

We, the citizens of Singapore

Pledge ourselves as one united people

Regardless of race, language, or religion

To build a democratic society

Based on justice and equality

So as to achieve happiness, prosperity and progress

For our nation

— National Pledge of Singapore, 1966
by S. Rajaratnam (1915 – 2006),
then Minister for Foreign Affairs and
a founding father of modern Singapore

RETHINKING ALBERT O. HIRSCHMAN'S
'EXIT, VOICE, AND LOYALTY':
THE CASE OF SINGAPORE

DISSERTATION

Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for
the Degree Doctorate of Philosophy in
The Graduate School at The Ohio State University

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* * * * *

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ABSTRACT

This research explores the concept of national loyalty within today's context of international migration and globalization. It seeks to provide a systematic understanding of national loyalty that, thus far, has been widely accepted by most citizens as a social fact and assumed to be an inherent trait.

Probing deeper, however, we realize that our understanding of national loyalty is superficial, made ever more shaky by today's ease of international travel, increasingly porous territorial borders, and images of the global citizen who is at home anywhere in the world. Academically, our understanding of national loyalty has also been mired in intellectual, philosophical, and rhetorical debates over the concept of the nation and national identity. Still, the realization that national loyalty is particularly vital during times when the nation-state is at some major cross road, or faced with the greatest challenge ever yet, is not lost on political leaders throughout the world, especially since the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, on the World Trade Center in New York.

What, then, is national loyalty? How is it able to coexist with our claim to be global citizens and free-floating individuals who belong nowhere and everywhere? And how may we reinforce this feeling of national belonging, especially in a world that encourages flexibility and fluid identities?

This study starts with the premise that all of us are, to a greater or lesser degree, national loyalists at heart. Using Albert O. Hirschman's exit-voice-loyalty concepts as the organizing framework, this dissertation systematizes and contributes to a more nuanced understanding national loyalty by elaborating on and adapting Hirschman's concepts to today's context of international migration, in addition to developing a typology of national loyalists. This typology is further fine-tuned, using information gathered from in-depth, one-on-one interviews with Singapore emigrants and residents. Finally, this study analyzes the participants' responses in the light of Singapore's cultural, political, and institutional contexts, and proposes several policy recommendations with the aim of enabling the Singapore government to better foster national loyalty among its emigrants and residents.

*Dedicated to Singapore loyalists
all over the world*

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This dissertation would never have seen light of day, if not for the numerous individuals who offered kind words of encouragement, emotional support, and sound advice, constantly cajoling and reminding me to “just put that final full-stop to the dissertation!,” and the generous funding and support I received from various institutions.

I am greatly indebted to the following individuals and funding sources:

- My dissertation committee: Professor R. William Liddle (adviser and chair), for coordinating my paperwork from across the Pacific and his friendly but firm reminder, in the summer of 2006, that it was time I finished up; Professor Anthony Mughan, for putting up with my long periods of absence from cyberspace and his not-too-subtle prodding to get on with the suggested revisions; and Emeritus Professor Patrick Mullen, for encouraging me to soldier on to the finish line. I am grateful for their explicit suggestions on revisions, which helped me produce this much-improved version of earlier drafts. Their support and patience were instrumental to my completing this long, arduous journey — from initial proposal and research, to fieldwork and writing up;
- Dr. Garry Rodan, Director of Asia Research Centre at Murdoch University, for providing office facilities and suggestions of people to approach for interviews during the time I spent in Perth;

- The Ohio State University’s Department of Political Science for funding a major portion of my graduate studies through graduate assistantships and the grants I received from the Program for the Enhancement of Graduate Studies (PEGS);
- The Ohio State University Alumni and the Mershon Center for International Security and Public Policy for providing research grants that enabled me to spend an extended period of time conducting field research in Singapore and Perth;
- The Ohio State University Graduate School and Office of International Education for providing partial funding for my final quarter;
- My sister, Serene, for reading and editing my numerous drafts, her invaluable insight, and willingness to engage in intellectual discussions into the wee hours of the night; brother-in-law Bryan and niece-and-personal-cheerleader Sonya for putting up with my irregular hours and vigorous hammering at the keyboard in the early hours of the morning. Over the years, they have seen me through periods of hope, self-doubt, and despair, but never once gave me the chance to call it quits;
- My parents for holding their counsel as they watched me struggle through graduate school, despite being totally bewildered at my decision to abandon a promising career for the life of a poor graduate student;
- My childhood friend, Grace, for her constant encouragement and urging to “make sure you graduate with your Ph.D!” and the countless days and nights she spent formatting my dissertation draft to both our satisfaction; and
- All Singapore loyalists who directly and indirectly participated and contributed invaluable insights, shared their personal and most private thoughts, and provided rich data for this dissertation.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Abstract.....	ii
Acknowledgments	v
Vita	vii
List Of Tables	xiii
List Of Figures.....	xiv
Prologue — Returning “Home”	xv
Chapter 1 — Introduction.....	1
Purpose of Study	7
Research Question	8
<i>Subsidiary Questions</i>	8
Significance of Study	9
Case Study: The Republic of Singapore	10
Research Method	13
Limitations of Research	14
Outline of Chapters.....	15
Chapter 2 — Locating Loyalists: Constructing a Typology of National Loyalists	17
Critiques of Hirschman’s Framework.....	20
<i>Hirschman’s Exit</i>	20
<i>Hirschman’s Voice</i>	23
<i>Hirschman’s Loyalty</i>	24
<i>To Exit, or To Voice?</i>	27
Proposed Refinement of Hirschman’s Framework	33
<i>Rethinking Hirschman’s Exit (and No Exit)</i>	33
<i>Rethinking Hirschman’s Voice (and No Voice or Silence)</i>	35
<i>Rethinking Hirschman’s Loyalists</i>	37
Internal Loyalists	37

Proposed Refinement of Hirschman’s Quality-Conscious Loyalist.....	37
Proposed Refinement of Hirschman’s Unconscious Loyalist	40
External Loyalists.....	44
Modifying and Extending Hirschman’s Framework.....	49
<i>Vertical Exit / No Exit Line</i>	56
<i>Horizontal Voice / No Voice Line</i>	57
Chapter Review.....	59
Chapter 3 — Research Methodology	61
Identifying Participants and Research Sites	62
<i>Some Data from Preliminary Research</i>	62
Those Who Leave.....	65
Those Who Stay.....	67
Defining the Field	67
<i>Why Perth?</i>	68
<i>Participant Pool</i>	69
<i>Precautions Undertaken</i>	72
Surveying the Field.....	75
<i>Widening the Net</i>	76
Research Procedures.....	82
<i>In-depth Interviews Versus Survey Research</i>	82
<i>Group Versus Individual Interviews</i>	86
<i>Interview Settings</i>	88
Sample Interview Questions	89
Chapter 4 — The Making, Un-Making, and Remaking of Singapore.....	91
The Making of Singapore: The Accidental Nation-State	93
<i>Beginnings of Singaporean Nationalism</i>	94
<i>Creating Rudimentary National Symbols</i>	95
<i>Creating Other Loyalty-Generating Symbols</i>	96
<i>Closing Ranks</i>	97
<i>Establishing Political Authority & International Recognition</i>	99
<i>Harnessing the National Economy</i>	100
<i>Building Homes</i>	101
<i>Educating a People</i>	103
The Un-Making of Singapore	104
<i>Political Challenges</i>	104
<i>Combating Western Influence</i>	105
<i>Rising Emigration</i>	107
Remaking Singapore: An Exercise in Futility?	111
<i>The National Ideology Experiment</i>	113

<i>Singapore 21</i>	114
<i>Remaking Singapore</i>	117
Assessing Remaking Singapore Committee Efforts	121
Loyalty Matters	123
<i>Of Stayers and Quitters</i>	123
<i>National Policies</i>	127
Dual Citizenship	127
Citizenship by Descent	130
<i>Government Initiatives</i>	131
Singapore International Foundation (SIF)	131
Contact Singapore	131
Overseas Singaporeans Unit	132
Chapter 5 — Findings & Analysis: Singapore Loyalists	133
Findings & Analysis: Singapore Loyalists	133
Summary of Main Findings	133
Elaborating on the Typology of Loyalists: The Case of Singapore	137
<i>Internal Loyalists</i>	137
<i>External Loyalists</i>	161
Reasons for Emigrating	162
Personal and Financial Costs of Emigration	164
Feeling Singaporean Abroad	166
Distinguishing Between Types of External Loyalists	169
<i>Political Alienation and Apathy</i>	178
Moving Within and Between Categories	180
<i>Some observed trends</i>	182
Those Who Do Not Fall Within Any Category	188
Chapter 6 — Conclusion	189
Conclusion	189
Overview of Main Findings: The Case of Singapore	190
<i>Extending Hirschman’s Typology: Introducing External Loyalists</i>	190
<i>Personal Motivations of Internal and External Loyalists</i>	191
<i>Complicating Hirschman’s Unconscious Loyalist</i>	192
<i>Absence of Dissident Internal and External Loyalists</i>	194
<i>Personal Changes Over Time and Space</i>	198
Suggestions for Future Research on Singapore	199
Some Policy Recommendations	205
Lessons Learned From The Singapore Case	215
Appendix A — Official Statistics of Potential Emigrants, Released by the Singapore Government	219

Appendix B — Official Statistics of Singapore Emigrants in Australia, Released by the Australian Government	221
Appendix C — Profile of the Singapore Emigrant	228
The First Wave: 1960s to 1970s	229
The Second Wave: 1980s	230
The Third Wave: 1990s.....	234
The Fourth Wave?: 2000 to 2006	236
Appendix D — Profile of Research Participants	240
Internal Loyalists	241
<i>Enthusiastic Loyalists</i>	241
<i>Dissident Internal Loyalist</i>	246
<i>Contented Internal Loyalists</i>	246
<i>Self-Adjuster</i>	247
<i>Disengaged Stayers</i>	254
External Loyalists	256
<i>Supportive External Loyalists</i>	256
<i>Dissident External Loyalists</i>	260
<i>Passive External Loyalists</i>	260
<i>Rejecters</i>	274
No Classification of Type	276
Appendix E — Singaporeans Living in Self-Exile	277
Singaporeans Living in Self-Exile.....	277
Appendix F — Statistical Profile of Research Participants	280
Bibliography	283
Index.....	310

LIST OF TABLES

Table 2.1: Proposed Typology of Loyalists.....	51
Table 4.1: Number of Certificates of No Criminal Conduct issued, 1986-1996	109
Table 5.1: Ethnic Composition Participants, compared with Population Survey 2004.....	135
Table 5.2: Types of Internal Loyalists Among Research Participants	135
Table 5.3: Types of External Loyalists Among Research Participants	135
Table 6.1: Types of Internal Loyalists Between the Ages of 30 – 39 and 40 – 49.....	199
Table 6.2: Types of External Loyalists Between the Ages of 30 – 39 and 40 – 49.....	200
Table A.1: Number of Certificates of No Criminal Conduct Issued, 1986-1996.....	220
Table B.1: Number of Singaporean-Born Residents in Australia	222
Table B.2: Singapore Settler Arrivals, 1995-96 to 2005-06.....	223
Table B.3: Number of Singaporean-Born Persons in Australia in 2001, by State/Territory.....	224
Table B.4: Number of Singaporean-Born Settling in Australia During the Year and by State/Territory	225
Table B.5: Singaporean-Born Residents in Australia, by Age Group.....	226
Table B.6: Singaporean-Born Residents in Perth, by Age Group (as of 2001).....	227
Table B.7: Number of Singapore Emigrants Granted Australian Citizenship	227
Table F.1: Ethnic Composition of Research Participants	281
Table F.2: Types of Loyalists Among Research Participants.....	282

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 2.1: Schematic Representation of an Expanded Albert O. Hirschman's Framework.....	50
Figure 2.2: Suggested Modification to Hirschman's Framework.....	55
Figure 6.1: Modification to Hirschman's Framework: The Case of Singapore.....	197

PROLOGUE

RETURNING “HOME”

It was early morning when the 737 aircraft circled Singapore’s Changi International Airport, preparing to land. Looking out of the window, I saw millions of lights dotting the city-state’s skyline. In a way, I was relieved that my 27-hour, long haul flight from Columbus, Ohio, was over. But I was also aware that the end of my flight was only the beginning — of my research project, of my attempt at studying a place I intuitively and instinctively understood, yet had difficulty explaining.

It was with mixed feelings that I left snowy Columbus for hot, humid Singapore. Two words — “returning home” — came to mind, prompted by emails from well-meaning friends and relatives who had been urging me to “come home for a visit.” It had been five years since I set foot on Singapore soil, or “returned home,” as my friends put it. And as I started to reacquaint myself with the island and the changed landscape, I began to feel as though I was a total stranger in the land where I was born, raised, and had spent a better part of my life.

When I arrived in March 2004, Singapore seemed more bustling with activity than I remembered. Construction crews worked feverishly around the clock to complete new condominium projects and government-initiated upgrading projects in various public housing estates; traffic was constantly rerouted to widen roads or add another strip of a

new highway; and construction of new subway stations was on track to link the different subway routes together. It is no wonder, I mused, that many Singaporeans feel displaced in their own homeland, with such constant activity impinging on their physical surroundings, and that many participants in this research would jokingly refer to the construction crane as Singapore's national "bird."

I arrived in Singapore at the height of a debate over whether the familiar red brick building of the National Library on Bras Basah Road, a busy main street in the heart of the city, should be preserved. The library was a favorite haunt among generations of Singapore students, and Singaporeans from all walks of life petitioned the government to reconsider its plans to demolish the building so as to widen the road. These petitions were to no avail; the government stood firm on its decision, and the building was demolished soon after.

Many participants I spoke with lamented the destruction of familiar landmarks in the name of progress and the inevitable eradication of historical and personal memories that connect Singaporeans — especially those residing overseas — to the territorial land.

"How do you expect me to root my child to this country when all the places are gone? How do you anchor this rooted-ness?" were some of the poignant questions raised.

This question of home and rooted-ness would come up over and over again in conversations I had with participants in Singapore and Perth, as we explored what it meant to be Singaporean, what it meant to be loyal to Singapore, and how Singapore emigrants view the issue of loyalty to their current or, in some cases, former homeland.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

*The Congress, by Public Law 85-529, as amended,
has designated May 1 of each year as “Loyalty Day.”
I ask all Americans to join me in this day of celebration
and in reaffirming our allegiance to our Nation.*

— U.S. President George W. Bush
April 28, 2006

National loyalty — what it means in today’s globalized world, and how best to nurture it — is an issue of growing concern among state leaders, especially in the wake of the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks on the World Trade Center in New York. Now, more so than ever, governments around the world are taking proactive steps to reassert their relevance to an increasingly mobile population, strengthen their citizens’ bond with the nation-state in the face of porous territorial borders, and reclaim rights to their nationals — both at home and abroad. These strategies have ranged from the more overt overtures — such as the revival of May 1 as “Loyalty Day” in the U.S., for “reaffirming

our allegiance to our Nation”¹ (Office of the Press Secretary, April 28, 2006) — to carefully crafted programs for maintaining links with their emigrants and nurturing an active citizenry that complement existing national political institutions. For example, countries such as South Korea (Yoon 1992) and Taiwan (Chang 1992) are offering their returnees economic benefits, tax breaks, and help reintegrating into society; others, such as South Africa, have launched cooperative projects to tap the expertise of its nationals overseas and encourage them to return on short visits to share their expertise (Crush 2002; Ite 2002), a move now popularly known as “brain circulation”; still other states, such as India, have extended dual citizenship to a large number of emigrants in an effort to maintain ties with highly successful nationals who have established themselves overseas (*The Press Trust of India*, June 16, 2005); and, finally, soft authoritarian states such as Singapore are enlarging the political space and allowing their citizens greater involvement and participation in national policy issues (*The Straits Times* 2002-2006).

Confounding these national governments’ efforts to reach out to their people, however, are rapid improvements in international travel and communication, cooperative treaties among national governments, and immigrant-friendly policies that make it easier for individuals to permanently emigrate, or to travel, work, study, and live away from

¹ May 1 became Loyalty Day in the U.S. starting 1959, after President Dwight D. Eisenhower proclaimed the day as a national holiday. The announcement was made in a bid to counter the then USSR’s proclamation of May 1 as the Communists’ Labor Day. Loyalty Day is not a federal holiday, although many towns and cities across the U.S. mark the occasion with parades. Following what many saw as the U.S.’s controversial role in the Vietnam War, Loyalty Day dipped in popularity and soon slid into obscurity. With the terrorist attacks on the World Trade Center in 2001 and the war in Iraq the following year, the Bush Administration has revived anew Loyalty Day as an occasion for Americans to show their appreciation to the troops defending the American ideals in foreign lands, and to renew their allegiance to the nation.

their home country for an extended period of time.² Observers assert that the blurring of national territorial lines has weakened our bonds to our nation-state and diminished its significance in our everyday lives (Brenner 1999; Falk 2001). Postmodern scholars also argue that the forces of globalization — of which migration is “the quintessential experience” (Berger 1984, 55) — have shifted the balance of power away from the nation-state to the global system (Brenner 1999; Chua 2004; Robinson 1998). Consequently, these scholars are predicting the imminent demise of the nation-state, while concurrently heralding the dawn of an era of global citizens that de-territorializes citizenship. They believe that “the nation has become a marginal imagination in the individual’s orientation to the future” (Chua 2004, 129), and contend that local-national politics and political participation are no longer of relevance to the individual (Brenner 1999; Chua 2004).

Despite dire predictions of its imminent demise, however, the nation-state and its associated institutions remain very much alive today, and continue to provide the organizing framework through which we understand our world (Smith 1996; Thompson 2001; Waltz 1999). Social scientists say this international system of nation-states is unlikely to fade away anytime soon (Smith 1996; Thompson 2001; Waltz 1999), as the nation-state continues to be naturalized as an integral part of our everyday lives through “daily flaggings” and “banal reminders” in the national media, in speeches made by national politicians, and during national events that celebrate the nation (Anderson 1981; Bilig 1995; Thompson 2001) — Independence Day and Loyalty Day in the U.S. being

² According to the Washington-based Population Reference Bureau, nearly three million people emigrated worldwide in 2005, with the U.S. — the most popular destination of choice — attracting one million immigrants each year and Europe about 1.4 million (<http://www.prb.org>, accessed August 20, 2006).

examples. These scholars also maintain that economic benefits of globalization and global citizenship were made possible only as a result of supportive supra-structure provided by national governments working in the background — as cooperative partners in bilateral and multilateral agreements, and as members of international organizations (Morris 1996; Waltz 1999). Indeed, such multi-state cooperation can only be sustained by an implicit recognition and sustenance of national sovereignty.

At the micro-level, the nation-state continues to pique the interest of its emigrants even from afar. Empirical data show that people residing outside the territorial boundaries of their nation-state remain concerned with the happenings in their lands of origin. As recent studies on diaspora, transmigration, and transnationalism have highlighted, individuals who emigrate remain emotionally attached to their country of origin and the people they left behind; some may even seek ways to become involved with, or contribute to, developments in their country of origin (Baubock 1998; Ong 1998; Skeldon 2001; Skrbis 1999). Clearly, these emigrants continue to identify themselves with their fellow nationals even though they now live away from their nation-state and may have even changed their nationality or citizenship (Pellegrino 2001; Smith 1996; Thompson 2001). Emigrants' concern and eagerness to share their knowledge with, and to better the lives of, their fellow nationals back home cannot be described as anything else but national loyalty, for "loyalty defines a moral community in terms of a conception of a common good and a special commitment to the members of the group who share this good" (Oldenquist 1982, 177). National loyalty, then, is not dictated by territorial

boundaries: there can be loyalists who live within the territorial boundaries of the nation-state (that is, *internal loyalists*), and loyalists who live outside the territorial boundaries (that is, *external loyalists*).

But what, exactly, is national loyalty in this age of international migration?

Surprisingly few scholars have given much thought to the precise nature of national loyalty, its determinants, or even how national loyalty may be nurtured, despite the fact that national loyalty is especially vital for the continued survival of the nation-state in the face of globalization. As Roger Tung succinctly puts it:

“Loyalty is the very *raison d’etre* of Political Man. Loyalty is the ‘why’ of nationalism, patriotism, partisanship, identification and alienation, hate and love, greed and generosity, and, in short, the motive of Voice. Without Loyalty, there is no Political Man nor Polity” (1981, 3-25).

In other words, loyalty is what accounts for the persistence of political organizations, including the political community and nation-state. It provides continued sustenance for and perpetuation of political entities, especially in the face of competing and conflicting loyalties or when the original reasons for such entities no longer remain relevant. And it is precisely because of the lightning speed with which our national and global contexts have changed in this past decade that we are now forced to systematically assess, rethink, and confront our still-nebulous understanding of national loyalty. Further clarification, specification, and development of the concept of national loyalty would allow us to better understand the underlying reasons for the nation-state’s sustenance and relevance — and, relatedly, that of national governments — especially in today’s context of globalization and international migration.

The changing global landscape also dictates that we can no longer identify national loyalists using the by-now outdated yardstick: that only individuals who reside within their nation-state's territorial boundaries are uniformly loyal, while those who choose to emigrate are disloyal (Hirschman 1970). In fact, many of us are, to some extent, national loyalists at heart, for our relationship with our nation-state remains one of our primary sources of identity (Druckman 1994; Mummendey and Klink 2001; Terhune 1964). As sociologists have observed, individuals tend to assess their nation-state positively when they identify themselves as members of the nation-state (Druckman 1994; Mummendey and Klink 2001; Oldenquist 1982; Terhune 1965). But such an assessment is unlikely to be uniform across the board, since the feeling of attachment to the nation-state varies from individual to individual (Druckman 1994; DeLamater 1973; Guetzkow 1955; Kanter 1968). Moreover, how one's self-professed loyalty to the nation-state is translated into observed behavior and subsequently judged as loyal or disloyal by other nationals is a complicated process (Guetzkow 1955; Laver 1976b).

National loyalty, then, is a multifaceted, social concept where one's actions are judged by "culturally defined limits" (Laver 1976b). As such, it is the values and norms of the particular society within which the national loyalty debate takes place that determines the kinds of behaviors that are accepted as loyal, and the kinds of behaviors that are not. These definitions are usually distilled and further clarified through political speeches and national debates in the mass media. This dissertation argues, therefore, that there can be different gradations of national loyalty that may be traceable to a range of various types of national loyalists. I propose that by systematically assessing the literature

so far on loyalty and adapting it to Albert O. Hirschman's exit-voice-loyalty framework, we can construct a typology of national loyalists that allows us to identify and locate these loyalists, and to establish the nature of their relationship with the nation-state.

PURPOSE OF STUDY

This dissertation aims to do two things: (1) to provide a more nuanced understanding of national loyalty; and (2) to determine how national loyalty may be developed and nurtured in today's context of international migration.

This study begins from the standpoint that national loyalty is a complex concept that, until now, has not been systematically explored. Instead, scholars have tended to either implicitly assume that national loyalty exists, or to refer to national loyalty as if it exists only when the individual chooses to live within the territorial boundaries of the nation-state, but dissipates as soon as the individual emigrates (Hirschman 1970). However, an individual's physical location is no longer a useful yardstick by which to determine the presence or absence of national loyalty, especially in this age of international migration. Moreover, since national loyalty is an inherently personal conviction hinging on the individual's assessment of and predisposition toward his or her nation-state, no two persons may be similarly loyal and are unlikely to attribute their loyalty to the same factors (Laver 1976b; Guetzkow 1955). We are, instead, more likely to discover different gradations of national loyalty.

This research seeks to present a comprehensive framework that would provide a more nuanced understanding of national loyalty in the context of today's interconnected

world. Using Singapore as a case study to explore the question of national loyalty, this dissertation develops, refines, and adapts Albert O. Hirschman's framework in his 1970 book, *Exit, Voice, and Loyalty: Responses to the Decline of Firms, Organizations, and States*, to the study of national loyalty in this era of international migration. In particular, I outline a typology of national loyalists that would better reflect the range of nuances in national loyalty in this era of international migration. This typology is further refined in Chapter 5, following the presentation and analyses of research findings from in-depth interviews with Singaporean residents and emigrants in Singapore and Perth (Australia).

RESEARCH QUESTION

The primary research question of this study is:

How might states build national loyalty that would allow them to successfully retain and reclaim their mobile and educated population in an increasingly interconnected world?

Subsidiary Questions

The following subsidiary questions were asked to establish a more nuanced understanding of Hirschman's loyalty with respect to the nation-state, while taking into consideration the context offered by today's increasingly globalized world.

- (1) What does loyalty to the nation-state mean in this interconnected world?

- a) What accounts for an individual's decision to stay with the nation-state?
- b) What accounts for an individual's decision to leave the nation-state?
- (2) Are there different degrees of national loyalty?
- (3) How might a better understanding of the nature of national loyalty help states shape their policies and craft policies that build loyalty to the nation-state?

SIGNIFICANCE OF STUDY

This dissertation is important for several reasons: (1) it updates current scholarship on national loyalty that has, thus far, been regarded as a dichotomous concept where either an individual is loyal, or s/he is disloyal; (2) it dispels the notion that national loyalists are a homogeneous group of people; (3) it provides a more systematic approach to distinguishing between the different types of national loyalists which may be instructive in determining the nature of national loyalty-building programs; and (4) it aims to update and better specify Hirschman's concept of loyalty, which was heavily criticized as "not precisely defined" (Tung 1981, 3-22; see also Barry 1974; Birch 1975; Laver 1976a; Laver 1976b).

CASE STUDY: THE REPUBLIC OF SINGAPORE

For this study, I chose to examine how Singapore — a relatively young, independent state with a predominantly migrant, multiracial population — is seeking to nurture national loyalty in its internationally mobile population. These attributes and its historical trajectory make Singapore a particularly good case study for exploring the concept of national loyalty and further explicating, developing, extending, and situating Hirschman's elegant (but deceptively simple) exit-voice-loyalty framework within the context of international migration.

Specifically, what makes the young city-state an interesting study is the fact that, firstly, national loyalty to Singapore was practically nonexistent prior to its independence and separation from the Federation of Malaysia on August 9, 1965. Secondly, Singapore is simultaneously a country of origin, transit, and destination for migrants,³ making it an excellent resource for exploring nuances in one's loyalty to nation-state. Thirdly, Singapore's experience and efforts at remaking itself and implementing programs that nurture national attachment are likely to provide valuable insights to countries in the midst of launching their own loyalty-building projects. And, finally, this research allows

³ Official estimates given in 2006 put the number of Singapore emigrants at 143,000 (figures by the National Population Secretariat, August 24, 2006). Of this, 800 Singaporeans renounce their citizenship every year, a consequence of the city-state's strict no dual citizenship policy. At the same time, Singapore practices an open-door migration policy, and has actively recruited foreign skilled workers and professionals, especially since the early 1980s. Today, foreign residents number a million — or a quarter of the total resident population in Singapore. Of these, only 6,000 to 7,000 landed immigrants were granted Singapore citizenship annually between the years 2001 and 2004. The year 2005 saw a record 12,900 people granted Singapore citizenship (figures supplied by Singapore's Ministry of Home Affairs, and published in *The Straits Times*, August 24, 2006).

us to paint a clearer picture of the emigrant Singaporean's understanding of loyalty to Singapore — an issue of particular personal interest to me: a second generation, internationally mobile Singaporean Chinese who has spent the past decade overseas.

My interest in developing a more in-depth understanding of national loyalty evolved when I became somewhat perturbed at my ambivalent regard for Singapore and lack of affective ties to the nation-state, despite having lived there two-thirds of my life. This feeling of ambivalence became especially obvious when I was asked questions such as “What are you going to do after your degree? Will you stay here [that is, in the United States], or go back home?”

Those questions inevitably got me thinking: “What is there, really, in Singapore that would compel me to return after I finish my degree, other than the fact that my parents and relatives still reside there? What are some of the factors I would take into consideration when deciding whether to return or to move elsewhere? How do Singaporean emigrants view their relationship with Singapore?”

It is with this background that I first formulated this dissertation topic. In August 2002, then Prime Minister Goh Chok Tong — currently the Senior Minister — unwittingly made a comment about “stayers” and “quitters” that sparked off a national debate. Emigrants and locals alike took issue with these value-laden, simplistic categories which appeared to juxtapose residents against emigrants, drawing a clear line in the sand between those who continue to physically reside — and hence, presumed to “be with” Singapore — and those who have emigrated — and no longer regarded as “being with” Singapore. A lively public debate ensued and many pointed out that those who are

“stayers” in the physical sense may not necessarily be emotionally attached and loyal to Singapore and, conversely, those who have left should not be seen as being disloyal, but may actually remain very much passionate about, and loyal, to the city-state.

