

VALUE SYSTEMS OF MALAY AND CHINESE MANAGERS: A COMPARATIVE STUDY

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SINOPSIS

Di antara variabal-variabal psikologi yang asas nilai merupakan suatu tenaga yang kuat mempengaruhi pengurus-pengurus. Kajian ini adalah penerokaan sistem-sistem nilai kerja bagi pengurus-pengurus Melayu dan Cina. Hasil kajian menunjukkan bahawa sistem-sistem nilai pengurus-pengurus Melayu dan Cina adalah berbeza. Pengurus-pengurus Melayu didapati lebih "egocentric" dan "sociocentric" dari pengurus-pengurus Cina, dan pengurus-pengurus Cina sebaliknya adalah lebih "conformist" dari pengurus-pengurus Melayu. Tetapi kedua-dua golongan pengurus tidak berbeza dari segi sistem nilai "tribalistic", "manipulative" dan "existential".

SYNOPSIS

Among basic psychological variables values has been a strong influential force on managers. This study explores the system of work values of Malay and Chinese managers. The findings indicate that Malay managers were much more egocentric and sociocentric compared to Chinese managers, who on the other hand, were much more conformist. However, both groups did not differ significantly on tribalistic, manipulative and existential values.

INTRODUCTION

In a multiracial society like Malaysia, employees bring into the organization differing systems of values. Extremely heterogeneous value profiles may result in conflict that threaten organizational stability, harmony and growth.

OBJECTIVE OF STUDY

This is a study of the work related value systems of Malay and Chinese managers in Malaysia. The study seeks answers to the following questions:—

1. Are the work related value systems of Malaysian managers different across racial origin?
2. What are the value system patterns of the Malay and Chinese managers?

VALUES AND VALUE SYSTEMS

Despite the variety of definitions, some theoretical consensus regarding the conception of values can be seen to be developing (Kahl, 1968; Coleman, 1969; Kolasa, 1969; Elbing and Elbing, 1967; Steiner, 1971; Brown, 1976; Taylor and Thompson, 1976). Values implies a code or a standard which has some persistence through time, or which organizes systems of actions. Values place things, acts, ways of behaving, goals or actions on the approval-

disapproval continuum.

Values, according to Graves (1970), change in a regressive–progressive fashion when each set of existential problems are solved and pre-stage movement to a higher level of psychological system. The pressure of changing conditions will first produce a regression and disorganization of values. Disorganization is not however, decay, but rather a stage in preparation for a higher level organization. When man's old values are no longer appropriate to his new state of existence they break down as he searches for more congruent values.

The term value system suggests hierarchy, and implies some kind of rank-ordering of values along a single continuum (Rokeach, 1973). One writer defines value systems as "a set of individual values which exist in a scale or a hierarchy that reveals their degree of relative importance" (Sikula, 1971).

METHODOLOGY

This study is based on a sample of 391 managers from 112 companies operating in Malaysia. The sample was selected by types of companies, racial groups and as to public or private sectors, i.e., government-owned corporations (public sector) or privately-owned firms (private sector). Sole proprietorship and government institutions not directly dealing with any business activity were excluded from the sample.

The present study compares the value systems of Malay managers (N = 180), Chinese managers (N = 164), and "Others" (N = 47). Malaysian Indian managers, which are classified under "Others" are deliberately left out from the analysis, because the total of 47 respondents, of which 25 were Malaysian Indians, offer a sample size too small for significant results.

Two sets of questionnaires were used, the "Value for working Questionnaire" (VWQ), and the "Personal Information Questionnaire" (PIQ). The VWQ instrument was adapted from

Flowers et. al. (1974) study. Since the original VWQ instrument was designed for American managers, the instrument's terminology was revised by the translation–retranslation procedures to adapt to the Malaysian situation.

Using Grave's theoretical framework, Flowers (1975) developed seven systems of values for working, i.e., the reactive, tribalistic, egocentric, conformist, manipulative, sociocentric, and existential. The description of each value system is given in figure 1. Eight items were used to measure each value system. The items relate to the topics of company loyalty, the boss, money, profits, work itself, job freedom, big companies and company rules. A total of 48 items were then used to measure six value systems. The first level of the value system, the reactive level as shown in figure 1, was excluded from the study since it is theoretically impossible to find managers at this level on organizational payrolls.

