



Igorot Shared Ways of Ethnic Identity Self Identification in Facebook Groups

Stephanie Luanne R. Lagasca

Assistant Professor, Department of Communication, College of Arts and Communication,
University of the Philippines Baguio Gov. Pack Road, Baguio City, Philippines

Received: September 15, 2025; Accepted: October 22, 2025; Published: December 30, 2025

Abstract

This paper looks at how the Igorots of Northern Luzon, Philippines sustain their ethnic self-identification through shared ways of speaking in Facebook groups. The author conducted a case study to analyze the communicative acts of posting by the Igorots, using Trimble's Ethnic Self-Identification Measurement Domains Model. Specific to this paper are cultural concepts that characterize the collective identity of the Igorots: *ili* - the hometown and *gag-ay* - sharing of stories during community gatherings. The author posits that the Facebook groups studied are the virtual *ilis* of the Igorots; interactions in these Facebook groups make for the online *gag-ay*. The results show that there are nine shared ways of speaking across the three Facebook groups. These are (1) the use of the word Igorot in the Facebook group names; (2) the use of Igorot artifacts in the Facebook group cover photos; (3) references to Igorot culture in the Facebook group descriptions; (4) the use of speech community's language in their Facebook pages; (5) featuring Igorot towns and places in their Facebook pages; (6) focus on Igorot personalities/events; (7) focus on Igorot-related topics in articles posted; (8) sharing of Igorot music videos/self-made videos in the group page; and (9) memes in the local language. Through the shared ways of communicating ethnic identity, the Igorots engage in storytelling (*pan-iiistorya*) and discussions of ideas, views, and feelings (*pantatabtavel*), thereby preserving *gag-ay* in the virtual *ilis* forms of social interaction that remain central to the Igorot culture.

Keywords: Indigenous Communication, Ethnic Identity, Facebook Groups, Igorot, Shared Ways of Speaking

1. Introduction

The Internet and social media have democratized the way messages are created, allowing anyone to create content and especially allowing formerly marginalized groups to positively represent themselves. This is true for the Igorots of the Philippines, who have long been marginalized and portrayed as being backward in traditional media. Today, Igorots use Facebook

groups to communicate with each other and positively represent themselves on social media, thereby sustaining their ethnic self-identification.

The Igorots are people who were born and live in the mountainous areas of the Cordillera region in Northern Luzon, Philippines. The word Igorot is derived from the prefix “i,” which means the “people of” and “golot,” meaning mountain chain (Scott, 1964, p. 235). The Igorots can be more accurately referred to by the names of six ethno-linguistic groups into which they can be divided – Isneg, Kalinga, Bontoc, Ifugao, Kankana-ey, and Ibaloi (Scott, 1993, p.235)

In the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic, the researcher explored the shared ways of speaking of the Igorot members of three Facebook groups. The researcher detailed preliminary observations in an online conference in 2021. This year, these results were revisited and this paper aims to explore how the shared ways of speaking of the Igorots keep alive their ethnic self-identification.

The objectives of this study are to:

1. identify the shared ways of speaking of members within three Facebook groups that cater to Igorots;
2. analyze the communicative acts of posting in Igorot Facebook groups through the lens of Trimble’s Ethnic Self-Identification Measurement Domains Model;
3. show how these shared ways of speaking are a means of sustaining ethnic self-identification; and
4. analyze the shared ways of speaking as manifestations of *gag-ay* which form a virtual *ili*

These Igorot communities speak different languages but a basic form of the Ilokano language is the “common lingua franca, accommodating trade and ordinary communication among individuals from different parts of the Cordillera, as well as throughout all of Northern Luzon (Labrador, 1997, p. 10).

Apart from the use of Ilokano as a lingua franca, Igorots from the six ethno-linguistic groups share cultural concepts that define their collective identity. My study focuses on two of these concepts: *ili* and *gag-ay*.

Ili, translated to the English language, means the place of one’s birth, or one’s hometown. This definition, however, does not encompass the meanings Igorots ascribe to the word. Indigenous community development specialist Digna Adonis details several connotations of *ili* to the Igorot: the place where a baby’s placenta is buried (*nay-anakan/naikutan di puseg*); the place where one is raised (*binma-degan/dinmakdake-an*); the place where one’s family and clan live and propagate (*ebonatan/ekanakan*); and the place where one goes home to (*pan-udian/pantauli-an*).

Further, Adonis says:

“For most Igorots, the *ili* provides them with a sense of perpetual belonging to a community that plays a critical role in shaping their beliefs, values and views about the world as an

individual and as member of an Indigenous group. It is the source of the stories of their ancestors, legends of their origin, and the biodiversity that provides for their daily existence" (2018, p. 6).

The connotations Adonis mentions reflect the affective ties Igorots have with the word *ili*. Following Adonis, the researcher adds another dimension to the meaning of *ili* in this paper. the concept of *ili* is now expanded to the virtual space, particularly on social media platforms where Igorots from different physical locations come together to communicate, socialize, and interact with one another.

Common among all Igorot ethnic groups is the *gag-ay*. *Gag-ay* happens spontaneously during family or social gatherings, when participants exchange stories. These informal storytelling sessions are "clear manifestation[s] of the orality of Igorot culture" (Rabia, 2009, p. 316) because it is through the oral nature of *gag-ay* that the people in the *ili* socialize.

The *gag-ay* seems to be a general term that covers Patricia Afable's concepts of *pan-iistorya* and *pantatabtaval* (1998). In *pan-iistorya*, the communal setting hosts storytelling, and in *pantatabtaval*, the community engages in discussions. Adonis describes *paniistorya* as

"story sharing based on life experiences," emphasizing that this takes place during rituals and community gatherings, where those present "sit[ting] (on the ground or inside the house) facing each other in a circular-like formation" (2018, p. 5). *Pantatabtaval* is distinguished from *paniistorya* in that it is "the discussion and sharing of analysis, perspectives, ideas and feelings on given topics..."(2018, p. 5).

Both Afable and Adonis use *pan-iistorya* and *pantatabtaval* as a method of research or as a means of teaching. In my own study *gag-ay* refers to the act of communicating, interacting, and socializing within the social media virtual space. The ways by which the Igorots engage in *gag-ay* are through Facebook group members posts, comments, and reactions/comments to/on other members' comments.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Igorot Representation on Media and the Internet

According to Colonel-Ferrer, "In Philippine society, 'Igorot' remains attached to discriminatory notions like 'uncivilized' and 'pagan.' Zapata (2006), in the study entitled *Televising Ethnicity: (Re)Constructing Igorot Identity in Television* echoes Colonel-Ferrer by stating that "Igorot has come to refer exclusively to 'minority ethnic groups' or to the often derogatory 'cultural minorities' and lately, the supposedly more politically correct indigenous peoples"(p.3).

