986: 296-297); it is somewhat an extension to Goffman's approach to self (Buchignani, 1980:75).

A view from symbolic interactionism suggests that the concept of ethnic identity lies in the contemporary theories of self. For instance, Mead's theory of self (1934) also applies to the formation of ethnic identity in that the concept of self is put in the ethnic context, thus, self is viewed as culture-specific or ethnically-grounded. Mead himself asserts,

> We are individuals born into a certain nationality, located at a certain spot geographically, with such and such family relations, and such and such political relations. All of these represent a certain situation which constitutes the "me" (Mead, 1934:182).

In other words, Barth's approach to ethnic identity approximates to an attempt to explore Mead's I, the active, creative and dynamic aspect of self, or more precisely, Goffman's "manipulating" self, which is put in the ethnic context. Barth's concepts, such as ethnic boundaries and interaction (1969), are particularly relevant as the main tools to analyse the data, so are Goffman's concepts such as impression management and performance (1959). As Dentan suggests, in cases of switching ethnic identities,

Ethnicity becomes a fleeting, Goffmanesque persona, more or less

manipulative, and not a trap . . . Goffmanesque models of self presentation and interaction ritual are adequate to describe this behaviour, often with only tangential reference to notions of ethnicity (1976:76,78).

Through these ethnic identity manoeuvres the migrants endeavour to maintain harmony and reduce friction between themselves and their social environment so they have to situationally take the roles of the various others whom they confront.Thus, the subjects' construction of their ethnic identities are dynamic, complex and context-related.They define their ethnic identities differently in different situations and so their meanings vary from situation to situation. Since the subjects can belong to more than one ethnic category, they can use their ethnic identities for their personal, social, economic or political purposes. In other words, ethnic identity is not merely a matter of identification with a culture, but as Durham (1989:138) puts it,

> it is also a matter of strategy, of the active use of that system or style [of culture] ... Ethnicity is both an identity and an instrument; it is at once a statement of cultural membership and a tool or a weapon by which members attempt to negotiate improved standing within a social system.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study is part of larger research which lasted approximately two years. To conduct the whole research I was involved in various Indonesian (ethnic and religious) communities in Melbourne. In addition, I intensively observed and interviewed dozens of key informants, most of whom being indigenous Indonesians. These subjects are long-term migrants (permanent residents) from various socio-cultural backgrounds who have lived in Australia for at least five years. Their comments as quoted in this study are original, except for their names which are fictitious.

The sampling technique used in this study is the combination of the quota sampling and the snowball sampling. The snowball sampling procedure depends mainly on personal introduction which relates the researcher to the informants who will in turn relate him to the next informants (Burgess, 1984:55). To get more data, I was engaged in activities of the individuals under study, either openly in the role of researcher or unobtrusively without the subjects knowing that I observed them: the way they conducted themselves, their mannerism, and their replies to my questions.

Although this study is not an ethnography or participant observation in the strict sense, it has employed a lot of its techniques, for instance, I attended gatherings, parties, meals, work activities, etc. By conducting in-depth interviews and participant observation, I had ample opportunity to find out what values were considered as important or unimportant to their ethnic identities and how they interacted with people around them, including their Australian fellows.

RESEARCH FINDINGS

The term *Orang Indonesia* as used by the subjects in Melbourne is rather ambiguous, since it includes various categories, each of which is based on one or more ethnic attributes. These ethnic categories relate to those found in Indonesia. In daily usage in Indonesia, *Orang Indonesia* is used as an umbrella category for a range of other categories, these may include various indigenous ethnic subgroups (such as Javanese, Sundanese, Balinese, Madurese, etc.), Indonesian Chinese, Indonesian Indians, Indonesian Arabs; religious subgroups such as Muslims, Christians, Hindus, Buddhists, etc. Each group is regarded as distinct, having its own social boundary within the Indonesian society. But they may have some shared cultural attributes such as geographical origin, language, and nationality.

Indonesian Categories

Presumably, since the subjects' ethnic identity did not come from a vacuum, the categories embodying Indonesian identity in Australia are to some extent influenced by the identity categories which the subjects have brought with them from their homeland. Therefore, in the new land, the subjects have also created similar (internal) ethnic boundaries and have used the term *Orang Indonesia* as a broad ethnic category to refer to Indonesian people in Melbourne. Morever, in line with Barth's perspective (1969:38), boundaries are, to some degree, maintained between ethnic units within this broad ethnic category.