To me, this exchange — coming on the heels of the launch of the Remaking of Singapore effort just six months earlier — presented an opportunity to study the ongoing process by which a nation-state transforms itself in the face of global challenges.

I followed the repartee that was published in the English-language daily broadsheet, *The Straits Times*, and simultaneously posted on STOnline⁴ with great interest. Eventually, these exchanges raised several questions: how would I classify myself? Am I a stayer, or a quitter? Are stayers necessarily loyal, and are quitters disloyal? Or are there loyalists even among quitters? What are some of the yardsticks by which Singaporeans measure national loyalty? What are some ways in which Singaporeans — current citizens, Singaporean emigrants, and former citizens — exhibit their loyalty and commitment to Singapore? And, with the Singapore government more intent now on including the Singapore diaspora in its future plans, how would these emigrants and former citizens be encouraged and persuaded to contribute to the future of the country? Such were the initial thoughts and musings that went into this research.

⁴ STOnline publishes selected headlines and articles on its website (<http://www.straitstimes.com>) that are printed in Singapore’s mainstream, English-language newspaper, *The Straits Times*.

RESEARCH METHOD

For this study, I chose to use a combination of publicly available emigration data and ethnographic techniques of in-depth interviews and participant-observation to capture the nuances of loyalty to one's nation-state. Statistical data provided a broader overview of the emigration numbers as well as the general perception of emigration and emigrants held by the population-at-large (Department of Statistics, Singapore, various years; Sullivan and Gunasekaran, 1994; Hui, 1997; Yap 1999; *The Straits Times*, 1959-2006; Australian Bureau of Statistics; Australia Government Department of Immigration and Multicultural Affairs; Singapore Department of Statistics). These were instructive in formulating my preliminary hypotheses and helping me frame more incisive questions that were posed to participants during in-depth interviews.

Since national loyalty is inherently personal and idiosyncratic in nature, in-depth interviews and personal interaction with participants were, for me, the best approach for developing a more comprehensive understanding of the issues underlying the concept of national loyalty. Moreover, as emigration has been a sensitive issue in Singapore until very recently — top officials have publicly frowned on and denounced emigrants for their lack of sense of loyalty and duty to their homeland — emigrants and potential emigrants have tended to keep a low profile and, in many cases, are extremely cautious about the people with whom they share their emigrant aspirations and experiences.

In order to seek out willing participants for my research, I employed snowball sampling, where I asked participants to introduce or suggest other possible participants for interview. This technique provided me with vital access to previously hidden,

emigrant groups. In addition, in-depth interviews also enabled me to further pursue and explore trends that were identified or hinted at in survey numbers, thus allowing for the gathering of more nuanced responses.

In selecting participants for my research, I made a deliberate effort to include officials from government departments, opposition politicians, citizens and former citizens residing in Singapore and overseas — specifically, in Perth (Australia), which is home to the largest population of Singaporeans outside Singapore — who are best suited to shed light on the issue (Patton 1990; LeCompte and Preissle 1993). I took steps to ensure that the sample chosen was as close a representation of the Singapore population as possible in terms of ethnicity and other demographics (Stewart 1998).

In writing this dissertation, I have chosen to use a narrative style, weaving in anecdotes, observations, analyses and interpretations that arose during the interview sessions and afterwards, while reviewing my notes and jotting down my impressions of each participant. This was undertaken with the view of providing the reader a more nuanced understanding of the issues under study, and a better understanding of the context within which this research was carried out. As a result, the reader is presented with a clearer picture of the circumstances under which I arrived at my conclusions.

LIMITATIONS OF RESEARCH

Owing to the fact that this study was based on the specifics of the Singapore case, my preliminary investigation suggests that the city-state's particular historical trajectory, demographics, and political and cultural environment invariably impinged on the findings

and these, in turn, inevitably rendered as inconclusive several categories in the suggested typology of national loyalists. I, therefore, strongly recommend that future research be conducted using in-depth interviews with members of other nation-states so that a more comprehensive understanding of the impact of a particular nation-state's characteristics — for example, its institutional constraints, historical trajectory, national culture, or treatment of emigration and emigrants, etc. — on its members' national loyalty may be further investigated. These findings may also be used to further refine the suggested typology of national loyalists in Chapter 2, so that future scholars may be better equipped to determine if the inconclusive categories suggested by the Singapore case study should, indeed, be discarded and disregarded in future studies, or if those inconclusive results were an anomaly due to the particulars of the Singapore case.

OUTLINE OF CHAPTERS

Below is a brief overview of the chapters to follow:

Chapter 2 reviews the literature on loyalty and critiques of Hirschman's framework as it relates to our understanding of national loyalty. It discusses the reasons for variations in national loyalty, and uses this nuanced understanding to formulate a typology of national loyalists.

Chapter 3 describes the research methodology used in this study. This chapter explains why I use ethnographic techniques of in-depth interviews and thick description over surveys and statistical analysis. It also describes how participants were recruited for

the research, my interaction with the participants, the problems I encountered in the field, and how national loyalty within the context of this study was operationalized to better capture the subtle nuances in the concept.

Chapter 4 presents a historical overview of the case study: the Republic of Singapore. Using material from political speeches, media reports, academic writings, and government publications, this chapter traces national policies undertaken since the republic's independence in 1965 that are aimed at creating a sense of Singaporean identity and national loyalty. It also outlines the national discourse on emigration in the past 40 years, and reviews government initiatives targeting overseas Singaporeans.

Chapter 5 discusses and analyzes the research findings from interviews with participants in Singapore and Perth, Australia. I summarize the participants' understanding of national loyalty, and the rationale for judging themselves as "loyal" or "not so loyal" to Singapore. I also highlight some interesting observations from the research findings, and compare and contrast the different types of loyalists. These findings are used to further refine the typology of national loyalists developed in Chapter 2.

Chapter 6 provides some policy recommendations on building national loyalty in Singapore. I also discuss some of the limitations of this study, suggest areas for future research, and conclude with observations of lessons that policy makers of other countries may draw from the Singapore case.

CHAPTER 2

LOCATING LOYALISTS: CONSTRUCTING A TYPOLOGY OF NATIONAL LOYALISTS

Albert O. Hirschman's *Exit, Voice, and Loyalty: Responses to Decline in Firms, Organizations, and States* remains a highly persuasive, seminal work for exploring strategies to slow the decline of a firm, an organization, or a state. At the time of the book's publication in 1970, Hirschman's framework was particularly attractive because it represented one of the earliest attempts at formulating an overarching, interdisciplinary, social theory to explain human behavior. Many scholars — admirers and critics alike — have described Hirschman's theoretical framework as “elegant” and “attractive” (Barry 1974; Birch 1975; Laver 1976a), pointing to the deceptive simplicity that belies its unlimited applicability (Barry 1974; Rokkan 1974a).

Hirschman's conceptual framework was not without problems, however. Many critics have described Hirschman's concepts of exit, voice, and loyalty as “chameleon-like” (Tung 1981, 3-7), changing form according to context, and posing problems to scholars attempting to apply the concepts to specific situations (Barry 1974; Birch 1974; Laver 1976a). Some of the harshest criticisms were reserved for Hirschman's concept of loyalty. In particular, Brian Barry chastised Hirschman for using loyalty as “an ad hoc equation-filler” (1974, 95), to “make the answer come out right” (1974, 95), and “the

equation... fit the facts *ex post*" (1974, 96). Although I agree with Barry's criticism, I would not go as far as Barry in dismissing loyalty as redundant, claiming it not to be "a significant phenomenon" (1974, 97). After all, a measure of loyalty goes a long way in sustaining and perpetuating the lifespan of political entities, especially in the face of competing and conflicting loyalties or when the original reasons for such entities no longer appear relevant (Tung 1982).

Surprisingly, Hirschman himself saw little utility in national loyalty, for he emphatically stated: "Loyalty to one's country... is something we could do without, since countries can ordinarily be considered to be well-differentiated products" (1970, 81). Yet, Hirschman immediately acknowledged that loyalty becomes increasingly important as globalization gathers pace and especially when there is little by which to differentiate or distinguish one country from another. Loyalty is especially essential for countries perceived to be of a lower quality because they are less developed, and have a lower quality of life or few opportunities for advancement. Ironically, these countries are also the very ones with the least points of pride around which to rally its citizens.

In a 1978 article published in *World Politics*, Hirschman further expanded on this thesis. He noted that in an increasingly interconnected world, small modern states are especially affected by brain drain, since any outflow of resources "may represent a critical loss for the small country" (Hirschman 1978, 105). Hirschman recommended that such countries could stem emigration by increasing loyalty through the provision of "some 'attractions' that will reinforce [its members'] normal reluctance to leave" (1978, 105; *italics* in original). He suggested that such countries should specialize in a public

good that would provide a rallying point of pride, loyalty, and support among its members. For example, the country could become a champion for human rights or environmental issues.

With increasingly porous territorial boundaries and growing aspirations to global citizenship, political leaders find themselves increasingly faced with the dilemma of how best to nurture and assess national loyalty. Clearly, national loyalty can no longer be measured by an individual's physical place of residence. In other words, those who live within the territorial boundaries of their birthplace cannot be regarded as being more loyal to their nation-state, as compared with others who have chosen to move away. Rather, national loyalty can take a number of forms, ranging from silent interest in local happenings beyond demarcated national territorial boundaries, to rigorous promotion of national culture both within as well as outside the territorial boundaries, and to engaging the government in vigorous debates over its national policies. As such, there can be internal, as well as external, loyalists — that is, loyalists who live within the territorial boundaries, as well as loyalists who live outside those boundaries.

To better systematize the study of national loyalty, I first present a critique of Hirschman's exit-voice-loyalty framework as it pertains to the study of national loyalty. This is followed by a detailed discussion of the determinants of national loyalty. Finally, I introduce a typology of national loyalists to better explore the nuances of national loyalty. This typology builds on and extends Hirschman's framework to include **External Loyalists** — that is, emigrants who, despite now living away from their birthplace, and/or having taken up citizenship in their current country of residence, and/or formally

renounced their first citizenship, still profess to having a strong attachment to their birthplace and former nation-state and may even actively seek ways to contribute to its future development.

CRITIQUES OF HIRSCHMAN'S FRAMEWORK

As the title of his 1970 book suggests, Hirschman's theoretical framework revolves around three possible behavioral responses — exit, voice, and loyalty. These are coping strategies used by individuals unhappy with the declining quality of a product, service, or entity such as an organization or state.

Hirschman's Exit

Exit occurs when “some customers stop buying the firm's products or some members leave the organization” (Hirschman 1970, 4). Instead of actively seeking to improve their situation and bring about positive change, this group of people, often the more quality-conscious consumers and members, prefers to put an end to what they view as an unproductive relationship by abandoning it — a reaction that, in some situations, may appear to border escapism.

Consumers and members of organizations use exit — “a clearcut, either-or decision” (Hirschman 1970, 43) — to *anonymously* register their dissatisfaction with the deteriorating quality of goods and services in the marketplace or organization. This makes exit “neat,” “impersonal,” and “indirect” (Hirschman 1970, 15-16, *italics* in original). However, Hirschman emphasized that by choosing to exit, consumers and

members effectively remove their ability to exercise voice — that is, these exiters cannot hope to influence the management’s decisions from the outside. Neither can they enjoy the benefits that future improvements may bring. In effect, Hirschman disregards the possibility that customers who have exited would return as customers in the future. Moreover, when applied within the context of one’s country, Hirschman noted, “exit has often been branded as *criminal*, for it has been labeled desertion, defection, and treason” (1970, 17; *italics* in original). By extension, those who exit are disloyal, seen as deserters, defectors, or traitors.

Underlying Hirschman’s concept of exit, then, is the implicit assumption of membership. An individual who is a member of an entity would have a vested interest in the future continuity and quality of an entity, and would actively contribute to its betterment. With exit, an individual ceases to be a member of the entity, and is no longer concerned about the entity’s future prospects. Paul Thomas noted that exit occurs when one ‘cancels,’ ‘quits,’ ‘leaves,’ or ‘changes’ one’s membership. This choice can be more or less extreme in that individuals may choose to (1) partially exit, or (2) totally withdraw from the entity. An example of partial withdrawal from a nation-state is what Tung calls “local exit,” as in regional migration that involves only the “crossing of municipal boundaries” (1981, 3-9). In contrast, total withdrawal or “total exit” entails the “crossing of nation-state boundaries” (Tung 1981, 3-9) — that is, international migration.

In his brief application of the exit-voice-loyalty framework to the nation-state, Hirschman simply defined an exiter as someone who no longer lives within the territorial boundaries of the state — that is, when physical relocation abroad has occurred. Hirschman did not elaborate on what membership in a nation-state means, although he

viewed all exiters as disloyal — hence, traitors. However, applying Hirschman’s framework to the nation-state requires us to ascertain what constitutes membership in a nation-state, so that we can determine what non-membership (and hence, exit and disloyalty) is. For example, does being a citizen make an individual a member of a nation-state, even if s/he is living overseas for an extended period of time? What about former citizens who have taken up citizenship elsewhere but continue to maintain ties with the people in their country of origin and have access to the authorities who make policy decisions? Should these individuals still be considered members of the nation-state, despite their having physically relocated overseas or are they all traitors by virtue of the fact that they had exited?

When considering these questions, I was dissatisfied with Tung’s conception of “total exit” as “crossing of nation-state boundaries” (1981, 3-9), because it was no different from Hirschman’s blanket use of the term, “exit,” to describe the act of physically relocating overseas, and his reference to exiters as traitors. Moreover, as recent studies on transnationalism and transmigration illustrate, territorial exit alone is not a good indicator of an individual’s disloyalty to his nation-state. Empirical and anecdotal evidence also illustrate that many emigrants continue to feel an affinity with their country of origin. In most cases, physical exit from a nation-state does not cause emigrants to renounce all of their ties with their country of origin. Neither does physical exit make the individual any less emotionally committed to the nation-state than another individual who has not emigrated. Frequently, because of their personal circumstances, many individuals are forced to reluctantly leave their nation-state in search of economic opportunities,

despite still feeling very loyal to it. It is, thus, important to pin down exactly what constitutes exit from a nation-state in this increasingly globalized world, especially since it would give us an insight as to what constitutes loyalty to one's nation-state.

Hirschman's Voice

Voice is exercised when customers or organizational members bring their dissatisfaction or grievances directly to the management or authorities. They may also publicly register their unhappiness at the declining quality of the product, service, or organization by staging protests and demonstrations. These tactics are aimed at focusing public attention on the failings of a previously superior quality product or entity, thereby forcing the management or authorities to address those issues of concern.

What makes voice persuasive is its acknowledgment of human agency, that the individual has the ability to change his or her situation if s/he chooses to. Voice stands in direct contrast to exit for it is "far more 'messy'" (Hirschman 1970, 16), personal (as opposed to anonymous), "direct and straightforward" (Hirschman 1970, 16). Hirschman attributes a positive role to voice: it is constructive, seeking a betterment of the entity while simultaneously acknowledging the legitimacy of the current authorities. He does not see voice as necessarily building up to a protracted, destructive level, and advocated, instead, the view that voice had to stay within certain limits: "Voice has the function of alerting a firm or organization to its failings, but it must then give management, old or new, some time to respond to the pressures that have been brought to bear on it" (Hirschman 1970, 33). Because it alerts management to problems, Hirschman largely viewed voice as a constructive, "recuperation mechanism" (1970, 30).

In attributing a constructive role to voice, however, Hirschman ignored the possibility that voice could just as easily be used to undermine the current authorities by calling into question their legitimacy. Moreover, he also failed to consider the individual's decision to stay silent — that is, no voice — as a choice in its own right (see Birch 1975). Instead, Hirschman regarded silence as symptomatic of a loyalist's behavior, and one that is highly valued by the management. For Hirschman observed, “loyalty-promoting institutions and devices ... are often meant to *repress* voice alongside exit” (1970, 92, *italics* in original) thus “converting... conscious into unconscious loyalist behavior” (1970, 93).

Hirschman's Loyalty

Loyalty accounts for what may seem like an irrational decision to remain with a deteriorating entity or product. Hirschman's loyalist, then, is an individual who does not exit, regardless of his or her underlying reasons for staying put. According to Hirschman, loyalty is that unexplainable “special attachment” or sentiment that makes even the sharpest critic in any entity think twice about quitting and moving on to another one that offers a similar — possibly better — product, service, or membership benefits. Andrew Oldenquist concurs, for he noted:

“When I have loyalty toward something I have somehow come to view it as *mine*. It is an object of noninstrumental value to me in virtue (but not only in virtue) of its being mine, and I am disposed to feel pride when it prospers, shame when it declines, and anger or indignation when it is harmed. In general, people care about the objects of their loyalties, and they acknowledge obligations that they would not acknowledge were it not for their loyalties (1982, 175, *italics* in original).

A sense of loyalty convinces members that their entity has the potential for reform and further improvement, one that would occur from within, and with their help. Loyalty, then, is an inherently individualistic attitude, the strength of which depends on a particular individual's level of support for the objects that symbolize the group (Guetzkow 1955). This attachment is particularly valuable to a deteriorating entity because it gives the authorities the "slack" or breathing space to bring about much needed improvements before the exodus of consumers or members reaches epidemic proportions, and threatens the entity's existence.

Hirschman suggested that there are two types of loyalists: (1) *quality-conscious loyalists* who, although aware of the entity's deterioration, remain confident of their efficacy in bringing about positive change, and (2) "*unconscious loyalists*" who, unaware of any deterioration in their environment, "[are] free of any felt discontent" (1970, 91) and, hence, have no reason to leave or to voice their discontent. Hirschman noted that organizations tend to prize unconscious loyalist behavior more highly because these individuals "refrain from both exit and voice" (1970, 93).

Hirschman's concept of loyalty was problematic right from the start, and was heavily criticized as "not precisely defined" (Tung 1981, 3-22). One critic even accused Hirschman of using loyalty as "an ad hoc equation-filler" (Barry 1975, 95), an "error term... to make the answer come out right" (Barry 1975, 95), and "the equation... fit the facts *ex post*" (1975, 96). Tung charged that Hirschman had attached three different meanings to the concept (Tung 1981), while others contended that Hirschman had used the term indiscriminately, by presenting loyalty as both an attitude (a variable) and a behavior (an outcome) (Barry 1974; Birch 1975; Laver 1976a; Withey and Cooper 1989).

In my view, perhaps what is even more fundamentally problematic than the above criticisms is Hirschman's view that loyalty is a dichotomous concept, where either (1) an individual is loyal (as reflected by his or her decision to remain as a member of an entity), or (2) s/he is not (by virtue of the individual's decision to leave the entity). Within the context of international migration, such a dichotomous view of loyalty makes territorial departure (that is, physical relocation or Hirschman's exit from the state) synonymous with disloyalty. However, as Barry pointed out, "someone who leaves is described as disloyal only if there is some special factor, for example that he has defected to another country carrying military secrets with him" (1974, 98). Thus, I propose that Hirschman's traitor be restricted to only those cases where the individual is found guilty of conducting himself or herself in a manner that is damaging to the national interests or national security of his or her state (Barry 1975; Shklar 1992). I also posit that such cases are usually few and far between; instead, a large proportion of individuals who emigrate may actually be more accurately described as **External Loyalists**, since the assumption that all emigrants are disloyal — hence having no emotional attachment to their country of origin — is inconsistent with recent empirical evidence (Kearney 1995, Baubock 1998, Pellegrino 2001): many emigrants remain emotionally attached to social units back home, and often seek ways to be involved with the community in their country of origin even while they are away — thus continuing to be active members of their national community and exercising voice in its affairs from afar (Baubock 1998, Kearney 1995, Pellegrino 2001).

Even Hirschman himself admitted that there may be special circumstances under which "the member continues to care about the activity and 'output' of the organization

even after he has left it” (1970, 99, *italics in original*) — what A. H. Birch referred to as “residual loyalty” (1975, 80). Hirschman noted that such special circumstances apply in the case of public goods, where “one remains a consumer of the article in spite of the decision not to buy it any longer, and a member of the organization in spite of formal exit” (1970, 100). Birch reasoned that this affective sentiment toward their former entity often hold exiters in check, making them reluctant to criticize the entity even though they are no longer part of it. In the context of the nation-state, then, Birch recognizes that emigrants still feel affection for and a sense of belonging to the extended “imagined community” that has its roots in their country of origin. Guetzkow suggested that this attachment could stem from the individuals’ continued “vicarious satisfaction from identification” (1955, 19), whereby the individual feels the nation-state’s achievements and accomplishments are his or her own. Thus, such emigrants may be more accurately described as *external loyalists*.

This dissertation argues, therefore, that loyalty to one’s nation-state is not dictated by territorial boundaries. There can be both internal, as well as external, loyalists — that is, loyalists who live within the territorial boundaries, as well as loyalists who live outside those boundaries. I will discuss these types of loyalists and their distinguishing characteristics in greater detail later in this chapter.

To Exit, or To Voice?

A major portion of Hirschman’s work revolved around the development of his concepts of exit and voice. In particular, Hirschman regarded exit and voice as diametrically opposing alternatives since choosing one implies forgoing the other, for

“whoever does not exit is a candidate for voice” (1970, 34), and vice versa. Hirschman’s critics protested, however, that the range of options available to individuals is more complicated than he had proposed (Barry 1974; Birch 1975; Laver 1976a; Tung 1981; Withey and Cooper 1989).

These critics emphasized that exit and voice are essentially two independent, dichotomous variables. In other words, an individual does not choose between whether to exit *or* to exercise voice. Rather, s/he has to make two mutually exclusive choices: (1) whether to exit, or to stay, *and* (2) whether to exercise his or her voice, or remain silent. As such, the individual essentially has four choices:

Choice 1: S/he can choose to exit and voice his or her displeasure

i.e., *Exit + Voice*

Choice 2: S/he can choose to exit and remain silent about his or her displeasure

i.e., *Exit + Silence = Hirschman’s traitor;*

Choice 3: S/he can choose to stay and voice his or her displeasure

i.e., *No Exit + Voice = Hirschman’s conscious loyalist;*

Choice 4: S/he can choose to stay and remain silent about his or her displeasure

i.e., *No Exit + Silence = Hirschman’s unconscious loyalist +*

Withey and Cooper’s neglecter

Choice 1 (*Exit + Voice*) is absent from Hirschman’s book. When formulating his exit-voice-loyalty framework, Hirschman had overlooked the possibility that an individual can choose to exit and voice at the same time. Instead, Hirschman was rather emphatic in his discussion that the exiter’s attempts at voice would be fruitless. He

believed that such attempts would be ineffective, since the management would not feel pressured to seek ways to accommodate the people who have left. Such a view may no longer hold in today's context, however. Recent empirical evidence from countries such as India, Mexico and El Salvador show these governments starting to cultivate relationships with their emigrants, and to respect their input and influence on national and foreign policies (*British Broadcasting Corporation* May 18, 2004). As such, exiters from their nation-state can no longer be deemed as voiceless, nor can they be seen as traitors.

Hirschman extensively discussed Choices 2 and 3 in his book. For Hirschman, Choice 2 (*Exit + Silence*) characterizes the behavior of all exiters, whom he saw as traitors. Once this group of people exits from an entity, they do not have any voice, and cannot initiate or affect any changes in their former organization or state. Birch observed that this silence may be prompted by four self-imposed constraints: (1) a "feeling of residual loyalty" to the entity; (2) an individual's "fear of retaliation" from the powers-that-be; (3) an individual's "low belief in efficacy"; and (4) a general "lack of concern" for the entity and its members (1975, 80).

Choice 3 (*No Exit + Voice*) typifies the behavior of Hirschman's quality-conscious consumers — hence, *quality-conscious loyalists*. Unlike those who leave for greener pastures at the first signs of decline, this group of loyalists prefers to stay with the floundering entity, because they strongly believe in their efficacy and ability to influence the decision makers in such a way that would improve the entity's future prospects and get the floundering entity back on the right track. These individuals stay on and seek ways to alert the management as to the failings of the entity, in the hope that authorities

would take steps to address their concerns. Their response takes the form of “active and constructive efforts to improve conditions giving rise to dissatisfaction” (Lyons and Lowery 1986, 332).

At first glance, Choice 4 (*No Exit + Silence*) appears to fit Hirschman’s initial description of the *unconscious loyalist* as a contented individual. However, a closer scrutiny of Hirschman’s unconscious loyalists revealed that he had indiscriminately used the same term to describe two, rather distinct, groups of people. Moreover, as Withey and Cooper points out, such a behavioral response is not as unconscious as Hirschman had made it out to be.

At first, Hirschman presented these *unconscious loyalists* as “inert consumers” who are blissfully unaware of any deterioration in the entity. Having no cause for complaint — since such individuals are neither unhappy nor disillusioned with the direction of the entity — they remain silent members of the entity.

Yet, Hirschman later painted *unconscious loyalists* as skilled practitioners of self-deception. These loyalists “alter their cognitions and beliefs so as to make them more consistent with some ‘discrepant’ act or behavior they have engaged in and which is difficult to reconcile with these beliefs” (1970, 94). In the blink of an eye, Hirschman’s contented (unconscious) loyalist becomes Tung’s Autist who uses “self-adjustment as a coping mechanism” (1981, 3-6). In other words, the latter type of Hirschman’s *unconscious loyalists* are actually fully aware — and conscious — of their unhappiness with their current situation, but bitterly wrestle with themselves to suppress that realization. Rather than exit or voice their dissatisfaction, these individuals prefer to make the necessary behavioral adjustments to maintain their previous comfort level, often

because the price exacted for leaving the entity is too high, or because they had paid dearly for the privilege of membership, or due to a fear of possible retaliation by the powers-that-be (Birch 1975).

As Stein Rokkan pointed out, an individual's decision to exercise voice, and the volume at which s/he is heard in any territorial system, are conditional on the "*internal barriers between subject populations and decision-making strata*" (1974b, 49, *italics in original*). These internal barriers restrain and muffle voice so that only those messages that are deemed by the gatekeepers to be constructive and supportive of the regime's norms are heard by the people that matter (Easton 1965; Rokkan 1974b; Tung 1981). As a result, a large proportion of the messages conveyed by voicers could be gratefully received, politely acknowledged, or quickly repressed at various intervening points.

Consequently, discontented and, often, disillusioned individuals prefer to rely on other, more vocal, members to voice their grievances to the people who matter. By remaining silent, these consciously unhappy free riders seamlessly blend into the sea of Hirschman's unconscious — but contented — loyalists.

That Hirschman's *unconscious loyalists* are actually conscious, calculating individuals is not such a controversial finding, if seen in the light that Hirschman himself believed that "the most loyalist behavior retains an enormous dose of reasoned calculation" (1970, 79).

Choice 4 also describes the behavioral response of yet another group of individuals — that of Withey and Cooper's "neglector."⁵ Such an individual no longer

⁵ In their 1989 article "Predicting Exit, Voice, Loyalty and Neglect" that further developed Rusbult et al.'s neglecter, Withey and Cooper proposed that neglecters may be distinguished from Hirschman's loyalists by the level of support they have for the organization. Hirschman's *unconscious loyalists* continue

sees any value in maintaining anything more than a cursory relationship with the entity, and is contributing as little as possible to the betterment of the organization, while waiting for a better alternative to come along. The neglecter is conscious of, and unhappy with, the problems at the entity, but is unable to leave because of the high price associated with such a move.

A closer examination of the foregoing shows that these different loyalist behaviors stem from the individual's predisposition toward the entity to which s/he belongs — that is, the loyalty an individual exhibits towards the entity depends on whether s/he feels (1) high or positive support; (2) medium or passive support; or (3) low or negative support toward the entity. In the case of national loyalty, Guetzkow pointed out that this predisposition is “directed toward a nation-state, in actual existence or still-to-be-realized” (1955, 8), and “may be attached to persons, places, institutions, or ideals — separately or in combinations” (1955, 9).