According to Labrador's (1997) study entitled *Subordination and Resistance: Ethnicity in the Highland Communities of the Cordillera Administrative Region, Northern Luzon, Philippines* "ethnicity, and in this case Igorot ethnicity, is a label of the subordinate, of the subaltern" (p.2).

According to Rolando Tolentino in the editorial of the 3rd volume of *Plaridel: A Journal of Philippine Communication, Media and Society*, “media are a major factor in the dissemination of the popular imaginary of the ethnic figure” (p. iii). He also discussed a caste system utilized by the colonizers that was based on three levels of ethnic structure in the Philippines society. “At the top most position, the mestizaje, the mixing of a purportedly national (the idea of the “Filipino”) and the privileged race - Spanish, American and Chinese... The next tier of the structure are the Tagalogs, and close to them, the Cebuanos - of authentic Cebu origin mainly. These are purer local elites or a locally purer mix in the mestizaje blend...At the bottom of the ethnic structure there are indigenous peoples, often referred to as ‘cultural minorities.’ The biggest groups here are the Igorots and the Bangsa Moro while the others, fewer in size but equally diverse, are numerous” (p.vi).

In fact, a few years ago, a meme of a Department of Education online module made the rounds in social media. The sentence on the Dept of Education meme loosely translates to “I will not play with my Igorot classmate because his clothing is different.”

Figure 1

Department of Education book citing Igorots, Part 1

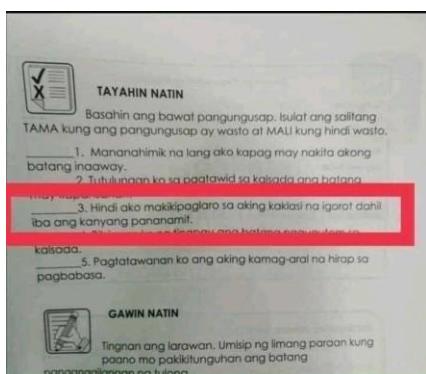
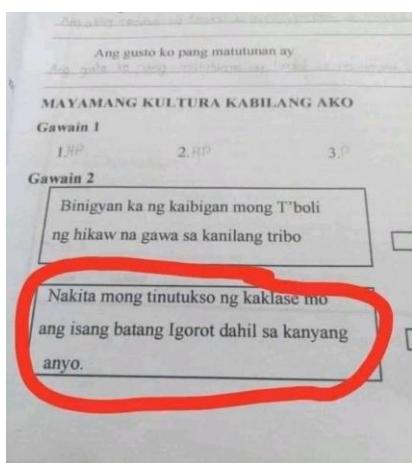


Figure 2

Department of Education book citing Igorots, Part 2



The second sentence loosely translates to “You saw your classmate teasing an Igorot kid because of the way he looks.”

This just shows that until now, Igorots are still marginalized and looked down upon in mainstream culture.

Igorots, even though perceived as backward, primitive and indigenous, have also already been using the Internet to fulfill their communication needs.

Tindaan (2019), in her study entitled *The Performance of Indigenous Identity in the Igorot Diaspora in the United Kingdom* stated that “Igorots have indeed increasingly utilised online communication to assert and redefine their identity. This has been the case for indigenous peoples in general. By exploring the facilities of this medium, they have become more visible in text and images and they have been able to call attention to issues that confront their communities” (Tindaan, 2019, p. 211).

Longboan’s (2013) study entitled *Technologies of Indigeneity: Indigenous Collective Identity Narratives in Online Communities* stated that “although indigenous peoples are said to have limited technological capabilities, the accessibility of the internet has allowed them to “talk back” to sources of power that have participated in their marginalization” (Longboan 2013, p. 82)

“By using this platform then, indigenous peoples are enabled to engage in creative productions as a strategy of sustaining social interactions. In this way, they can produce alternative narratives and images about themselves” (Tindaan, 2019, p. 212).

In the researcher’s earlier unpublished study entitled *The Igorot in the World Wide Web: Exploring Igorot Ethnic Identities through the Communicative Act of Blogging*, it was stated that blogging is a communicative act that enables the Igorot bloggers to recreate their Igorot ethnic identity based on their own understanding and appreciation of their own culture (Rabia, 2009, p. 317). The Igorot bloggers’ individual blogs may be viewed as a virtual dap-ay that allows them to partake in gag-gag-ay. Furthermore, the aggregation of the Igorot bloggers’ virtual dap-ay is the Igorot Online Speech Community or the cyber-ili which is brought together by Shared Ways of Speaking, Shared Weblog Community Indicators, shared value for the Igorot culture, and the desire to change their position as a marginalized group through active self-representation through their blogs (Rabia, 2009, p. 318).

All these studies show that despite the common misconception that Igorots are backward, primitive, and marginalized, they have empowered themselves with the use of social media and the internet. They are actively representing themselves as diverse and tech-savvy individuals who have a clear understanding and appreciation of their ethnic identity. Through the internet and social media, Igorots are able to create alternative narratives of themselves that go against the negative images traditional media has portrayed of them.

2.2 Ethnic Identity

Ethnicity is a multi-faceted concept. In Zapata’s (2006) study entitled *Televising Ethnicity. (re)Constructing Igorot Identity in Television*, Kath Woodward defines ethnicity as a :group or

community that is assumed to share common cultural practices and history" (in Zapata, 2006, p. 3). Cultural and physical markers like religion, language, physical characteristics, sets of attitudes and behaviors and territory are used to collectively differentiate one ethnic group from another.

Labrador's (1997) study entitled *Subordination and Resistance: Ethnicity in the Highland Communities of the Cordillera Administrative Region, Northern Luzon, Philippines* asserted that ethnicity is a "negotiated reality, an interaction and interplay between self-ascriptions which co-exist and often compete with external categorizations and classifications" (p.8). He added that ethnicity is constructed largely on the perception of common descent, shared experiences and memories of a common history.

Randolf David's (2004) book entitled *Nation, Self and Citizenship, An Invitation to Philippine Sociology*, stated that personal identities are formed from different sources such as gender, ethnicity, religion, and work. He further stated that an individual actively strategizes and negotiates the definition of oneself.