To distinguish themselves from nonindigenous Indonesians, the subjects commonly use the term *Melayu* for themselves and the term *non-Melayu* for the latter. The major basis for such social differentiation is primarily physical traits (race). Sometimes the term *Indonesia* and *Melayu* are used as synonymous, for example, in the terms *Perut Melayu* (Malay Stomach),*Kampung Melayu* (Malay Village) and *Makanan Melayu* (Malay Food). The subjects occasionally refer the term *Melayu* to their homeland or their ethnic identity, such as in the expressions, "When I return to *Melayu*, I have more time to relax there," or "My stomach is still *Perut Melayu*. I must eat rice everyday, at least at dinner."

Indigenous Indonesians Vis-a-Vis Indonesian Chinese. Although the term *Orang Indonesia* also applies to nonindigenous Indonesians, there is a tendency among the subjects to qualify the nonindigenous Indonesians by adding a prefix or details that have racial quality to complement the term Indonesian. For example, the subjects use the term *Cina Indonesia* (Indonesian Chinese), the description "*Ia orang Indonesia, tapi keturunan Cina*" (He or she is an Indonesian, but of Chinese descent), or simply *Cina*. The subjects do not use the terms *pribumi* (indigenous people) and *nonpribumi* (nonindigenous people) in their daily interaction, since they are all visitors to the new land.Yet, there is a tendency that the subjects, particularly Muslims, set their own ethnic boundary,

particularly vis-a-vis the Indonesian Chinese. Obviously, this social situation did not occur randomly.Rather, it is the continuation of the social situation existing in Indonesia that has derived from previous historical antagonistic processes.Since the term *Cina* is rather derogatory, even in the new country, the subjects rarely use it in the presence of Indonesian Chinese, save in joking situations.

As in Indonesia, in Melbourne the categories of the indigenous Indonesians (ethnic subgroups) are less clear-cut than the categories indigenous Indonesians and nonindigenous Indonesians.Nevertheless, the ethnic demarcation between the indigenous Indonesians and the nonindigenous Indonesians and the differences between the ethnic subgroups in the new land are less visible than in the homeland. The lack of opposition between indigenous Indonesians and nonindigenous Indonesians stems from the fact that both groups are migrants confronting the host society. Together they share a small Asian social world within the dominant Australian social world.

Ethnic subgroups still maintain some degree of ethnic boundaries, particularly the Javanese and the Sundanese because of their relatively large numbers and their frequent use of their regional dialects among their ethnic members. It is still common to inquire about one's ethnic subgroup whether one is a Javanese, a Sundanese, a Balinese, etc. Except for differences in religion, language and some other cultural activities, the subjects do not perceive any significant differences between ethnic subgroups. Rather, they feel that they share a common identity. Ethnic stereotypes are hardly heard of among the ethnic subgroups. They do not look down on each other. They seldom talk about their ethnic differences with people from different ethnic subgroups. Instead, they are more concerned with current affairs related to financial situation, jobs, children's upbringing and education or events occuring in the new land and in the homeland. The fact that they live as a minority in a foreign country has made them aware of the importance of maintaining their ethnic harmony and solidarity.

Muslims Vis-a-Vis Christians. Like in the homeland, Indonesians in Melbourne are also differentiated on a religious basis.Thus, there are social categories such as Indonesian Muslims and Indonesian non-Muslims. The majority of the indigenous Indonesians are Muslims, while the majority of the nonindigenous Indonesians are Christians. A small number of indigenous Indonesians, typically Balinese, are Hindus. While a small proportion of Indonesian Muslims affiliate with HPIA (*Himpunan Pengajian Islam At-Taqwa*), ISG (The Islamic Study Group), and the Tablighi Jamaat, a large proportion of Indonesian Christians affiliate with various ethnic Christian organisations. In this context, both indigenous Indonesians and Indonesian Chinese as Christians have their own religious boundaries vis-a-vis indigenous Indonesians who are Muslims.

At the public level, both Muslim and Christian groups have to some extent maintained tolerance and solidarity. Although Muslims and Christians have their own social boundaries, unless the Christians are Chinese, their respective social

boundaries are still open in nonreligious life. Muslims and Christians go separately to their own religious services, but friendships between Muslims and Christians are common beyond religious contexts. For example, they work together to develop ethnic organisations such as IKAWIRIA (*Ikatan Warga Indonesia di Victoria*), PERWIRA (*Perhimpunan Warga Indonesia di Victoria*), PIA (*Persatuan Indonesia di Australia*), and *Paguyuban Jawa* and to carry out their activities. Some Christians attend *lebaran* parties held by Muslims, while some Muslims attend Christmas parties held by Christians. The *lebaran* celebrations hosted respectively by PERWIRA and IKAWIRIA are typical events reflecting their religious tolerance. Leaders of PERWIRA in particular are mainly Christians. Yet, they have shown the initiative of celebrating the great holiday of their Muslim members.