In other words, to better understand and account for the nuances of national loyalty and to determine the different types of national loyalists, we will need to take into account the individual's varying predispositions towards the nation-state, as represented by the national community, the authorities, and the regime (see Easton 1965; Guetzkow 1955; Kanter 1966), as well as his or her observable actions to (1) exit or to stay; and (2) to voice or keep silent. This would allow us to make a distinction between, say, the law-abiding member who whole-heartedly supports the authorities, regime, and national

to quietly support the organization and are generally seen to make constructive contributions to the organization, whereas Withey and Cooper's neglecters are deeply aware of their unhappiness and have consciously withdrawn their support for the organization, in the belief that there are better alternatives out there. Neglecters are generally seen as biding their time until that perceived better alternative comes along.

community, and the seemingly law-abiding member who has a weak sense of identification with the community and silently questions the legitimacy of the authorities. We can, then, broadly classify and differentiate between each type of national loyalist.

PROPOSED REFINEMENT OF HIRSCHMAN'S FRAMEWORK

Rethinking Hirschman's Exit (and No Exit)

In my earlier section, *Hirschman's Exit*, I drew attention to the fact that:

- (1) Hirschman regards physical relocation as exit, implicitly assuming that an individual's membership with the entity ceases upon his or her exit from the entity.

Things are not so clear-cut in the case of the nation-state, where one's membership is often not due to choice, but the direct result of one's birthright. An individual's membership with the country of origin does not completely cease even upon revocation of one's citizenship, for the country of origin continues to provide the basis for one's self-identity, however negligible. In some countries, such as the UK and U.S., the authorities do not recognize revocation of citizenship by birthright.

- (2) in the context of today's globalized world, we can no longer assume (as Hirschman did) that all those who choose to leave their nation-state — that is, emigrants — are disloyal and, hence, are deserters, defectors and traitors.

Many emigrants continue to identify with the people from their country of origin, are keenly interested in current developments there, and actively participate in the nation-state's development even from afar. In view of their enthusiastic contributions to their country of origin, these emigrants do not fit the deserters-defectors-traitors description proposed by Hirschman.

I propose to enlarge Hirschman's existing framework of loyalists that currently consist of *quality-conscious loyalists* and *unconscious loyalists* (henceforth collectively referred to as **Internal Loyalists**) to include emigrants who are positively predisposed toward the nation-state. These emigrants will henceforth be collectively referred to as **External Loyalists**.

- (3) Hirschman disregards the possibility that those who have exited the entity would return in the future. However, as the experience of India has shown, Indian emigrants are returning to their homeland by the thousands, encouraged by the economic growth since the late 1990s.

I propose that **Internal Loyalists** should include: (1) citizens who live and work in their country of origin, and who have no other right to permanent residence elsewhere; (2) current citizens who hold the right to permanent residency elsewhere; and (3) former citizens who have returned to live and work in their country of origin for an extended period of time.

Additionally, **External Loyalists** are those individuals who choose to live and work outside of their country of origin, but who continue to

nurture their interest in goings-on in their country of origin. These **External Loyalists** would encompass (a) former and current citizens living overseas and who have taken up citizenship in their country of residence; (b) current citizens who work and live away from their country of origin and hold the right to permanent residency in their country of residence; and (c) current citizens who work and live away from their country of origin but do not have landed immigrant status in their country of residence and employment.

Rethinking Hirschman's Voice (and No Voice or Silence)

I address Hirschman's failure to distinguish between constructive and destructive voice by proposing that Hirschman's *quality-conscious loyalists* be further subdivided into the subcategories of **Enthusiastic Internals** and **Dissident Internals**. I also propose corresponding subcategories of **Supportive Externals** and **Dissident Externals** among the **External Loyalists**.

These subcategories were introduced to make a clear distinction between (1) vocal individuals who believe themselves to be loyal and are seen as such by the authorities and fellow members of the national community (that is, the **Enthusiastic Internals** and **Supportive Internals**); and (2) those who believe themselves to be loyal but whose vocal attempts at steering the entity back on track are regarded by some of their fellow nationals — and especially by the authorities — as contravening some cultural, social, political, or institutional norms and values (that is, the **Dissident Internals** and **Dissident Externals**) (Laver 1976b; Oldenquist 1982). However, it is

important to note that tolerance for dissent differs from nation-state to nation-state, and an individual whose actions may cause him to be labeled as a meddling dissident in one country could be regarded as a conscientious objector in another.

Norms are effective in delineating between what is socially, culturally, and politically permissible and what is not, because they are “learned as objective truth in the course of socialization and internalized as subjective reality” (Berger and Luckmann 1966, 62). It is in this way that “inhibitions of disloyalty are internalized” (Guetzkow 1955, 29; see also DeLamater et. al. 1969; DeLamater 1973; Kantor 1968), and individuals become increasingly aware of their expected duties toward the nation-state, the types of behaviors and actions that are acceptable and unacceptable, and the punishments that follow certain acts. However, Guetzkow cautions that while “sanctions tend largely to prevent disloyalty... a nation-state demands more positive creative attitudes to insure its survival” (Guetzkow 1955, 34). He also noted, “when loyalty is reared through fear and punishment, its expression is more stereotyped, more of the flag-waving type... Such fear-ridden loyalty is not sustained” (Guetzkow 1955, 33).

When faced with the choice of conforming to the norms and values of the nation-state, or be punished accordingly, most individuals are likely to choose the path of least resistance and conform to the norms — which often results in the individual choosing to remain silent about his or her grouses, especially in public. Because sanctions are “more effective in influencing the citizen’s overt activities than in changing his private feeling toward his nation-state” (Guetzkow 1955, 28), an individual who outwardly appears to be loyal by virtue of his or her conforming behavior — hence, silent — may actually have no such feelings of loyalty in private, when s/he may voice his or her unhappiness to a

tight circle of trusted friends or close family. Public observances of norms, then, are not a good indicator of the depth of loyalty to one's nation-state, especially when an individual's personal goals clash with those of the nation-state of which s/he is a member. In fact, some individuals may psychologically disassociate from the group even while s/he remains a formal member, and may eventually renounce his or her ties with the nation-state by renouncing his or her citizenship, for example.

Rethinking Hirschman's Loyalists

Internal Loyalists

Internal Loyalists are those individuals who choose to stay within the territorial boundaries of a nation-state. Both of Hirschman's *quality-conscious loyalist* and *unconscious loyalist* would fall under this category of **Internal Loyalists**.

For the purposes of this dissertation, I have chosen to regard as **Internal Loyalists**: (1) Singaporean citizens who have no landed immigrant status elsewhere and who live and work in Singapore; (2) Singaporean citizens who hold the right to permanent residency elsewhere and who live and work in Singapore; and (3) former Singaporean citizens who currently work and reside in Singapore for an extended period of time, usually more than one year.

Proposed Refinement of Hirschman's Quality-Conscious Loyalist

This study proposes that there are actually two types of *quality-conscious loyalists*:

- (1) **Enthusiastic Internals**; and

(2) **Dissident Internals.**

My revision of Hirschman's *conscious loyalist* takes into account the possibility that members of a nation-state who choose to voice their criticisms do so in response to their predisposition toward the nation-state — a differentiation that Hirschman failed to make in his own discussion. In other words, my framework acknowledges that voice could just as easily be harnessed for constructive purposes — that is, in support of current authorities and regime — as well as destructive ones (for example, in a bid to challenge the authority and legitimacy of the current political leaders, to overthrow or vote out the current government, or to change the whole political regime).

(1) **Enthusiastic Internal Loyalist**

No Exit + Voice

In his book, Hirschman presented his *quality-conscious loyalist* as one who lobbies the management to bring about change, and is quietly confident that the powers-that-be would heed his or her suggestions. When working towards changes in a country, these loyalists often closely collaborate with the powers-that-be, rather than in direct open conflict. They are usually the ones that the management or authorities view as responsible actors and approved agents of change who are supportive of the authorities and regime.

This is also the definition of **Enthusiastic Internal Loyalist** in my typology.

(2) **Dissident Internal Loyalist**

No Exit + Voice

Dissident Internal Loyalists are individuals who identify with and declare themselves to be extremely concerned with the national community's future, but who are widely viewed as dissidents by authorities and fellow nationals. Impatient for change to take place, these individuals frequently position themselves in direct conflict with the government, by refusing to abide by the rules and regulations governing the nation-state, or to observe the established norms of engagement. As a result, the authorities and even their fellow nationals may regard the **Dissident Internal Loyalists** as antagonists and dissidents — even disloyal — especially if their actions are seen as violating some culturally prescribed norms and limits (Laver 1976b; Oldenquist 1982).

In what may serve as the clearest official guideline to date for determining national loyalty in Singapore, several members of the Singapore parliament have voiced their views that (1) loyal Singaporeans must put their national interests above personal interests; and (2) any disagreements with the Singapore government should be voiced locally and resolved at the national level through proper channels within the country, rather than raised through foreign groups and on foreign soil. Also, a loyal opposition must be a loyal Singaporean who conducts himself or herself according to the guidelines in (1) and (2) (*The Straits Times*, November 3-5, 1996; October 28-29, 2001).

Proposed Refinement of Hirschman's Unconscious Loyalist

In his book, Hirschman used the term “*unconscious loyalist*” to describe the rest of the population who were not “*conscious loyalists*” — that is, those who did not exit and who remained silent. By implication, these *unconscious loyalists* were genuinely happy and contented with their current circumstances, believing them to be the best possible. However, Hirschman later acknowledged that among these so-called “*unconscious loyalists*” were master practitioners of self-deception — that is, individuals who “alter their cognitions and beliefs so as to make them more consistent with some ‘discrepant’ act or behavior they have engaged in and which is difficult to reconcile with these beliefs” (1970, 94).

As discussed earlier, Hirschman’s description of his *unconscious loyalist* actually applies to two different groups of people: (1) those who are genuinely happy with their current circumstances, believing it to be the best possible; and (2) those who are acutely aware of their unhappiness, but who *will* themselves to be contented with their current situation either because (a) it is their best option for now (that is, Tung’s Autist), or (b) they are biding their time until a better alternative comes along (that is, Withey and Cooper’s Neglecter).

Hirschman’s *unconscious loyalists* are, in fact, conscious, calculating individuals who rationally weigh the costs and benefits of their actions, for Hirschman noted, even “the most loyalist behavior retains an enormous dose of reasoned calculation” (1970, 79).

I, thus, propose to refine Hirschman’s *unconscious loyalist* by subdividing it into: (1) **Contented Internal Loyalist**; (2) **Self-Adjuster** (or Tung’s Autist); and (3) **Disengaged Stayer** (or Withey and Cooper’s Neglecter).

(1) **Contented Internal Loyalist**

No Exit + Silence

I use the term **Contented Internal Loyalist** to describe those who are generally happy with their own situation, and who cheerfully go about their everyday activities, blissfully unaware of any threats to the entity. This fits with Hirschman's initial description of the unconscious loyalist.

(2) **Self-Adjuster**

No Exit + Silence

Self-Adjusters refer to individuals who are in a state of self-delusion or self-denial. They are also Hirschman's *unconscious loyalists* who practice self-deception or Tung's Autists.

These **Self-Adjusters** are unhappy about the impact of structural constraints on their personal situation, but do not believe in their ability and efficacy in fighting the system. They deal with their disappointments or dissatisfaction by revising or modifying their personal expectations so that they are in line with lived reality. This self-coping mechanism removes all feelings of agitation and gives the **Self-Adjusters** a sense of resolution (Tung 1981). It also makes the self-adjuster outwardly supportive of the authorities, regime, and national community. **Self-Adjusters** are likely to project the image that everything is going well, and to come around to believing it, which is why some scholars, including Hirschman, describe them as "entrapped individuals."

(3) **Disengaged Stayer**

No Exit + Silence

Disengaged Stayers (or Withey and Cooper's Neglecter) are individuals who are unhappy with their status quo, but remain silent because they do not see an alternative to their current situation. They are conscious of the fact that their membership in the nation-state (e.g., being a citizen or resident of the country) is their best option for now and they grudgingly remain in the country — hence being seen as loyal — until a better alternative comes along. Among their tight circle of friends or family members, this group of people might venture to voice their honest opinions, but they frequently refrain from any public discussion or declaration of displeasure to avoid drawing attention to themselves; they would also not knowingly flout the laws governing the state either because of their fear of retaliation, or because some internalized norms are holding them in check (Birch 1975; Easton 1965; Berger and Luckmann 1966).

Disengaged Stayers tend to be indifferent to the community of fellow nationals, do not feel much emotional attachment to the national community, and would leave the nation-state at the slightest opportunity to do so. Ironically, these **Disengaged Stayers** should really be viewed as exiters, having emotionally exited the national community and are, in effect, free riders in the system. In fact, Oldenquist would describe **Disengaged Stayers** as alienated from the community of which they are still (marginal) members. Such a person “does not view his community as his own and consequently does not much care what happens to it or

what it looks like. He is loathe to support it financially, and if its deterioration threatens his safety or the value of his property, his inclination is to move rather than work for improvement” (Oldenquist 1982, 187-188).

I have chosen to include **Disengaged Stayers** as a subtype of **Internal Loyalists** despite their emotional detachment from the national community because it is almost impossible to distinguish **Disengaged Stayers** from **Contented Loyalists** and **Self-Adjusters** just by observing their decision not to exit and not to voice (that is, remain silent). Such nuanced differentiation between the three types of **Contented Loyalists**, **Self-Adjusters**, and **Disengaged Stayers** may only be made if these individuals are forthcoming about their feelings with regard to the nation-state.

What distinguishes between the three types are the following:

- (1) **Disengaged Stayers** are more likely to acknowledge in private their unhappiness over the impact of national policies on their personal lives and confide in their circle of close friends and family. However, they are likely to reject suggestions that they could help shape those policies if only they would participate in related issue groups.
- (2) Similarly, **Self-Adjusters** are likely to acknowledge their unhappiness over how certain national policies are affecting their situation. However, they are more likely to resign themselves to the fact that “that’s the way things are in Singapore,” and would usually comfort themselves with the thought that “there are other things to be thankful about Singapore...”; and

- (3) **Contented Loyalists** are genuinely content with their lives, and see no cause for complaints.

External Loyalists

I disagree with Hirschman's use of the terms "traitor," "defector," and "deserter" to describe all exiters, since some exiters may still feel some residual loyalty to the entity they left (Birch 1975). Instead, I propose to introduce a new category of **External Loyalists** so as to better account for the range of attitudes among emigrants.

Recent research on international migration reveals that people leave their nation-state for a variety of reasons, ranging from economic opportunities to political persecution and family reunification. Often, many of these people remain attached to their fellow nationals, and continue to identify with the "imagined community" (Anderson 1983). Many keep a strong link to their national community, possibly through repeated interaction and exchanges with their friends and relatives who still live in their former homeland, or by faithfully following news about the former homeland through all forms of media, or by continuing to observe traditions and customs, and being involved in expatriate groups overseas (Berger and Luckmann 1966; Cohen 1985; Kong 1998). Some of these individuals even seek ways to contribute to their country of origin despite living outside its boundaries. It would, therefore, be inaccurate to label these people who have emigrated as "traitors," as suggested by Hirschman. It might be more accurate to categorize this group of people who remain attached to their fellow nationals and who hold fast to their nationality as **External Loyalists**.

For the purposes of this dissertation, I have chosen to regard as **External Loyalists**: (1) Singaporean emigrants (that is, former and current citizens) who have taken up citizenship in their country of residence; (2) Singaporean citizens who live and work outside of Singapore and who have obtained landed immigrant status in their country of residence; and (3) Singaporean citizens who living and working outside of Singapore for an extended period of time, usually more than one year, but do not hold the right to permanent residency in their current country of residence.

These **External Loyalists** may be further differentiated into: **Supportive, Dissident, Passive, and Rejecters**, depending on the level of commitment and attachment the individual feels for the nation-state.

(1) **Supportive External Loyalist**

Exit + Voice

This term more accurately describes the emigrant who maintains a strong link with his or her country of origin, and continues to offer feedback to the authorities with the good of the national community in mind, despite having left the country and possibly even after giving up his or her citizenship. S/he is likely to return to the country of origin at least once a year, either for a business trip or by invitation to participate in a knowledge exchange or technical transfer program. As such, any input or suggestions offered by this individual is given serious consideration by the powers-that-be. Such an individual is likely to work closely and effect change through engagement with the relevant authorities and government representatives.

(2) **Dissident External Loyalist**

Exit + Voice

This emigrant is disillusioned with the current authorities and regime in his or her country of origin, but continues to feel a close kinship with his or her fellow countrymen. This individual views himself or herself as the conscience of the regime, and acts in a self-appointed role as a check on the government. S/he believes they are acting in the good of the imagined community. Instead of working through the system, however, such individuals often take a confrontational stance, for example, by openly disregarding the norms of engagement or the rules and regulations of the regime and criticizing the authorities, thus causing the authorities to view them as dissidents, and as political thorns in their side.

Examples of **Dissident External Loyalists** would be political dissidents, opposition leaders, or leaders of an alternative government in exile overseas who continue to comment and attempt to influence the local political scene.

Singapore only has a handful of political dissidents living in self-exile:

Francis Seow⁶, Tang Liang Hong⁷, and Zulfikar Mohamad Shariff⁸. In 2005, the

⁶ Francis Seow was a former Solicitor-General and President of the Singapore Law Society, before his foray into politics. In 1988, Seow won a seat in Parliament standing on the Workers' Party ticket. He was subsequently disbarred, stripped of his seat in parliament, and declared bankrupt after he was charged for tax evasion. Seow fled the country for the U.S., where he is now a citizen. He is reportedly a resident fellow with the East Asia Legal Studies program at Harvard Law School. A widower, Seow lives with his daughter in Boston.

⁷ Tang Liang Hong, a former lawyer, fielded himself as an opposition candidate in the 1991 elections. PAP leaders accused him of being an anti-Christian Chinese chauvinist who incited racial and religious discontent. At the height of police investigations and in the midst of the elections, Tang fled for Australia where he now lives in Melbourne.

three men founded the Melbourne-based Association For Democracy In Singapore, with the purported aim of fighting for freedom of speech and democracy in Singapore. They say they want to “‘shout’ to the world... the anti-democracy policies allegedly practiced by the PAP government” (<http://www.malaysiakini.com/>, November 1, 2002). In the same interview with [malaysiakini.com](http://www.malaysiakini.com/), Zulfikar reportedly “told his detractors not to underestimate his reach because of his absence from the country,” saying “he intended to protest louder now” (<http://www.malaysiakini.com/>, November 1, 2002) — lending credence to this **Dissident External Loyalist** category. He also told the reporter “he was willing to risk anything to ensure that Singapore becomes a ‘transparent and just’ country where Muslims can practice their faith without any hindrance” (<http://www.malaysiakini.com/>, 1 November 2002).

(3) **Passive External Loyalist**

Exit + Silence

As mentioned earlier, people leave their country of origin for a variety of reasons. Some may have left because they were unhappy with the government and (perceived) discriminatory policies, or to pursue education overseas, or to settle overseas with their foreign spouses, or for an overseas job posting. However, many continue to maintain ties with their friends and family who remain in the

⁸ Zulfikar Mohamad Shariff was the editor of the now defunct website, <http://www.fateha.com/>, which was set up as a forum to discuss Muslim issues in Singapore. An outspoken critic of the Singapore ruling that banned the use of *tudung* (Muslim headdress) in Singapore schools, Zulfikar left for Australia while being investigated for criminal defamation of then Senior Minister Lee Kuan Yew, Muslim Affairs Minister Yaacob Ibrahim, and Temasek Holdings executive Ho Ching. Zulfikar is currently a fellow with Monash Asia Institute in Melbourne.

country, and to seek out other Singapore emigrants for social activities. It is these links that continue to bind these **Passive Externals** to their homeland. These emigrants are likely to quietly observe developments in their homeland with some interest. But they do not aspire to fill the activist role. **Passive External Loyalists** are also more likely to return to their country of origin, especially if they feel that they are just temporary migrants in their host countries.

Examples of **Passive External Loyalists** are the majority of students studying overseas, individuals with foreign spouse, or those who had to relocate for a short overseas stint. These **Passive External Loyalists** would usually make the occasional trip back to their country of origin and continue to maintain close ties with their friends and family there.

(4) **Rejecters**

Exit + Silence

This last group of emigrants is likely to have little to no affection for their country of origin, probably because of some unhappy situation that left a indelible mark on their lives, making them bitter about their experience. They resolve to start their lives anew in their new country of residence and not look back longingly to the place they left. No matter how difficult the current circumstances are in their new homeland, returning to their birthplace is not an option. These **Rejecters** have emotionally and physically exited their nation-state.

I have chosen to include **Rejecters** as a subtype of **External Loyalists** because they often do not reveal their deep-seated bitterness, except to their close

circle of trusted friends and family. Also, it is not accurate to label these emigrants disloyal, since earlier in this research, we had limited the label of traitors to individuals who, by their actions, are judged as having conducted themselves in a manner that is damaging to the national interests or national security of his or her state.

MODIFYING AND EXTENDING HIRSCHMAN'S FRAMEWORK

The typology of **Internal** and **External Loyalists** I briefly outlined shows a wide spectrum of loyalists between Hirschman's polar extremes of loyalist and traitor. Figure 2.1 shows in detail my extension of Hirschman's framework. I also summarize the characteristics of **Internal Loyalists** and **External Loyalists** in Table 2.1.

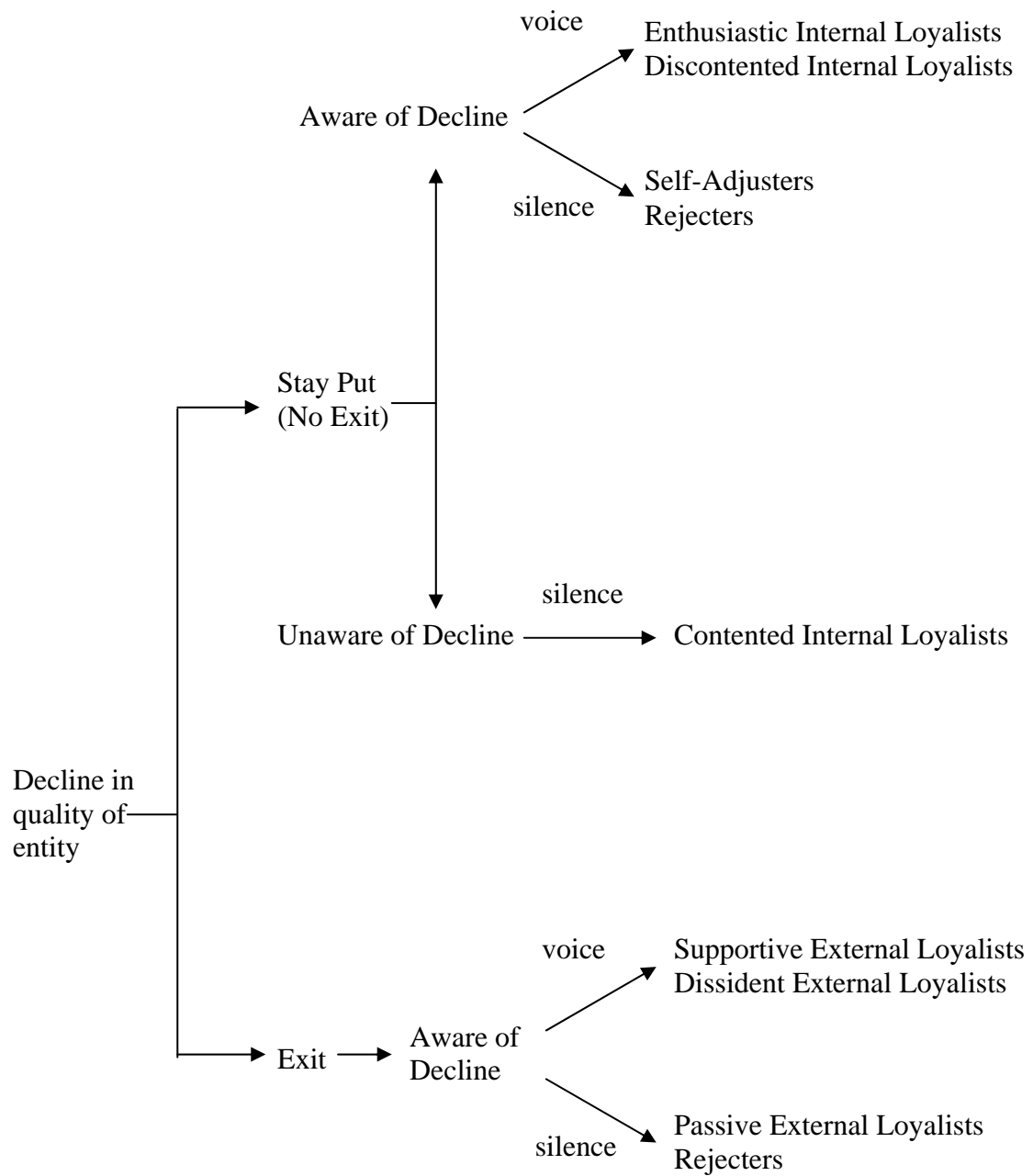


Figure 2.1: Schematic Representation of an Expanded Albert O. Hirschman's Framework

SPECIFIC STRUCTURAL	INTERNAL LOYALISTS (NO EXIT)	EXTERNAL LOYALISTS (EXIT)
VOICE <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • High belief in efficacy • Seen as supportive of authorities by the powers-that-be • Presently mobilized, and mobilizable 	<u>Enthusiastic</u> (1) View themselves as highly supportive of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Authorities • Regime • National Community 	<u>Supportive</u> (1) View themselves as highly supportive of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • National Community (2) View themselves as passively supportive of / indifferent to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Authorities • Regime
VOICE <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Exercise voice as firm believers of moral duty • Seen as unsupportive of authorities by the powers-that-be • Presently mobilized against the authorities, and have no potential of being mobilized by the powers-that-be 	<u>Dissident</u> (1) View themselves as highly supportive of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • National Community (2) View themselves as indifferent to / unsupportive of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regime (3) View themselves as unsupportive of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Authorities 	<u>Dissident</u> (1) View themselves as highly supportive of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • National Community (2) View themselves as indifferent to / unsupportive of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regime (3) View themselves as unsupportive of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Authorities
SILENCE <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Silent either because generally content, or has low belief in efficacy and fear of retaliation • Seen as supportive of authorities by the powers-that-be • Presently un-mobilized, but have the potential of being mobilizable 	<u>Contented</u> (1) View themselves as passively supportive of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Authorities • Regime • National Community <u>Self-Adjusters</u> (1) View themselves as passively supportive of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Authorities • Regime • National Community 	<u>Passive</u> (1) View themselves as passively supportive of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Imagined Community (2) View themselves as passively supportive of / indifferent to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Authorities • Regime
SILENCE <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Silent due to a lack of concern • Seen as supportive of authorities by the powers-that-be • Presently unmobilized and have no potential of being mobilizable 	<u>Disengaged Stayers</u> (1) View themselves as indifferent to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • National Community (2) View themselves as unsupportive of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Authorities • Regime 	<u>Rejecters</u> (1) View themselves as indifferent to / unsupportive of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Imagined Community (2) View themselves as unsupportive of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Authorities • Regime

Table 2.1: Proposed Typology of Loyalists

As may be observed from the above table, this typology differentiates between **Internal Loyalists** and **External Loyalists** by way of the individual's physical location. **Internal Loyalists** live within the nation-state boundaries, while **External Loyalists** live outside those boundaries. In contrast to Hirschman's framework, my typology proposes that an individual's physical location in no way impacts his or her willingness, or lack thereof, to express displeasure or to remain silent. Instead, these reactions stem from the individual's assessment of structural constraints and sanctions on the exercise of voice. So, an exiter is, in principle, just as likely to voice his or her dissatisfaction with the nation-state, as a stayer is likely to remain silent.

With regard to different types of voicers, I have distinguished between those who are viewed as offering positive feedback to the authorities, and those whom the authorities view as being overly critical complainers or troublemakers. Like Birch, I made provisions for a more nuanced view of silence, noting that silence could be due to one's general content with the direction of the nation-state and/or fear of retaliation, or a general lack of concern or identification with the nation-state.

Exit (or no exit) and Voice (or silence), then, are the most observable signs of support — what Easton calls “overt support” (1965, 159). Authorities often look upon silence as acquiescence and passive support for their decisions and policies. But as the above typology and Birch have shown, silence does not necessarily indicate tacit support for the system, nor is it a good indicator of general support from a potentially mobilizable population.