Trimble & Dickson (2005) in *Ethnic Identity* stated that understanding the etymological origins of the term ethnic identity is a pre-requisite to understanding the construct of ethnic identity. "The term ethnic has Latin and Greek origins - ethnicus and ethnikas, both meaning nation...Ethnikas and and ethos taken together therefore can mean a band of people (nation) living together who share and acknowledge common customs. The second part of the construct, identity, has Latin origins and is derived from the word identitas; the word is formed from the same meaning. Thus, the term is used to express the notion of sameness, likeness, and oneness" (p.1).

Today, however, ethnic identity has a different connotation. Trimble & Dickson (2005) cited Daniel Bell to emphasize the relationship of ethnic identity to dominant and subordinate groups of society. Ethnicity now refers to disadvantaged groups to claim a set of rights and privileges that have been denied to them by the existing power structures.

Boquiren (2007), asserts the same idea of ethnicity being deemed as negative by stating that "definitions of ethnicity in the Philippines today hinges not only on cultural criteria but on political assertion as well" (p.1).

Trimble (2002), in the study entitled *Social and Psychological Perspectives on Ethnic and Racial Identity* states that "one's ethnicity and expression of values are centralized meanings particular to the individual and therefore have intrinsic importance in their own right" (p.255).

Trimble also quoted Santiago-Rivera (1999) by stating that "ethnic identity is multidimensional and consists of the following components: self-identification or the label individuals give themselves; knowledge about one's own culture, including language, customs, values, beliefs, and norms; attitudes and feelings about group membership; and language fluency" (p.256).

Ethnic Identity is multi-faceted, fluid and dynamic. It is based on certain dimensions or categories which may include language, values, beliefs, attitudes and behaviors.

2.3 Facebook Groups and Internet Usage in the Philippines

“Facebook Groups are created around areas of interest and are usually not directly tied to a particular business (though very popular brands have garnered Groups dedicated specifically to their products). Groups are a place where businesses can participate by helping people learn and share ideas about your products and services. While your page posts can be accessed by anyone on Facebook, the visibility of your activity in Facebook Groups can be selected based on the nature of the conversation” (<https://www.bigcommerce.com/ecommerce-answers/what-are-facebook-groups/>). Facebook groups can either be public or private. Public groups do not require group administrators and moderators to approve a person joining the group. Group settings can also allow administrators and moderators to approve and moderate group posts by members.

3. Theoretical Framework

3.1 Ethnic Self-Identification Measurement Domains Model

This study used the Ethnic Self-Identification Measurement Domains Model by Trimble (2002) to determine if posts are measures of ethnic self identification. The Ethnic Self Identification Measurement Domains Model was created based on the various definitions of ethnicity, identity and ethnic identity. Trimble drew from previously created ethnic identity measures and scales and focused on the four measures he believes provides a holistic view of the concept of ethnic identity. The four-part ethnic identity measurement model by Trimble includes natal, subjective, behavioral, and situational measurement domains.

3.2 Natal Measures

Natal measures refer to demographic information such as birthplace, age, sex, ethnic origins and the like. It also includes demographic information related to an individual’s nuclear and extended family.

3.3 Subjective Measures

Subjective measures refer to markers of ethnic identity that come from the individual. These markers are based on the individual’s knowledge and statement of his/her own ethnic identity.

3.4 Situation Context Measures

Situation Context Measures refer to specific communication and behavioral contexts or settings that the individual experiences. These contexts may be actual, physical or social situations wherein communication occurs. These contexts may dictate norms or rules that govern the communication process that enable the individual to identify his or her ethnic identity.

3.5 Behavioral Measures

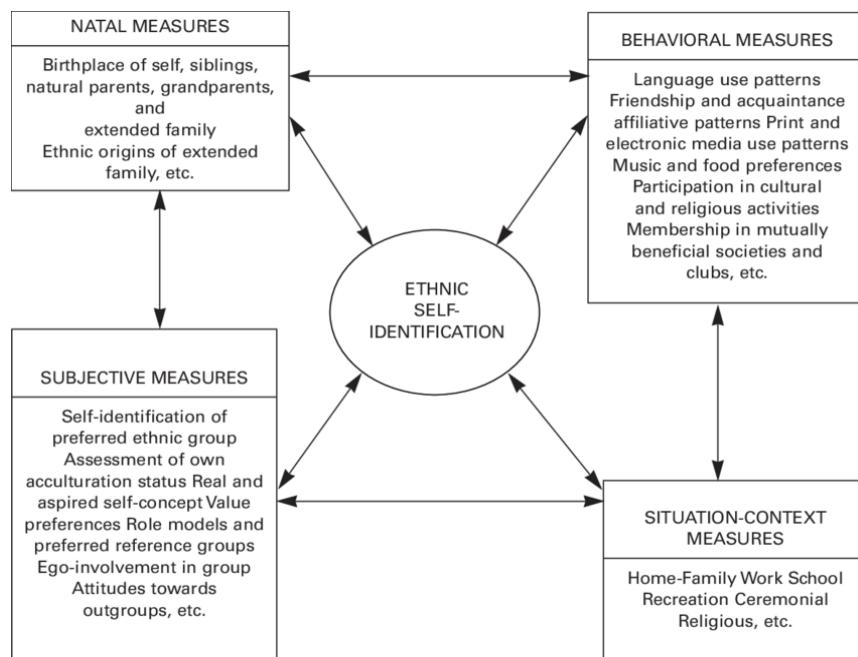
Behavioral measures refer to ethnic identity measures evident in the actions and affiliations of the individual. Examples of these are the language and language patterns used and understood by the individual, the individual’s preferences, likes and dislikes. Affiliations with specific organizations, social groups or people also determine the behavior of the individual.

These four Ethnic Self Identification Measures Domains are interrelated and affect one another. This is shown by the arrows that connect each measure to the other.

Figure 3 shows the illustration of the Ethnic Self identification Measurement Domains Model.

Figure 3

Ethnic Self-Identification Measurement Domains Model



Note: From *Social and Psychological Perspectives on Ethnic and Racial Identity*. (p. 257) by Trimble, Joseph E., 2002. Sage Publishing.

The model illustrates arrows that connect the measures to each other. This shows how each measure is related to and affects each other. Natal Measures are related to Behavioral and Subjective Measures. Subjective Measures are related to Situation-Context Measures and Behavioral Measures are related to Situation-Context Measures. For example, your birthplace (Natal Measures) can affect your language use because your birthplace can determine what lingua franca you use.

4. Methodology

In the earlier unpublished study of Rabia, (2009) it stated that the Igorot bloggers' blogs can be seen as virtual spaces or virtual *dap-ays* where they come together and share personal experiences, stories of the past, news, discussion on their Igorot ethnic identities. All of these actions are manifestations of *gag-ay*.