Upper Class Vis-a-Vis Lower Class. The subjects see that Indonesians in Melbourne can be divided at least into an upper class and a lower class, but the differences between the two classes are less clear-cut than in Indonesia. Some subjects argue that, here, the income of a working-class person is not much different from that of a professional; some Indonesians with university degrees also work as tram drivers or factory labourers. In their view, occupation is the most crucial aspect distinguishing upper-class Indonesians from lower-class Indonesians. When the subjects left their homeland, they dissociated themselves from various roles attributed to them by others. Working in the new environment, where there is more equality among people than in the home country, they have internalised new aspects of the self. Specifically, there is a tendency among the working-class subjects who have lived for a relatively long time in Australia to take the role of "the Australian others" who are similar to them in social status in that they internalise a sense of egalitarianism in associating with others: with Australians as well as with some Indonesians who have a higher social status according to the Indonesian standard. Simply put, the lower-class subjects do not bear the stigma they once had in Indonesia. That the internalisation of egalitarianism is subjectively felt by working-class subjects is clear in the following accounts:

> I do not see there is a difference. They eat meat, I also eat meat (Abdullah).
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> See Professor . . . [an Indonesian working at a university]. His house and his car are not much different from the house and the car that I have (Dayat).

Having internalised this Australian characteristic, and knowing that their living standard is not much different from that of the upper class, the working-class subjects assume that they are economically self-sufficient and are not dependent on the latter. In the case of unemployment, they still receive allowances (unemployed benefits) from the Australian government which fulfill their basic needs.

Apparently class distinctions among the subjects manifest themselves in, and typically correspond to, a clear demarcation of occupations, friendships and ethnic organisations. Most of the working-class subjects, in particular, see that although there is still a separation between the lower-class and the upper-class Indonesians, these boundaries are not as apparent as in the past. However, they are still inclined to restrict their significant relationships to those with other working-class Indonesians.

While the working-class subjects have their own typications for the upper class, so do the upper-class subjects for the working class. However, the upper class are not as articulate as the lower class in distinguishing themselves from the latter, except in their interaction which, according to the lower class, limits them within their own group. The statements of both groups are not necessarily true, since these are only their perceptions which are subjective in nature. More crucial is the fact that the two groups maintain their respective social boundaries.

The Repertoire of Ethnic Attributes

Since the subjects belong to various ethnic categories, they have multiple identities. Put differently, their ethnic identity takes various forms from which each can select and emphasise one identity to fit a particular situation. In doing so, while preserving their Indonesian identity, they have been exceptionally flexible in adjusting themselves to such changing situations. The repertoire of the subjects' ethnic attributes includes the following:

National and Regional Identity. When the subjects came to Australia, they brought with them a repertoire of attributes. They come from different families, cities, regional origins, ethnic subgroups with different dialects, different religious backgrounds, different social classes, etc. Each of these attributes might have priority over others to fit a particular situation. Since the subjects interact with several groups of significant others simultaneously, an encounter with a different group of significant others also demands a different ethnic attribute. However, the ethnic attributes they display are not mutually-exclusive. Rather, they exist simultaneously without each automatically being an alternative to each other. They are assumed as complements to each other rather than as alternatives.Allegiance to an ethnic subgroup and a religion is not contradictory to allegiance to the nation state where they originally came from. A person can be a Sundanese or a Manadonese, a Muslim or a Christian, and an Indonesian simultaneously without contradicting one attribute with another. A Javanese is at the same time an Indonesian, even though it is not necessarily vice versa.The two ethnic attributes are not separate nor in opposition. He or she may be a Muslim or a Christian without contradicting his or her ethnic identity with his or her religion. Simply put, the subjects have not only a sense of themselves as members of an ethnic group (Indonesians) but also as members of a certain ethnic subgroup and adherents of a certain religion. Loyalties to certain entities

are seen as risky only if these loyalties are at the expense of loyalty to the Indonesian nation state or Indonesian people as a unit.