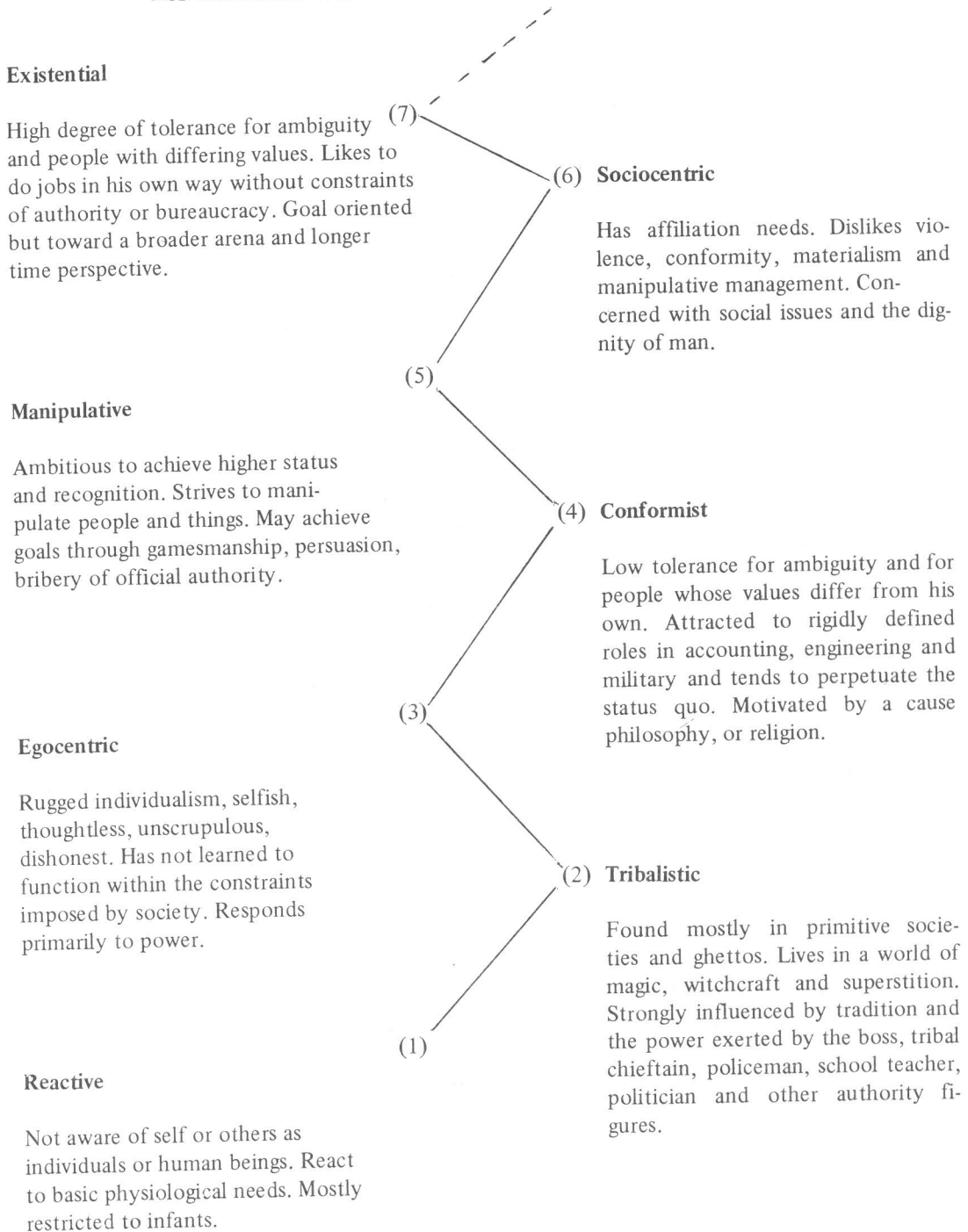
In light of the a priori expectation that Malays are fatalistic, animistic, "segan" and "malu", and Chinese are diligent, aggressive and wealth-seeking, (Smith and Bastin, 1967; Wilson, 1967; Parkinson, 1967; Charlesworth, 1974), one would expect Malay managers to have dominant value systems in the lower end of Flower's value system hierarchy. Malay managers can be expected to be more tribalistic, more conformist, and more sociocentric.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