In this study, the researcher now analyzes how the Facebook groups serve as virtual *ilis* for its group members and allow for *gag-ay*.

In 2021, the researcher focused on three (3) public Facebook groups that clearly identify as Igorot groups based on their group name. The following artifacts were observed and analyzed in the each group:

1. Name
2. Cover photo
3. Description
4. Posts for one month (month of January- 1st week of February 2021)

Purposive sampling was employed by searching on Facebook's search option on "Igorot groups". I chose three public groups that have the highest number of members. I came up with the following search results. The reason for choosing public groups is so that I will not need to be approved to join the group. A private Igorot group might require proof of being Igorot, which I will not be able to provide.

Purposive sampling is defined as the intentional selection of specific units (such as individuals, cases, or events) based on their relevance to the research question, enabling the researchers to gain deep insights into complex phenomena (Tajik, et al. 2024). The researcher chose to employ purposive sampling in this study as it allows the researcher choose the Facebook groups according to the set criteria which is based on the research objectives.

Thematic analysis was conducted on the posts and artifacts of the chosen Facebook groups. The posts in each Facebook group were coded according to the type and theme of each post. The posts were coded according to whether they were video, audio or image posts. After that, they were then described according to what each post was about and what language was used in the post. Common themes were identified and the shared ways of speaking emerged from these themes.

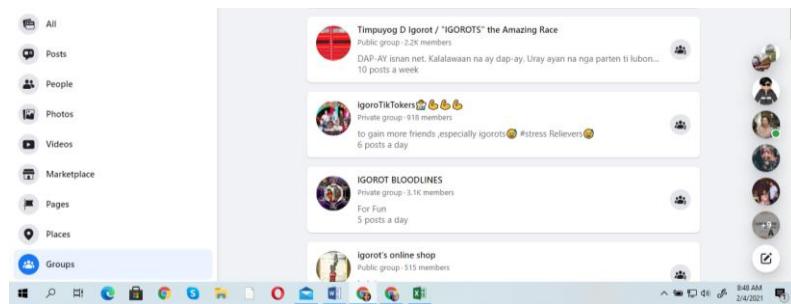
Figures 4 & 5 show the Facebook groups I chose based on their number of members and whether they were public groups or not.

Figure 4

Search Results of 'Igorot groups' on Facebook 1

The screenshot shows a Facebook search results page for the query 'igorot'. The search bar at the top has 'igorot' typed into it. To the left of the search bar is a sidebar with the text 'Search Results for' and 'igorot'. Below this are 'Filters' with options: All, Posts, People, Photos, Videos, Marketplace, and Pages. The main area displays four search results, each representing a Facebook group:

- Igorot Cultures and Identities** (Public group - 7.6K members): Description: 'Name: Igorot - Literally means "people from the mountains." In this group, it r...'. It shows 10 posts a day.
- "Full Blooded Igorots"** (Private group - 13K members): Description: 'We would like to let you know that this group is a created strictly for IGOROTS... 20 posts a day'.
- IGOROT TIKTOKERS ❤️** (Public group - 2.8K members): Description: 'All Igorot Tiktokers are welcome to join this group. ❤️ 250 posts a day'.
- BEAUTY OF IGOROTS** (Private group - 10K members): Description: 'I am an Igorot. Let me be treated as I deserve—with respect if I am good, wit... 2 posts a day'.

Figure 5**Search Results of 'Igorot groups' on Facebook 1**

5. Results

5.1 Shared Ways of Speaking

In an earlier unpublished study (Rabia, 2009) it was stated that the Igorot bloggers have “Shared Ways of Speaking” or shared blogging patterns. These shared blogging patterns and their common self-identification as Igorots make way for the creation of the Igorot online speech community. Speech communities, according to Wood (2000), “may exist when members of a social group use languages in ways and to achieve goals not shared by people outside of the group” (p. 228).

In 2021, the researcher observed the following artifacts in order to determine if the three Facebook groups have common or shared ways of speaking and if they indeed form a speech community.

1. Name of Group
2. Cover photo of Group
3. Description of Group
4. Posts in the group for one month (month of January- 1st week of February 2021)

Let us discuss each in more detail.

1. Names of Groups

The three Facebook groups that were chosen for this study are named:

1. Igorot Cultures and Identities
2. Igorotage - the Igorot Community
3. Timpuyog D Igorot / “IGOROTS” The Amazing Race

From the names of the groups themselves, it is obvious that it caters to Igorot members since it has the word “Igorot” in its name. This is the first indicator that the group is for Igorots. The use of the word Igorot in the Facebook groups’ names is an example of Subjective Measures in Trimble’s Ethnic Self Identification Measurement Domains Model. Specifically, this is an example of Self identification of ethnic groups.

The third group, Timpuyog D Igorot / “IGOROTS” The Amazing Race uses the local language in its name, which can be an example of Behavioral Measures, specifically Language use patterns.

Although the groups are public and the administrators and moderators do not screen those who join the group, it would be safe to assume that those who join are those who self-identify as Igorots or are interested in the Igorot culture. The act of joining these groups is an example of Subjective Measures in the Ethnic Self Identification Measurement Domains Model, specifically, Ego involvement in groups.

2. Cover photo

The cover photo of each group shows different aspects of the Igorot culture. Igorot Cultures and Identities has two woven bags called a “pasiking” and with a woven cloth on a mountain area. Igorotage – The Igorot Community has an avatar and a silhouette of a man wearing a “bahag” and dancing the “canao”. Timpuyog D Igorot has an image of a woven cloth of one of the Igorot groups. All of these are obvious markers of the Igorot culture. The use of these markers of the Igorot culture are examples of Subjective Measures in the Ethnic Self Identification Measurement Domains Model of Trimble, specifically Self Identification of Ethnic Group.

Figure 6

Igorot Cultures and Identities Group Cover Photo



Figure 7

Igorotage - The Igorot Community Group Cover Photo



Figure 8**Timpuyog D Igorot Group Cover Photo****3. Description**

Of the three groups, all three groups have a reference to the Igorot culture. The Igorot Cultures and Identities even has a lengthy discussion on what Igorot, culture, and identities mean. Stating also that the aim of this group is to provide a platform for understanding the multiplicity of Igorot cultures and identities. Timpuyog D Igorot has a description in Ilokano which loosely translates to “there is nothing like the *dap-ay*. We can live anywhere in the *dap-ay*.”

These group descriptions are examples of Subjective Measures in the Ethnic Self Identification Measurement Domains Model, specifically, Self Identification of Ethnic Group.