On the surface, the pivotal criterion of the subjects' Indonesian identity seems to be "place of origin" which refers to what Anderson (1983) calls an imagined community, a cultural region now called the Republic of Indonesia where the subjects were born and raised. It is seen as an identification with their *bangsa* (people) or the nation state where they come from, the larger domain on which other ethnic attributes (such as ethnic subgroup, regional dialect, religion, place of origin, race, social class, etc.) rest.The subjects felt these national feelings vividly when they first arrived in Australia and encountered the new social world comprised mainly of the dominant Anglo-society. They identified themselves as Indonesians, not as members of an ethnic subgroup or natives of the region from which they came (such as Javanese, Sundanese, Balinese, Minangkabau, Batak, Manadonese, etc.).This Indonesian feeling remains relatively stable whenever they encounter non-Indonesians, for example at work, gatherings, meetings, seminars and conferences. It manifests itself at certain events such as the celebration of national days by the Consulate, particularly the independence day and the *lebaran* day, the celebration of the *lebaran* and the Indonesian Fair held by IKAWIRIA, the Satay Festival and the Food/Trade Festival held by PERWIRA. People who attend these events share certain ethnic attributes, at the least their *bangsa*, their Indonesian language and their geographical origin. Attendance at these events differentiates Indonesians, regardless or their racial, religious and ethnic backgrounds from non-Indonesians. However, the major line of social differentiation may change when Indonesians are in different organisations and/or at different events.

In Australia the subjects are more likely to identify themselves as Indonesians first rather than as Javanese, Sundanese, Balinese, etc. when encountering non-Indonesians. Thus, when they meet the latter and are asked "Where are you from?" typically they will reply "I am an Indonesian" or "I am from Indonesia." If they are asked more details about their identity, they will mention either the island such as Java, Sumatra, Bali, etc. or the city where they come from such as Jakarta, Bandung, Surabaya, etc., or the ethnic subgroup to which they belong such as Javanese, Sundanese, Minangkabau, Balinese, etc. The island or part of it (a province) is most likely to be given as an answer since the inquirers are most likely to be familiar with it rather than with either a city or an ethnic subgroup. Following Tan, "The difference in the behaviour of identification is due to the difference in the context of interaction which calls for a different level of contrast" (1988:89). In Royce's words, "The answer would depend on how familiar the questioner is with the region" (1982:201).

"Feeling Indonesian" is also felt when the subjects personally encounter strangers who have similar physical traits like them such as Malaysians or Filipinos, whom they initially take to be Indonesians. Their Indonesian identity will emerge if the two parties identify each other as coming from Indonesia.

However, a narrower identity will also emerge if they belong to the same ethnic subgroup, come from the same city, or adhere to the same religion and identify each other as such.For example,if a Sundanese meets another Sundanese in Melbourne for the first time, soon they are aware that they are not only Indonesians, but also Sundanese. In this case, they may switch their language from Indonesian to Sundanese if both parties feel comfortable in doing so.

When Indonesians meet and identify each other as such, each of them has in mind that the other must belong to an ethnic subgroup (or a racial group). Bruner's observation is still relevant for Indonesians in that there is no person who is simply an Indonesian without more specific ethnic identification (1974:252). In case of indigenous Indonesians, one cannot easily determine to which ethnic subgroup the other belongs if one relies simply on the other's physical traits. One has to determine whether the other is a member of an ethnic subgroup like oneself or another self belonging to an ethnic subgroup different from one's own. The ethnic individuals estimate each other's ethnic origin based on their commonsense knowledge and the stereotypes they have about the other which they once internalised in the homeland. For example, the Javanese and the Sundanese will be considered as *halus* (refined), the Batak as *kasar* (coarse) and aggressive. The individual will also predict the other's ethnic origin by observing the latter's name, skin colour, facial contour, speech patterns, nonverbal behaviour, hair style (Bruner, 1974:275), clothing and other symbols which may be subtle. If one fails to ascertain one's partner's ethnic origin, one may ask a question of "*aslinya dari mana*?" or "*asalnya dari mana*?" ("where are you from originally?"). Among Indonesians such a question is common in initial encounters. In answering the question, the person asked will not refer to Indonesia but may refer to a narrower entity, most likely the place where he or she was born and/or raised, or other entities such as the ethnic subgroup to which he or she belongs, or simply the place where he or she once lived.