In my typology, I subdivided **Internal Loyalists** into **Enthusiastic, Dissident, Contented, Self-Adjusters,** and **Disengaged Stayers** by taking into account the different levels of support these different loyalists have for the nation-state. **External Loyalists** were similarly differentiated into **Supportive, Dissident, Passive,** and **Rejecters.**

As laid out in the table above, each subcategory of **External Loyalists** has its corresponding counterparts in **Internal Loyalists.** For example, **Supportive** is the counterpart to **Enthusiastic; Dissident External** is the counterpart to **Dissident Internal; Passive** is the counterpart to **Contented** and **Self-Adjuster;** and **Rejecter** is the counterpart to **Disengaged Stayer.** At this point, I have chosen to distinguish between **Contented Internal Loyalists** and **Self-Adjusters** due to the different cognitive levels of dissatisfaction these groups display towards the components of the nation-state. However, I also recognize that it may be debatable as to whether they are distinguishable, and if these distinctions would be apparent in my research findings. Depending on my research findings, these two types — that is, the **Contented Internal Loyalists** and the **Self-Adjuster** — may remain separate, or be collapsed into one.

Last but not least, I have chosen to include **Disengaged Stayers** and **Rejecters** in my typology of “loyalists” because the powers-that-be are likely to view their silence and seemingly non-antagonistic attitude toward the authorities and regime as acquiescence and passive support, even though these individuals may not necessarily share the same view. These individuals may actually have chosen to remain silent because of a lack of identification with the nation-state, and/or a lack of concern over the intentions of the

authorities and regime. It is for this reason that I have chosen to highlight the two groups in gray, so as to distinguish them from the rest of the loyalists who still, to a greater or lesser extent, feel some concern for the nation-state.

In Figure 2.2, I present a graphical illustration that integrates my typology of loyalists (in parenthesis) with previous work on the exit-voice-loyalty framework developed so far by Hirschman, Tung, and Withey and Cooper. These were presented on the same diagram for ease of comparison. I also include emigrants in my graphical representation below as **External Loyalists**, to take into account the recent changes to national and global landscape brought about by international migration.

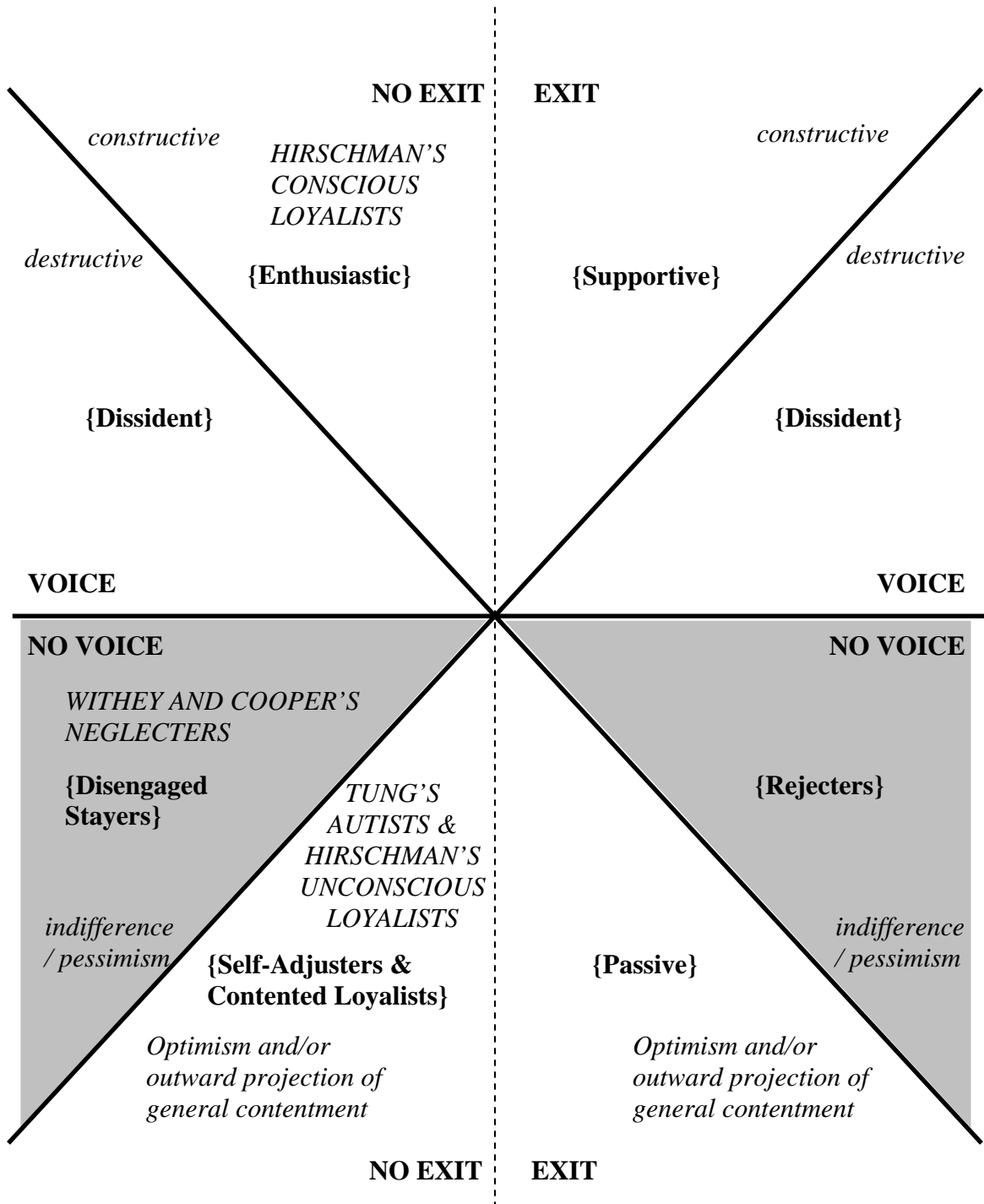


Figure 2.2: Suggested Modification to Hirschman's Framework

In my model suggested above, I accorded former members of the entity a place in the model, to acknowledge their potential contribution and influence on the future direction of the entity. In contrast, Hirschman had largely ignored the existence of this group of potentially influential people in his framework.

Vertical Exit / No Exit Line

The broken vertical line represents the territorial boundaries of an entity, such as a nation-state. In the area to the left of the Exit – No Exit line are people who still reside within the territorial boundaries of the nation-state. In the area to the right of the Exit – No Exit line are observed behaviors of those who now reside outside of the territorial boundaries of the nation-state. As such:

- (1) **Internal Loyalists** of a particular nation-state refer to the following groups of individuals who satisfy the following criteria:
 - a) citizens who currently reside within the territorial boundaries of the nation-state;
 - b) citizens who hold the right to permanent residency elsewhere, but have returned to reside within the territorial boundaries of the nation-state for an extended period of time (e.g., more than one year); and
 - c) former citizens who currently reside within the territorial boundaries of the nation-state for an extended period of time; this was included to account for recent empirical evidence (from countries such as Mexico,

China, and India) of returning migrants who may have renounced their citizenship, but who have returned to reside and work in their former homeland and to contribute to its development.

- (2) **External Loyalists** of a particular nation-state refer to:
- a) current citizens who have relocated overseas for an extended period of time but do not have landed immigrant status in their current country of residence;
 - b) current citizens who have relocated overseas and hold the right to permanent residency in their current country of residence; and
 - c) former citizens of the nation-state who have taken up citizenship in their current country of residence.

I have chosen to use a broken vertical line to represent the territorial boundaries of the nation-state, so as to highlight the porosity of national borders, rising international migration, and the increasing global trend towards dual citizenship. As such, today's **Internal Loyalist** could very well become tomorrow's **External Loyalist**, and vice versa.

Horizontal Voice / No Voice Line

The horizontal line distinguishes between the people who voice their opinions, and those who remain silent. All voicers are represented by the area above the Voice – No Voice line; those who choose to remain silent are represented by the area below the Voice – No Voice line.

Among the voicers are: (a) those who are viewed as offering constructive criticism, and (b) those who are viewed as antagonistic toward the powers-that-be and regarded as endeavoring to undermine the legitimacy of the authorities.

Among those who choose to remain silent are: (a) those who are genuinely optimistic and contented; (b) those who give an outward show of support for the management of the entity but who may privately think otherwise; and (c) those who exhibit behaviors similar to Withey and Cooper's neglecters that stay silent about their entity's decline due to a disregard for the entity's future prospects. Neglecters may be described as being pessimistic about the future of the entity and have, hence, withdrawn their tacit support for the entity. They are staying with the entity only for as long as there is no other "better" alternative.

An individual's propensity to give voice, or stay silent, is not set in stone. Rather, the context in which the individual finds himself or herself is an important determinant in influencing the individual's decision to voice or remain silent. As such, changes in one's personal situation could motivate the individual to voice, or to remain silent. As a result, the individual who lives within the territorial borders of the nation-state — thus identified as an **Internal Loyalist** — could move between the sub-categories within the **Internal Loyalist** category; similarly, changes in an **External Loyalist's** personal situation could result in the individual moving between the sub-categories within the **External Loyalist** category.

CHAPTER REVIEW

This chapter illustrates how Albert O. Hirschman's exit-voice-loyalty framework could offer a more comprehensive understanding of the forces underlying international migration. Being inherently interdisciplinary, Hirschman's framework also provides a way by which to structure this growing field of study. However, as the foregoing discussion of Hirschman's framework and the subsequent critiques of his concepts reveal, his concepts of exit, voice, and loyalty warrant rethinking and refining.

Briefly, my criticisms of Hirschman's exit-voice-loyalty framework are as follows:

- (1) Physical exit from an entity should not be seen as synonymous with complete abandonment of all associative and affective ties with members of the entity. This underlying assumption accounts for Hirschman's indefensible postulate that all exiters are disloyal.
- (2) Hirschman's eagerness to give greater weight and scope to voice had led him to regard voice as a constructive "recuperation mechanism" (1970: 30). As a result, he largely overlooked the potential of voice in undermining authority.
- (3) Hirschman did not adequately explore all strategic options available to individuals. In particular, he did not attribute any agency to individuals who have left the entity, apparently assuming that exiters have no voice.

- (4) With regard to loyalty, an individual is viewed as either (a) loyal, or (b) disloyal. Hirschman did not allow for the possibility of differentiated levels of loyalty between the two extremities.
- (5) Recent scholars have suggested that Hirschman's exit-voice-loyalty framework should be further extended to include a fourth response: that of neglect.

CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This dissertation seeks to ascertain what national loyalty means to Singaporeans, and what accounts for the variations in loyalty. It proposes to: (1) gain an understanding as to the assumptions people make about national loyalty; (2) explore the impact of their personal circumstances on self-professed national loyalty; and (3) explain how and why these feelings of loyalty may vary from individual to individual. This study, then, is not so much concerned with quantifying *how many* people are loyal or disloyal to Singapore; rather, it seeks to *understand the varying degrees of loyalty* that people may have towards their country, what accounts for that variation, and the impact of their particular circumstances on their professed feelings of loyalty.

From the outset, I determined that in order to fully explore the different categories of **Internal Loyalists** and **External Loyalists**, I would have to conduct research at two sites: (1) Singapore, and (2) Australia, the top choice destination for Singapore emigrants.

IDENTIFYING PARTICIPANTS AND RESEARCH SITES

During the preliminary stages of this research, I used publicly available, aggregated data published in media reports, the websites of Singapore and Australian government statistics departments, and research publications to identify the interesting characteristics and trends in the Singaporean emigrant population and determine the people's and leaders' attitude towards national loyalty. From these, I developed the initial hypothesis and typology of national loyalists, determined the characteristics of the research sample, and framed the initial interview questions.

Some Data from Preliminary Research

A survey of current data available revealed that comprehensive figures and profiles of Singaporean nationals who actually emigrated and those who aspire to emigrate are not publicly available or published, even though the emigration trend is faithfully tracked by a dedicated team of researchers with Singapore's Ministry of Home Affairs. The Singapore government regards such data as sensitive, classified information, which are placed under the auspices of the Internal Security Act. Sporadically and at strategic times, the Singapore government releases aggregated figures of applications for Certificates of No Criminal Conviction (CNCCs)⁹ (Department of Statistics, Singapore; *The Straits Times*, 1989; 1997; see also Appendix A, Table A.1) — usually during the run-up to the country's National Day celebrations on August 9, or the incumbent prime minister's National Day Rally address two weeks after. Singapore's leaders often use

⁹ CNCCs, also known as Good Conduct Certificates (GCCs), are issued by the Criminal Investigation Department (CID) under the Ministry of Home Affairs.

these data to underscore their concern over emigration and the seeming lack of national loyalty among the country's mobile population, and to sound the alarm over the loss of local talent.

Although CNCC figures are often used by government officials and the national media as an indicator of population outflow, these figures are not an accurate measure of the total number of Singaporeans applying to emigrate for permanent residency for several reasons: (1) only applicants to Commonwealth countries such as Australia and Canada are required to submit CNCCs, and only in the final stages of their application; (2) these CNCC figures also include those applying to work in countries that require CNCCs, but who may not necessarily wish to permanently reside there (Cheung 1991); (3) not everyone who applies and submits these CNCCs will be granted permanent residency; and (4) among those who applied for the CNCC, the number who eventually relocate may be fewer than the actual number who applied.

Moreover, these aggregated figures reported in the national media do not fully reveal the characteristics of aspiring emigrants such as ethnicity, income level, destination, etc., making it difficult to determine which section of the population — whether Chinese, Malay, Indian, or Eurasians/Others — were more likely to emigrate.

According to a paper presented at the 1991 International Conference on Migration by Singapore's then chief statistician, Dr. Paul Cheung, "The majority of Singaporeans who applied for the certificate were in the 20-39 age group (71%)... Nine out of ten received secondary or higher education and about half were professionals or administrative personnel. The profile of Singaporeans who have gone overseas has remained fairly unchanged in the past few years" (Cheung 1991, 6).

Australia remains the top destination of choice for Singaporeans aspiring to emigrate. Figures released by the Singapore government in 1989 showed that more than half (51%) of the CNCC applicants were applying to emigrate to Australia, while 30% were leaving for Canada. Nearly 15 years later in 2003, a survey by Singapore's mainstream, English-language newspaper, *The Straits Times*, found that 25% of Singaporeans aspire to retire overseas, with 43% of respondents picking Australia as their most favored destination, and Malaysia a distant second at 19% (*The Straits Times*, August 11, 2003).

Australia maintains a more comprehensive database of aggregated figures of migrants, collected by the Australian Statistics Bureau and the Department of Immigration and Multicultural Affairs. This database gives the clearest picture yet of the aggregate number of Singapore-born emigrants that have settled Australia (see Appendix B, Table B.1 and Table B.2), as well as the breakdown by states and territories (see Appendix B, Table B.3 and Table B.4); the age distribution (see Appendix B, Table B.5 and Table B.6); the number who have taken up Australian citizenship (see Appendix B, Table B.7), to name a few. Here, again, these aggregated figures were unsatisfactory, as they do not give a detailed breakdown on the ethnic and religious distribution of the Singapore-born emigrant population, partly because Singapore has a much smaller resident population as compared to Australia, and the even smaller base of the Singapore emigrant population as compared to other migrant-sending countries such as Malaysia.¹⁰

¹⁰ Malaysia has a resident population of 23 million people, of which nearly 25,000 have emigrated to Australia. (Australia Bureau of Statistics, <http://www.abs.gov.au>, accessed July 20, 2006).

Australia's migration figures may also understate the number of Singapore emigrants to the country, since those that have retained their permanent residency, but have since returned to Singapore to live and work, are not accounted for in the census survey.

It is, thus, impossible to ascertain with absolute confidence the number of Singapore emigrants and the more detailed breakdown of the proportion that have emigrated to Australia by ethnicity or religion. Surveys conducted by research firms such as ACNielsen Research and MasterCard International, as well as the marketing arm of Singapore Press Holdings, may be better barometers of the Singaporean's propensity to emigrate and the ethnic composition of emigrants and aspiring emigrants.

Those Who Leave

What emerges from the synthesis of information from research surveys of aspiring emigrants and current emigrants by research institutes and firms is a generalized composite of the Singapore emigrant — the white-collar, skilled Singaporean who speaks a second language other than English (*The Straits Times* 1989; 1997; 2002). The largest group of aspiring emigrants were found among those between the ages of 30 and 44, 60 per cent of whom are white collar workers earning between S\$2,001 and S\$4000 a month (*The Straits Times*, August 15, 1997). Of these aspiring emigrants, 68% were Chinese, 11% Indians, and 10% Malays (*The Straits Times*, August 15, 1997).

Singaporeans who chose Australia as their top choice were drawn to the country because of its proximity to Singapore; it also has a slower pace of life than Singapore, and a largely affordable standard of living. Moreover, many aspiring emigrants already have relatives in Australia, making the decision to relocate less traumatic (see Appendix

C for more details on the different waves of Singapore emigrants to Australia). Aspiring emigrants to Australia mostly describe themselves as Christians, with earnings of more than S\$52,000 a year (or S\$4,000 a month) (*The Business Times* 1989, 1991; *The Straits Times* 1991). The Malays who emigrated to Australia often choose to “settle mostly in close-knit communities in Perth, Sydney and Melbourne” and were “mostly skilled workers with specialized training” (*The Straits Times*, December 1, 1991).

Figures released by the Australia Bureau of Statistics from the 2001 Census reveal that as of 2001, there were 33,485 Singapore-born emigrants living in Australia. Under the section on selected ancestry group, Singapore-born Chinese account for 20,816 (or 62.2%) of the total 33,485 Singapore-born emigrants in Australia, and was ranked seventh among the Chinese migrant communities in Australia (behind Australian-born Chinese, China-born Chinese, Hong Kong-born Chinese, etc.).

Singapore-born Indians number 2,797, while Singapore-born Sinhalese total 434. In Singapore, Sinhalese would have been categorized together with the Indians. From this, we could deduce that Singaporean Indians account for nearly 10% of the 33,485 Singapore-born emigrants in Australia.

Because Malay was not considered an ancestry group, there were no figures given for the number of Malays in Australia. A good proxy for the number of Singapore-born Malay emigrants would have been the number of Singapore-born Muslims. However, Singapore-born Muslims were unaccounted for, presumably because the numbers were considered negligible (< 6,000) and not large enough to be one of the top 10 contributing groups to the Muslim migrant community in Australia.

Those Who Stay

On the flip side, it is reassuring for policy makers to note that even with the 25% of Singaporeans who aspire to emigrate, a large proportion of Singaporeans (75%) are stayers. Moreover, as Singapore's chief statistician Dr. Paul Cheung noted, a large proportion of those who aspire to emigrate usually do not do so (*The Straits Times*, August 15, 1997).

Singaporeans who have no wish to emigrate often cite reasons such as family, friends, Singapore's world-class facilities, and the safe environment in which to bring up children. Many also pointed to Singapore's relative economic and political stability and racial harmony as reasons for staying put.

DEFINING THE FIELD

I conducted field research between March 2004 and July of 2005. During this time, I interviewed 70 participants residing in Perth (41 participants) and Singapore (29 participants).¹¹ This is a good sample size, especially since many qualitative studies on international migration usually focus the whole monograph on in-depth interviews with five participants or less (see Armbruster 2002; also Lee 2004; Matthews 2002), and is sufficiently large to generate a cross-section of responses from which inferences could be made.

¹¹ See Appendix D for a more detailed description of each participant.

Why Perth?

I chose to conduct extensive field research in Perth, Western Australia, because it is home to an estimated 20,000 Singaporeans — the largest concentration of Singaporeans outside Singapore (*The Straits Times*, September 28, 2003). According to the Community Information Summary published by Australia’s Department of Immigration and Multicultural Affairs, 10,270 out of the 33,590 Singapore-born persons who had settled in the country (or 30.6%) were residing in Western Australia. Additionally, figures released by the government of Western Australia show that 9,733 Singapore-born persons were residing in Perth in 2001 — that is, close to 95% of Singaporean-born persons who settled in Western Australia actually live in Perth.

It is no wonder, then, that Perth is described as “crawling with Singaporeans” — “You throw a stone, you’ll hit a Singaporean” was another common refrain attesting to the growing Singaporean community there. There seems to be a grain of truth in that statement. The first few days I was in Perth, I heard the familiar Singaporean accent everywhere I went. The intonations, the gestures, the person’s manner of speaking, and words used during the exchanges that were peculiar to Singlish (localized pidgin English) all made me feel as though I was back in Singapore. As **Lawyer-turned-Housewife**, a Chinese in her late 30s, explained, “Perth is near enough to Singapore. It’s an ideal ‘trial’ immigration place — affordable to travel for both us and our families in Singapore, and less painful for our parents to see us leave.”

This in-depth study of the largest overseas Singaporean community contributed to my research in several important ways: (1) it helped me establish how emigrants view their relationship with Singapore; (2) I was able to clarify the reasons behind the different

waves of Singaporean emigrants to Perth since the city-state's independence in 1965 (see Appendix C for more detail); and (3) I could paint a clearer picture of the Singaporean emigrant's view of national loyalty.

Participant Pool

From the preliminary data, I determined that the following would be the guiding criteria for my research sample. That the participant:

- (1) comes from one of the four officially recognized ethnic groups in Singapore;¹² Chinese, Malay, Indian, and Eurasian or Other, with the majority (at least 65%) of the participants being Chinese;¹³ I also determined that the pool of participants selected in Singapore should be as representative as possible of the Singapore resident population;
- (2) is a skilled, white-collar worker with at least high school education;
- (3) be more than 25 years old.¹⁴ This would ensure that the individual had consciously chosen to emigrate, or has the ability to independently decide whether or not to emigrate.

I was particularly interested in recruiting participants in the 25- to 55-year-old age group, since recent surveys rate this group of individuals as the most likely to emigrate,

¹² Figures obtained from the Singapore Department of Statistics web site, www.singstat.gov.sg/keyfigs/people.html, that were compiled from the 2000 population census show the ethnic breakdown to be 76.8% Chinese, 13.9% Malay, 7.9% Indian, and 1.4% Others.

¹³ Since Singapore-born Chinese accounted for 62.2% of the total Singapore-born emigrant population in Australia (Australian Statistics Bureau), I determined that it would be best to keep the participant pool at 65% Chinese.

¹⁴ While in Perth, I chose not to recruit participants below 25 years of age, as they would mainly be undergraduates studying at Australian universities who were typically sojourners, staying only for as long as it took them to finish their degree. Even if these students were Australian permanent residents, the decision to emigrate would typically have been made by their parents, on their behalf.

or to aspire to emigrate (*The Straits Times*, August 11-12, 2003). Moreover, these individuals are in their most productive years — economically, socially, politically, and culturally — making them the target group of professional and skilled workers aggressively sought by many immigrant-friendly countries such as Australia and Canada.

When selecting participants, I deliberately and purposefully selected participants from a large cross-section of the population who were best equipped to provide me with information on the topic areas I wanted to explore. In Singapore, for example, I identified and approached government officials to participate in my research, and to obtain an update on the official stance on national loyalty. I also spoke with members of the opposition parties, and selected participants from among those who frequently expressed their opinions in *The Straits Times* on national policies and politics or who had frequently participated in government consultative committees, for their observations and thoughts with regard to the issue of national loyalty and emigration. Additionally, I interviewed individuals who had:

- (1) never considered emigrating; or
- (2) had considered emigrating and had either:
 - a) taken the life-changing decision to move;
 - b) decided against emigrating and are staying put; and
 - c) emigrated, but decided to forego their permanent residency and return to Singapore to live and work. I also located former Singaporeans who had returned to the city-state to work, to better understand how they viewed their current relationship with their former nation-state.

I usually conducted a short pre-interview with these potential interviewees, so as to determine their suitability to participate in the research project. For example: Are they in the 25 to 45 age group? Are they white-collar workers? What level of qualifications do they have? If they are applying to emigrate, where are they emigrating to? What are their thoughts on national loyalty?

These pre-interview sessions served as a good barometer both to myself and the potential interviewee, as they gave these potential interviewees a better idea as to whether they would be comfortable with the general topic of discussion, and I could establish if they were representative enough to be part of the participant pool with whom I would conduct a more in-depth one-on-one interview. These pre-interview sessions also allowed me to build rapport with each potential participant that would help put them at ease during the interview, which would be scheduled for a later date. Once these potential interviewees affirmed their willingness to participate in the research, I would proceed to set up an interview venue. At the end of each interview, I always asked the participants to introduce or suggest other possible interviewees they knew in Singapore and Perth who might fit the guidelines I outlined above, and whom they thought would be willing to participate in my research.

It was in this way that I purposefully built a network of disparate research participants who would collectively add to the information I sought on national loyalty and international migration. This technique of snowball sampling — where each participant is asked to recommend other potential participant(s) — to generate and recruit participants was especially useful in this research because: (1) it gave me access to interviewees whom I would not have been able to locate otherwise; and (2) the nature of

this inquiry and the sensitivities associated with the research topic made it necessary that there already be some base level of trust established between researcher and the potential participant, and a referral by an acquaintance or close friend usually helps smooth the way and put the potential participant at ease.

Precautions Undertaken

Because of the underlying political culture and climate in Singapore, I made a conscious effort to anticipate and eliminate anything from my research design that may potentially discourage potential participants, and especially emigrants, from contributing to this study. Emigration remains a sensitive topic among Singaporeans — even considered taboo up until the 1980s — because of the government’s strong denigration of emigrants. It was only in recent years — notably since 2003 — that the government has adopted a more conciliatory attitude toward emigrants, whom political leaders now acknowledge as the city-state’s ambassadors to other countries. Thus, I paid particular attention to the interview procedures that would ensure participant confidentiality, the interview settings, as well as the scripting of interview questions, which were fine-tuned as I went further along in my field research.

I decided, very early in the research process, not to identify participants in this study. In my application to the university’s Institutional Review Board, I requested — and was granted — a waiver of written consent since these forms would be the only written records that would link participants to my study and compromise participant confidentiality. Individuals who consented to being interviewed were not required to divulge their personal details, nor were they required to sign any consent form prior to

their participation. As an added precaution, I chose not to record any of the interviews but to rely, instead, on copious, verbatim notes taken during interviews, scribbled keywords of the participants' mannerism, mental notes or "headnotes" (Emerson et. al. 1995), and the more detailed notes that I wrote immediately following each encounter. I believe that such precautions and safeguards made participants more at ease during their interviews and interaction with me, while at the same time encouraging them to provide more candid interview responses.

My fieldwork experience affirmed my initial reservations and considerations. Many potential interviewees, when contacted by telephone, reacted to my requests for an interview with suspicion and surprise. They wanted to know how I had obtained their telephone number, whom it was that suggested I contact them, what my research was all about, and how the findings would be used or distributed. They wanted me to offer some kind of assurance that if they were to participate in my research, my write-up of their responses would be general enough so that it would not be possible to identify them as the participant. In addition, they needed reassurance that I was not working for the Singapore government, that I was not the much-dreaded Internal Security Department (ISD) agent, and that my research was a *bona fide* academic exercise. Many pointedly asked me: "Who is funding your research?" "Are you working for the government?" "Are you working for the PAP¹⁵?" "Are you with the ISD¹⁶?" "Are you in any way

¹⁵ PAP is the acronym for People's Action Party, the ruling party of Singapore.

¹⁶ ISD is the acronym for Internal Security Department, the Singaporean equivalent of the United States' CIA. The ISD has the power to detain without trial anyone suspected of being a threat to national security.

connected at all to the Singapore government?” “How will your research be used by the government?” The more candid ones explained, “I just want to make sure that my family and I will not get into any trouble talking to you about this.”

The participant would usually agree to meet with me for a one-on-one, in-depth interview only during our second or third telephone conversation, after they had questioned me at length and felt comfortable enough to meet me face-to-face. Following my assurances, all the people I approached were more than happy to offer their time and to share their opinions and personal experiences. Perhaps what made the participants in Perth more comfortable with contributing to my research was my affiliation with Asia Research Centre at Murdoch University, which provided me with office facilities during the time I was conducting field research in Perth. Participants in Singapore seemed to take comfort from the fact that my research project was for a degree awarded by a foreign university in a country other than Singapore or Australia.

