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Asian Survey, Vol. 16, No. 6 (Jun., 1976), 510-524.

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BIRTH OF A NATION: NATIONAL IDENTIFICATION IN SINGAPORE

John A. MacDougall

BUILDING UP and sustaining citizen self-identification as nationals are considered critical and constant tasks by the political leadership of developing states, not least those of Southeast Asia. The difficulty of these efforts is considerably compounded by the diverse and numerous ethnic minorities within each and every state in this region. Many members of these minority groups—as well as segments of dominant groups—exhibit apolitical or parochial orientations, while others possess alternative national identifications to those of their countries of domicile. Where the population does evidence the national identification considered appropriate by ruling elites, the intensity and quality of that identification is often perceived—correctly—by those elites as problematically low, variable, or of dubious political substance.

The newest sovereign state in Southeast Asia is the Republic of Singapore. If the conventional wisdom be true that the level of citizen national identification is a direct function of time elapsed since independence and that such identification develops and stabilizes only after relatively long periods of time, then Singapore, fully independent only since 1965, should display one of the most acute national identification problems in the region. And so it often seems to outside observers who have never lived in the area or who have spent only short periods of time there and are consequently likely to stereotype Singapore as a Chinese city rather than as a nation of communally diverse Singaporeans.

In contrast stands the ruling elite's view of Singapore as a cultural marketplace, an unlikely but nonetheless historically real crossroads

* The author wishes to acknowledge financial support by the Southeast Asia Program and Department of Sociology of Cornell University for the period in which the data reported here were first analyzed. Collection of the data was made possible through grants by the Lee and Asia foundations while the author was employed by the University of Singapore.

where the several great cultural traditions of South China, Indonesia, South India, and the English-speaking West have met in relatively peaceful co-existence and competition, necessary and, it is hoped, sufficient conditions for the emergence of an abiding and overriding Singaporean nationalism. A policy of cultural democracy is the aspirational vehicle whereby the ruling People's Action Party (PAP) seeks to unite this communally plural society—76% Chinese, 15% Malay, and 7% Indian.¹

The leadership's faith in a national role for Singapore was not always there. The PAP did not actively seek full political independence for Singapore, but reluctantly accepted it after being somewhat less reluctantly given it by the uppermost Malay leadership of Malaysia's dominant United Malay National Organization (UMNO). Escalating open conflict between PAP policies of cultural democracy and UMNO policies of cultural hegemony led to the highly charged and cathartic expulsion of Singapore from Malaysia on August 9, 1965.² Even the somewhat awkward term "Singaporean" had to be newly coined as a name for the prospective nationality, although the choice was natural and doubtless may have seemed to many Singaporeans-designate "what we have been all along." A Singapore-centered regionalism had long been domestically seen as an integral rather than alien component of first a united Malaya and later Malaysia.

But in 1965 the hope of the PAP leadership for creating a Singaporean national identification among its populace had to be highly tentative. The island had seen in the 1963 electoral struggle between the PAP and Barisan Sosialis and the UMNO-spurred rioting of 1964 what strength could be wielded and havoc created by grandstanding to sections of the local Chinese and Malay communities. And as at least three in ten members of the Chinese, Malay, and Indian communities were not Singapore-born, external pulls from the political and customary cultures of China, Indonesia, Malaysia, and India could not be idly written off.

Both evidence from a national probability sample survey of the Singapore electorate completed by the author in 1970 and subsequent events indicate strongly that pessimistic outside forecasts concerning the viability and durability of a Singaporean national identification are untenable and that the hope of the PAP leadership that this identification would be successfully learned has been sustained. In developing citizen discernment that he or she is, after all is said and done, a Singaporean, a person belonging to a nation having singular attractiveness and distinctive political commitments, there has been remarkable

¹ P. Arumainathan, *Report on the Census of Population 1970. Singapore, Volume 1* (Singapore: Government Printing Office, 1973), p. 248.