Figure 9**Igorot Cultures and Identities Group Description**

Igorot Cultures and Identities

© Public group · 7.6K members

About Discussion Members Events Media Join Group

About This Group

Name:
Igorot - Literally means "people from the mountains." In this group, it refers to those who trace their roots or ancestry to any of the provinces of CAR (BANAUE), and inclusive of those who consider themselves Igorots beyond the mentioned places such as some of the ILOCOS tribe. There is an ongoing conversation now on what makes a person qualified as indigenous such as Igorot - Is it by blood or by consciousness, or both? This is a question to ponder upon. Yet for this group, an Igorot is by blood, regardless of the present consciousness. Therefore, it is much better for this group to have diverse members sharing information about their cultures.

Cultures: - It is a socially structured pattern of thinking, valuing, and acting of a group of people. This description is inclusive of any context, such as time (past and present), space (e.g. rural and urban), institutional (e.g. family, political), point of view or voice (e.g. priest/minister, elder, etc.). This is in recognition that culture is a present and multiple reality among Igorots. While different groups of people in the Cordilleras and beyond consider themselves as Igorots, they have similarities and differences.

Identities: - It operationally refers to "how I look" based on my culture. It affirms the principle of cultural relativism which seeks to understand people based on how they understand themselves and culture. "Identities" is plural because, once again, Igorots are still diverse in many ways. Yet, amidst diversities or particulars of Igorot identities are commonalities or universals such as values, beliefs, and lifeways. Hopefully, we could explore both in this group.

Aim:
This group aims to provide a platform for understanding the multiplicity of Igorot cultures and identities. This group is inclusive, and anyone is invited to join. You may also post in this group anything related to multiplicity of "Igorotness." You may also invite others to join us.

Posts:

1. Help achieve the group's aim.
2. It is highly encouraged to include pictures, or videos along with texts to appeal to the younger generation.
3. Relating "culture" to education, theologies, and development are highly encouraged.
4. Reviews, or recommendations of book, journal articles, and the likes. It is much better if it includes picture of the cover, and table of contents (if applicable), where to find and buy, URL for online resources. This is to promote reading, and to guide those interested on what to read regarding Igorot culture.
5. Personal stories relating to group's aim.
6. Inspirational devotional reflections to start our day.
7. Scenic pictures of beautiful places in the Cordilleras and related areas.
8. More, coming soon. [See Less](#)

Public
Anyone can see who's in the group and what they post.

Visible
Anyone can find this group.

General Group

History
Group created on March 28, 2020 [See More](#)

Figure 10**Igorotage - The Igorot Community Group description**

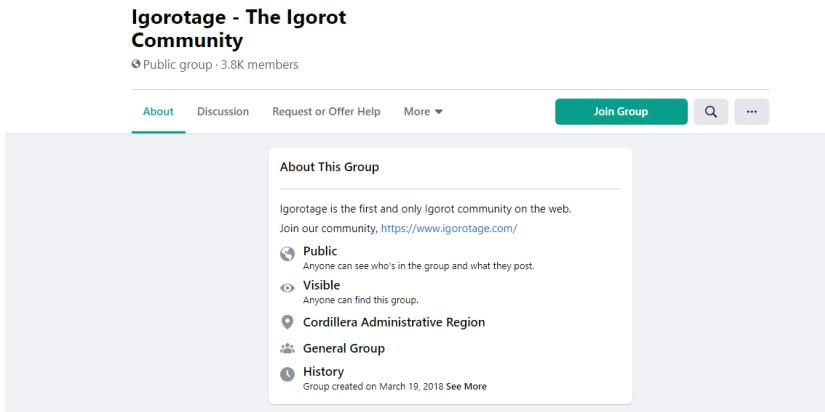
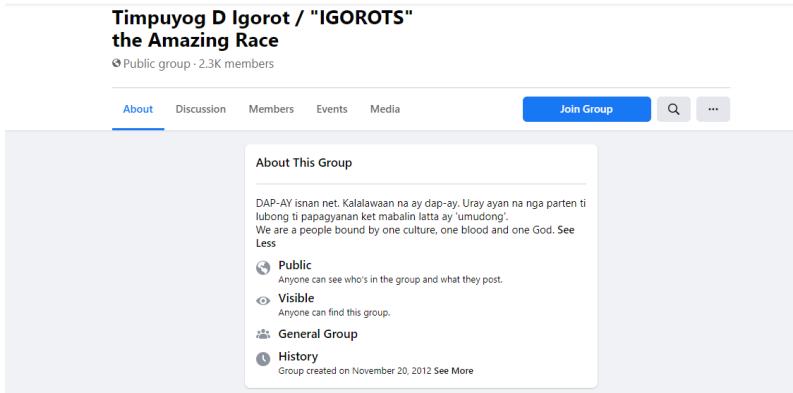


Figure 11

Timpuyog D Igorot Group Description



These artifacts on the Name, Cover Photo, and Description depict facets of the Igorot culture. These show that these Facebook groups clearly self- identify as Igorots by the use of the identified artifacts. These self-identification acts as Igorots echoes Trimble's (2002) statement that self-labelling can be an act of conveying ethnic identity.

4. Posts for month of January 2021 - 1st week of February 2021

I analyzed the groups' posts for the month of January - February 2021. This was the timeframe during which the study was conducted. In the succeeding parts, common themes observed in the posts from January - February 2021 will be discussed. The type of measure each type of post is an example of according to Trimble's Ethnic Self Identification Measurement Domains Model will also be identified. The most common types of posts are the posts that 1. Use local language, 2. Feature Igorot towns and places, 3. News focused on

Igorot personalities / events, 4. Articles focused on Igorot-related topics, 5. Igorot music videos / self-made videos and 6. Memes in the local language.

A. Use of Local Language

Members use the local language, either Ilocano or Kankana-ey or Ibaloi, often when posting. This is perhaps the most obvious and most basic marker of self-identification as an Igorot. This is also reflected in my 2009 study. “The use of their local dialect serves as a means of recognition of a shared Igorot ethnic identity between the blogger and the reader” (Rabia, 2009, p. 291). The use of the local language when posting is an example of Behavioral Measures according to Trimble’s Ethnic Self Identification Measurement Domains Model which is affected by Natal Measures because ones’ birthplace determines what language one uses.

The screenshot below shows a post on January 12 that uses the Ilocano language and loosely translates to “do not compare our conversation because the soles of my feet are colder”.

Figure 12

Example of Use of Local Language



The screenshot below shows another post from Igorotage that is also in Ilocano and loosely translates to “We would not have answered back but this is too much, they are making up stories about us. My gosh, the jealousy is making them step on others to get ahead. An Igorot wouldn’t do that!”