Thus, for example, Martono will answer that question by saying "I am a Banjarese," referring to his place of birth. Deden will reply "I am from Bandung", referring to his place of birth while at the same time speculating that his listeners will associate Bandung with the Sundanese ethnic subgroup to which he belongs.Zulkarnain will reply "I am a Sasak" referring to his ethnic subgroup. Rizal will reply, "I am from Ujung Pandang, because I grew up there. It is too long to say `My father was a Macassarese and my mother was a Bugis'." Hanifah will answer, "From Sumbawa," referring to the island where she was born and raised, although her parents are from Bali. Ivan will identify himself as a Manadonese, because, as he said, his parents are Manadonese, although he was born in Ternate, does not speak the Manadonese language, and has only lived in Manado for three years of his life. This regional background is commonly expressed when Indonesians meet other Indonesians at a gathering such as a party, a seminar and in other encounters. Clearly, one's ethnic identity can be broadened or narrowed according to particular situations (Othman,

1977:110,216). Thus, self-identification can be made at the highest level (e.g. as Asians and specifically as Indonesians), at the intermediate level (e.g. Javanese, Sundanese, Minangkabau, Balinese, or from Java, Sumatra, Bali, etc) and at the lowest level (e.g. from Jakarta, Bandung, Surabaya, etc.). But the most common way to identify oneself, and others, is to refer to one's regional origin which implicitly suggests one's ethnic subgroup.

*Religious Identity***.** The Muslim subjects who associate with religious organisations and are practising their religion report that at a religious gathering their Indonesian identity and their regional identity are felt less significantly. It is their Muslim identity which is more important in such a situation. Their Indonesian identity and, more, their regional identity, is felt to be even less significant when they attend multiethnic religious gatherings where they meet other people who are non-Indonesians and use English as the main instrument of communication. But it does not mean that their religiosity is situational, since in nonreligious situations they still consider that being Muslims, for instance, is more important than being Indonesians or being Sundanese or Javanese.

Although loyalty to Islam in this context transcends ethnic loyalty and even national loyalty, this religious identity is not necessarily to be manifested at the absence of other identities. Rather, all these identities can be expressed simultaneously. The subjects can still be good Muslims while they are also Indonesians and Javanese. Their Indonesian identity in such a context is expressed through the language they speak to their Indonesian fellows or by the ethnic clothing they wear. Thus, the subjects typically identify themselves as Indonesian Muslims when encountering other Muslims from different national or cultural backgrounds.

That the subjects' religious and ethnic identities exist simultaneously can also be observed through the combination of religious and ethnic symbols they display. Although religiosity can be conceptually separated from ethnic identity, the subjects consider that the two can be combined as long as their ethnic aspects are not contradictory to their religious values. Put in another way, religion is used by the subjects as a strategy to perpetuate and strengthen their ethnic identity. Thus, it is common for Muslim men to wear *batik* shirts and *peci* (Muslim caps) and for Muslim women to wear ethnic costumes and *kerudung* (veils covering their hair) on religious occasions, particularly on the *Idul Fitri* day and the *Idul Adha* day. The subjects such as Fuad, Husni, Imran, Murad and Wawan often put on Muslim caps when they attend religious gatherings, regardless of the types of clothing they wear, thus still using religious symbols. A few others who consider themselves to be "less religious" also do so when attending special Islamic holidays such as the *Idul Fitri* day. However, in nonreligious or less religious situations, those who consider themselves to be religious do not display their religious symbols. Those subjects wear ordinary clothes (shirt, jacket, trousers without Muslim caps) when they go to work. Thus, Wawan wore his suit and tie when he attended the *lebaran* celebration and

became its MC, the event being held by PERWIRA whose leaders were mainly Christians. Imran wore his suit and tie and a Muslim cap when he attended an international Muslim dinner sponsored by three Muslim communities, HPIA, PMV (*Persatuan Melayu Victoria*) or The Association of Malays of Victoria and ISOMER (The Islamic Society of Melbourne Eastern Region). Ridwan put on his Muslim cap when he attended the *Idul Fitri* prayer but did not wear it when he and his Australian wife attended its celebration by the Indonesian Consulate later in the afternoon. The avoidance of using religious symbols at "secular" or simply cultural events by the Muslim subjects, even by those who are practising, and the use of such symbols by the subjects who consider themselves less religious at special religious events, are tactics of impression management (Goffman, 1959).