A series of one way analysis of variance (ANOVA) for tribalistic, egocentric, conformist, manipulative, sociocentric and existential value systems by racial origin of Malaysian managers were used to test the hypothesis. One way ANOVA for each of the eight dimensions measuring each value systems of managers by racial origin was also used to test whether or not Malay, Chinese and "Other" managers differed in their views toward eight dimensions, company loyalty, boss, money, profit, work, job freedom, big companies, and company rules.

Figure 1

MANAGERIAL VALUE SYSTEMS OF MALAYSIAN MANAGERS:



(Adapted from M. Scott Myers and Susan S. Myers, "Toward Understanding the Changing Work Ethics," *California Management Review*, Spring 1974, Vol. XVI, No. 3, p. 9)

Table I

ANOVA FOR EGOCENTRIC VALUE SYSTEM:
MANAGERS BY RACIAL ORIGIN

Source	Degrees of Freedom	Sum of Square	Mean Squares	F Ratio	F Prob.
Between Groups	2	124.56	62.28	3.11	0.05
Within Groups	388	7792.02	20.06		
Total	390	7706.57			

Group	Count	Mean
Malay	180	6.04
Chinese	164	4.85
Others	47	5.21

Table II

MULTIPLE COMPARISONS BETWEEN EGOCENTRIC MEANS:
MANAGERS BY RACIAL ORIGIN

Contrast	F Ratio for Contrast	Critical F Value
1. $M_1 - M_2$	2.45	$N = 391, K = 3, .95 = 3.00$
2. $M_1 - M_3$	1.13	
3. $M_2 - M_3$	-0.48	$\sqrt{(K-1)(.95)_{2,00}}$
4. $[M_1 + M_2/2] - M_3$	0.38	$= \sqrt{(2)(3.00)}$
5. $[M_2 + M_3/2] - M_1$	-2.03	$= 2.45$
6. $[M_1 + M_3/2] - M_2$	1.53	

M_1 - mean values for Malays; M_2 - mean values for Chinese; M_3 - mean values for "Others"

Tribalistic Value System and Race

The ANOVA results show that Malay, Chinese, and "Other" managers in Malaysia, all view the tribalistic value system in similar manner as evidenced by the fact that no significant difference is found in the test. Similarly, when separate ANOVA for the eight dimensions purported to measure the tribalistic value system of Malaysian managers across race, Malay, Chinese, and "Other" managers are found to have similar views about company loyalty, boss, money, company profit, work, job freedom, big company, and company rules. Thus, the assertions that Malays are more tribalistic than the Chinese have proven to be wrong at least among those in the managerial group.

Egocentric Value System and Race

The egocentric value system of Malaysian managers is found to differ by racial origin. The overall F ratio of 5.45 shown in Table 1 is significant at the 0.05 level implying that Malays, Chinese, and "Other" managers possess the egocentric value system in different degrees.

Further tests involving individual racial group comparisons as shown in Table II, imply that Malay managers are more egocentric than Chinese managers. Malay managers have been found to be more egocentric than the Chinese or "Other" managers in their views toward importance of money and job freedom. This tendency is evidenced by the fact that the overall F ratios for effect of race on views about importance of money ($F = 6.62$) and job freedom ($F = 3.59$) dimensions of egocentric value system are found to be significant at the 0.05 level (Table III). Malay, Chinese and "Other" managers, however, have been found not to differ in their views toward company loyalty, boss, company profit, work, big company, and company rules of the egocentric value system.

Wilson and Charlesworth have found Malays to be shy ("segan" and "malu") or an easily embarrassed group of people. The present study, however does not find Malays to be so, for the

egocentrics are the most unscrupulous, selfish, impulsive, and in general not willing to live within the constraints of the society's norm. The question now is, why are the Malay managers different from the Malay society as a whole? One possible explanation could be due to the recency of entry into the business sector among the Malays. The Malays who have chosen employment in the business sector have learned that survival means to be hardened, selfish and aggressive and thus to do away with the characteristics of "segan" and "malu". As a result of the past experience of being rejected from entry in business organization, a Malay manager could have developed a feeling of suspicion, a need to foster his individual survival in an organization which he felt was only legally forced to accept him¹. These feelings could have driven the Malay managers into viewing company loyalty, their boss, company profit, job freedom and company rules suspiciously. These feelings might have made them more egocentric than the other managers.