Figure 13

Example of Use of Local Language 2



The screenshot below is in Kankanaey, a local language in the Cordillera region and loosely translates to “Is there any difference between cultural practices and pagan practices? So that’s what it means, God and paganism? I’m still new in understanding these practices. There are already many teaching me, so how is it really?”

Figure 14

Example of Use of Local Language 3



The screenshot below is also in Ilocano and translates to “I am thankful for your welcoming me.”

Figure 15

Example of Use of Local Language 4



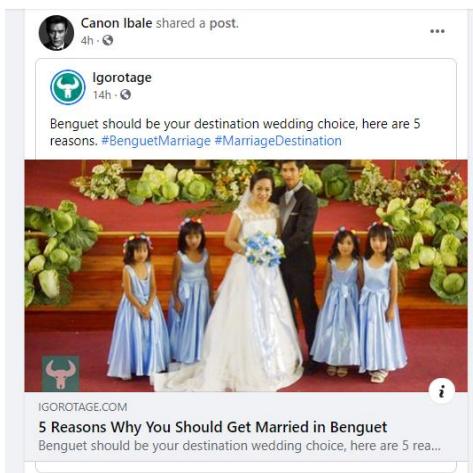
B. Feature Igorot towns and places

Another common post is pictures or videos featuring towns and places within the Cordillera Administrative Region. This may be a way to reminisce for the Igorot members who are not situated in their physical *ilis*. This can be considered an example of Natal Measures in the Ethic Self Identification Measurement Domains Model as it features the birthplace of the self and extended family. However, this can also be related to Subjective Measures which is self identification within an ethnic group. When they post about their birthplace, they also self identify as being a member of that group that hails from that physical location.

The screenshot below shows a reposted article that talks about why Benguet (a province in the Cordillera region) should be a destination wedding choice.

Figure 16

Example of Feature of Igorot Towns and Places 1



The screenshot below shows scenic pictures of Bontoc, Mountain Province.

Figure 17**Example of Feature of Igorot Towns and Places 2**

The screenshot below shows another scenic picture of Bontoc, Mountain Province.

Figure 18**Example of Feature of Igorot Towns and Places 3****C. News focused on Igorot personalities / events**

News focused on Igorot personalities / events within the Cordillera are also common posts. These types of posts show their pride and affinity towards other Igorots who have done well in their respective fields and careers and have been recognized for it. This is an example of the Subjective Measure of the Self Identification Measurement Domains Model, specifically, role models and preferred reference groups. The Subjective Measures can also be related to Natal Measures as their birthplace determines their self identification as Igorots, thus influencing them to post about Igorot personalities and events.

The screenshot below shows a repost about an Igorot cop who was awarded as an outstanding Filipino by a national bank corporation.

Figure 19**Example of News focused on Igorot Personalities / Events 1**

The screenshot below highlights the winner of Mr. Philippines who is from Kapangan, Benguet (a province in the Cordillera region).

Figure 20**Example of News focused on Igorot Personalities / Events 2**

This screenshot focuses on the promotion of an Armed Forces of the Philippines officer who is also from the Cordillera region, particularly Kiangan, Ifugao.

Figure 21**Example of News focused on Igorot Personalities / Events 3**

The screenshot below shows a picture of the Igorot film director of a few animated films.

Figure 22**Example of News focused on Igorot Personalities / Events 4****D. Articles focused on Igorot-related topics**

The posts that focus on Igorot-related topics such as trivia on Igorot life, Igorot representation on media, and Igorot history are also common posts in the three Facebook groups that were analyzed. This can be an example of Situation Context e Measures in the Ethnic Self Identification Measurement Domains Model. These posts are examples of recreational posts. The Situation Context Measures can also be related to Subjective Measures as self-identification as Igorots influences them to post about Igorot-related topics.

The screenshot below is entitled “Here’s what will happen to you when you bully an Igorot.”

Figure 23**Example of Articles Focused on Igorot-related Topics 1**



The screenshot below is entitled “Deped CAR Top Official Calls On More Involvement to Correct Wrong Depiction of Igorots”.

Figure 24

Example of Articles Focused on Igorot-related Topics 2



The screenshot below shows an informational article about young igorot boys from Lubuagan, Kalinga.

Figure 25

Example of Articles Focused on Igorot-related Topics 3



The screenshots below show a post about physical distancing during the pandemic the Igorot way.

Figure 26

Example of Articles Focused on Igorot-related Topics 4

Understanding Igorots and other Ideas
January 12 at 8:53 AM ·

PHYSICAL - SOCIAL DISTANCING IN DATING: An Igorot Way

Everytime I pass by Burnham Park, in some ways, through observations. I can detect whether dating couples are Igorots - Highlanders or not. Aside from physical features such as body built, which are many times obvious, there are more indications and hints if Igorots on a date. How? What are the indications? The list below are partial and non-absolute categories.

1. **PHYSICAL DISTANCING:** Have you observed couples on a date walking together but one meter apart, either horizontally or vertically? I observed daring couples to be like these in session road. Most are obviously Igorots - Highlanders. Why? Culturally, physical touch between a man and woman is not advisable such as holding hands or the guy's hand on the lady's waist or shoulder, and if are publicly displayed it relay a message of a deeper level of physical intimacy. Well, this is not absolute, but oldies always tell a perception in the past that if a man and woman are holding hands, the next time around the woman is pregnant. Well, this just indicates that culturally physical touch is reserve for marriage couples. So, for many Igorots - Highlanders, particularly those who grew in conservative communities, public display of "touching" is socially unacceptable.

2. **FOOD - EATING:** One of the challenging decisions to be made by those dating particularly in earlier stages in which both are still in an unfamiliar social situations is where to eat, and what to eat? An Igorot guy would always ask a lady for her preferred location to eat. In other cultures, a guy does not ask this, but decides and invites the lady to come with him. If in Baguio City where do we see most Igorot couples dating - eating. Well, let us try to name some - Good Taste, Jacks, Sab-at-an, include Health Resto to name a few. Did you try going to restaurant mentioned? What to eat? An Igorot guy would always ask a lady to choose what to eat. In other cultures, the man does the choosing. Igorots are practical thinkers. They want to eat in restaurants that satisfies their stomach, rather than going to "social" dining areas.



Lately, I observed, more Igorot couples dating in Mang' Inasal. Yeah, unlimited rice. I once dated there, and took advantage to eat my three meals for day in one setting - 5 cups of rice. I cleaned my plate, so she did. In other cultures, it is a cultural act to leave an amount of food in your plate. Well, as a indication of being "modest." Others claim that they do this so that the other will not think that the food served is not enough if everything is eaten.