Passing. Since the subjects believe that part of their ethnic identity is physical, for instance that they are brown-skinned, their beliefs restrict their tactics of ethnic manipulation. With such distinctive characteristics it is somewhat difficult for the subjects to manipulate their ethnic identity---albeit not impossible---when interacting with non-Indonesians. Their physical traits, in which their Indonesian identity is embedded, are self-evident. Among Australians, they will be seen at least as Asians. Moreover, they feel that there is no need to pass as members of other ethnic groups since they have pride in their own ethnicity. They need to "pass" only if they perceive their ethnic identity as a stigma. Thus, their ethnic boundaries are more likely to, and can more easily, be penetrated by Indonesians themselves, by those whom Goffman terms the wise (1963:41), that is, individuals who to some degree have shared similar experiences with members of other groups, even though they do not inherit the latter group's culture entirely. It is easier for Indonesians to manipulate their regional or religious identities in the presence of other Indonesians. People linked to a certain ethnic subgroup may conceal their regional identity. They may also identify themselves with their interactants' culture by speaking the latter's regional dialect. It is not unusual for Indonesians to be able to speak two regional dialects, as a result of their wide mobility within Indonesia. The following cases illustrate:

> Martono was born and raised in a Sundanese region. He is like a perfect Sundanese when he speaks Sundanese, although he is a Javanese by ancestry. As he admits, his Indonesian language has a Sundanese accent. Occasionally he passes as a Sundanese among new members of the Indonesian community because of his Sundanese language mastery, even to the degree that he is not aware that he is "passing."
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> Cucun is a Cina peranakan (mixed-blooded Chinese) who was raised in a Sundanese region. She is married to a man of mixed ancestry (Anglo-Maori). As a Christian she interacts more frequently with other Christian Chinese. Yet she speaks *halus* (refined) Sundanese and has a strong Sundanese accent even when she speaks English. Since her physical traits are somewhat Sundanese, she occasionally passes as a Sundanese.

There are cases in which Indonesians pass as people who come from big modern cities in Indonesia, particularly Jakarta, whereas in fact they just lived there for a few years. They conceal their real identities by not revealing the places where they were born and/or raised to avoid feeling ashamed or being stigmatised. For them, rural areas or small towns other than major cities are associated with backwardness. This phenomenon apparently supports Gofmann's contention that inferiors must exert flexibility in the presentation of self (1969).

Based on my observations, I found that Indonesians manipulate their identity for situational impression management (Goffman, 1959). A lot of instances can be cited here: working-class Indonesians wearing formal western clothes (suits and ties); professionals driving costly cars; nominal Muslim men wearing *peci* (Muslim caps) and Muslim women wearing *kerudung* (veils) at religious events; Indonesians of some Chinese descent wearing traditional Indonesian costumes at ethnic events; others speaking the Jakarta dialect (to show that they are urbanised) or using some unnecessary English phrases when speaking Indonesian. Indonesians' ethnic identity manipulation mainly pertains to their efforts to present favourable images to others in particular situations, so that the latter assume that the former have the appropriate identity in a given situation. Thus, Amir wore his suit and tie on several occasions. Martono often wore similar attire whenever he attended seminars. Jaya wore a Muslim cap when he attended the *Id* prayers although he did not consistently observe his daily prayers. Husni, who consistently observed his religious duties, occasionally manipulated his performance by wearing *galabeya* (a traditional robe) assumed to be part of the Prophet's *sunnah* (tradition) when he attended religious gatherings in the Preston mosque. One night on the way to the mosque he had to draw some money from a flexi teller machine. Getting out of the car he put the lower part of his long attire into his pants. When I asked him why he did that, he said that he would be embarrassed to be seen by others in such an attire. At another time, Husni wore a leather jacket when he attended the lebaran celebration held by PERWIRA, whose leaders were predominantly Christians.

CONCLUSION

In this article I have demonstrated how the subjects of the study are creative in constructing their Indonesian identity. The perspective of symbolic interaction, and specifically Mead's concept of I (1934), Barth's concept of ethnic boundaries (1969) and Goffman's concept of impression management (1959) evidently show their usefulness in exploring the meanings of Indonesian identity in an interactional social context based on the subjects' own subjective point of view and their definition of a situation.

Clearly, there is no uniform definition of what it means to be an Indonesian. Rather, Indonesian identity is dynamic, fluid and situational. It is composed of

different categories, each of which can be elicited in different situations. Put differently, its meanings vary and change as the context of place and time also change, this determining the subjects' own actions to a considerable degree.

It is suggested that the subjects of the study, due to their ethnic pride, physical constraints and distinctive culture, rarely pass as members of other ethnic groups or ethnic subgroups, except for situational mpression management.

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