Conformist Value System and Race

Malay, Chinese and "Other" managers are found to differ in their values respecting conformity. The overall F ratio of the ANOVA among conformist value system means of Malaysian managers by racial origin is 7.136, very significant at the 0.05 level as shown in Table IV.

When the multiple comparison tests were used to test if individual racial group means differ, Chinese managers were found to be more conformist than Malay managers though Chinese managers were not significantly different from "Other" managers. Similarly the degree of the conformist value system possessed by Malay managers have not been found to

¹One underlying policy of the Malaysian government, as laid out in the Second, Third and Fourth Malaysia Plans is to "persuade" organizations in the private sector to restructure their personnel make up at all levels of operations and management so that the ratio of Malay, Chinese, and "Others" employees employed in their organization is consistent with the racial composition of the Malaysian population.

**ANOVA FOR EIGHT DIMENSIONS OF EGOCENTRIC VALUE SYSTEM:
MANAGERS BY RACIAL ORIGIN**

Group	N	MEANS							
		Company Rules	Boss	Money	Company Project	My Work	Job Freedom	Big Company	Company Rules
Malays	180	0.06	1.10	1.13	0.49	0.50	2.16	0.25	0.36
Chinese	164	0.16	0.88	0.65	0.44	0.55	1.66	0.19	0.36
Others	47	0.21	1.15	0.94	0.53	0.34	1.32	0.43	0.49
Total	391	1.02	0.91	0.48	0.50	1.85	0.25	0.37	5.45
F Ratio		0.61	1.19	6.62	0.16	0.70	3.59	1.15	0.33
F Prob		0.55	0.31	0.002	0.85	0.50	0.03	0.32	0.72

Table IV

**ANOVA FOR CONFORMIST VALUE SYSTEM:
MANAGERS BY RACIAL ORIGIN**

Source	Degree of Freedom	Sum of Squares	Mean Squares	F Ratio	F Prob
Between Groups	2	989.31	494.66	7.14	0.001
Within Groups	388	26896.25	69.32		
Total	390	27885.56			

<u>Group</u>	<u>Count</u>	<u>Mean</u>
Malays	180	18.38
Chinese	164	21.74
Others	47	19.34

differ significantly from "Other" managers. The results in Table V address these findings.

The finding that Chinese managers are more conformist than Malay managers is contradictory to the a priori expectation that Chinese managers would be less conformist than Malay managers. The contradiction could be due to either one or all of the following reasons:

1. That the observation about the Malay values as viewed by some people is an oversimplification.
2. That Malay managers are the deviants of the Malay society.
3. That the contradiction is due to the results of the New Economic Policy which calls for the restructuring of society through strategies such as:
 - eradicating poverty through redistribution of income and ownership, restructuring employment patterns in the various organizations according to racial origins;
 - developing a Malay industrial and commercial society;
 - developing the non-growing region, and
 - providing better educational opportunities for the population.²

The joint effect of the above policies and efforts could have changed the value system of the Malays to be less conformist, more confident in their views toward work as a whole; or that those policies and efforts could have psychologically threatened the employment security of the Chinese and Other managers so as to make them become more conformist. As shown in Table IV, which displays the result of analyses of variance among the dimensions measuring conformist value system by racial origin, company loyalty and company rules are found to be viewed significantly different by the various racial groups of managers. The results indicate that Chinese managers are highly conformist relative to the Malay or "Other" managers, in their views toward loyalty and company rules. Similarly,

the scores of Chinese managers are also higher for most of the other dimensions, although they are not found to be significantly different.