3. **SIMPLE - NORMAL PHYSICAL PROJECTION:** What to wear? Just an above daily clothing will do. No need to prepare and wear grand and eye catching clothings. For a typical Igorot guy, jeans with matching shirt and jacket, hat and shoes, sometimes with popular brands such as Levi's, Merrill, Columbia, and the like. For a lady, just a conservative clothing will do. No heavy shades on the face, or nothing at all. Simply, beautiful as they say.

These are observations. Probably from a 90s and conservative perspective. There are more. Please feel free to share your thoughts in the comment section.

I once discussed partly these things among college students, and laughingly and admittedly, most of the Igorots-Highlanders students agreed that some of the mentioned things describe them. There are more to these. Now, it is turn to share - to add, to clarify, to agree, to disagree, etc. Just express your thoughts for healthy discussions.

E. Igorot music videos / self-made music

In the study of Jimmy Fong entitled *Batawa: Constructing Identity through Country Music in the Philippine Cordillera*, he states that Cordillera music "constitute an "ethnography" of the producers' and consumers' own cultures" (Fong, 2011, p. 11). Furthermore, Cordillera pop songs "show some of the ways by which the Cordillera people are confronting or dealing with change

and modernity. The songs express their thoughts and feelings on education, religion, economics, marriage and the family, and the various configurations of 114 such institutions. The experience of change and development is often evaluated in reference to a certain past, such as when a song persona was younger, or when life was once either simple or hard" (Fong, 2011, p. 7).

These are evident in the songs that the members upload either as covers of existing Cordillera pop songs or as their own creations. The posting of Cordillera pop songs and videos is an example of Behavioral Measures of the Ethnic Self Identification Measurement Domains Model, specifically, Music and food preferences. The Behavioral Measures are also affected by Natal Measures because their birthplace of the Cordillera region affects their preference for Cordillera pop songs.

Figure 27

Example of Igorot MusicVideos / Self-made Music 1

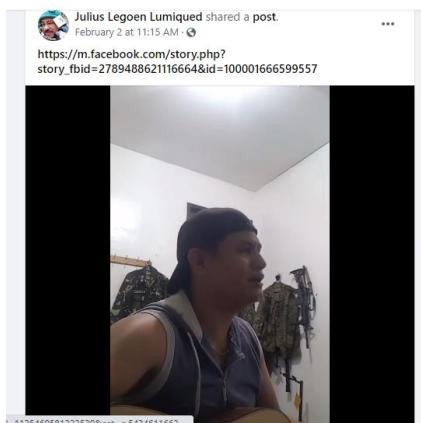


Figure 28

Example of Igorot MusicVideos / Self-made Music 2



F. Memes in the local language

Memes using the local, either Ilocano, Ibaloi or Kankana-ey is an example of Behavioral and Situation Context Measures in the Ethnic Self Identification Measurement Domains Model. This is an example of Language use patterns and Print and electronic media use patterns but is also an

example of recreational activities under Situation Context Measures. The use of memes in the local language shows that the Igorot members are keeping up with the popular culture of memes and even take time to create them and translate them to the local language.

Figure 29

Example of Memes in the Local Language 1



Figure 30

Example of Memes in the Local Language 2



The common themes in the group names, group descriptions, group cover photos, and posts are the following:

1. All Igorot Facebook groups clearly self-identify as Igorot in the group name
2. All Igorot Facebook groups have a description of the Igorot ethnicity or use the local language (Ilocano) in their group description
3. All Igorot Facebook groups have a facet of the Igorot culture in their group cover photos

4. All Igorot Facebook groups have the following common themes in their posts from January – February 2021:
 - a. Use of local language
 - b. Feature of Igorot towns and places
 - c. News focused on Igorot personalities / events
 - d. Articles focused on Igorot-related topics
 - e. Igorot music videos / self -made videos
 - f. Memes in the local language

The following commonalities in the Igorot Facebook groups that were observed prove that they have shared ways of speaking. It is these shared ways of speaking that allow for the creation of a speech community because the members of each Igorot Facebook group use language to achieve goals not shared by people outside the group. These goals may be to connect, communicate, socialize and interact with other Igorot members.

The shared ways of speaking of the Igorot Facebook groups' members, are all manifestations of their ethnic identity as enumerated in the Ethnic Self-Identification Measurement Domains Model by Trimble (2002). The shared ways of speaking of the members is a way for them to assert their ethnic identity.

2025 Updates

As I look back and revisit my 2021 study, I have the following updates:

1. Only two of the three groups are still active: *Timpuyog D'Igorot* and *Igorot Cultures and Identities*. The third group has been deactivated and discontinued as per the owner of the page.
2. Both groups still have the nine common themes in their recent posts, thus the shared ways of speaking as a means to communicate their Igorot ethnic identity are still present in the Facebook groups

There is also a realization that aside from members having shared ways of speaking, they are engaging in *pan-iistorya* and *pantatabtavel* (Afable, 1998), creating virtual *ilis*, and sustaining *gag-ay*.

Igorots and the Virtual ili

According to Boyd and Ellison (2007), social network sites like Facebook enable users who had no prior relations to meet, but often the meetings in these sites are not among strangers but among those who have “latent ties” (Tindaan, 2019, p. 225).

Trimble also quoted Santiago-Rivera (1999) by stating that “ethnic identity is multidimensional and consists of the following components: self-identification or the label individuals give themselves; knowledge about one’s own culture, including language, customs, values, beliefs, and norms; attitudes and feelings about group membership; and language fluency”

(p.256). All these assertions of ethnic identity are present in the Facebook groups that were analyzed. The act of joining the Facebook group is a form of self-identification as an Igorot.

In the Facebook groups, their latent ties are that they are all Igorots and have the commonality of belonging to the same ethno-linguistic group or having the same concept of *ili*. This concept of coming from the same *ili* is echoed in the study of Adonis entitled *Ili based Community Organising: An Igorot Indigenous Peoples' Concept for Grassroots Collaboration*,

“The interconnectedness within the *ili* also extends outside their communities. In meeting someone for the first time for example, people ask ‘into di kad-anyo’ or ‘tuwa e iliyo’ (‘which village or town do you come from?’). By knowing this information, people start to do tonton (tracing back of ancestors’ origins) and other related topics including clan history, work, and farm crops. Exchanging conversations about the *ili* where one belongs makes people at ease to share their stories when they know that the person they are talking to is ‘related’ to them in some way. The relatedness makes people treat new acquaintances not as a stranger but like a family member. The expression ‘enshigayam e ap-afil, sangkakhait kito’ (‘we are not strangers to each other, we are related’) means that they are welcoming and accepting the person as someone belonging to their own family, clan and community” (Adonis, 2018, p.6).