In order to better safeguard participant confidentiality, I assigned generic alphanumeric identifiers to each participant, and any references to specific participants in this dissertation are in general, descriptive terms. I chose to catalog my participants in my field notes using an alphanumerical system, such as A001, A002, A003... etc., so that the data collected is devoid of any identifying marks, and responses quoted in this dissertation would not be traceable to any particular individual. I also chose to use pseudonyms and general descriptive phrases when referring to any particular participant in this report, so that the particular individual would not be identifiable (See Appendix D for more information on each participant).

SURVEYING THE FIELD

Before leaving the U.S. for Singapore in March 2004, I contacted Dr. Garry Rodan, director of Asia Research Centre at Murdoch University, who readily agreed to provide me with office facilities during the time I was conducting field research in Perth. As an expert on Singapore politics, Dr. Rodan was a wealth of information in suggesting possible interviewees in Perth for this project. He put me in touch with participants such as **Academic, Freelance Writer** and **Professional Artiste**, who collectively provided a more informed perspective of Singapore emigrants. My affiliation with the Australian university proved to be a selling point, as it helped assure potential participants in Perth that my research was a *bona fide* academic exercise.

When I arrived in Singapore, I spent my first five weeks renewing contact with relatives, friends, and former colleagues, and engaging their help in identifying possible participants for my research. During this time, I phoned and emailed potential participants who were identified from a list of possible participants I had put together from my preliminary research, such as the government officials, opposition party members, and frequent participants in government consultative committees. In my emails and phone calls to these potential participants, I briefly introduced myself, my research project, and broached the subject of recruiting them as participants. For those who agreed to participate in the research, I proceeded to pre-interview them in the form of a short telephone chat, following which I set a definite interview date and venue to meet with the participant.

In April 2004, I left for Perth with a handful of names, email addresses, and telephone numbers, including that of **Handicraft Business Owner**, a Singaporean Chinese lady and the aunt of an acquaintance. **Handicraft Business Owner** has lived in Perth for close to 20 years, and is knowledgeable about the Singaporean community there. She had agreed to accommodate me at her home until I found suitable housing, and to help me identify potential participants from among her friends and acquaintances. Through **Handicraft Business Owner**, I met **Elderly Pastor**, the founder of her church, her other church mates, as well as recent Singaporean Chinese emigrants to Perth.

Widening the Net

I spent my first week at **Handicraft Business Owner**'s place, which gave me time to observe the interaction between her family and other Singaporean Chinese families. **Handicraft Business Owner** and her friends were forthcoming with suggestions on people I could contact to interview. However, I noticed that **Handicraft Business Owner** and her friends preferred that I speak to them about my research as a group. There was also a certain reticence, almost guardedness, whenever we discussed my research topic, and a hush almost never failed to blanket the group whenever I asked them questions about their lives in Perth and their feelings toward Singapore.

During my first week in Perth, I made the acquaintance of researchers at Asia Research Centre who suggested some names of Singaporean university lecturers and students to contact. I also took this time to telephone and email other potential interviewees that my Singapore participants had suggested, to pre-interview potential interviewees, and to set up interview appointments for the following weeks. From these

initial contacts and subsequent interviews, I obtained other names of possible potential interviewees, including Malay and Eurasian emigrants who were friends of contacts and participants in Singapore.

Subsequently, upon finding suitable housing, I moved in with a second family (the schoolmate of my former colleague, she is a Malaysian Indian married to an Australian; they have a two-year-old son) in Perth. Upon learning the nature of my research, the couple put me in touch with friends who, in turn, helped me approach other Singaporeans they knew. From these participants, I made contact with **Migration Agent** who subsequently introduced me to Malay emigrants living in a Muslim community in a middle-income neighborhood of Perth.

My base at the university also proved to be rewarding in widening my contact base with Singaporean emigrants. I happened to be on campus on the day tickets to the premier of a Singapore play, “Void Deck Monologues,” were put on sale, which I readily bought. The play was produced and written by former Singaporean graduates in theater studies at Murdoch University. I got to know the producers and directors of the play, as well as **Former Journalist** who, in turn, suggested other possible interviewees for my project.

It was in this way that I generated new leads and painstakingly added nodes to my network of contacts — ensuring new points of entry into the Singaporean emigrant community in Perth — and built up a contact base of participants from a large cross-section of the Singapore emigrant population during the five weeks I was there. I also constantly asked my network of contacts in Perth and Singapore if they knew of any Indian or Eurasian emigrants whom I could speak with for my research. This grew out of

my realization, by the end of my second week in the field, that my research participants up till then were predominantly Chinese. This was to be expected, since the Chinese account for more than three quarters of the total population in Singapore¹⁷. I was, however, eager to locate Indian and Eurasian participants for my project, as this would ensure that my research findings would better reflect the views of a cross-section of Singapore émigrés. I tried contacting the Eurasian Association in Perth, but to no avail, as no one returned my telephone calls. Knowledgeable participants and fellow Eurasians affirmed what I had suspected all along: that Singaporean emigrants — especially the Indians and Eurasians — tend to keep a lower profile in Perth.

My task in identifying willing participants for my research project in Perth would probably have been easier if I had contacted the Singapore government agencies and government-linked groups in Perth for names of people to interview. After all, these were obvious points for tapping into the Singapore network. However, I chose not to contact any Perth-based government groups for a list of willing participants because I was certain that the tradeoff would be stilted comments, less candid opinions, and politically correct answers.

My intuition proved to be spot on.

Some participants confided that visiting Singapore journalists often contact them after obtaining their names from the Perth-based groups, and they usually responded with “safe answers.” Others related their unhappy experiences of being quoted out of context

¹⁷ According to statistical data obtained from Singapore Statistical Unit’s online report of the Singapore Census 2000, Singapore’s resident population consists of 76.8% Chinese, 13.9% Malays, 7.9% Indians and 1.4% Eurasians. The report can be found at the following URL link: <http://www.singstat.gov.sg/keystats/people.html>.

by the national media, and they now either flatly refuse to be interviewed or, if pressed to agree to the interview, would respond with answers that are in-line with current government policies and would not reveal much of their personal opinions.

Even though I chose not to approach Perth-based government groups for names of people to contact for my research, I was fully aware that the answers provided by most of my participants would be trite, guarded and, to a certain extent, self-censored since it is part of the Singaporean culture to offer careful answers on any topic that are deemed even vaguely political.¹⁸

Former Architect articulated the general sentiment shared by Singaporean emigrants, when he offered his observation that “they [The PAP government] govern with fear! This fear is so ingrained in the people that even though they are now living away from Singapore, they are still fearful and unwilling to talk about what made them leave.”

Interestingly, even though these Singaporean emigrants are now more than 5,000 miles away from their birthplace, I was surprised to find the Singapore government’s racial policies have transplanted themselves onto Australian soil, with members of the respective ethnic groups interacting mostly with their own. The Singaporean Chinese I interviewed are predominantly Christians, and usually socialized with other Singaporean Chinese in the same bible study group or church. Families that interact socially but attend

¹⁸ Political observers say the government’s heavy-handedness and interference in all aspects of Singaporean life, coupled with its willingness to publicly come down hard on anyone seen as being out of step with official policies, have fostered this Singaporean culture of caution, lack of passion and commitment for any particular cause, and a general unwillingness to take a firm stand on any topic of discussion. Opposition politicians such as Dr. Chee Soon Juan have also accused the PAP government of nurturing a culture of fear in Singapore, with high profile defamation lawsuits against opposition politicians and international media organizations.

different churches often urge each other to go to the services at their respective churches. The Chinese usually reside in more established, wealthier neighborhoods, such as Winthrop (popularly referred to as “Chin-throp,” because of the predominantly Chinese resident population in the area). Those who are comfortable with each other, having interacted socially for several years, often build a loose business network so that anyone who hears of a business opportunity would spread the word around, creating a win-win situation for all. There seemed to be more camaraderie, greater interaction, less competitiveness among the Singapore emigrants in Perth, than among Singaporeans in Singapore. Everyone seemed more willing to help one another seek out new areas to do business in, so that each is able to build a better life for his or her family in a foreign land.

The Singaporean Malay Muslims also form a close-knit community, especially with other Malay Muslims who moved to Australia around the same time. They often choose to live in the same area, call to each other from their front gates, and visit each other without prior arrangement, thus reconstructing the semblance of a *kampung*¹⁹-style life that has long been erased from Singapore’s landscape. Usually, these families were already friends or had known each other on a social basis while in Singapore. Their decision to relocate to a new country at the same time has only served to strengthen the bonds of friendship, making them more of the familial kind. Often, the families would help each other out, with the women cooking for and tending another’s children together with their own whenever the need arose, for example, due to extended working hours at the family business.

¹⁹ *Kampung* is Malay for village. Often associated with the idyllic, laid-back lifestyle of yesteryear.

“We all like family. Always *makan*²⁰ and interaction. Always meet... have chat... *makan*... like dat lah. Quite relaxed... still have time. In Singapore, life very hectic, very stressful. Here, we go like *kampung* like dat. Six to seven o’clock, everybody with family. A lot of time with family,” explained **Former Teacher**, a Malay Muslim in her early 30s who wore a *tudung*²¹.

Sound Engineer, a Malay in his 40s, echoed this sentiment: “Friends in Australia are like relatives. The closeness there is different from here. There are more family feelings.”

On weekends, the men would meet to play soccer, often including the younger boys who have an interest in the game. The girls and women would usually go along to watch the players, bringing along a picnic basket to share during the outing. As a result of their frequent interaction and shared lives, the parents and children have become fast friends. According to leaders of the community, there are about 700 Malay families living in Perth. They predict that the community will continue growing, as more first-generation émigrés were sponsoring the applications of their extended families and relatives.

²⁰ *Makan* is Malay for food.

²¹ *Tudung* is the traditional Islamic headscarf worn by Muslim women to mark their commitment to their religion. It covers their hair and drapes down to their shoulders, leaving only their face uncovered. The number of women wearing the *tudung* in Singapore has risen over the past few years.

RESEARCH PROCEDURES

In-depth Interviews Versus Survey Research

Qualitative methods of inquiry such as in-depth, one-on-one interviews and participant observation were the principal methods employed in this study. Qualitative methods are more suited for this particular study than quantitative surveys since this inquiry seeks to delve into the native Singaporeans' and Singapore-born emigrants' attitudes and behaviors toward their nation-state — Singapore — which are inherently personal, socially constructed, and context-driven (Easton 1965; Berger and Luckmann 1966; Kanter 1968; DeLamater 1973). Questions asked during in-depth interviews are typically open-ended, prompted by the particular individual's personal experiences, and occasionally border personally sensitive topic areas, whereas quantitative surveys often require candid, cut-to-the-chase questions that are associated with a limited number of corresponding responses.

For example, to ascertain one's ties to Singapore, candid questions such as “Are you still a citizen of Singapore?,” “Do you still pay income tax to the Singapore government?,” or “On a scale of 1 to 10, how would you rate your loyalty to Singapore?” would form the basis of some of the key questions in a formalized quantitative survey.

Given the fact that emigration is a highly sensitive issue in Singapore and that Singaporean emigrants have, until recently, been publicly denounced by its political leaders for choosing to leave their homeland for greener pastures, such probing, incisive survey questions asked point blank in formalized surveys are unlikely to yield any — let alone any *honest* responses — from survey participants due to the personal nature of

those questions, the respondent's worry over how the information would be utilized, and whether the answers would filter back to the Singapore government. Consequently, missing data from such surveys are likely to be the norm rather than anomaly, making it difficult to make meaningful sense of the information collected.

In contrast, a researcher using in-depth interviews and participant observation for his or her inquiry would have the flexibility of couching these probing, sensitive questions in a number of ways and using different tacks to elicit responses from the participant that would invariably shed light on the respondent's attitude toward the nation-state — the purpose of this research. The tack chosen would often be based on the researcher's observation and analysis of the interviewee's personality during the course of their interaction.

My own experience with quantitative surveys has shown them to be an unsatisfactory research tool for the inquiry into the nature of national loyalty among Singaporeans. During one of my interactions with a Christian cell group in Perth, I was asked to prepare a list of questions so that I could gather as much information as possible from the twenty Singaporean emigrants who were attending the meeting. This was a once-a-month potluck meeting of two smaller cell groups and, my contact explained, it would be impossible for me to interview everyone at the two-hour meeting since there would be prayer and sharing sessions. As such, having a survey in hand to distribute to the attendees would raise the likelihood of a higher rate of response.

My contact even assured me that she would personally gather all the completed paper surveys and return them to me. As an added measure to ensure that I would receive answers for the survey, my contact suggested I email her the questions as well, so that she

could forward it to the rest of her group via the cell group's email list. Even though participants of the survey would be anonymous, I did not hold out much hope for a high response rate, given the personal nature of the questions and sensitivities associated with emigration, and being well aware of the Singaporean tendency to avoid open confrontation, unwillingness to offer firm answers, and to give the impression that they were willing to participate even when they had no real intention of doing so in the first place. I could only assume that the survey forms handed out would be duly completed and returned to me, while the participants could presume they had done their part just by politely acknowledging my presence at their potluck, interacting with me during the short meeting, and making a show of picking up the survey forms with the promise of filling them out, but not submitting their answers eventually. Nevertheless, I decided that a survey would be worth a try on this occasion.

During the meeting, members of the cell group dutifully picked up a copy of the survey, and gave me their assurances that they would complete and return the forms to me. I asked every one present for their email addresses, and if they would be willing to briefly meet with me for a chat, besides this one meeting. I was politely turned down with answers such as "It would be easier if you emailed the survey form to your contact and she forwarded it to us on the mailing list," and "I don't have time to meet; anyway, I already have your survey questions." I knew, then, that I could only count on a handful of responses. Nevertheless, I emailed my contact the survey questions, in the hope that she would forward them to her cell group members.

A week later, one of the cell group members I briefly interviewed during the meeting emailed her response to the survey. I thanked her and requested her help in

following up with the rest of her cell group. I also emailed my contact to thank her for forwarding the survey, and asked that she remind her group members to email their responses to me; I did not hear back from her. The next day, I called my contact and asked her if she could forward me the list of email addresses for the cell group members. She politely refused, citing privacy reasons, but said she would check with her cell group members as to whether they would like me to contact them. I, again, asked if she could help me email a follow-up reminder to her group, and to forward any hard copies of completed surveys to me. She assured me that she would do so but to date, two years later, I have received only that one email response.

My experience with this attempt at formalized survey provides a good learning experience where research methodology is concerned, for it showed that: (1) quantitative methods are not a suitable research tool for delving into sensitive topics since response rates are likely to be low, with surveys being voluntary; (2) many quantitative questions are close-ended with responses that limit the expanse of the inquiry; and (3) it is difficult to validate responses that seek to establish the respondent's attitude, especially if the respondent is unavailable or refuses to participate in follow-up sessions.

With in-depth, one-on-one interviews and participant observation, the problem of obtaining and interpreting answers for these candid questions are lessened somewhat since the researcher/interviewer would have pinned down a willing participant to a one-on-one interview, with the possibility of follow-up interviews at a later date. During the initial interaction and subsequent follow-up sessions, the researcher/interviewer would have the opportunity to build some base level of trust between herself and the participant. Subsequently, during the interview, the researcher would also have several opportunities

for eliciting the required information by using different tacks in follow-up questions during the interview, encouraging the participant to share accounts of his or her personal experiences, and observing the participant's nonverbal cues while s/he is giving answers that are peripherally associated with any sensitive topic areas that the interviewer may wish to explore (Emerson et. al. 1996; Stewart 1998).

For the researcher, such interactions with the participant are enlightening and informative, since the researcher is exposed to other unanticipated, extenuating influences that s/he would not have otherwise accounted for, thus allowing for a more comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon under study (Hammersley 1992; Maxwell 1996; Stewart 1998). The researcher would then draw his or her own conclusions about the data gathered and verified during the course of repeated interactions and exchanges with the participant, with the view of determining how these findings relate with current theoretical scholarship — a qualitative research procedure commonly referred to as triangulation.

Group Versus Individual Interviews

As I progressed from making the initial contact by phone or by word-of-mouth, to scheduling a meeting, and to face-to-face encounters and social gatherings, I was able to confirm what I had suspected all along: that even though social settings were, perhaps, the most efficient way to meet as many people as possible at one time, interviews were best conducted one-on-one, because of the inherently personal nature of the inquiry. Participants were understandably uncomfortable with revealing their personal dilemmas

when emigrating, especially with other members of the group straining to hear what the participant had to say, thus resulting in a rather uncomfortable, self-conscious atmosphere for both the participant and myself.

Interactions during such events were also largely dictated by the group's planned program, and I found these gatherings to be somewhat superficial and stilted. Perhaps the groups I contacted felt pressured — or obligated — to invite me to one of their functions, by virtue of the fact that we are all “fellow Singaporeans.” The discussions that followed often did not go beyond superficial banter about things Singaporeans have come to accept as a given: of the heavy hand of the Singapore government, of the ‘Big Brother is Watching’ mentality, of the high-pressured, fast-paced way of life. More often than not, I became the subject of discussion, as attendees posed question after question in an attempt to discover what they thought was my hidden agenda.

Nevertheless, these social events were not entirely futile: even though I did not manage to interview anyone at length or in depth, I was able to narrow down the list of possible interviewees to just one or two whom I later approached for a one-on-one interview. Group interactions in Perth also offered me a peek into how Singaporeans living abroad interact, and provided me with opportunities to explore the collective understanding of the Singaporean identity.

As expected, I found it more satisfying to conduct in-depth, one-on-one interviews — a decision I made and stuck to until the end of my fieldwork. One-on-one interviews allowed for a richer, contextual understanding of each individual situation and gave me the opportunity to explore in greater detail some of the issues that Singapore emigrants and residents tussle with when deciding to emigrate, or to stay.

Interview Settings

Many of the one-on-one interviews with participants were conducted informally in restaurants, coffee shops, private homes, or other relaxed social settings, and at the participant's convenience. Formal interviews with government officials were mostly held in their offices. Most times, I left it to the participants to propose a meeting place as I felt this would make them more relaxed during the interview and help ease the interview along. Some preferred to meet at a neutral venue such as a neighborhood coffee place or an eatery; others preferred that I travel to their homes or offices. What stood out during these interactions was that participants tended to be more candid when the interview was conducted in their homes or offices, although a measure of caution as to how much they reveal, and what they let on, was still very apparent. On the other hand, participants interviewed in public places would often cast a watchful eye at the people around them, before proceeding to answer my questions. I also found naturalized Australians more forthcoming with their opinions, the reasons they left, the difficulties they encountered, and their internal struggle with themselves as they tried to make sense of their relationship with Singapore.

I tried as much as I could to write detailed notes and descriptions of each encounter, manner of interaction, interview responses, and my commentaries, impressions and interpretations of what went on immediately following each interaction, in order to “preserve [the] idiosyncratic, contingent character” (Emerson et. al. 1995, 14) of each encounter. I also penned my personal interpretations of each encounter into these field notes which came in handy later, as I was able to instantly recall my reactions to

particular incidents at the particular period of time, thus affirming Emerson et. al.'s assertion that "*what* the ethnographer finds out is inherently connected with *how* she finds it out" (1995, 11).

Throughout the duration of my fieldwork, I constantly reviewed my field notes for recurring patterns and trends. Theories about what was being observed emerged in the course of my interaction with participants and as more data was gathered. As I became more comfortable with the research settings and participants, I would scribble memos of some thoughts I had, sudden insights, and questions of what was going on (Maxwell 1996, 11). These memos served as a way for me to flag an idea, an issue, or interviewing tack that I believed to be worth pursuing (Maxwell 1995), and allowed me to keep my eye on the "big picture," that was gradually being pieced together from the accumulation of experiences from each individual encounter and interaction with the participants at the research sites.

Sample Interview Questions

Below are some of the key interview questions posed to the participants (current Singaporeans, Singaporean emigrants, and former citizens) to get a better understanding of their underlying attitudes and behaviors toward Singapore.

- (1) If someone were to ask you the question: "Where are you from?" what would your reply be, and why?
- (2) Tell me some of the things you associate with Singapore (or Singaporeans in general).
- (3) In your view, what does it mean to be loyal to Singapore?

- (4) What must the Singapore government do in order to make its people more emotionally committed to Singapore?

To current Singaporeans:

- (1) Have you ever thought about leaving Singapore? If so, where would you emigrate to, and why? If not, why not?
- (2) What would persuade you to stay on in Singapore?

To former Singaporeans or Singaporean emigrants:

- (1) What are some of the memories you have of Singapore?
- (2) What do you miss most about Singapore?
- (3) Why did you choose to emigrate?
- (4) How often do you meet up with fellow Singaporeans?
- (5) How often do you keep up with news in Singapore?
- (6) Have you ever regretted emigrating?
- (7) Would you ever consider moving back to Singapore? If so, why? If not, why not?

Armed with this set of interview questions, I proceeded to venture out to the field, first stopping briefly in Singapore, then to Perth, before heading back to Singapore again.

CHAPTER 4

THE MAKING, UN-MAKING, AND REMAKING OF SINGAPORE

What kind of Singapore will make Singaporeans proud?

What values must we preserve?

*How do we strengthen our multi-racial, multi-religious society,
in an age of intense revival of religions?*

*What political, social and cultural changes will make this
a thriving economy and a cosy home?*

— Prime Minister Goh Chok Tong,
New Year Day Speech 2002,
archived online at
<http://www.gov.sg/nd/ND02.html>,
(accessed on May 13, 2005).

Reflexive moments such as the foregoing are commonplace throughout Singapore's forty-one year history as an independent state. Political leaders frequently indulge in public musings, often to foreground and highlight to the people what they see as potential pitfalls and potholes in the shared journey through national life. A thorough

study of the historical context within which Singapore established itself as an independent, sovereign state reveals that its political leaders' anxiety over the development of a Singaporean consciousness and identity, the mobility of talented and educated Singaporeans, and the resulting brain drain, were already tightly interwoven into the city-state's national psyche even before its independence on August 9, 1965. Since then, the island-state's prime ministers frequently use their speeches at the annual National Day Rally to reflect on Singapore's achievements, and to exhort the people to remain committed to the sustenance and continued success of the nation-state, thus keeping alive a national consciousness among its internationally mobile populace.

This chapter provides the background to the context within which independence was thrust upon Singapore, the subsequent actions taken by its political leaders to ensure the city-state's survival, and their efforts at coalescing a Singaporean identity. Here, I trace the national discourse on Singaporean identity and loyalty, emigration, and brain drain, so that the reader is better able to understand and situate the Singapore leaders' concerns over national identity and loyalty, and how these interact with certain periods in the island's short history. In addition, I highlight state attempts at forging a Singaporean identity, and conclude with an assessment of Singapore's remaking effort and an overview of current government policies and initiatives related to emigration and national loyalty.

THE MAKING OF SINGAPORE:
THE ACCIDENTAL NATION-STATE

“This is how the history of Singapore unfolded: as forgettings, as leavings, as partings, as separations, as sudden unaccountable breaks...”

— Jenadas Devan²²

Singapore may best be described as a reluctant nation-state. The city-state was forced into independence on August 9, 1965 following Singapore’s expulsion from the Federation of Malaysia. Prior to that date, no one — not even political leaders such as the island’s first Prime Minister Lee Kuan Yew and Deputy Prime Minister Dr. Toh Chin Chye — believed that an independent, sovereign Singapore would be economically viable. In fact, Lee himself once described microstates as a “political joke,” and viewed “the idea of an independent Singapore as ‘a political, economic, and geographical absurdity’ ” (George 1973, 74). Later, in the first volume of his memoirs published in 1998, Lee described his sentiments about Singapore’s newfound independence at the time of the city-state’s sudden separation from Malaysia:

“Some countries are born independent. Some achieve independence. Singapore had independence thrust upon it. Some 45 British colonies had held colourful ceremonies to formalise and celebrate the transfer of sovereign power from imperial Britain to their indigenous governments. For Singapore, 9 August 1965 was no ceremonial occasion. We had never sought independence. In a referendum less than three years ago, we had persuaded 70 per cent of the electorate to vote in favour of merger with Malaya. Since then, Singapore’s need to be part and parcel of the

²² Devan, Jenadas. 1999. Forgetting to Remember. In *Our Place in Time: Exploring Heritage and Memory in Singapore*, edited by Kwok Kian-Woon, Kwa Chong Guan, Lily Kong, and Brenda Yeoh, 22. Singapore: Singapore Heritage Society.

Federation in one political, economic, and social polity had not changed. Nothing had changed — except that we were out.” (Lee 1998, 22)

Beginnings of Singaporean Nationalism

Singapore’s expulsion from the Federation of Malaya remains an important historical event that provides the basis for the myth of the island’s birth as an independent nation-state (Hill & Lian 1995). Many scholars agree that the separation marked the beginnings of nascent feelings of Singaporean nationalism (Cheng 1968; Chua & Kuo 1995; Devan 1999; Mutalib 1994; Quah 1990a; Willmott 1989). Although Michael Hill and Lian Kwen Fee attempted to make a case for the existence of a Singaporean identity from 1946, which they claimed grew out of the aftermath of the Second World War and the Malayan Union proposal, scholars such as W.E. Willmott contended that this “plethora of ethnic and national sentiments... eventually coalesced into Malayan nationalism” (1989, 581), rather than a distinctive Singaporean identity associated with the territorial land demarcated as Singapore (Chua & Kuo 1995; Devan 1999; Kluver & Webber 2003; Lau 1998; Willmott 1989).

Anecdotal accounts by Willmott also showed that the predominantly immigrant inhabitants of diverse ethnic backgrounds did not develop a distinct Singaporean identity prior to 1965. Migrants, such as the Chinese and Indians, “considered themselves as mere sojourners” (Willmott 1989, 582), staying only long enough to make their fortune before heading back to their respective motherlands. Thus, the people living in pre-independent Singapore identified closely with their ethnic origins: the Malays viewed themselves as an extension of the Malay society and culture on the peninsula and the archipelago; the

Chinese were divided in their loyalties and support for Taiwan and China; and the Indians identified with the Indian National Congress in its struggles against the British rulers. Consequently, with Singapore's expulsion from the Federation, Singapore's leaders "found themselves in possession of a state but without a nation" (Hill and Lian 1995, 18). In essence, "the state itself became the first major symbol of national identity" (Willmott 1989, 581). With Singapore's territorial boundaries now frozen in place and independence a stark reality, the nascent beginnings of a national consciousness, cultivated by a team of like-minded politicians, started to take root among the heterogeneous population in Singapore. This was aided, in part, by the presence of a set of rudimentary national symbols previously created in 1959.

Creating Rudimentary National Symbols

When Britain granted self-governance to Singapore in 1959, its local leaders were already keenly aware of the importance of forging a common identity among the disparate — predominantly migrant — inhabitants of the island. Lee Kuan Yew, the city-state's first Prime Minister, asserted: "Diversity of race, language and culture is part of the richness of Singapore. But in one thing, we cannot afford diversity — diversity of loyalty. If our new citizens are loyal not to Singapore but to the countries of their origin, then the State will run into difficulties." (Lee, Text of Radio Singapore talk, December 3, 1959).

When launching Loyalty Week on December 3, 1959, Lee underscored "the urgent need for inculcating common values, common loyalties, common responses amongst our people. The sense of belonging together, belonging to one entity, one unity,

is a must in our task of nation-building” (Josey 1968, 113). To create this sense of belonging, the new leaders installed the first national symbols of Singapore. In particular, the office of the symbolic head of state (which later evolved into the presidency), national anthem, national flag, national pledge, and coat of arms were all unveiled six months after Lee formed the government (Willmott 1989). Lee described the role of the Yang di-Pertuan Negara as “that of constitutional head of the state of Singapore. He is the personification of the state of which you and I are members... He symbolizes all of us. To him devotion and loyalty is due.” (Josey 1968, 112).

“The flag, the coat of arms and the anthem... serve a powerful emotive function,” observed Lee. “Men have died for the honour and glory of their flag. Men have rallied and united in instinctive response to their anthems. Small country though we may be, it is nevertheless necessary that we develop these instinctive emotive responses so vital to the survival of a people” (Josey 1968, 113).

These rudimentary symbols were initially created to function as state symbols, to be used as soon as Singapore’s much-awaited incorporation into the Federation of Malaysia was complete. Now, they came in handy as symbols of the fledgling nation-state, and handmaidens of the nation-building process.