A fourth reason which could be the probable explanation for the high conformity characteristic of the Chinese managers relative to the Malay or "Other" managers is the clannish nature of the Chinese society itself. Socially, the Chinese tend to remain separated from the rest of the Malaysian society, and to remain a closely-knit structure of discrete clans, dialect associations and mutual aid groups bound together by a common culture and heritage that is an amalgam of Confucian, Taoist, and Mahayana Buddhist elements. The Malaysian Chinese regard themselves as part of the larger Chinese society and therefore aim at conforming to the values which they believe hold the wider Chinese society together. Since business organizations and their activities have for many years been regarded as the main differentiating institutional and employment factor between them and the Malays, the conformist value system which is apparent in the Chinese society is carried over into the Managerial world.

Manipulative Value System and Race

Overall, the degree of the manipulative value system of the Malay, Chinese and "Other" managers has not been found to differ significantly. Malay, Chinese and "Other" managers, however, are found to differ in at least three of the eight dimensions that are purported to measure manipulative value system, that is company profit, big companies, and company rules. On two of the three dimensions found to be significantly different across racial origin (company rules and big companies), the mean scores of Chinese managers are found to be higher than the mean scores for Malay mana-

²The Malaysian New Economic Policy was initiated in 1970 after the racial riot incidence of May 13, 1969. This policy was laid out in the Second Malaysia Plan (1971-75), and is continued in the Third Malaysia Plan (1976-1980), and the Fourth Malaysia Plan (1981-1985).

gers. These results confirm the expectation that Chinese managers are more manipulative than their Malay counterparts when viewing company profits and big companies.

Malay managers, however, are found to be more manipulative in their views toward company rules. A possible cause for the highly manipulative nature of the Malay managers in viewing company rules could also be related to their recent entry into the managerial world. Historically, native business has been predominantly Chinese. Malays have felt that occupational entry into business was socially closed to them. To survive and succeed in businesses owned or controlled by the Chinese would mean to be manipulative of the company rules.

Sociocentric Value System and Race

The degree to which Malay, Chinese and "Other" managers possess the dominant sociocentric value system differs significantly. Overall, Malay managers appear to be more sociocentric than Chinese or "Other" managers. Malay managers are more sociocentric than Chinese and/or "Other" managers in their preferences for types of superiors and in their views toward company profits. Malaysian managers from all ethnic groups, however, viewed company loyalty, money, work, job freedom, big company, and company rules indicative of sociocentric value system in similar fashion (see Table VII).

Existential Value System and Race

The degree of dominance in existential value system has not been found to differ between Malays, Chinese and "Other" managers. Table VIII indicates that further analyses involving effects of race on each of the eight dimensions measuring existential value system reveal significant differences only for the company loyalty dimension. Malay managers appeared more existential than Chinese or "Other" managers in their views toward company loyalty.

CONCLUSION

Evidently, the existing literature on human

values of Malaysians indicates that the studies are far from conclusive, and they have not added significantly to the current state of knowledge on the behavior of Malaysian managers. Those studies do not provide a substantial empirical evidence on the area under investigation, partly due to the general lack of work in this particular area.

Values of Malaysians as a nationality have never been described as extensively as one has found in literature on human values that relate to Americans. Most studies about Malaysians have been historical, subjective descriptions and non-empirical in nature profiling them in passing rather than delving deeply into the subjects that relate to values, attitudes, or beliefs. The a priori expectation that Malays are fatalistic, animistic, "segan" and "malu", and Chinese are diligent, aggressive and wealth-seeking, as stated earlier, are found to be unnecessarily true, at least among the managerial groups. Scott (1968) using an in-depth interview technique studied the political beliefs of 17 Malaysian civil servants in Kuala Lumpur. Using the value-orientation framework of Florence Kluckhohn, Scott profiles Malaysian civil servants as tradition-oriented — taking the view that human actions are prompted by egoism that is controllable only through external authorities, whether government or the supernatural; that Malaysian civil servants are fatalistic — man subjugated by nature, who see nature as too hostile and threatening to be approached; that Malaysians see life as a struggle for a "constant pie" — a struggle for a fixed scarcity of desired material goods.

The findings of this study so far have established that the value systems of Malay, Chinese and "Other" managers are similar in certain aspects and different in others. Malay managers are found to be more egocentric and sociocentric than Chinese managers, and Chinese managers on the other hand are more conformist than Malay managers. Both Malay and Chinese managers have similar tribalistic, manipulative and existential value systems. Figure 2 exhibits the value profile of Malay, Chinese and "Other" managers in graphic form.