These questions of where did one come from, who their ancestors were and the feeling of not being strangers, but being related because of the commonality of their *ili* is recreated in their interactions within the Facebook group. Communication creates speech communities and at the same time, it is the shared communicative behaviors or norms that constitute a speech community. The common themes identified:

1. Use of the word ‘Igorot’ in the group name
2. Use of Igorot artifacts in group cover photos
3. References to Igorot culture in the group description
4. Use of local language in posts
5. Feature Igorot towns and places in posts
6. News focused on Igorot personalities / events
7. Articles on Igorot-related topics
8. Igorot music videos / self-made music
9. Memes in the local language

Their shared ways of speaking and common usage of artifacts show that they form a speech community because they are social groups that use language to achieve goals within the group. The incidence of the different measures in the Self Identification Measurement Domains Model shows that they indeed use language to achieve goals within the group and indeed form a speech community. These goals may be to connect and socialize with each other.

The communicative acts that happen in these Facebook groups and between group members can be seen through liking and commenting on each other's posts. These communicative acts of liking and commenting can be likened to the concepts of *pan-iistorya* and *pantatabtavel* by Afable as highlighted in Adonis' study. These interactions happen regardless of whether they actually really know each other or not. It is the notion of coming from the same *ili* and having the commonality of origin that allows them to socialize with each other and have shared ways of speaking.

6. Conclusions

In conclusion, the Igorot members of the two public Igorot Facebook groups are able to assert their Igorot identity through shared ways of speaking:

1. Use of the word Igorot in the group name
2. Use of Igorot artifacts in the group cover photo
3. Igorot references in the group description
4. Use of local language in posts
5. Featuring Igorot towns and places in posts
6. News focused on Igorot personalities / events
7. Articles focused on Igorot-related topics
8. Posts of Igorot music videos / self-made videos
9. Posts of memes in the local language

Through *pan-iistorya* and *pantatabtavel*, they are able to create virtual *ilis* and sustain *gag-ay*—forms of social interaction that remain central to the Igorot culture. They are now able to take an active role in shaping the perceptions of the members of the Facebook groups by posting about their Igorot culture in their own shared ways of speaking.

7. Implications

The act of getting together and posting and commenting on others' posts in the Facebook group is a form of *gag-ay* or getting together or socializing, albeit virtually. The Facebook group allows Igorots in the diaspora to socialize despite distance. You may have members who are not within their physical *ili* in the Cordillera or are in different countries outside of the Philippines but the Facebook group allows them to congregate and socialize with other Igorot group members talking about varied topics, very much like *gag-ay* in their *ilis*. The Facebook groups serve as virtual *ilis* where Igorots, despite their physical locations, can converge and socialize with each other and have shared ways of speaking to form a speech community. The Facebook groups allow them to identify as Igorots, connect to their culture, create virtual *ilis* and perform *gag-ay*.

The Igorot members of the Facebook groups are able to assert their ethnic identity and go against the mainstream media's stereotypes of their ethnic groups. They are able to take active control of their identities by creating content about their culture, for their culture, through their culture.

Through their active creation of content as Igorots for Igorots, they are able to pass on their culture to younger generations and dispersed members of their ethnic groups. As younger

generations and dispersed members of their ethnic groups rely more on the Internet and social media to get information, they are more likely to use the Internet and social media to connect to their roots and discover, establish and maintain their ethnic identities as well.

Lastly, the Igorot digital community's assertion of their ethnic identity through shared online practices is part of a larger global movement for visibility, self-determination, and resilience.

References

Adonis, D. (2018). *Ili-based community organising: An Igorot Indigenous Peoples' concept for grassroots collaboration*. *Journal of Social Inclusion*.

Afable, P. O. (1998). *The linguistic and historical background to "kanyaw."* *The Igorot Quarterly*, 7(4).

Fong, J. (2011). *Batawa: Constructing identity through country music in the Philippine Cordillera*. Linköping University Electronic Press. <https://doi.org/10.3384/lic.diva-73875>

Labrador, R. N. (1997). *Subordination and resistances: Ethnicity in the highland communities of the Cordillera Administrative Region, Northern Luzon, Philippines*. Southeast Asian Studies Student Association.

Longboan, L. (2011). *E-Gorots: Exploring Indigenous identity in translocal spaces*. *SouthEast Asia Research*, 19(3), 495–516. <https://doi.org/10.5367/sear.2011.0051>

Rabia, S. (2009). *The Igorot in the World Wide Web: Exploring the Igorot ethnic identity through the communicative act of blogging* [Undergraduate thesis]. University of the Philippines Diliman.

Scott, W. H. (1962). *The word Igorot*. *Philippine Studies*, 12(3), 450–465.*

Tindaan, R. (2019). *The performance of Indigenous identity in the Igorot diaspora in the United Kingdom* [Doctoral dissertation]. University of London.

Trimble, J. E. (2002). *Social and psychological perspectives on ethnic and racial identity*. Sage Publishing.

What are Facebook groups? (n.d.). *BigCommerce*.
<https://www.bigcommerce.com/ecommerce-answers/what-are-facebook-groups/>

Pew Research Center. (2019, April 10). *Share of U.S. adults using social media, including Facebook, is mostly unchanged since 2018*.
<https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2019/04/10/share-of-u-s-adults-using-social-media-including-facebook-is-mostly-unchanged-since-2018/>

DataReportal. (2021). *Digital 2021: The Philippines*.

<https://datareportal.com/reports/digital-2021-philippines#:~:text=Social%20media%20statistics%20for%20the%20Philippines&text=The%20number%20of%20social%20media,total%20population%20in%20January%202022,1>

NapoleonCat. (2020, January). *Facebook users in Philippines*.

[https://napoleoncat.com/stats/facebook-users-in-philippines/2020/01#:~:text=There%20were%2073%20170%20000,group%20\(24%2000%200000\)](https://napoleoncat.com/stats/facebook-users-in-philippines/2020/01#:~:text=There%20were%2073%20170%20000,group%20(24%2000%200000))

NapoleonCat. (2024, January). *Facebook users in the Philippines*.

<https://napoleoncat.com/stats/facebook-users-in-philippines/2024/01/>

ResearchGate. (n.d.). *Purposive sampling*.

https://www.researchgate.net/publication/391849280_Purposive_Sampling