Creating Other Loyalty-Generating Symbols

To foster commitment and loyalty to the fledgling nation-state and facilitate national integration, “compulsory, universal, national service for all men over eighteen” (Willmott 1989, 590) was put in place in 1967, and Israeli instructors were hired to train the national defense force. A military institute was established the following year, soon

after the British announced they were withdrawing their troops from the island-state. Since its inception, Singapore's modern military has been given high visibility through regular nationwide defense exercises and the show of military prowess during the annual National Day Parade.²³ This sustained visibility of Singapore's military has been a source of national pride, contributing significantly to national sentiments and helping solidify Singapore's status as a sovereign state in the eyes of its people, neighboring countries, and the world.

Closing Ranks

From Day One, the island's leaders have been preoccupied with this need to foster a strong sense of commitment and loyalty to the fledgling nation-state, for they realized they had little time on their side to make this experiment of a microstate work. The government has always adopted a harsh stance towards all who were viewed as potential troublemakers and swiftly dealt with them, so that the people's attention could be fully focused on the greater good of ensuring the economic survival and viability of the city-state. In one of his earliest speeches, Lee stressed:

“This country belongs to you. If you are a Singapore citizen, let us work together and build a society that will look after the interests of everyone. If you are not concerned whether this country survives or sinks, then I say *do not interfere*. You can earn your living here and send money overseas, *but do not interfere*. And, if you *undermine my country, then I will smack you down*. I will always be frank. Those who love Singapore and who want Singapore to survive are my friends: they share my aspirations. *To those who say, “to hell with Singapore,” I*

²³ Singapore has one of the most modern military technologies in the region. Defense spending accounts for nearly 30 per cent of the annual budget.

would like to warn them to stay away and not interfere.”
(Lee, Speech at Punggol Festival, January 16, 1967,
emphasis mine).

The PAP government continues to adhere to this hard-line stance today. Political leaders have constantly reiterated their position that “politics in Singapore is reserved for Singaporeans” and that “foreigners with no stake in the future of Singapore and of Singaporeans will not be allowed to interfere in Singapore's domestic politics, much less to instigate, agitate and promote civil disobedience among targeted segments of society, against the laws of the country” (*The Straits Times*, May 16, 2005). Over the years, many of these undesirable foreign elements — usually activists based in western countries — have been barred from entering Singapore. The Singapore government frequently admonished foreigners, foreign media organizations, and foreign politicians for their unflattering remarks about Singapore politics and politicians. On numerous occasions, the PAP government successfully sued foreign media organizations such as *International Herald Tribune* and *Bloomberg Television*, and was awarded huge financial compensation for injury to its reputation.

Domestically, PAP leaders have also publicly denounced and reprimanded citizens whom they saw as challenging and undermining their authority to rule — whether real or imagined. Top PAP leaders have sued opposition politicians and political parties for making defamatory remarks, and for attempting to undermine the legitimacy of the PAP government. They take a serious view of all challenges to the government's legitimacy and authority, and have frequently reiterated that they “would counter those

arguments that they regard as misinformation or outright falsehoods” (Ho 2003, 334). As then Prime Minister Goh Chok Tong warned, “If you land a blow on our jaw, you must expect a counter-blow on your solar plexus” (*The Straits Times*, January 24, 1995).

In particular, top leaders regard as most contemptible attempts by Singaporeans to undermine the Singapore government and institutions while overseas. They contend that any questions about government conduct should be lodged in Singapore and in accordance with proper protocol and procedures, such as calling for a Commission of Inquiry to investigate alleged wrongdoing. They also maintained that in the face of foreign criticisms, “a loyal Singaporean should feel for the country and be able to defend it justly, no matter what inadequacies it might have” (*The Straits Times*, November 3, 1996).

Establishing Political Authority & International Recognition

In the days following the island’s sudden independence, the island state’s new leaders took the necessary steps to raise awareness of Singapore’s sovereign status in the international arena. The late S. Rajaratnam was appointed Foreign Minister and left immediately for Washington, D.C., to claim Singapore’s seat as an independent nation-state in the United Nations Charter. Lee accepted numerous media invitations for interviews that allowed him to share his vision for his new state with audiences at home and overseas. He also traveled extensively to establish diplomatic and trade relationships with other countries and garner foreign investments, thus raising his international and national stature.

Having demonstrated their ability to speak and act on behalf of the people of Singapore internationally and to establish international recognition of the new sovereign state, Singapore's leaders now turned their attention to building good rapport with the people through sound economic policies and benefits.

Harnessing the National Economy

Unlike the leaders of many newly independent countries at the time, Singapore's leaders did not rely solely on rhetorical, ideological tools, and national symbols to forge a Singaporean identity. Lee was "enough of a realist to know that the psychology of nationhood would remain hollow without the economics of nationhood to sustain it economically" (Latif 1992, 13). As Lee himself stressed:

"... behind all the idealism, my colleagues and I decide policy on the basis of its efficacy: we ensure that policies are worth pursuing. It is no use preaching peace and the milk of human kindness between human beings if, at the end of it all, having preached it, we will die and perish because those are not the qualities which are required. But I can assure you that my motivations are much more practical, much more down to earth: I want this place to succeed because it is the only way in which you and I have a stake in it." (Speech at the Indian Chamber of Commerce, November 16, 1965).

In accordance with the first generation leaders' conviction, many of the PAP government's early policies were tempered with a huge dose of economic pragmatism that sought to promote economic growth and development, anchor the rootless migrant population to the territorial land, and reinforce the PAP government's political legitimacy. With unemployment hovering between 10 to 12 percent in 1965, the PAP government immediately embarked on an ambitious industrialization drive to increase

employment. It also set about streamlining and standardizing employment practices and the provision of fringe benefits to employees, which culminated in the Employment Act of 1968. Later in the same year, the government passed the Industrial Relations Act prohibiting workers from going on strike (Quah 1990b). All of these moves made the city-state extremely attractive to foreign investors, and foreign investments started pouring in. This close nexus between politics and economics remains at the core of Singapore's national life, and the formulation of many public policies today.

Building Homes

One of the greatest successes of the early PAP government was its ability to make good on its 1959 promise to provide low cost public housing for the people. According to Willmott, Goh Keng Swee, then-Finance Minister to the new government, had disclosed that Lee envisioned a “property-owning democracy” (1989, 590) in Singapore, and he took concrete, measured steps to make it a reality. In February 1964, the Home Ownership for the People Scheme was introduced, to allow eligible citizens to own homes (Quah 1977). The scheme was later extended in 1968 to allow homebuyers to use their Central Provident Fund (CPF)²⁴ balances for the purchase of public flats built by the

²⁴ CPF is a forced savings scheme and social security plan. Each month, all Singaporeans below the age of 50 must contribute an amount equivalent to 20% of one's monthly salary, which is held by the Central Provident Fund Board. (This sum is deducted at source and deposited into the individual's CPF account.) Additionally, employers are required by law to contribute an amount equivalent to 13% of the employee's monthly salary every month. Each month, the total contribution to an individual's CPF account — which amount to 33% of one's monthly income — is then divided into three sub-accounts: Ordinary (equivalent to 22% of monthly income), Special (5%) and Medisave (6%). CPF holders are allowed to use their Ordinary Account to buy property and invest in stocks, bonds, and/or precious metals. (The remaining monies in the Ordinary Account earn interest at the rate of 2.5% per annum.) Proceeds from the sale of the property, stocks, bonds, etc., are re-deposited into the CPF Ordinary Account. Although every individual will be able to draw on his or her CPF after the age of 55, CPF is required by law to hold onto a minimum sum of S\$94,600 (as of July 1, 2006). This sum will be disbursed to the individual as a monthly allowance over 20 years. Anything above and beyond the minimum sum of S\$94,600 is released to the individual for

Housing Development Board (HDB). As a result, the number of residents living in public housing has grown from an initial 8.8 per cent of the population in 1959, to 51 per cent in 1976, and 80 per cent in 2000.

Jon Quah observed, “The most significant reason for encouraging home-ownership among the population was the government’s desire to allow increasingly large numbers of its citizens to become property owners, and thereby hope to deepen their loyalty to Singapore” (1977, 215). Agreeing, Willmott noted: “a nation that provides economic reasons for patriotism will have more patriotic citizens than one in which citizenship requires everyone to accept hardships” (1989, 590).

The PAP’s housing policy, then, had the dual function of fostering national integration of the different ethnic groups in high-rise housing blocks, and giving every Singaporean a stake in the country (Mutalib 1992; Quah 1977; Quah 1990b; Willmott 1989). In later years, Singapore’s rapid economic growth and development, as well as the successful implementation of the public housing policy under the HDB, would serve as shining examples and constant reminders of the legitimacy of the PAP government and its leaders, and proof of its ability to deliver on its promises to the people (Chua 1995; Mutalib 1992; Perry et. al. 1997; Quah 1990b). Needless to say, the PAP regime and its leaders’ ability to secure and deliver economic benefits to the people have raised its stature, led to a consolidation of the PAP government’s legitimacy in the eyes of the people, and increased the people’s pride in Singapore and willingness to identify themselves as Singaporeans.

his or her discretionary use. This minimum sum of S\$94,600 will be gradually raised over the years until it reaches the maximum sum of S\$120,000 in the year 2013.

Educating a People

Schools, in particular, were integral to promoting national integration, national loyalty, and a sense of community among Singaporean youths, through their daily, ritualistic flag-raising and flag-lowering ceremonies that are accompanied by the recitation of the national pledge (Quah 1977; Willmott 1989). This daily flagging of the nation-state proved to be extremely successful in creating a national consciousness among the people in the years immediately after the separation from Malaysia.

A 1970 random survey of Singaporeans conducted by Chiew Seen Kong revealed that a majority of the 990 people surveyed describe themselves as Singaporean, rather than by their ethnic origins. Seventy-five per cent of the people surveyed had a positive attitude towards the national flag, national anthem, National Day, and the prime minister (Chiew 1971). This is a remarkable achievement, especially since the survey was conducted barely five years after Singapore's reluctant independence and traumatic separation from the Federation of Malaysia. These results also support Bilig's 1995 finding that daily flagging of the nation-state increases its visibility and solidifies its form in the people's minds as a real entity.

By the beginning of the 1980s, the PAP government had successfully consolidated its power and legitimacy on the local political scene: its carefully planned and orchestrated moves have resulted in economic progress and development for the island once thought to be economically unviable. Moreover, the PAP and its leaders have become synonymous with the state and government, having successfully established a one-party rule since 1965. As a result, any efforts to separate these into distinct entities seem almost unfathomable to Singaporeans of today.

However, the open economy and general affluence of the Singapore society brought a host of new problems: foreign — specifically, Western — influences, which the leaders feared would undermine the nation-state's founding principles, and unravel the social fabric of the still-young Singaporean society.

THE UN-MAKING OF SINGAPORE

Governing Singapore in the face of globalization has proved rather challenging for the PAP government. Many scholars charged that the Asianizing policies implemented as a counterweight against the perceived debilitating effects of western influences in the 1980s inadvertently heightened ethnic awareness, increased divisions among the four major races, and undermined the coalescence of a Singaporean identity (Tan 2004). In addition, the PAP government has had to contend with, and increasingly accommodate, growing demands for greater political participation from the increasingly educated middle class in recent years.

Political Challenges

The early 1980s saw developments on the political front that many thought would blunt the PAP's dominance of the local political scene. The growing middle class in Singapore was starting to clamor for a greater role in the decision-making process, especially in policies that affected their personal and family lives. They wanted greater

political freedom and more individual rights and liberties such as freedom of expression, of speech, and of the press. With increasing numbers boldly registering their protest at the ballot boxes, the PAP soon found itself losing political ground.

For the first time since Singapore's independence in 1965, the PAP would concede several parliamentary seats to the opposition parties. In 1981, Joshua Benjamin Jeyaretnam (popularly known as JBJ) of the Workers Party made political history when he won the by-election in Anson constituency and broke the PAP's stranglehold on Singapore politics. This was followed by Chiam See Tong's victory in Potong Pasir constituency in 1984. In the general elections of 1988, PAP would concede the greatest number of seats to opposition parties: four, out of a total of 81. This period also saw the sharpest slide in PAP's popular support at the polls — from 75.5 per cent in 1980, to 62.9 per cent in 1984, and 61.8 per cent in 1988 (Quah and Quah 1989; Perry et. al. 1997).

Combating Western Influence

On both the economic and social fronts, the PAP government has had to contend with the proliferation of the influences of materialism, consumerism, and individualism on the Singaporean society, following years of economic growth and rising affluence among Singaporeans. Upon noting this trend, the ever-vigilant PAP government immediately introduced several changes to the educational system as counterweight to what they viewed as the creeping influences of the ills in Western society. Government leaders also extensively used the local media as a vehicle to reach out to the masses, in articles that highlighted the debilitating effects of modern Western values on the performance of western economies.

Chief among the PAP's defensive strategies was the introduction of civics and local history²⁵ into the school curriculum in the early 1980s. In 1984, Confucianism was incorporated into the national education curriculum, "to counter the emergence of a self-seeking generation of young Singaporeans who lacked a sense of commitment to the larger community" (Willmott 1989, 589). The PAP leaders, notably Lee, believed that Confucianism, being a philosophy rather than a religion, was neutral enough to be accepted by all four major ethnic groups. Moreover, they viewed Confucian principles as compatible with the values they felt should underpin the Singapore society. Textbooks were written with examples drawn from life in Singapore to illustrate the principles of family life, honesty, hard work, and loyalty (Willmott 1989). Eventually, the principles of Confucian ethics were incorporated into the Asian Values argument²⁶ that served as the basis for explaining East Asia's rapid economic growth in the 1970s and 1980s.

The first of Singapore's "Speak Mandarin" campaigns was launched in 1979; it has since become an annual event. In the years to follow, the Education Ministry introduced the concept of the Special Assistance Plan (SAP) schools that would nurture a core group of students who would be equally proficient in English and Mandarin, having

²⁵ The teaching of Singapore history pre-1965 had been largely ignored in the national education curriculum, and it was not until the mid-1980s that local history books were written for the purpose of national education (Willmott 1989; Hill and Lian 1995). Sir Stamford Raffles, the British who established Singapore as a trading outpost for the British Empire, was introduced as the founder of Singapore in local history textbooks. Willmott observed that this was a compromise PAP had to make, given its "original anti-colonial stance," and the dearth of "national symbols to represent Singapore as a whole" (1989, 589).

²⁶ Asian values of thrift, industry, and filial piety took center stage in the late 1970s, when they were proposed as one of the foremost explanatory factor behind Asia's rapid economic development and growth in the 1980s. Eddie Kuo suggested that political leaders in the Asia Pacific region grasped onto the Asian Values construct at the time, due to rising concerns over the visible increase in social ills of "crime, delinquency, drug-abuse, abortion and divorce" (Kuo 1992, 4) at the time. The four proponents of the Singapore School argument on democracy and Asian Values — popularly known in academic circles as the Gang of Four — were then Prime Minister Lee Kuan Yew, Singapore's former Ambassador to the UN and Director of the Lee Kuan Yew School of Public Policy Kishore Mahbubani, Ambassador-at-large Professor Tommy Koh, and Singapore's Ambassador to the U.S. Dr. Chan Heng Chee (Lam 2003).

to study both at the first language level. All of this was part of a calculated move in response to Deng Xiaoping's liberalization of the Chinese economy in 1979, and the pressing need to nurture a group of Chinese-educated students who would facilitate Singapore's business dealings with the Mainland Chinese in the near future (Tan 2004).

Subsequently, in a move that many feared would drive a wedge among the different races in Singapore, ethnic self-help groups were launched in the late 1980s, to cater to students with lesser academic abilities, so that these "underachievers" would have the chance "to level up and break out of the vicious cycle of poverty" (PM Goh, quoted in *The Straits Times*, July 11, 1994). Supporters of this community-based approach saw the benefit in allowing each community "to decide for themselves what they need as a community" (*The Straits Times*, November 22, 1992), rather than being dictated by a national group dominated by the Chinese who would also probably "have first claims on resources" (*The Straits Times*, November 22, 1992). However, some Singaporeans viewed these two developments with trepidation. They were worried that changes to the educational policies — especially the launch of SAP schools and the introduction of Confucianism, an inherently Chinese philosophy — would lead to a sharp increase in Chinese chauvinism within the predominantly Chinese population in Singapore. In addition, they believed that the great emphasis put on ethnic self-help groups would cause further division among the four races.

Rising Emigration

Another issue of concern for the PAP government, especially in the late 1980s, was the rising number of emigrants. The top three reasons cited for emigrating were: (1)

the emigrants' concern over their children's education and the requirement that they had to obtain a passing grade in their second language at senior high school level if they wanted to be considered for one of the limited places in the university²⁷; (2) personal frustrations; and (3) the regimented socio-economic and political environment that encourages intolerance of failure and lacks compassion.

According to figures obtained by Dr. Paul P. L. Cheung, then chief statistician of Singapore's Population Planning Unit, the number of Certificate of No Criminal Conviction (CNCC)²⁸ issued by the Criminal Investigation Department (CID) to Singaporean citizens applying to emigrate or to work in Commonwealth countries, such as Australia and Canada, had more than doubled — from 2,014 in 1986, to 4,707 in 1988 (see Table 4.1).²⁹

²⁷ From 1979 to 1987, there was only one local university — National University of Singapore (NUS) — in Singapore. Now there are four. Foreign universities such as the University of New South Wales, which will open its doors in 2007, have also been invited to set up full campuses in Singapore with degree-granting status; the UK-based Warwick University was also in talks with the Singapore government to set up a full campus, but those talks have since fallen through. At the post-graduate level, the University of Chicago's Graduate Business School, France's INSEAD (MBA program), Duke University's Medical School, and Germany's The Technical University of Munich (master's in industrial chemistry) are all represented in Singapore.

²⁸ Not all aspiring emigrants have to obtain a CNCC as a supporting document to accompany their permanent residency application. Only immigrant receiving countries in the Commonwealth, such as Australia and Canada, require the CNCC to be submitted during the final stages of the immigration application process. Applicants to countries such as the U.S. are not required to furnish this information. Still, the number of CNCCs issued is a good indicator of the emigration trend in Singapore.

²⁹ Applicants for the CNCC are required to fill out a survey form as to the reasons for emigrating.

Year	No. of CNCCs issued	Estimated Emigrants†
1986	2014*	5,040
1987	3825*	9,560
1988	4707*	11,770
1989	3052*	7,630
1990	2528*	6,320
1991	1978 [#]	3,956
1992	1848 [#]	4,620
1993	1725 [#]	4,313
1994	1883 [#]	4,708
1995	1854 [#]	4,635
1996	2240 [#]	5,600

Table 4.1: Number of Certificates of No Criminal Conduct issued, 1986-1996

* figures from Paul P.L. Cheung's conference paper presented at the International Conference on Migration, 7-9 February 1991.

figures from *The Straits Times*, 1997.

† Cheung estimated the number of emigrants by multiplying the number of CNCC applications by 2.5 persons.

Figures published by Australia's Department of Immigration and Multicultural and Indigenous Affairs and Census Bureau also showed a corresponding jump in its Singapore-born population in the period between 1986 and 1991,³⁰ with the number of Singapore-born residents almost doubling from 15,840 in 1986 to 23,988 in 1991.³¹ (See Appendix B, Table B.2 to Table B.5 for more details.)

Although statistical figures on the demographics of CNCC applicants are not published and are not true estimates of the total number of Singapore emigrants, the Ministry of Home Affairs, nevertheless, keeps a close eye on these trends and releases

³⁰ Interestingly, there appears to be an inverse relationship between the state of the Singapore economy and numbers of Singaporeans leaving: when the Singapore economy is doing well, fewer Singaporeans are applying to emigrate, and vice versa.

³¹ Taken together, these figures are a good reflection of the emigration trend, since it usually takes up to two years between the application for the CNCC and the actual physical relocation by the approved emigrant.

consolidated numbers to the media from time to time. The ever-vigilant PAP government was quick to notice the rise in the number of emigrants, and this issue became the central theme in then Prime Minister Lee Kuan Yew's National Day Rally speech in 1989. According to figures released by Lee, 78 per cent of those applying to emigrate in 1988 were Chinese, 15 per cent Indian, 4 per cent Malay, and 3 per cent Other.

Interestingly, barely two years earlier in 1987, Lee had remarked that willing immigrants would easily fill up the places left empty by Singapore emigrants. Lee had also declared, "If you feel you have a better life in Canada, Australia, New Zealand, America, good luck to you. We feel we can get a Canadian or Australian to come to Singapore and work or a Malaysian, or a Thai, or an Indonesian we will try. It's that kind of a world now." (Yap 1999, 422, quoting from *The Straits Times*, October 20, 1987).

Now, in a sudden about-turn, Lee would note that the foreign university graduates recruited by the Public Service Division and Economic Development Board "cannot make up for our loss from emigration" (Lee 1989, in *The Straits Times*, August 21, 1989). He believed that "Singaporeans are going to get creamed off unless we face this problem in a rational, cool, intelligent way, make adjustments, educate our people so that they can weigh the pros and cons and not go by rumor or hearsay" (Lee 1989, in *The Straits Times*, August 21, 1989).

"We've got to analyse, research, analyse, weigh the problem. We have got to discuss this issue openly. Realities won't go away, and the grass is not greener on the other field because many have emigrated and have regretted it" (Lee 1989, in *The Straits Times*, August 21, 1989).

Lee also believed “people must feel that Singapore is worth defending. Otherwise, we cease to exist. We cannot close our doors to prevent Singaporeans from leaving. But we can make Singapore a vibrant and thriving society, with opportunities for a rewarding and fulfilling life... by continually attracting talented and dynamic people to join us in Singapore” (Lee quoted in *The Straits Times*, August 21, 1989).

REMAKING SINGAPORE: AN EXERCISE IN FUTILITY?

The need to instill in all Singaporeans a passionate sense of belonging and rootedness to Singapore, so that they would continue to view the city-state as a comfortable home rather than a hotel, still weighs on the minds of political leaders in Singapore today. In retrospect, the “Remaking Singapore” exercise, officially launched in 2002, may be viewed from the perspective of a concerted effort aimed at articulating an official definition of the Singaporean identity that would keep Singaporeans rooted to Singapore, provide the building blocks for national loyalty, encourage active citizen participation in public life, and lay a strong foundation for the relatively open Singapore society to withstand the adverse effects of globalization, such as the perceived erosion of traditional values and threats to racial and religious harmony.

Even though the Remaking Singapore Committee was officially set up and commissioned in 2002 to review and recommend social, political, and cultural policies that would “forge a cohesive society rooted in Singapore” (Remaking Singapore Report 2003, 4), the beginnings of this remaking exercise may actually be traced to the late

1980s, when it became patently clear to Singapore's leaders that in addition to foreign investment, the city-state would have to ensure its future economic viability by broadening its economic base; moving into higher value-added industries such as technology, services, and research and development; encouraging its local companies to venture overseas and set up manufacturing plants in the relatively cheaper regional countries; and enhancing the current base of local talent through overseas job postings, post-graduate studies and other specialized training.³² With this consciously external orientation came a noticeable change in the government's attitude toward Singapore emigrants, especially from 1989 onwards. Where previously the PAP government saw emigrants as traitors and failures, it would now view these very same emigrants as "possible allies and potential contributors to Singapore's growth" (Yap 1991, 3; see also Yap 1994). As pioneers tasked with the mission of building an external wing to the Singapore economy, these Singaporean emigrants are necessarily active contributors and drivers of the Singapore economy who form the essential core of local talent that Singapore could not afford to lose.

Interestingly, this period also coincided with the advent of a new generation of leaders. After 31 years at the helm, Lee Kuan Yew would step aside and a new generation of leaders, led by Goh Chok Tong, was to take charge. In line with then Prime Minister Goh's promise of a "kinder and gentler" government, the Singapore government

³² In its review of the causes of the economic recession of the mid-1980s, the Economic Review Committee (ERC), chaired by Lee Hsien Loong, had attributed the cause of the slowdown to Singapore's narrow economic base that was too heavily invested in the manufacturing sector. The ERC recommended that Singapore companies be encouraged to expand overseas and to relocate their manufacturing plants to cheaper regional markets such as Indonesia and Malaysia. Additionally, young talented Singaporeans should grasp every opportunity to chalk up foreign work experience, and the economic base be shifted to the high technology and services sectors. The aim was to cushion the Singapore economy from any similar recessions by substantially increasing the base of its Gross National Product and diversifying its export markets.

embarked on several ambitious consultative exercises, such as the White Paper on Shared Values in 1988, Singapore 21 (S21) in 1997 (which reportedly involved 6,000 participants), and Remaking Singapore in 2002 (which took into consideration the responses of 10,000 participants).

These efforts to consult the public were undertaken with the growing realization that the PAP government could no longer use the top-down approach to governing an increasingly educated, mobile population with a global orientation, but should instead encourage the citizens to take an active part in policy making. Moreover, the second generation of leaders saw the need to quickly solidify an official definition of a Singaporean identity and concurrently foster strong emotional bonds among Singaporeans — what Goh had termed as “heartware” — that would help anchor an increasingly mobile and educated population and maintain racial and religious harmony against the backdrop of religious strife in the region. To do this, the PAP government could no longer keep the Singaporean identity at its arrested state of development. As Chan Heng Chee and Hans-Dieter Evers had warned back in 1973, a non-ideological national identity could not be viable over the longer term. Now, the PAP government felt it was time to heed that warning.

The National Ideology Experiment

In 1988, then-First Deputy Prime Minister Goh Chok Tong mooted the idea of “formaliz[ing] our values in a national ideology and then teach[ing] them in schools, work-places, homes, as our way of life. Then we will have a set of principles to bind our

people together and guide them forward” (Goh 1988, 15).³³ The national ideology would serve to anchor the younger generation of Singaporeans, while giving the population the ability to withstand the pressures of globalization and what Goh described as “alien influences” (Goh 1988, 15) that threaten to unravel the social fabric. These Shared Values were to be “compatible with Chinese, Malay, and Indian cultures, and with the values taught by the major religions” (Quah 1990c), so as to create a sense of commonality among the major ethnic groups.

Altogether, five Shared Values were ultimately identified and highlighted in the White Paper on Shared Values, which was adopted by the Singapore parliament in 1992 (Hill and Lian 1995; Kong and Yeoh 2003). These were: (1) nation before community and society above self; (2) family as the basic unit of society; (3) regard and community support for the individual; (4) consensus instead of contention; and (5) racial and religious harmony.

Singapore 21

1997 saw the launch of another major government initiative — Singapore 21 (S21) — this time to outline the vision of Singapore in the 21st century. Coming close on the heels of the Asian financial crisis and one of the worst rounds of retrenchments in Singapore’s post-independent history, S21 was essentially an exercise in readjusting and realigning Singaporeans’ expectations in the face of economic uncertainty and the maturing Singapore economy, and to prescribe the management of social and economic

³³ Coming at a time of an imminent political transition to the second generation of PAP leaders with Goh at the helm, some scholars saw the Shared Values project as part of an attempt for the second-generation leaders to define anew their vision for the nation-state, and put their stamp on the Singapore society (Hill & Lian 1995).

change — that these would encompass changing entrenched mindsets and transforming Singapore into an all-inclusive, caring society in the face of economic adversity. For example, Singaporeans were exhorted to renounce the yardsticks by which success was measured — that is, by the 5C's of cash, car, condo, credit card, and career — and to embrace the 5C's of the 21st century — that of character, courage, commitment, compassion, and creativity.

The S21 initiative grew out of then-Prime Minister Goh Chok Tong's observation that "affluence and prosperity cannot be the only glue holding us together. If Singaporeans are just economic animals, materialistic with no sense of belonging, they will be like migratory birds, seeking their fortunes in other lands when the season changes" (Goh's Parliamentary Address on June 5, 1997, archived on http://www.singapore21.org.sg/menu_speeches.html).

Goh established S21 to incorporate the declared Shared Values in its prescription of what can be done at the individual, societal, and government levels that would help foster and develop a strong sense of belonging and rootedness in Singaporeans and move the city-state forward into the 21st century. Elaborating on his vision of S21, Goh stressed, "Singapore 21 is about a Home for a People, not a hotel. A Home where we feel comfortable with ourselves, where we look after one another, where everyone makes the country succeed. Our vision for Singapore is not houses of bricks and mortar, but homes with hearts and dreams" (Goh's Parliamentary Address on June 5, 1997, archived at http://www.singapore21.org.sg/menu_speeches.html).