² John F. Cady, *Post-War Southeast Asia: Independence Problems* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 1974), pp. 172-173.

success, not excluding the minority Malay and Indian communities. The Singapore nation is a long-term political reality in Southeast Asia; the period of the "politics of survival" is over.³

This is not to argue that as of 1970 there had been a concomitant recognition by the self-identified Singaporean that he moved in a sea of similarly-identified persons. Anecdotal evidence indicates the level of national solidarity which actually existed in 1970 was much underestimated by the political leadership and citizenry of Singapore. When the author presented preliminary data from the 1970 sample survey to a Conference on Multiracialism in Singapore shortly after the field-work had been completed, the findings were deemed sufficiently surprising to rate a front-page story in Singapore's leading newspapers the following day.⁴ In fact, on the initial day of the Conference, PAP Foreign Minister S. Rajaratnam had told those in attendance of his assessment that a Singaporean national identification was not yet prevalent among the general population, a then standard PAP perception which may have been subsequently modified by the dissemination of detailed survey findings to the PAP leadership.

Procedures of the Singapore National Identity Survey (SNIS): Since the survey focused on identification with the nation, the desired population to sample was all legally registered Singapore citizens above a base age. Singapore's voting laws allow near universal suffrage to citizens twenty-one and over, and provision is made for automatic registration of electors. Consequently, there are annually revised rolls of electors for every parliamentary constituency on the main islands and the inhabited smaller offshore islands. For this study these electoral rolls constituted the best available and one of the best conceivable sampling frames of adult Singapore citizens.

Proportional stratified random sampling was undertaken from these rolls. Stratification was by constituency since it was considered necessary to ensure that the minority Malays and Indians—concentrated in some constituencies more than in others and in a small number of constituencies absolutely speaking—were drawn into the sample in a proportion congruent with their proportion of the electorate. Direct stratification by community was operationally much too difficult to carry out since the rolls were internally arranged in a geographic sequence. Post-sampling and post-interviewing communal distributions

³ This was how a Singaporean political scientist characterized the immediate post-independence era. See Chan Heng Chee, *Singapore: The Politics of Survival 1965-1967* (Singapore: Oxford University Press, 1971).

⁴ The Conference was sponsored by the Democratic Socialist Club of the University of Singapore, where the author was teaching. See *Straits Times*, May 11, 1970, for an example of the major English-language press coverage. An edited version of the speech was subsequently printed in the periodical the government circulated monthly to all secondary school students. See John A. MacDougall, "The Genuine Singapore Revolution," *Prospect*, Nos. 16 and 17, 1970.

of the persons drawn, however, correspond very closely to the population proportions, as do other check data.

Out of the 1197 cases drawn, 990 completed interviews were obtained, a crude completion rate of 83%.⁵ The questionnaire used was structured. Standard English and Malay (rumi) versions were printed and taped translations made by teams of native English-speaking bilinguals in Tamil, Mandarin, Hokkien, Teochew, Cantonese, and Hainanese. Respondents were allowed to choose the language in which they preferred to be interviewed.

Figure 1 presents conservative critical percentage differences which must be equalled or exceeded when seeking to evaluate the statistical significance of differences within the total sample, within a subsample, or between any two subsamples. The critical differences given are conservative in that they are designed for two-tailed hypothesis testing, assume simple random sampling (the stratified random sampling actually used in SNIS would yield smaller standard errors and so smaller critical differences), and hold when the percentage estimates are 50% (leading to maximum standard error and so maximum critical differences).⁶

FIGURE 1: Critical Percentage Differences for Determining Statistical Significance of SNIS Results

Within the total sample or a sub-sample

Group	N	Level of significance		
		p = .01	p = .05	p = .10
Total sample	990	4%	3%	3%
Chinese	797	5%	4%	3%
Malays	121	12%	9%	7%
Indians	56	17%	13%	11%

Between any two sub-samples

Groups	Ns	Level of significance		
		p = .01	p = .05	p = .10
Chinese, Malays	797, 121	13%	10%	8%
Chinese, Indians	797, 56	18%	14%	11%
Chinese, Indians	121, 56	21%	16%	13%

Levels of National Identification among the Three Major Communities of Singapore

A necessary but hardly sufficient condition for establishing clearly popular identification with Singapore would be citizen acceptance of

⁵ The Chinese crude completion rate was 82%, the Malay 90%, the Indian 80%, and others 100%.