Figure 2
 MEAN SCORE OF VALUE SYSTEMS
 FOR MALAYSIAN, MALAY AND CHINESE MANAGERS

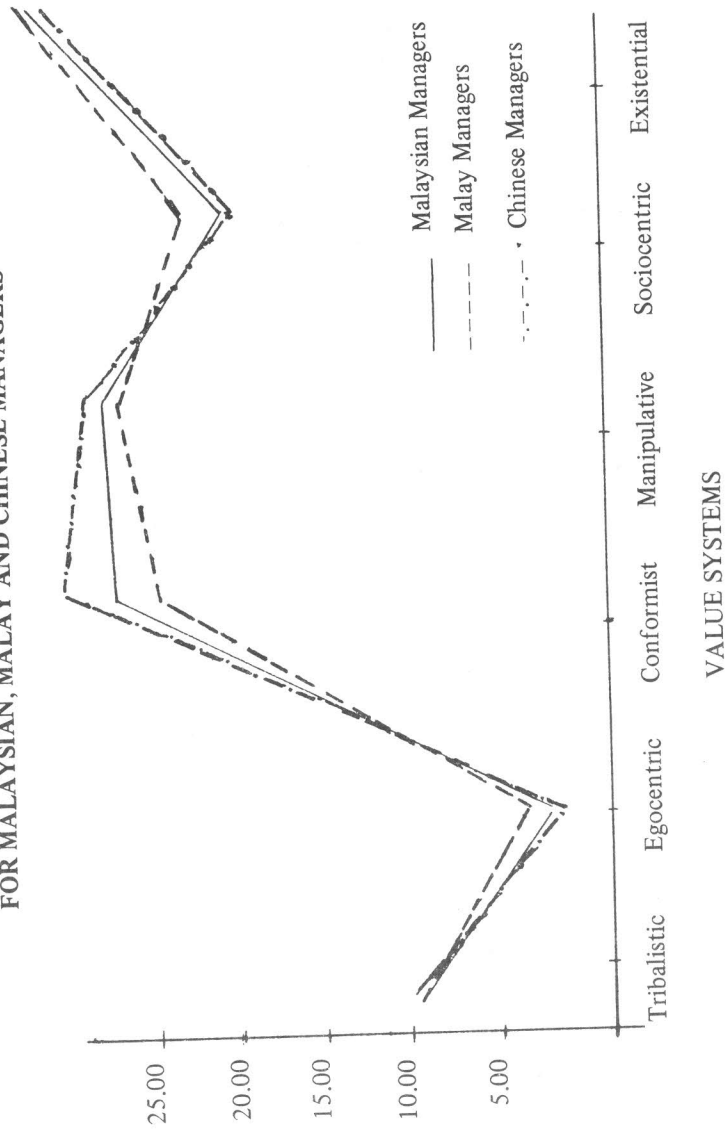


Table V

**MULTIPLE COMPARISONS BETWEEN CONFORMIST MEANS:
MANAGERS BY RACIAL ORIGIN**

Contrast	F Ratio for Contrast	Critical F Value
1. $M_1 - M_2$	-3.74	$N=391, K=3, .95 = 3.00$ 2_{100}
2. $M_1 - M_3$	-0.70	
3. $M_2 - M_3$	1.75	$\sqrt{(K-1)(.95)}$ 2_{100}
4. $[M_1 + M_2/2] - M_3$	0.56	$= \sqrt{(2)(3.00)}$
5. $[M_2 + M_3/2] - M_1$	2.29	= 2.45
6. $[M_1 + M_3/2] - M_2$	-3.06	

Table VI

**ANOVA FOR EIGHT DIMENSIONS OF CONFORMIST VALUE SYSTEMS:
MANAGERS BY RACIAL ORIGIN**

Group	N	MEANS							
		Company Loyalty	Boss	Money	Company Profit	My Work	Job Freedom	Big Company	Company Rules
Malays	180	2.97	2.07	3.14	3.14	1.49	1.31	1.54	3.23
Chinese	164	3.84	2.16	3.30	2.90	1.84	1.53	1.88	4.29
Others	47	2.87	2.38	3.15	2.45	1.72	1.49	1.85	3.43
Total	391	3.32	2.14	3.21	2.72	1.66	1.42	1.72	3.70
F Ratio		4.72	0.43	0.19	0.99	1.37	0.62	1.61	6.05
F Prob.		0.01	0.66	0.83	0.38	0.26	0.54	0.20	0.003