In line with Goh's vision, the S21 committee report, published in 1999, placed the onus squarely on the individual who, with strong family and institutional support, is

tasked with exploiting available opportunities and actively participating in making Singapore into the “best home” (Singapore 21 Report 1999, 57) to which Singaporeans and foreign residents would instinctively gravitate, rather than a temporary port of call before the bright lights of another bustling port beckons. “Whether we live in Singapore or overseas, we must embrace a common vision of the country as a place worth coming home to and if need be, fighting and dying for. We need to feel passionately that Singapore is where we identify with, where our roots are and where we feel is home, wherever we may be around the world” (Singapore 21 Report 1999, 13).

Singaporeans “must become active citizens, who are participants, not mere observers, in building the Singapore we want for the future” (Singapore 21 Report 1999, 14), the Committee emphasized, for “active involvement enhances ownership, passion, and commitment” (Singapore 21 Report 1999, 14). To encourage participation, the Committee urged the government to “work in partnership” with the people, “share more information” with the people in order to “build the basis of an equal dialogue,” accord “public recognition... for suggestions that have been taken up and implemented,” and “spell out the ‘out-of-bounds markers’ in more precise and transparent terms” (Singapore 21 Report 1999, 54). The Committee also called for the preservation of landmarks — well-known areas and buildings — unique to Singapore, noting that these physical anchors are vested with memories that “provide a feeling of familiarity and comfort in the midst of rapid change” (Singapore 21 Report 1999, 43).

Remaking Singapore

Less than three years later in 2002, and within the six months immediately following the September 11th attack on New York's World Trade Center, the Singapore government established a Remaking Singapore Committee consisting of newly appointed, junior cabinet ministers, new members of parliament, and individuals from all walks of life. They were tasked with reviewing Singapore's social, political, and cultural policies, programs, and practices, and recommending strategies that "are needed for Singapore to successfully face future challenges" (Remaking Singapore Committee Report 2003, 6), especially in the light of the city-state's economic downturn and the geopolitical developments at the time, which included domestic and regional "escalation of religious and ideological extremism" (Remaking Singapore Committee Report 2003, 10).

The PAP government was extremely concerned that increasing religious extremism in the region, such as the religious strife in the Maluku Islands and church bombings in Java, would spill over into the city-state and upset Singapore's tenuous racial and religious harmony. The city-state's leaders were also closely monitoring the sudden rise in challenges to the PAP government's political legitimacy by the usually docile Malay Muslim community, which ranged from the community's protest over the unflattering review and possible closure of *madrasahs* (private Islamic schools) and the ban on Islamic style of dress in the national schools, to the criticism of the community's inadequate representation in the PAP government and the subsequent proposal by the Association of Muslim Professionals to "develop an independent, non-partisan 'collective leadership' for the community" (Koh and Ooi 2002, 258). The bombing of the World

Trade Center on 9/11, Washington's subsequent declaration of war on terrorism and Islamic extremists, and the arrest of 13 members of Jemaah Islamiah (JI) terrorists planning to attack American military and civilian targets in Singapore only strengthened the Singaporean leaders' resolve to review and, where necessary, overhaul current policies so as to strengthen ties among the major ethnic and religious groups, inculcate a strong sense of loyalty to Singapore, and better position Singapore to face future challenges.

The timing seemed right, especially after the young son of a junior minister reportedly asked his father the innocent question, "If there is a war, why should we fight for Singapore?" That question triggered some soul searching among Singaporeans and sparked a heated debate in parliament, with politicians voicing their dismay and anxiety over where the system might have failed — is it the fault of our education system or our family upbringing? — and the seeming lack of national loyalty especially among younger Singaporeans born into an already thriving Singapore.

Coinciding with the imminent transition to the third generation of leaders under Lee Hsien Loong, Remaking Singapore was viewed by some political observers as an opportunity to draw up a social contract of sorts between the PAP government and the post-independence generation of Singaporeans (that is, those born after 1965) that would lay down the rules of engagement and citizen participation, and point the way forward to the future.

The Remaking Singapore Committee report, entitled *Changing Mindsets, Deepening Relationships*, is essentially a reiteration and further elaboration on Singapore 21's platform. Where Singapore 21 had explored the myriad of possibilities with regard

to what could be done, and how individual, social, as well as institutional attitudes and mindsets must be changed in order to meet the challenges of the 21st century, Remaking Singapore explicitly spelled out concrete policy recommendations in areas such as education, politics, health care, arts and culture, information technology and media, etc.

The Remaking Singapore Committee report organized the issues discussed and related policy recommendations into four broad themes: “A Home for All Singaporeans,” “A Home Owned,” “A Home for All Seasons,” and “A Home to Cherish.” Collectively, the recommendations were made with the aim of building a more compassionate community of Singaporeans that hold fast to shared values, have a strong sense of ownership and responsibility toward Singapore and its people, and are committed to translating this into active involvement in public policy and society, thus contributing to a unique Singaporean experience that makes the city-state home.

Altogether, Remaking Singapore Committee put forth 72 policy recommendations that found unanimous support with all members. The government readily accepted 60 of these recommendations, but flatly turned down the remaining 12 — five of which were loosely related to politics (*The Straits Times*, April 17, 2004). For example, the Committee had recommended: (1) allowing students to choose their second language — not accepted; (2) introducing religious education in schools — not accepted; (3) setting up Singapore international schools for overseas Singaporeans — accepted, but only in cities with a critical mass of overseas Singaporeans; and (4) granting citizenship by descent to children born to Singaporean females married to foreigners who are citizens by

birth, registration, and descent, as well as overseas-stationed Singaporean fathers who are citizens by descent³⁴ — accepted; the Constitution (Amended) Bill was tabled in Parliament on March 17, 2004, and came into law on May 15, 2004.

Among the political policy recommendations turned down were the enfranchising of overseas Singaporeans through the appointment of a Nominated Member of Parliament to represent this growing constituency, and the explicit definition of “political” OB markers (see Overview of Government Response (April 15, 2004), archived on <http://www.remakingsingapore.gov.sg/>.)

Perhaps even more revealing was the section entitled “Proposals Without Consensus.” The proposals were excluded from the list of policy recommendations submitted to the government, as the Remaking Singapore committee members could not reach unanimous consensus on these contentious issues. For the sake of transparency, these “issues long raised by political observers as potential obstacles in Singapore's democratic development: the dampening effect of defamation suits on political dissidence; media freedom; and rules governing elections, especially the redrawing of electoral boundaries close to polling day” (*The Straits Times*, April 17, 2004) were included as an Annex in the Remaking Singapore Committee report (see pages 84-89 of the Remaking Singapore Committee report archived on <http://www.remakingsingapore.gov.sg/>).

³⁴ Previously, only Singaporean males who are citizens by birth and registration may pass on citizenship by descent to their children born overseas. The children of Singaporean females with foreign spouses could only obtain Singapore citizenship by registration (*The Straits Times*, May 15, 2004).

Assessing Remaking Singapore Committee Efforts

When viewed from the perspective of consultation with and involvement of the people in the public policy process, Remaking Singapore is a commendable effort for it involved 10,000 participants from all walks of life. As **Objective Participant** observed, Remaking Singapore “gave the people franchise... a platform... to give some ideas,”³⁵ although the regular participant in government initiatives such as Singapore 21 also pointed out that “the exercise was repetitive and unnecessary hard work.”

Seasoned Communicator, also a regular participant in government consultative committees, was less flattering in his assessment, however. “The Remaking Singapore is, to a large extent, side stepping critical issues,” he said. Casting his mind back to the outcomes of previous committees, **Seasoned Communicator** declared, “The think process has become an end in itself... [Remaking Singapore] demonstrates that we are doing some soul searching. The sad thing is there is not enough of a political will to address the pertinent issues squarely.”

In fact, “all things are *kosher* to discuss, but just don’t touch PAP supremacy” was how participants such as **Objective Participant** put it. “It’s a line drawn in the sand.”

³⁵ Interestingly, the Remaking Singapore exercise pointedly excluded the participation of opposition politicians. That decision seemed agreeable to all involved. Many observers such as **Objective Participant** believe that the quality of debate did not suffer much, and that “on the balance, it was wise of the government not to include opposition politicians, but to include people who are objective and nonpartisan to speak for Singapore.” Similarly, some members of the opposition parties appeared visibly relieved at the decision. As **Opposition Leader** observed, “There is a danger in us getting involved. Harder to take a step back to look at [the Remaking Singapore exercise] objectively... we also don’t want to be subject to government perimeters.”

“Remaking Singapore has been useful, but have we pushed the boundaries enough?” mused **Objective Participant**. He observed, “It was very easy for the government to accept most of the recommendations because they were recommendations of very obvious things.”

Objective Participant’s sentiments were echoed by onlookers such as **Newly Unemployed** who confided, “I’m skeptical about the policies. [Political leaders] keep saying, ‘We are remaking; no sacred cows will be spared,’ but it’s just getting rid of basic safety net. No remaking of the government *per se*.”

Others, such as **Studio Technician**, describe Remaking Singapore as “just another movie that you sit and watch... just another nice show put up by the government. Don’t expect any difference, because nothing much will change.”

These skeptics could hardly be faulted, especially in the light of the government’s point-by-point response to — and rebuttal of — the Committee’s policy recommendations that makes it rather evident that “consultation does not require the government to engage in equal dialogue with the people, not even with the ‘experts’” (Tan 2003, 255). As political scientist Kenneth Paul Tan cogently observed:

“In fact, many Singaporeans remain sceptical about large-scale consultative exercises like Remaking Singapore because they feel that their involvement merely provides passive feedback and a reading of public reactions after decisions have already been made, at least in principle, according to an agenda set solely by the government. Suggestions, according to this view, have simply been collated bureaucratically, and if accepted, have rarely been acknowledged. It is also not easy for conscientious Singaporeans to speak up, expose themselves to public humiliation, and have their national loyalty called into question” (Tan 2003, 255).

LOYALTY MATTERS

“We worry because if every trained and skilled Singaporean is abroad, then who's going to be here in Singapore, jaga rumah, looking after the home, keeping Singapore dynamic, vibrant, beating? And if we have so many people overseas but not many in Singapore, where will the next generation of Singaporeans come from? How will we get talented and skilled Singaporeans to keep this place going?”

— Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong,
National Day Rally 2006

Of Stayers and Quitters

Because the majority of Singaporeans have not experienced any major life-threatening crisis such as war, the vocabulary within which national loyalty has been discussed in Singapore is rather limited. Societal understanding of national loyalty has been restricted, in part, by how the PAP government frames internal debates on such matters. For the past 40 years, national loyalty and emigration have been conveniently discussed within the frames of Stayers and Quitters, where Stayers (that is, Singaporean citizens who live and work in Singapore) were seen as loyal, and Quitters (that is, Singaporean emigrants) disloyal.

Back in 1969, Singapore's first prime minister, Lee Kuan Yew, took great pains to underscore the gravity of brain drain to Singapore's viability as an independent nation-state, the moral obligation educated Singaporeans owe to society, and their pivotal role in ensuring Singapore's continued survival.

“Because we are a new society, largely of immigrant stock, with a short history, the future will be decided by whether

this 1 to 2%³⁶ consists of “stayers” or “quitters”. With established societies, there is no question of quitting. People stay and fight for what they have inherited, if for no other reason than sheer force of habit. This generation, yours and mine, has got to start this habit. We must decide as a community that we will see our problems through. It is only when we stay and solve our problems, and not quit and so dodge unpleasantness, that we can make a better future for all. The mass of people everywhere has to stay and face whatever is coming. But in a new society, the determinants are those who can leave, but do not, and help make things better for the majority.” (Lee, Speech on Singapore International Alumni Night, September 5, 1969).

Thirty-three years later, Goh Chok Tong would return to these very same labels although this time, in view of the context of today’s globalized world, the “stayer” label was broadened to encompass even overseas Singaporeans.

“Fair-weather Singaporeans will run away whenever the country runs into stormy weather. I call them ‘quitters.’ Fortunately, ‘quitters’ are in the minority. The majority of Singaporeans are ‘stayers.’ ‘Stayers’ are committed to Singapore. Rain or shine, they will be with Singapore. As we say in Hokkien, *pah see buay zao* (refusing to run despite being beaten to death). ‘Stayers’ include Singaporeans who are overseas, but feel for Singapore. They will come back when needed, because their hearts are here. The Singapore nation is not just those of us living here, but also the thousands of loyal Singaporeans who live around the world. Let me stress that I am not criticising all Singaporeans who have emigrated. But I take issue with those fair-weather Singaporeans who, having benefited from Singapore, will pack their bags and take flight when our country runs into a little storm.” (*The Straits Times*, August 21, 2002).

³⁶ In 1969, the number of local university graduates was estimated to make up about one to two per cent of the total resident population in Singapore.

Many Singaporeans took issue with the simplistic dichotomy, however, and a heated national debate ensued in the media and in parliament. Some critics pointed out that stayers in the physical sense could just as likely be quitters from the emotional point of view, especially if they do not feel a sense of belonging to Singapore. Others criticized the use of the label “quitters,” noting that emigrants continue to maintain strong ties to Singapore, and are often tax-paying contributors to the Singapore economy.

This incident illustrates that concerns over the ability to retain the internationally mobile Singaporean³⁷ continue to preoccupy the younger generation of PAP leaders, who frequently remind Singaporeans of their moral obligation to contribute to Singapore’s development. In August 2006, Singapore’s mainstream English daily, *The Straits Times*, conducted a survey of Singaporean youths, and found a disturbing trend: 53 per cent of Singaporean youths polled were considering emigration. That same month, the Singapore government also revealed that 800 Singaporean emigrants give up their citizenship each year (*The Straits Times*, August 24, 2006).³⁸ Officials estimate that 30 per cent of the Singaporean population has the ability to emigrate [Interview with **Cabinet Minister**].

“The only reason for this high number of Singaporean emigrants is because we succeeded!” declared **Cabinet Minister**. “Because of our English education, internationally recognized qualifications, technically recognized skills in university and polytechnics, and the assets that the government allowed [these emigrants] to cash in on.”

³⁷ The Overseas Singaporeans Unit (OSU) estimates that there are 143,000 Singaporeans overseas, although the number could be much larger, since many Singaporeans do not register with Singapore consulates overseas (*The Straits Times*, September 30, 2006).

³⁸ Interestingly, even though Singapore attracts 30,000 new permanent residents each year, only 12,900 permanent residents took up Singapore citizenship in 2005 (*The Straits Times*, August 24, 2006), the largest number of citizenships given out by Singapore in a year. Between 2001 and 2004, the number of permanent residents becoming Singapore citizens has averaged between 6,000 and 7,000 annually (*The Straits Times*, August 24, 2006).

“Our first take is, not to shed too many tears over the recent debate about migration. In fact, the first order of the day is to celebrate the option open to the people. No other country has this. It’s a cause for celebration, not despair!” asserted **Cabinet Minister**.

“[Emigration] is not a problem partly because we’ve changed our attitude. We recognize that the economic and social spheres are outgrowing the boundaries of Singapore. Our economic sphere is not Singapore-the-little-red-dot. There is a network that extends beyond,” observes Cabinet Minister.

At the same time, however, **Cabinet Minister** concedes that the large number of people contemplating emigration is “not something to be blasé about or ignore either, because the future continuity of Singapore depends on a presence of a self-replicating core of Singaporeans who have inherited the identity, culture, sense of becoming Singaporean.”

“We need a core of Singaporeans and this core needs to consist of people who are successful, and be successful anywhere in the world. Without that, we will see a hollowing out of local Singaporean talent in Singapore. We need to make [Singapore] attractive for enough of them to stay back and keep this place running and for that sense of continuity.”

In view of this, **Cabinet Minister** believes that the first order of business facing the Singapore government today is the challenge of “deliver[ing] a better life for those who can’t get out, and options for those who can get out.”

In addition, the Singapore government is looking for ways to connect and establish links with the growing diaspora, “to make them part of the family and treat them

as part of the family” (Lee, National Day Rally speech 2006). “For people who go overseas, the key is to keep them as part of a viable network. We need Singaporeans overseas to look out for opportunities, to represent us, to look after our investments,” stressed **Cabinet Minister**.

Ultimately, the government hopes that Singaporeans overseas will feel a strong pull to come back home.

“We... have to help Singaporeans to come back and when they are ready to come back to link them up so that they can find jobs, to link them up so that their children can get into schools and to help them to integrate back in smoothly,” said Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong, during his National Day Rally speech in August 2006.

National Policies

Despite voicing its concern over the loss of Singaporeans to other countries, the Singapore government has taken a relatively hands-off role and refrained from implementing national policies aimed at reducing emigration. This stems largely from the political leaders’ conviction that in order to groom local talent, attract foreign investments and talent, and maintain its relevance to the rest of the world, Singapore cannot afford to be insular and “cannot close our doors to prevent Singaporeans from leaving” (*The Straits Times*, August 21, 1989).

Dual Citizenship

On the prickly issue of dual citizenship, however, the PAP government continues to stand by its conviction that Singapore is too young a nation to allow for it. “My

response to this is: I don't have to cheapen citizenship just to make you happy and aggravate those who are here slogging. Not yet," said **Cabinet Minister**. In 2006, several PAP members of parliament and Deputy Prime Minister Wong Kan Seng also echoed this view. Although Wong did not rule out the possibility of the dual citizenship option in the long term, he said it is unlikely that this rule would be relaxed in the next three years (*The Straits Times*, August 24, 2006).

Because Singapore does not allow for dual citizenship, all permanent residents who aspire to be Singaporeans must renounce their citizenship before they are allowed to acquire Singapore citizenship. Also, all Singaporean emigrants who choose to acquire a foreign citizenship should lodge a formal application to renounce their Singapore citizenship.³⁹ In the case of overseas-born Singaporeans who hold dual citizenships, these individuals would have to make a decision by the age of 21 as to which citizenship they wish to retain. Should the individual choose to keep the citizenship issued by the foreign country, s/he would have to formally renounce his or her Singapore citizenship, or forfeit the Singapore citizenship.

All males who emigrate after the age of 11 are required by law to enroll for and serve the mandatory two-and-a-half year national service by the age of 16. Their families must also pledge a sum of money as security bond for the purpose of guaranteeing the return of these males for national service. The sum of money pledged is S\$75,000

³⁹ Many Singaporean emigrants who renounce their Singapore citizenship upon taking up a foreign one say that the decision was an economic one. Singaporeans are not allowed to withdraw their monies in the Central Provident Fund (CPF), before reaching the age of 55. Even then, those who wish to cash in on their CPF are only entitled to withdraw the amount over and beyond the stipulated S\$94,600 (as of July 1, 2006) that must remain in their account by law. This amount will be gradually increased to S\$120,000 by the year 2013. The same rule does not apply for former Singaporeans, who can withdraw the whole sum of money in their CPF accounts upon renouncing their citizenship, even if they have not reached the age of 55. This sum of money could amount to as much as S\$390,000 (US\$245,000) for a Singaporean degree-holder with an average salary (S\$60,000/year) and who held a steady job for 15 years prior to emigrating.

(US\$47,200) or 50 per cent of the parents' combined annual income, whichever sum is the higher of the two. Should these males wish to renounce their Singapore citizenship, they can only do so after undergoing the full two-and-a-half year term of national service.

Those who emigrate before the age of 11 and, as such, did not enjoy any of the socioeconomic benefits provided by the Singapore government may apply to defer their enrollment in national service until the age of 21, when they will have to decide on the status of their Singapore citizenship. Should he choose to renounce his Singapore citizenship, the Singapore emigrant would not have to serve the national service term.

National service draft dodgers are ineligible to renounce their Singapore citizenship, however. Should they decide to return to Singapore in the future, these national service draft dodgers may be sentenced to a jail term of up to three years, or fined to a maximum amount of S\$5,000 (or US\$3,200), or both.⁴⁰ This policy is under review, and the Ministry of Defence (Mindef) is considering a doubling of the maximum fine to S\$10,000 (US\$6,300), in addition to a jail sentence for national service dodgers who fail to fulfill their national service obligation for more than two years (*The Straits Times*, January 17, 2006). Also in the pipeline is a proposal that Singaporean boys and permanent residents aged 13 years and above be required to apply for an exit permit

⁴⁰ In December 2005, media reports that Melvyn Tan, a world-famous Singapore-born pianist and a national service dodger, was allowed to return to Singapore upon paying a fine of S\$3,000 (US\$2,000) and forfeiting a S\$30,000 (US\$20,000) bond, triggered a heated national debate. Tan left Singapore in 1969 on a scholarship to the Yehudi Menuhin School in Sussex at the age of 12. On the brink of a promising career, Tan decided not to return to Singapore to fulfill the mandatory term of national service. Although Tan acquired British citizenship in 1978, he was ineligible to renounce his Singapore citizenship as he had been gazetted as a draft dodger and was still answerable to the Singapore courts for the offence under the Enlistment Act. In 2006, Tan contacted the authorities to inform them of his decision to return to Singapore and to stand trial for his failure to enlist for national service, so that he could return freely to visit his aged parents — his father was 86, mother 80 — who were no longer able to travel to Britain to see him. Singaporeans from all walks of life protested what they saw as a lenient punishment that devalued the meaning of national service. This resulted in Defence Minister Teo Chee Hean's announcement in parliament that his ministry was reviewing and planning to stiffen current penalties.

should they go abroad for more than three months. Those who fail to do so may have to pay a penalty of up to S\$2,000 (US\$1,260). Previously, only those above the age of 16-and-a-half needed to apply for the travel document. Defence Minister Teo Chee Hean asserts that these planned changes and penalties were required to reinforce Mindef's stance on three key issues: that "NS is critical for the nation's defence and survival; NS is universal, and every Singaporean male who is fit to serve must do so; and, there must be equity, with all treated equally, no matter who they are or what talents they have" (*The Straits Times*, January 17, 2006).

Citizenship by Descent

In 2004, upon the recommendation of the Remaking Singapore Committee, the Singapore government decided to grant the right of citizenship by descent to children born on or after May 15, 2004 to Singaporean women with foreign spouses, and who are Singapore citizens by birth, registration, or descent. Previously, only male Singaporeans could pass on the privilege of citizenship by descent; Singaporean women whose children were born overseas had to acquire citizenship for their children under registration.

The implementation of this policy represents a big step forward in a largely patrilineal Singapore society, as it gives Singaporean women equal recognition, and sends a strong signal that the PAP government is committed to making Singapore a more inclusive society. This move was undertaken largely because of the government's realization that a growing number of Singaporeans were living, working, and starting their families overseas.

Government Initiatives

Although the Singapore government has been relatively hands-off in the area of national policy, it has spearheaded several initiatives such as Singapore International Foundation, Contact Singapore, and Overseas Singaporean Unit, in an effort to maintain links with Singapore emigrants and keep them abreast of developments in the city-state.

Singapore International Foundation (SIF)

The Singapore government established Singapore International Foundation on August 1, 1991, to bolster efforts at internationalizing the city-state. A non-profit organization, SIF is funded by a one-time government grant of S\$25 million, as well as funds from private corporations and public agencies. Originally mooted as Singapore's version of the Peace Corps, SIF was set up primarily to promote the city-state's image abroad, encourage a spirit of voluntarism among Singaporeans and organize corps of Singaporean volunteers in developing countries, and maintain links with Singaporeans overseas. Included as one of the foundation's core activities is the hosting of a series of talks to prepare Singapore students for their studies abroad and for their role as Singapore's ambassadors. In 2000, SIF's functions were further broadened to include the organization of scholarship and exchange programs that would bring youths from around the world to Singapore.

Contact Singapore

Contact Singapore was established in 1997 as a unit of the Public Service Division to help promote Singapore as *the* place to live, work, and study. Its principal

function is as a professional advisory and recruitment body that offers networking opportunities as well as industry and employment information to global talent, including Singaporean students overseas that are interested in relocating to Singapore. The six centers — located in Sydney, Perth, Boston, Los Angeles, London, and Vancouver — were also responsible for the welfare of overseas Singaporean students.

Overseas Singaporeans Unit

Overseas Singaporeans Unit (OSU), which reports directly to the Prime Minister's Office, was launched in March 2006. Explained Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong in his National Day Rally Speech on August 20, 2006, "The idea of the OSU is to engage Singaporeans overseas, keep them updated, make sure they know what's happening in Singapore, keep them as part of our global family." (*The Business Times*, August 21, 2006). Facilitating this is the Overseas Singaporeans Portal, <http://www.overseassingaporeans.sg/>, launched on August 26, 2006, where Singapore emigrants can log in to use its blog, forum, web chat functions, read live news feeds, and look up the latest job vacancies in Singapore (*The Sunday Times*, August 27, 2006).

Ultimately, the Singapore government hopes that these subtle overtures to engage Singaporeans overseas would keep their link to the city-state alive, and encourage them to return and contribute to Singapore some day. When that time comes, the OSU will play a part in reintegrating returnees by keeping them informed of job opportunities and helping them find schools for their children (*The Business Times*, August 20, 2006).

CHAPTER 5

FINDINGS & ANALYSIS: SINGAPORE LOYALISTS

*It is now the moment when by common consent we pause
to become conscious of our national life and to rejoice in it,
to recall what our country has done for each of us,
and to ask ourselves what we can do for our country in return.*

— Oliver Wendell Holmes, Jr. (1841-1935)
Memorial Day Address at Keene, Massachusetts,
delivered on May 30, 1884.
Reprinted in *Speeches by Oliver Wendell Holmes*
by Little, Brown and Company 1934.

SUMMARY OF MAIN FINDINGS

In Chapter 2, I listed and described types of loyalists based on (1) their physical location, (2) their predisposition to (a) an active/vocal or (b) a passive/non-vocal role, and (3) their predisposition towards the nation-state, as represented broadly by the national community, authorities, and political regime. In particular, I took issue with Hirschman's

labeling of all exiters (that is, emigrants) as traitors, deserters, and defectors, and his assertion that all exiters are voiceless and incapable of influencing the future direction of their former entity. Consequently, I proposed to enlarge Hirschman's framework to include **External Loyalists** — that is, emigrants who continue to feel emotionally attached to their former homeland and a moral obligation to contribute to the national community.

My research shows evidence of such a group of Singaporeans: in recent years, Singaporean communities overseas have grown in size, as many Singaporeans and local companies have heeded the government's enthusiastic encouragement to explore opportunities overseas. Singaporean residents and emigrants I interviewed asserted that there can be "external Singaporeans." **Seasoned Communicator** described this group as "not defined by citizenship, but almost tribal, primordial instinct," while **Polytechnic Lecturer** and **Former Journalist** both assert that nowadays, one "can be rooted without being physically present in Singapore."

I interviewed 70 people during the course of my field research in Perth (41 participants) and Singapore (29 participants). The ethnic composition of the research sample is comparable to official figures from the Population Survey of 2004 (See Table 5.1).

Ethnicity	As percentage (%) of participant pool	Population Survey 2004
Chinese	65.7%	70.0%
Malay	14.3%	14.5%
Indian	14.3%	12.0%
Eurasian & Others	5.7%	4.0%

Table 5.1: Ethnic Composition Participants, compared with Population Survey 2004

Below is a more detailed breakdown of the figures in each loyalist category (See Table 5.2 and Table 5.3).

<u>Internal Loyalists</u>	<u>Percentage (%)</u>
Enthusiastic	20.69%
Dissident Internal	0.00%
Contented	20.69%
Self-Adjusters	44.83%
Disengaged Stayers	13.79%

Table 5.2: Types of Internal Loyalists Among Research Participants

<u>External Loyalists</u>	<u>Percentage (%)</u>
Supportive	15.00%
Dissident External	0.00%
Passive	77.50%
Rejecters	7.50%

Table 5.3: Types of External Loyalists Among Research Participants

The following are some interesting observations from the research findings:

- (1) **Enthusiastic Loyalists** accounted for a higher proportion of **Internal Loyalists** (20.69%) than **Supportive Loyalists** among **External Loyalists** (15.0%). This may be due to the fact that until recently, Singaporean emigrants have tended to keep a low profile because of the Singapore government's strong denigration of emigrants whom early leaders had regarded as ingrates.
- (2) There were no **Dissident Internal** and **External Loyalists** among my participants. This finding is hardly surprising if viewed in the light of the PAP government's ability to consistently deliver economic benefits and a higher standard of living for the population at large, while effectively silencing its critics through the use of institutional and legal constraints.
- (3) In view of the Singapore government's ability to deliver on its economic promises, however, the proportion of **Contented Internal Loyalists** was unexpectedly low, accounting for only 20% of **Internal Loyalists**. This could be traced to an increasingly more educated population who, wanting more say in the policy-making process, feel stifled by the nanny state and the presence of OB markers.
- (4) There seems to be a rather high proportion of **Self-Adjusters** (44.83% of **Internal Loyalists**) and **Passive External Loyalists** (77.5% of **External Loyalists**). These are people who have internalized the norms of

engagement with the authorities and who have come around to the view that nothing they do will make a difference, although they may be persuaded to join in some temporary, *ad hoc* issue-based causes.