⁶ Details of the survey methodology are available from the author.

the nationality label "Singaporean" and affirmation of its legitimate persistence irrespective of the Singaporean's residence at any given moment. Ninety percent of all citizens acknowledged such a Singaporean nationality by choosing the label Singaporean for themselves when presented with a list of conceivably applicable national and communal labels, and a quite close 88% agreed (74% strongly so) with the statement, "Wherever I am, I am a Singaporean," when asked to judge its truth to them (see Table 1).⁷

TABLE 1: Direct Measures of Singaporean National Identification

Acceptance of Singaporean label				
Do you sometimes use any of the following labels to describe yourself? . . .				
Singaporean	Total	Chinese	Malays	Indians
Yes, describe self as Singaporean	90%	91%	98%	64%
Affirmation of Singaporean Identification				
Now I am going to read you a few more statements.				
Please tell me if you agree or disagree with each one. (READ STATEMENT AND OBTAIN AGREE OR DISAGREE ANSWER.) Do you _____ (INSERT AGREE OR DISAGREE AS APPROPRIATE) strongly or only somewhat? . . .				
Wherever I am, I am a Singaporean.				
	Total	Chinese	Malays	Indians
Agree strongly	74%	74%	84%	62%
Agree somewhat	14%	15%	12%	9%
Total agree	88%	89%	96%	71%
Preference of communal or national identification				
Now if you had to choose being called a _____ (INSERT RACE OF RESPONDENT) and a Singaporean, which would you prefer to be called?				
	Total	Chinese	Malays	Indians
Being called Singaporean	75%	76%	68%	69%

For both items the majority Chinese and minority Malays and Indians each separately registered high on national identification. While Indians score lower than Chinese and Malays on these labeling and affirmation items, on only two more of the total of 31 measures reported here do they do so. Not too much stress then should be placed on these isolated lower scores, especially since they are not absolutely low. This interpretation is reinforced further by the fact that when respondent's place of birth in Singapore, Malaysia, or India is controlled, no difference is found among Indians on either of these two initial direct national identification indicators, even though foreign

⁷ The item was one in a series of four statements for two of which the "Singaporean response" was to agree, two to disagree.

birth would seem likely *a priori* to be correlated positively with a lower level of Singaporean identification. If resident non-citizens had been included to produce a more heterogeneous sample, this expectation might have been borne out, but the hypothesized relationship does *not* hold among the citizens presently being studied.

A standard poser in Singapore has been whether Singaporeans are more loyal to their respective communities or to their country. This is an intricate question which can only partially be answered through survey analysis. Some references to observed behavior must ultimately be made in different situations entailing real-world conflict of the two loyalties in order for any conclusions to be fully credible. Some kinds of situation-specific conflicts required as "test cases" might be susceptible to simulation in a social psychological laboratory, but the more critical conflicts involving life-fulfilling and life-threatening decisions probably could not. So it seems useful if only for preliminary analysis to pose a direct question to respondents on whether they preferred to be called by the name of their community or by the label Singaporean. A sizable 75% majority preferred a national identification over a communal one with no statistically significant differences appearing between any two of the three main communities (see Table 1). However limited the meaning of this result in isolation, its meaning is enhanced by coherence with the high level of national identification found on the labeling and affirmation items. The respective fifteen and thirteen percent drops in marginals for the "Singaporean response" are, however, significant at the .01 level, suggesting that this last preferential item was an appreciably harder test to "pass" than the previous two.

A more conventional direct test of the level of national identification involves knowledge of national symbols, participation in events involving them, and favorable sentiments toward them. Of these perhaps the best test is expressed sentiment. Rote cognition and staid interaction are too often recurrent possibilities. The likely muting of sentiment in the formal interview setting would make additional results showing high national identification all the more striking.