Table VII

**ANOVA FOR EIGHT DIMENSIONS OF SOCIOCENTRIC VALUE SYSTEM:
MANAGERS BY RACIAL ORIGIN**

Group	N	MEANS							
		Company Loyalty	Boss	Money	Company Profits	My Work	Job Freedom	Big Company	Company Rules
Malays	180	2.03	2.89	1.36	1.79	2.74	1.31	3.39	2.69
Chinese	164	2.05	2.70	1.15	1.49	2.65	1.20	2.77	2.02
Others	47	2.60	1.77	0.94	0.83	2.30	1.49	2.89	2.21
Total	391	2.11	2.68	1.22	1.55	2.65	1.28	3.07	2.35
F Ratio		1.48	5.05	1.69	4.46	0.52	0.47	2.37	2.84
F Prob.		0.23	0.01	0.18	0.01	0.60	0.63	0.09	0.06

Table VIII

**ANOVA FOR EIGHT DIMENSIONS OF EXISTENTIAL VALUE SYSTEM:
MANAGERS BY RACIAL ORIGIN**

Group	N	MEANS							
		Company Loyalty	Boss	Money	Company Profit	My Work	Job Freedom	Big Company	Company Rules
Malays	180	3.91	2.79	2.39	2.32	3.43	3.68	2.33	1.76
Chinese	164	3.18	3.31	2.75	2.93	3.16	3.35	2.35	1.71
Other	47	3.55	3.45	2.62	3.34	3.62	4.19	1.60	2.32
Total	391	3.56	3.09	2.57	3.16	3.34	3.60	2.25	1.80
F Ratio		3.55	2.90	0.82	1.17	0.58	1.44	1.95	1.24
F Prob.		0.03	0.06	0.45	0.31	0.57	0.24	0.14	0.29

Malay managers are different from their Chinese counterparts in their view toward leadership style. Malay managers seem to prefer a sociocentric leadership style – a leader that gets them working together in close harmony – being more a friend than a boss – or what is sometimes referred to as the “subordinate-centered” leader. Chinese managers on the other hand prefer the existential leadership style – the kind of leader who “trusts” people – the kind of leader that gives them access to the information they need and lets them do their job in their own way. Malay and Chinese managers do not seem to prefer the manipulative, tribalistic or the egocentric type of leadership style or the leader that tells exactly what to do and how to do a particular job or the leader who is tough but allowing them to be tough too. These types of leadership styles are sometimes known as the “boss centered” or the “authoritarian” leadership style.

To a Malay manager job freedom means, an opportunity to do interesting and challenging work and to be able to express opinions openly which is typical of an existential manager. Chinese managers, however, view job freedom very highly as the opportunity to stand on their own two feet and to pursue success without too much interference from supervisors or anything else. This view is the typical expression of an entrepreneur – a manipulative manager.

Malay managers seem to favour big companies playing a role that would support the cause of social and economic justice, provide a pleasant work climate, share profits with employees and become selective in choosing their products and customers. This view is indicative of a sociocentric – or similar to what England (1974) calls, the moralistic-oriented leader. Chinese managers however, are more pragmatic-oriented in their views concerning the role of big companies. They feel strongly that big companies should play a role dedicated to maximising profits – a view that is descriptive of a manipulative manager.

Malay managers also differ from Chinese

managers in their views about company loyalty. Loyalty to a Chinese manager means sacrificing for the good of the organization, while to a Malay manager, loyalty has a limit, i.e., for as long as the goals of the organization do not go against his principles. My view is that these principles are usually those associated with religious beliefs and practices.

From the results of the study, it is evidenced that Malaysian managers and particularly Malay managers are not fatalistic, animistic, or man subjugated to nature as many Western Scholars assert. Malay managers are no more tribalistic than Chinese or “Other” managers. If there should be any difference, the difference could only be in the degree of sophistication and not in kind.

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