A majority of citizens indicate positive affective involvement with or favorable sentiments toward ten of thirteen national symbols presented to them (see Table 2). For the remaining three symbols such sentiment is attained not only in cases of patriotic symbols (National Day Parade, National Day, Prime Minister, National Flag, National Anthem) and prideful symbols of national development (Jurong industries, community centers, Housing and Development Board flats), but also for partisan symbols of PAP policies (educational system, Armed Forces). The three symbols which only approach majority support (President, foreign policy, Members of Parliament) are mainly depressed because of a small fraction of non-involvement responses (expression of "no feeling")—not antagonistic responses—concentrated

TABLE 2: Levels of Positive Affective Involvement with Patriotic Symbols, Pridel Symbols of National Development, and Partisan Symbols of Government Programs^a

Patriotic symbols	Total	Chinese	Malays	Indians
National Day Parade	77%	71%	83%	66%
National Day	73%	71%	79%	73%
Prime Minister	68%	68%	72%	74%
National Flag	67%	66%	74%	70%
National Anthem	67%	65%	83%	72%
President ^b	47%	41%	71%	67%
Pridel symbols				
Jurong industries	74%	75%	80%	71%
Community centers	71%	71%	83%	66%
HDB flats	70%	69%	70%	73%
Partisan symbols				
Educational system	72%	70%	82%	70%
Armed Forces	70%	68%	79%	74%
Foreign policy	51%	46%	71%	68%
Members of Parliament	49%	45%	63%	63%

^a The items all had fixed alternative responses. The wording paradigm may be gleaned from the item on National Day: How do you feel on National Day? Do you have a good feeling, a bad feeling, a mixed good and bad feeling, or no feeling? Figures in this table refer to the percent expressing good feeling.

^b At the time of the survey the President was the late Enck Yusof bin Ishak, not the current incumbent, Dr. Benjamin Henry Sheares.

in the Chinese community. The highest instance of negative affective involvement ("bad feeling" responses) among any community for any of the symbols is a miniscule six percent (Malays, toward MPs). However, it may be correct to presume that some unknown level of negative feeling was concealed in the non-involvement response.

Singapore Malays expressed more favorable sentiment than Singapore Chinese on all thirteen of the national symbols represented, and in ten of these cases this difference is significant at the .10 level and in eight at the .05 level. This difference between the two communities thus seems real enough. Chinese expression of favorable sentiments is high; Malay scores simply go higher still. For five symbols (National Day Parade, National Anthem, Jurong industries, community centers, educational system) the percentage of Malays expressing good feeling soars into the eighties. In eleven of thirteen cases the Malays also outpace the Indians, though the differences here are significant only twice at the .10 level.⁸ It may merely be that the Malays are rather less guarded in expression of their commitments than the other communities, but such an explanation of the difference does not negate it.

⁸ In nine of thirteen cases Indian scores are higher than those of the Chinese on positive affect toward national symbols, but in only three cases are the differences so large that they are significant at the .10 level.

So far two types of direct measures of Singaporean national identification have been discussed. Two disguised or indirect measures were also used. In the first the respondent was asked to select three countries in the world in which he might want to live permanently. Neither Singapore nor any other country is mentioned in the item wording. Here respondents were enabled to make sentimental journeys to the lands of their ancestors or to their near neighbors in Southeast Asia. Singapore was in effect pitted against countries with higher standards of living, greater civil liberties, and longer and more romantic historical traditions. The traps and trials which this item contained for the expression of a response suggesting a high level of national identification were therefore many.

The responses suggest that Singapore is quite favorably salient in the minds of its citizens. Not only was Singapore mentioned as being among the first three choices of 67% of the respondents, but it was the first choice of 60% of all (see Table 3). In other words, whenever Singapore was mentioned, it was almost always mentioned first, not to mention almost always ranked higher than the ancestral country of each respondent and than Malaysia, whose national identification Singapor-

TABLE 3: Disguised Measures of Singaporean National Identification

Countries chosen for possible residence				
If you could choose among <i>all</i> the countries of the world those in which you would <i>most</i> want to live your life, what countries would be your first, second, and third choices?				
	Total	Chinese	Malays	Indians
Singapore mentioned at all	67%	65%	65%	86%
Singapore as first choice	60%	59%	59%	70%
Singapore ranked higher than ancestral country ^{a, b}	62%	61%	63%	73%
Singapore ranked higher than Malaysia ^b	65%	64%	59%	84%
Personalities admired				
Aside from the people you know personally, of <i>all</i> the people you read and hear about, could you name three persons you admire very much?				
	Total	Chinese	Malays	Indians
Singaporean admired	43%	43%	39%	48%
PAP personality admired	40%	41%	29%	48%
Lee Kuan Yew admired	40%	41%	25%	46%

^a For Chinese, ancestral country was taken to mean Mainland China, Taiwan, or Hongkong; for Malays, Indonesia or Brunei; for Indians, India, Pakistan, or Ceylon.

^b Countries not mentioned are considered outranked by countries mentioned.

eans had presumably so recently shed. This high level of preference for Singapore as a permanent place to live was shared by all three main communities and appeared slightly elevated among the Indians.⁹ No other country even came close to rivaling the perceived pre-eminence of Singapore as a place to live. The People's Republic of China received nine percent of the first choice votes, far behind Singapore.¹⁰

A second disguised measure of national identification asked the respondent to name three persons he admired very much. Naming of a Singaporean was analytically posited to be a high national identification response. This item entailed a rather greater than usual intrusion on personal privacy, and the largest proportion of personalities named using the item are, in survey after survey, political figures.¹¹ The open-ended rather than fixed-alternative format also works to depress the number of substantive responses. Consequently, the very high 46% no opinion rate for the item here is not unexpected. Stress in interpretation of the item should therefore be placed not on the absolute percentage expressing admiration of a Singaporean, but rather on whether there is any sizable mention of persons of another nationality.

About 43% of respondents specifically expressed admiration of one or more Singaporeans, with one of them almost invariably being a PAP leader and this PAP leader almost invariably being the Prime Minister, Lee Kuan Yew. (A minority portion of the Malay community provides an exception to this progression.) In naming a Singaporean as a very much admired person, no significant difference appeared among the three main communities. No other nationality is named anywhere to the degree that Singaporeans are named. Only seven percent mentioned Malaysians (mainly Tunku Abdul Rahman) and six percent, personalities from People's China (mainly Mao Tse-tung).¹² So use of two disguised measures and a series of direct measures seem to indicate quite consistently a fairly high level of Singaporean national identification.

Developing National Identity

Focus is now shifted from the sense of being a Singapore national to the distinctive beliefs and behaviors expected of such a national, a

⁹ Indian scores on Singapore as preferred residence were higher for all four codes used in Table 3 than the scores of Chinese and Malays. These differences were significant at the .10 level in all four instances in the Chinese-Indian comparison and in two of the four instances for the Malay-Indian comparison.

¹⁰ Ignoring first choices for Singapore, the highest percentage of first-choice votes among the Chinese were for People's China (11%); among the Malays, Malaysia (12%, only 5% of the Malays picking Indonesia as a first choice); and among the Indians, India (18%).

¹¹ In 48% of the SNIS cases the person mentioned was in politics. Individuals in arts, literature, and entertainment followed at 5%.

¹² Interestingly the nationality mentioned most frequently after Singaporean was American (9%). Most of these respondents mentioned John F. Kennedy or one of his family.

TABLE 4: Positions on Policies Articulated as Being Especially Characteristic of Ideal Singaporeans

Normativeness of equality

To what extent do you think it is right to have tolerance and equal treatment to all racial and linguistic groups in Singapore? To a great extent, to some extent, to a small extent, or not at all?

	Total	Chinese	Malays	Indians
Great extent	74%	75%	52%	91%
Some extent	16%	16%	24%	5%
Small extent	1%	1%	5%	—
Not at all	—	—	2%	—
No opinion	9%	8%	17%	4%

Absence of belief in hereditary racial superiority

Are there certain races in the world today that are *born* superior to others and certain other races that are *born* inferior to others?

	Total	Chinese	Malays	Indians
No superior or inferior races	62%	56%	75%	91%
Such races exist	24%	27%	18%	5%
No opinion	14%	17%	7%	4%

Approval of plural number of language streams in one school

Generally speaking, should children be sent to a school where all the students have the same language of instruction, to a school where some students have one language of instruction and other students have another, or would it really not matter much one way or the other?

	Total	Chinese	Malays	Indians
Single language	13%	12%	11%	20%
Would not matter	21%	20%	30%	25%
More than one language	62%	64%	54%	46%
No opinion	4%	4%	5%	9%

Stress on bi-lingualism

Generally speaking, how important is it to know how to *speak more than one* language in Singapore? Very important, fairly important, not too important, or not at all important?

	Total	Chinese	Malays	Indians
Very important	81%	82%	76%	84%
Fairly important	15%	14%	17%	12%
Not too important	1%	1%	2%	2%
Not at all important	1%	1%	2%	2%
No opinion	2%	2%	3%	—

transition some would suggest constitutes an exit from studying simple national identification and entry into the more complex area of national character or identity. Singapore has known no government since independence but that of the PAP, and with its entrenchment in power,¹³ the PAP has been in a uniquely advantageous position to

¹³ See especially Pang Cheng Lian, *Singapore's People's Action Party: Its History, Organization and Leadership* (Singapore: Oxford University Press, 1971). This is the most definitive and consistently reliable work to date on the party. Another recent study is Shee Poon Kim, *The People's Action Party of Singapore 1954-1970*,

spell out in theory and forge in practice its model of an ideal Singaporean national. A deliberate attempt was accordingly made when developing the SNIS questionnaire to include items tapping the PAP's view of what Singaporeans should stand for. Four of these items have been broken down by community and displayed in full here (see Table 4).

Possibly the core tenet of the political faith of the PAP leadership is its commitment to treat all communities equally.¹⁴ Even such an embittered critic of the PAP as former Chief Minister David Marshall has favorably commented on the government's conspicuous espousal and implementation of the equality value. Malaysian UMNO leaders' correct perception of this PAP commitment in contrast to their own of non-terminal special privileges for the Malays quite likely played an important role in their decision to sever Singapore from Malaysia.¹⁵ The pledge of allegiance to the Singapore flag repeated daily by all Singapore schoolchildren also makes the equality value explicit, and cognate sentiments for a united people occur in the national anthem.

With the PAP able to implement its maximum program in Singapore, popular support for the principles of tolerance and equal treatment has reached great heights. Less than one percent of the citizenry wants these policies not at all or to a small extent, while 90% want them to some or a great extent (74% fall in the great extent category).¹⁶ A majority of each community also regards equality as normative, but the strongest abstract egalitarianism is clearly found among the Indians. The Malays, for some of whom the example of Malaysia may still inspire a belief in privilege, are lowest (but not low) on egalitarianism. Malays also have the highest no opinion returns on what may be for some a sensitive term.

The absence of a racist belief in hereditary racial superiority is tied more by expectation than logic to the belief that men should be treated equally. If there were really hereditary inferior races, this might

unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, Indiana University, 1971. Particularly useful are the highly original materials in Chapters 4, 5, and 7. Since these two works were written, the PAP swept all constituencies in 1972 for the second consecutive parliamentary election.

¹⁴ For a concurring view, see the turgid but interesting work by Peter Busch, *Political Unity and Ethnic Diversity: A Case Study of Singapore*, unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, Yale University, 1972, p. 332.

¹⁵ While the PAP had downplayed in public its dissatisfaction with the system of special privilege in Malaysia, the Malaysian Malaysia campaign preceding the separation appeared merely a device to spread the value of equality in a politically more sanitized fashion. As it turned out, however, even this muted posture proved too revolutionary for the UMNO leadership. A similar assessment may be found in Mary F. Somers Heidhues, *Southeast Asia's Chinese Minorities* (Australia: Longman, 1974), pp. 66-67.

¹⁶ It is worth noting that a very high 81% of all respondents believe principles of tolerance and equal treatment are now operative in Singapore to a great or some extent.

be used as an argument for special privileges, equal treatment, or special burdens. Nevertheless, if the liberal belief in social equality is widespread among Singaporeans, one might guess that another part of this line of thought is also prevalent, that no race is born superior or inferior to another. True to form, the tables are again loaded on the side of such a commitment, though not so heavily as when the rightness of the equality principle was abstractly considered. Sixty-two percent of Singapore citizens deny belief in any doctrine of innate racial inequality, while 24% accept such a doctrine.¹⁷

While a majority of each community again makes the egalitarian response, Indians once more loom as the foremost egalitarians, but the Chinese now score lowest (but not low). While having 27% of adult Singapore Chinese and 18% of adult Singapore Malays believing in innate racial inequality may seem on first examination to define unambiguous chauvinist population segments, this would be too simple a conclusion. Seventeen percent of the Chinese do identify their own community as a superior race, but the same proportion also says the Europeans (a local term generally meaning persons from the West or descended from Westerners) are superior. Only two percent of Malays identify their own community as a superior race, while a larger seven percent name the Chinese as superior and eleven percent, the Europeans. Perhaps some generalized communal prestige factor is at work here. At any rate, to call these complicated profiles chauvinist does not appreciably add to an understanding of them.

One of the most unusual PAP policies in regional context has been creation of the so-called integrated schools, which in Singapore refer to the housing of students of more than one language stream (from two to four) in a single compound.¹⁸ The PAP holds that such schools will raise levels of communal tolerance and bilingual competence over what might otherwise be expected in single-language stream schools. Whether or not these benefits actually accrue, 62% of Singaporeans feel that such schools are proper and a further 21% feel they do not do any more harm than single-language stream schools. The Chinese community seems to favor integrated schools somewhat more than the other communities. Only a plurality of the Indians explicitly voice approval of this system.

The chorus of PAP ministers exhorting Singaporeans to become bilingual seems almost unending. It is difficult to overemphasize the

¹⁷ It may be that responses to this item were influenced somewhat by the unintended loaded wording, which did not provide for affirmation of an explicit belief in innate racial equality.

¹⁸ For an exemplary work of scholarship and the most rigorous empirical analysis to date of the Singapore educational system, see Douglas Murray, *Multi-language Education and Bilingualism: The Formation of Social Brokers in Singapore*, unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, Stanford University, 1971.

importance the Singapore government attaches to this policy. All administrative officers, the backbone of the civil service, are required to pass an examination in a second language for confirmation in their posts. A second language is a required subject in schools. The primary school curriculum has now been revised several times to allow more opportunities for the maximum number of pupils to develop a bilingual competence before entering secondary school.

The message has been heard and accepted at the aspirational level. Eighty-one percent of Singapore citizens feel that being able to speak more than one language is very important in Singapore, and 15% more think it is fairly important. Cross-communal agreement exists on this policy at the same high level of agreement. This is perhaps encouraging when contrasted with the fact that only 35% of the citizenry is estimated in other SNIS findings not reported here to have oral-aural competence in two or more of the main language communities prevailing in Singapore (Chinese, Malay, Indian, English).

The pattern of responses on these four selected items indicates a gradual acculturation to the model of the ideal Singaporean as outlined by the PAP leadership. With some important exceptions, this pattern also characterizes the responses to a large number of other similar purpose measures used in SNIS.

The National Destiny: For some years after severance from Malaysia the PAP leaders observed near complete public silence on the issues of separation from and reunification with Malaysia. Citizens were encouraged only to have a Singaporean national identification, but were never urged *not* to identify as Malaysians. In one sense the latter exhortation can be shown to be unnecessary; only one percent of the citizenry accept the label "Malaysian" as applying to themselves. But this silence may prove to be a much more problematic tactic to evaluate if the focus is shifted from simple national identification to national identity. The latter must involve beliefs in the destiny of the nation. Some identity confusion may be said to have occurred if the citizenry do not believe, or it is not clear to them, that the independence of Singapore is now legitimate, and if the citizenry do not perceive, or do not clearly perceive that Singapore is a permanent nation. Such identity confusion, if evident, would seem to constitute a case for active leadership guidance on these points.

Is such identity confusion merely hypothetical? It appears not. Only 48% of the citizenry affirmed that separation from Malaysia was good for Singapore *now* (1970), while 20% said outright it was bad now and a further 32% expressed no opinion on whether it was good or bad (see Table 5). It is all the more significant that it was *now* (1970) that only half the citizenry accorded legitimacy to separation. Time had been allowed for abatement of any hurt felt due to the perceived failure

TABLE 5: Positions on Issues Affecting Singapore National Sovereignty

Legitimacy of separation from Malaysia				
How would you describe your reaction <i>now</i> to the separation of Singapore and Malaysia in August 1965? Was it good or bad for Singapore?				
	Total	Chinese	Malays	Indians
Good	48%	51%	34%	34%
Bad	20%	16%	42%	37%
No opinion	32%	33%	24%	29%

Reunification of Singapore and Malaysia				
How do you feel about the possible reunification of Singapore and Malaysia? Would this be good or bad for Singapore?				
	Total	Chinese	Malays	Indians
Good	40%	34%	73%	52%
Bad	20%	23%	2%	9%
No opinion	40%	43%	25%	39%

Could (reunification) be achieved in a short time, only after a long time, or is it impossible to achieve?				
	Total	Chinese	Malays	Indians
Short time	7%	5%	22%	9%
Long time	38%	35%	44%	42%
Impossible	18%	20%	6%	18%
No opinion	37%	40%	28%	31%

of an experiment in inter-communal cooperation. Singapore had been given a chance to develop its own *raison d'être*. Some may argue that with more time an increasing proportion of the population may feel that separation was now legitimate. This may be so, but begs the question whether the trend will appear without additional social engineering.

The picture becomes starker when reunification with Malaysia is posed as an option to respondents. Only a minority of 20% feel that on balance re-entry into Malaysia would be bad for Singapore. A larger 40% actually believe such a new merger would be good for Singapore, and a further 40% express no opinion. While some of the no opinion response may be due to the item being a speculative and imaginative one, the 40% of the citizenry wishing another Malaysia period is not a chimera but a significant political fact.

Latent communal conflict also exists on these issues, suggesting they would have to be handled most carefully. Only minorities of the two minority communities think separation was good for Singapore as opposed to a majority of Chinese who think so, while 73% of the Malays feel that reunification would be good for Singapore as against only 34% of the Chinese who think so. The conflict is likely to be only partially mitigated by cross-communal consensus that reunification would either take a long time or is impossible to achieve altogether.

While these final results point to some very sensitive problems in

the formation of a Singaporean national identity, it has not by any means been shown that such problems are insuperable. In discussing separation and reunification, it is necessary to point out the obvious and set a given. History cannot be undone and separation is a fact. Reunification appears to be increasingly unthinkable by the political power holders of Malaysia and Singapore. Therefore some time exists to try to cope with these problems.

Passage by the Singapore parliament in late 1972 of the Constitution (Amendment) (Protection of the Sovereignty of the Republic of Singapore) Act seems to be a direct attempt at the sort of social engineering suggested here. The Act amends the Singapore constitution so that the merger or incorporation of Singapore with any other state can only occur after two-thirds support for such an end has been demonstrated in a national referendum. Such a proportion is virtually impossible of accomplishment, and the citizenry at large and opposition political leaders were in effect told by the Act that the continued independence of Singapore was a historical necessity.

The process of transition to a Singaporean national identification in Singapore is now effectively over. High levels of this identification prevail among all three of the main Singapore communities. The era ahead would seem to be one of further transition from Singaporean national identification to Singaporean national identity. To the extent that such an identity involves affirmation of policy positions of the ruling PAP on matters affecting national integration, the identity largely exists now also. But there has yet to appear firm evidence of a solid popular as opposed to leadership national consensus on the ultimate political destiny of Singapore.