- (5) **Rejecters** tended to be recent emigrants in the 40s, with school-going children, and were usually non-degree holders with technical or vocational skills.

For a more detailed discussion of each participant in this research, please see Appendix D.

ELABORATING ON THE TYPOLOGY OF LOYALISTS: THE CASE OF SINGAPORE

Internal Loyalists

In Chapter 2, I described **Internal Loyalists** as people residing within the territorial boundaries of Singapore. These comprise: (1) the majority of Singapore citizens living and working in Singapore who do not hold the right to permanent residency elsewhere; (2) Singapore emigrants living and working in Singapore, but who hold the right to permanent residency elsewhere; and (3) Singapore emigrants currently residing and working in Singapore, who hold a foreign citizenship.

It would be foolhardy to assume that all **Internal Loyalists** are loyal to Singapore just because they live in Singapore. As **Former Journalist** noted: “These are the people who are not committed to the country, but are staying because they can’t go.”

Seasoned Communicator, a longtime political observer and frequent participant in consultative committees headed by government officials, also reminds us:

“We have to remember that just because someone stays in Singapore, that doesn’t necessarily mean he or she is rooted. They stay not because they want to stay, but because they cannot go out. They don’t have mobility. And recently, the not-very-mobile are feeling very desperate.”

Who, then, are Singapore’s **Internal Loyalists**?

In the following paragraphs, I provide a more detailed overview of each type of **Internal Loyalist**.

(1) **Enthusiastic Internal Loyalists**

In Chapter 2, I described **Enthusiastic Internal Loyalists** as individuals who recognize the power of the authorities as legitimate, are dedicated to upholding the norms of the regime, and who feel a deep sense of responsibility toward the national community and its future. As such, they are usually among the first to notice potential problems that may negatively impact the nation-state, make mental notes of these areas, and to alert the authorities of potential pitfalls and offer their suggestions on how best to deal with these issues. These **Enthusiastic Internals** prefer to initiate change from within, working with the system and the powers-that-be, and to give the authorities sufficient time to come up with a workable solution after having voiced their dissatisfaction.

My research findings support this preliminary assertion.

Enthusiastic Internals account for 20.69% of the **Internal Loyalists** in my participant pool. These individuals are mostly in the 40s, often established in professional or white-collar careers, and would typically be identified in most countries as being part of the elite. They are well-read, well-traveled, observant individuals who do not blindly adhere to the axiom “my country can do no wrong.” Instead, **Enthusiastic Internals** are usually among the first to identify, admit, and point out the shortcomings of the nation-state, which put them on the constant quest to improve the current ways of doing things in the national community. Far from being armchair commentators, **Enthusiastic Internals** are active problem solvers who believe in creating win-win situations — that is, forging fruitful collaborations with a wide range of people or organizations that would yield tangible results, even if such endeavors may require the direct involvement of the government or government agencies. They hold strong views on most issues, which lead them to eloquently and persuasively present their own ideas on how best to tackle those issues with the greater good of the community in mind, and to make more than the occasional attempts to push back the OB (or out-of-bounds) markers.⁴¹ But they are also always careful never to overstep those boundaries, for **Enthusiastic Internals** give serious consideration to the advice of

⁴¹ OB markers (or out-of-bounds markers) is the invisible boundary between the limits and extent of issues and actions that the Government will tolerate, and those that are considered “too sensitive to be discussed in public for fear of destabilising and jeopardizing public peace and order” (Ho 2003, 333), such as race and religion. In 1995, Singapore’s first prime minister Lee Kuan Yew clarified that only elected officials have the right to define the OB markers that demarcate the parameters of political discourse (*The Straits Times*, February 3, 1995). Where, previously, only race and religion were seen as sensitive topics, now these would include anything that seems remotely political, such as criticisms of the administrative style of political leaders. With these intermittent clarifications of OB markers, the space allowed for approved political discourse in Singapore has steadily shrunk over the years (Ho 2003).

top politicians, such as then-Minister for Information and the Arts George Yeo, to respect authority and hold elders in high regard and to “know their proper place in society before engaging in politics” (Ho 2003, 335).

“You must make distinctions — what is high, what is low, what is above, what is below — and then within this, we can have a debate, we can have a discussion,” advised Yeo (*The Straits Times*, February 20, 1995). Otherwise, as then-Prime Minister Goh Chok Tong warned: “If you land a blow on our jaw, you must expect a counter-blow on your solar plexus” (*The Straits Times*, January 24, 1995). In particular, “those who try to undermine the authority of the government through snide remarks and mockery must expect a ‘very, very hard blow from the government’ in return” (Ho 2003, 337). This was also affirmed during my conversation with **Cabinet Minister** who emphasized, “if you want to criticize anyone, the political culture is such that we [the PAP government] will take you on and demolish you publicly or in court.” **Enthusiastic Loyalists** are, thus, operating in an increasingly challenging environment with an “extremely limited” (Ho 2003, 336) public space for citizen discourse, following a public controversy involving local author and political observer Dr. Catherine Lim in 1995. Where previously, only race and religious matters were considered too sensitive for public debate, administrative style and political issues have since been included in the list of topics that were out of bounds.⁴²

⁴² Dr. Catherine Lim’s essay entitled “One Country Two Styles” was published in *The Straits Times*. In that essay, Dr. Lim had commented on the growing affective divide between the people and the government, and Singapore’s first prime minister Lee Kuan Yew’s continued grip on the government, despite having relinquished the premiership to Goh Chok Tong. Dr. Lim had suggested that there was internal conflict in the new government due to the difference in governing styles of previous prime minister

Over the years, **Enthusiastic Internals** such as **Seasoned Communicator** and **Objective Participant** have honed the skilful ability of respectfully engaging the authorities on sensitive issues without antagonism. Such an approach has become so tightly interwoven with the Singaporean political culture, psyche and norms that political leaders and the public have come to accept and expect this culture of self-restraint, which is regarded as synonymous with respect for authority and a much-revered part of Asian and Singaporean culture. In observing and upholding this widely accepted norm, these **Enthusiastic Internals**, in effect, demonstrate a positive predisposition to the rules and regulations laid down by the (PAP) regime. Their responsible conduct in their dealings with the authorities has also won over an increasingly receptive Singapore government that now values these **Enthusiastic Internals'** objective input on national policy issues.

Since the early 1990s, the Singapore government has reciprocated the overtures of these **Enthusiastic Internals** by handpicking and inviting many of them to join feedback committees and policy groups based on their apolitical stance, observed past commitment and contributions to society at large, and their participation in the sphere of civil (or, in the Singaporean context, civic) society.⁴³

Lee Kuan Yew and then prime minister Goh Chok Tong. She was subsequently admonished by top leaders in the PAP government. Then PM Goh declared that Dr. Lim had “‘gone beyond the pale’ when she implied that he had allowed himself to be overwhelmed by Mr. Lee” (*The Straits Times*, June 21, 2003). Goh challenged Dr. Lim to either join an existing political party, or form a political party if she wanted to engage in political debates with the government. Many Singaporeans at the time felt the harsh admonishment was uncalled for, and that Goh had overreacted. Given such public examples, **Enthusiastic Loyalists** are, thus, aware of the fine line they have to tread. Even though they want to contribute and play a part in the development of Singapore, they do not want to end up being made examples of.

⁴³ The Singapore government and its leaders prefer to describe the non-political arena as civic society, rather than civil society, because they believe that civil society is closely associated with championing the causes of individual and liberal rights and freedom — an activity largely frowned upon by the powers-that-be who view this as incompatible with the Singaporean culture and Asian values. As both Chua and Lee

It is usually through participating in government-led national initiatives that **Enthusiastic Internals** make the most impact, as many openly acknowledged: “You cannot make massive inroads by yourself. It can’t happen spontaneously.” Their assertions concur with Ho Khai Leong’s observation that “the extent to which citizens can influence policy-making depends on the extent to which the PAP allows it to happen. The basic ground rules are set from above, and the citizenry is merely passively reacting to these regulations” (2003, 361).

These regular participants in national committees, thus, recognize that their participation in national committees is unlikely to result in some earth shattering change, and are realistic about the extent to which they are able to push the boundaries. They understand that, ultimately, the decision lies with the powers-that-be, and that the final decision may not necessarily reflect all that had gone on during the discussions.⁴⁴ This point came up repeatedly in my conversations with **Enthusiastic Internals**.

“When you go into the committee and see the outcome, it sets you back. You ask yourself: ‘Did I go in for this?’ But I don’t allow skepticism to seep into my veins. I have to continue. I have been fortunate to surround myself with like-

point out, this choice to use the term ‘civic society’ instead of ‘civil society’ “is not some inconsequential play of words” (Chua 2000, 63), but a “prudent and well-calculated” (Lee 2005, 138) move that is “consistent with the PAP’s language of politics” (Chua 2000, 63).

⁴⁴ In Singapore, participation in feedback committees and consultations with policy-making bodies proceed in a top-down manner and under tightly prescribed scripts. There is no room for spontaneous exploration of issues that were not previously put on the agenda, and group discussions are usually conducted within carefully monitored and controlled limits. Even the recent Remaking Singapore effort took place under such a tightly controlled environment. Members of the Remaking Singapore Committee I spoke with revealed that there were very explicit guidelines as to the issues to be addressed and what could be included and excluded during their discussions and in the final report. “All things are *kosher* to discuss, but just don’t touch PAP supremacy. It’s a line drawn in the sand,” was how many participants described the Remaking Singapore exercise.

minded people, selfless people. It's okay to gripe, but if pathological, I walk away. Feedback counts. You need people in there to contribute. The battles are painful, draining, but worth it," was how **Seasoned Communicator** summed up his experience over the last two decades.

Other **Enthusiastic Internals**, such as **Conscientious Objector**, have even ventured into national politics. The veteran opposition politician remains unfazed over all the talk about OB markers. He had this piece of advice for aspiring politicians: "There are no OB markers, yet there are OB markers everywhere. One must be guided by one's common sense and do the thing that is right for Singapore."

I chose to include **Conscientious Objector** as an **Enthusiastic Internal Loyalist** because the self-proclaimed realist holds moderate viewpoints, has acknowledged the benefits of the PAP government, and is not seeking to undermine the current system or overthrow the government. PAP leaders have, on occasion, publicly commended opposition politicians — including **Conscientious Objector** — for their loyalty and service to the country. On their part, opposition politicians such as **Conscientious Objector** frequently stress that they seek to offer Singaporeans an alternative voice within the parliamentary system, which is dominated by the ruling PAP party. They do this by competing for a parliamentary seat during national elections.

"We recognize that the PAP is here to stay. They have done a lot of good for the country. But the PAP doesn't always know what is best for the people. We

are just offering an alternative for the people,” was the common view voiced by these realists. These members of the opposition parties also stressed, “we are loyal to Singapore, but Singapore is not synonymous with the PAP.”

From the above, it becomes apparent that repeated encounters between **Enthusiastic Internal Loyalists** and the authorities over the years have helped nurture a symbiotic relationship. Moreover, passionate participation stemming from one’s strong sense of obligation and loyalty to the national community alone is unlikely to win the indulgent tolerance and approval of the Singapore government, if it is not coupled with a genuinely respectful, responsible conduct toward the authorities. Nevertheless, the PAP government’s eagerness in nurturing a pool of **Enthusiastic Internals** is noteworthy, for it reveals the PAP’s political dominance and the lack of credible opposition in Singapore, and the ruling party’s increasing reliance on a core of **Enthusiastic Internals** to lend their objective insights and recommendations on national policy issues.

(2) **Dissident Internal Loyalist**

In Chapter 2, I noted that Hirschman had failed to consider the possibility that voice could be used to undermine the authorities. Instead, he attributed voice with a positive role — as a “recuperative mechanism” alerting the authorities to problems. As such, he had indiscriminately lumped two groups of people as **Conscious Loyalists**, and overlooked the presence of this group of people whom I identified as **Dissident Internal Loyalists**.

Dissident Internals publicly claim that their loyalties lie with the national community — that is, their fellow nationals and countrymen — not the authorities or regime. They signal their lack of support for the regime and the authorities by refusing to observe the rules of the engagement with the powers-that-be, by openly opposing the government, and taking every chance possible to stage a confrontation.

There were no **Dissident Internals** among participants in my research sample. This is a significant finding, for it suggests that this category of **Dissident Internals** may actually be nonexistent in the Singaporean context, where a generally non-confrontational culture of reverence and respect for authority holds sway. Even opposition parliamentarians in Singapore are more accurately described as **Enthusiastic Internal Loyalists**, since top PAP leaders have openly acknowledged and commended a handful of opposition leaders — including **Conscientious Objector** — for their loyalty to Singapore. Opposition leaders in parliament have also largely agreed with the government’s position on most issues and have not publicly attempted any political maneuvers that would undermine the Singapore government, its institutions, or its leaders.

One plausible explanation for the apolitical Singaporean culture is the fact that Singaporeans are, by and large, rational individuals who constantly weigh the pros and cons of their actions on their personal lives and their families. They are fully aware of the personal and financial costs suffered by opposition politicians such as Joshua Benjamin Jeyaretnam, Dr. Chee Soon Juan, Francis Seow,⁴⁵ and

⁴⁵ See Appendix E for more details.

Tang Liang Hong,⁴⁶ all of whom were either made bankrupt, or are in the process of being declared bankrupt as they are unable to pay damages awarded to the Singapore government and top leaders. As Terence Chong suggests, these “past examples of alternative political activism have ingrained in Singaporeans the lessons of challenging the Government. The spectre of incarceration, bankruptcy and exile of political opponents has, rightly or wrongly, penetrated the middle-class psyche” (*The Straits Times*, 14 January 2005), and are an effective deterrent that discourages many Singaporeans from entering politics as an opposition.⁴⁷ As a result, a culture of political apathy takes root, because “apathy... protects us from personal distress and embarrassment” (*The Straits Times*, 14 January 2005).

(3) **Contented Internal Loyalists**

In Chapter 2, I described **Contented Internal Loyalists** as synonymous with Hirschman’s unconscious loyalists who are blissfully happy with their current situation and see no need for any change.

Contented Internal Loyalists make up 20.69% of **Internal Loyalists** in my research sample. Most of them were single women in the 30s or, if married, were raising young children who are not yet at the school-going age. These are the people whom **Former Journalist** described as the “lucky ones” because they

⁴⁶ See Appendix E for more details.

⁴⁷ Several participants I interviewed confided that they and others they knew had considered entering politics as part of the opposition, but ultimately decided that it was not worth the personal and family sacrifices associated with such a move. They knew they would have to be prepared for the possibility of having their careers and their family’s future destroyed, if the past experiences of opposition politicians were to serve as any guide.

“may not have felt the need to look for greater opportunity for their children. If their kids are doing well or happy to accept the [education] system, these people see no need to move.”

The **Contented Internal Loyalists** among my participants are staunchly supportive of Singapore, because the city-state and its associated characteristics such as culture, government and institutions, and way of life collectively embody all that they could ever want, in one place. These stayers are the ones whom **Seasoned Communicator** described as “*bochap*”⁴⁸ — “Migration is not an issue because they have creature comforts [in Singapore].”

Contented Loyalists firmly believe that Singapore and, by extension, its government and institutions, are the best. For them, Singapore is their one and only home — there can be no other. What makes the city-state all the more attractive is its relatively developed status and cosmopolitan outlook, as compared to other countries in the Asian region. These **Contented Loyalists** are immensely proud of Singapore’s achievements and derive great satisfaction from their identification and association with a successful and internationally respected Singapore. They also firmly believe in Singapore’s practice of meritocracy and social policies that promote racial and religious harmony. The thought of emigration has never crossed their minds because these well-traveled **Contented Loyalists** such as **Administrative Executive** and **Civil Servant** are happy with their lives in Singapore and see no need to emigrate. If married, these participants

⁴⁸ *Bochap* is a Hokkien term used to describe someone who is blissfully happy or unaware of any potential problems lurking in their horizon. If s/he is aware of any possible problems, s/he is likely to ignore them, in the hope that they would go away.

point to the fact that Singapore offers a relatively safe and stable environment to bring up children and, being an Asian country, they believe the environment is more conducive for inculcating traditional Asian values in their children. The presence of family and friends in Singapore also strongly anchor these **Contented Loyalists** to the territorial land.

The typical response I receive from **Contented Loyalists** is: “Singapore good, wat. There’s nothing wrong with it. Why would I want to migrate? My family and friends are here; I have a steady job.... If I want to go overseas, I can travel to those places during my vacation. No need to move there! Better to stay here than be a second-class citizen elsewhere. No matter what, Singapore is still my home.”

Systems Administrator observed, “As long as you obey the laws and don’t get involved in politics, Singapore is quite a nice place to live. It’s close to places like Indonesia and Thailand, so on weekends, you can take short trips to all these places. It’s a cosmopolitan city-state, has efficient public transportation, and no political instability. Other places all have more problems than here. Besides, there’s no perfect government in this world; and Singapore isn’t too bad on that score.”

(4) **Self-Adjuster**

In Chapter 2, I described **Self-Adjusters** as individuals who are unhappy with the structural constraints that impact their personal lives, but yet believe they are powerless in their fight against the system. In order to better deal with

potential disappointments, these **Self-Adjusters** scale down their personal expectations, so that they are able to delude themselves into believing that the shortcomings of the system are relatively tolerable. Consequently, they are able to convince themselves that they are actually quite happy and content with their situation.

Nearly half of the **Internal Loyalists** among my research participants are **Self-Adjusters**. Included in this category are:

- a) individuals who had considered emigrating, but gave up the idea even before submitting their applications for permanent residency, either due to family pressure and obligations, financial costs of relocation, or the technicalities associated with the application;
- b) individuals who had applied for and were granted permanent residency elsewhere, but decided at the last minute not to relocate, either because of spousal or family objection, or financial considerations;
- c) former **Enthusiastic Internals** who have scaled back their involvement in government-led national initiatives and are more focused on their participation in issue-based groups;
- d) individuals who had spent several years abroad without obtaining permanent residency overseas, and who subsequently returned to live and work in Singapore; and
- e) Singapore emigrants with permanent residency elsewhere — or even foreign citizenship — but who have returned to live and work in Singapore.

Commenting on individuals who fall within the first group, **Migration Agent**, a migration agent based in Perth, observed that most Singaporeans who want to emigrate are often caught in a bind because they had previously bought into the Singaporean Dream of the 5Cs — Cash, Credit Cards, Car, Condominium, and Country Club Membership — especially during the heady days of the 1990s. As a result, many aspiring emigrants are forced to mechanically go through the motions: “Work hard, service mortgage, stuck, go in one big circle.” As financial realities set in, these aspiring emigrants’ initial thoughts of emigrating are quickly nipped in the bud because they “have to work and pay back. If they weren’t tied down by mortgage, more people will be thinking about migrating,” concluded **Migration Agent**.

Examples of this group of **Self-Adjusters** include **Graphic Designer** and **Polytechnic Lecturer**, who are saddled with family and financial obligations, and have both come to accept that emigration is a pipe dream. Up to five years ago, both **Graphic Designer** and **Polytechnic Lecturer** had explored the possibility of emigrating overseas, but never quite went beyond the initial inquiry stage. Now, **Graphic Designer** is in her late 30s and is locked into paying off a 30-year mortgage for a flat she bought jointly with her aged parents. Being an unmarried daughter who lives at home with her parents, **Graphic Designer** is expected to provide and care for her parents in their old age. On his part, **Polytechnic Lecturer** has since settled down and is now a father of two young children. As a family man, his priorities have changed. He now hopes to earn enough money so that his children would have the opportunity to be educated overseas.

Consequently, both **Graphic Designer** and **Polytechnic Lecturer** have adjusted their expectations downwards, so that they are no longer dissatisfied with the aspect of their life that had initially triggered their thoughts of emigrating, such as the impact of invasive government policies on their personal lives and their aspiration to experience a different type of lifestyle.

One example of a **Self-Adjuster** in the second group is **Malay Publisher**, who went as far as applying for permanent residency in Australia and having his family application approved. However, when it came time to relocate, **Malay Publisher**, now a relatively successful Malay Muslim, backed out of leaving Singapore. The reason? His wife and four children were opposed to the move, since it would mean leaving family and friends for an unfamiliar, foreign land. After weighing the pros and cons, **Malay Publisher** also came to the conclusion that emigrating would mean a huge financial sacrifice on his part, especially since he was doing well career-wise, and was about to launch several money-making business ventures in Singapore. Having accepted that emigration is not an option, **Malay Publisher** is once again sinking in his roots and reconnecting with the Malay Muslim community where he serves as a committee member in his mosque and religious groups, and volunteers his services in others. Now, he frequently travels to satisfy his wanderlust. **Malay Publisher** said, “Traveling is good. I like to visit new places, and see how the locals live.”

Among **Self-Adjusters** from the third group are **Civil Rights Activist** and **Political Analyst**. These invited participants of government initiatives have come away extremely disappointed with the top-down nature of the national

consultative process and what they see as the resulting cosmetic changes that do little to address the core issues. They have, instead, turned their attention to issue-based groups and themes, such as gay rights or heritage conservation, where they believe they can make the most impact.

Self-Adjusters who fall in the fourth group are **Academic Thinker** and **Local Poet**. When I first got to know **Local Poet**, he was a newly married, aspiring poet. I always sensed a spirit of restlessness and general dissatisfaction in him, as **Local Poet** had often expressed his longing to experience the way of life in a foreign country. That opportunity presented itself in the late 1990s, when he was offered a national grant to pursue postgraduate studies in Australia. He was one of those who I thought would emigrate, if given the opportunity.

I contacted **Local Poet** during the first few weeks I was in Singapore, to find out what his latest plans were with regard to emigration. I was surprised when he mentioned that emigration was no longer high on his list. “I would rather be a big fish in a small pond, than a small fish in a big pond,” was how he had put it. Even though **Local Poet** is not a household name, he has won several awards and national grants for his published work, and was starting to really make his mark on the local literary circles. A move overseas now represented a career setback, since **Local Poet** would have to start from scratch and be prepared for a life of anonymity while he built a name for himself in the literary circles overseas. **Local Poet** strongly believed that the opportunity for him to grow as a writer is greater in the city-state than elsewhere, especially since Singapore’s literary scene was still in its infancy, and more money was pouring into the burgeoning arts

industry in recent years. With his child faring relatively well in grade school, **Local Poet** has yet to face the pressures that forced families with older children to emigrate.

In the course of our last conversation, I also sensed that if given the opportunity, **Local Poet** could very well move towards being an **Enthusiastic Loyalist**. At the time of our interview, he was already actively promoting Singapore literature and poetry to universities in the U.S. and Australia. I have no doubt that **Local Poet** would passionately and enthusiastically participate in debates, discussions, or government initiatives set up to look into and map the future direction and development of the Singapore literary scene.

Returnees or *hai gui*⁴⁹ — that is, those who had emigrated but have since relocated back to Singapore — form the fifth and final group of **Self-Adjusters**. They range from individuals who have returned temporarily because of the draw of a higher paying job or family obligations (e.g., **PR Consultant, PR Director** and **Stay-At-Home-Mum**), to those who decided to cut their losses and return to Singapore after finding out that life in Australia is not quite what they had thought it would be (e.g., **Returnee**). These **Self-Adjusters** have enthusiastically re-immersed themselves into Singapore society, and are now more accepting of how things are run in the city-state, because they have come to view Singapore as their home for the moment. Perhaps, what makes life in Singapore more tolerable now than before is their ability to relocate to Australia at a moment's notice. These

⁴⁹ *Hai gui* is a Mandarin term coined by the Chinese to refer to emigrants who have returned from abroad to settle back in their home country. It describes “sea turtles returning to shores again after leaving it to grow up in the sea” (Hu September-October 2006, 74).

Self-Adjusters have the mobility and ability to relocate permanently to Australia should they wish to do so because unlike most Singaporeans, they hold the legal right to permanent residency in Australia.

Slight Modification to Self-Adjuster Category

In my initial exposition of my typology in Chapter 2, I had suggested that, perhaps, the **Self-Adjuster** may not occupy its own place in the typology and may, instead, exhibit tendencies that are similar to the **Contented Loyalist**. However, my research findings show that **Self-Adjusters** do exhibit particular characteristics that are dissimilar to **Contented Loyalists** and **Disengaged Stayers**. They may be distinguished from **Contented Loyalists** because they were never completely satisfied with what Singapore has to offer, and may have previously even harbored thoughts of emigrating. However, unlike the **Disengaged Stayer** who stands emotionally detached from the community in which they are living, **Self-Adjusters** have chosen to reconnect with their community. These findings support the proposition that **Self-Adjusters** do occupy their own place in the typology after all.

My research findings also saw **Self-Adjusters** revising their personal expectations and channeling their energies to reintegrating into the community. Some **Self-Adjusters**, such as **Malay Publisher**, may even do their own bit for the community, for example, by getting involved in *ad hoc*, short term projects in and around their community. Others, such as **Polytechnic Lecturer**, may voice their views and opinions on public policy from time to time by writing letters to

the editor that are subsequently published in the Forum page of *The Straits Times*. Perhaps, this is a way for them to shape their environment so that it comes closer to their ideal, thus allowing them to better cope with the original disappointments and dissatisfaction that had triggered their initial intention to emigrate. Such participation is usually intermittent and issue-driven, with many **Self-Adjusters** motivated to making such efforts because of their children's future, their personal ideals, or for the sake of their career advancement. Nevertheless, these episodic attempts also qualify as examples of constructive voice.

This finding that **Self-Adjusters** may actually participate in their community is refreshing, and contrary to the initial supposition I made in Chapter 2, where I had assigned a more passive role to the **Self-Adjuster**. I had suggested that **Self-Adjusters** were likely to assimilate and reintegrate themselves into their community once they make the decision not to emigrate, and to passively accept the shortcomings of the nation-state without attempting to change their situation. However, it is important to remember that an individual's personal circumstances may change over the course of his or her life, and that **Self-Adjusters** may still make the decision to emigrate further down the road. As Lyons and Lowery noted, an individual's relative level of satisfaction is likely to have an impact on his or her decision to emigrate (1989, 842-845).

(5) **Disengaged Stayer**

In Chapter 2, I described **Disengaged Stayers** as those who were generally unhappy with their current situation in the nation-state, but who remain

silent about it for want of a better alternative. They are conscious of the fact that their membership in the nation-state (e.g., being a citizen or resident of the country) is their best option for now and they grudgingly remain in the country — hence seen as loyal — until a better alternative comes along. **Disengaged Stayers** are generally unsupportive of the authorities and the regime, and tend to be indifferent to the community of fellow nationals. They maintain their membership in the nation-state so as to enjoy the economic benefits provided by the authorities, and because the current circumstances are their best possible option for the moment. They are also likely to be cynical of any government initiative to rally the people to contribute towards some national goal, and to view any attempts to persuade the people to accept certain government policies as government propaganda.

Disengaged Stayers may be more aptly described as the alienated (Oldenquist 1982; Lyons & Lowery 1986, 1989) that have consciously chosen to emotionally detach themselves from their environment, and would only interact with the community to the extent that such interaction satisfies their personal — and their immediate family's — needs. According to Oldenquist, the alienated “does not view his community as his own and consequently does not much care what happens to it or what it looks like. He is loathe to support it financially, and if its deterioration threatens his safety or the value of his property, his inclination is to move rather than work for improvement” (1982, 187-188).

The **Disengaged Stayers** among my research participants were mostly concentrated in the 40 to 49-year-old age group and accounted for close to 14% of

Internal Loyalists. They are usually parents with young and/or teenage school-going children who were having a tough time in Singapore's competitive educational system. These **Disengaged Stayers** maintain a clear division between their public and private lives, are only concerned about their nuclear family, and remain emotionally detached from the larger environment. Observed **Former Journalist**, "These people are so wrapped up in their own lives. They don't see beyond immediate family. They believe that 'I take care of my own. So everyone else should take care of their own'."

From my findings, I identified two subtypes of **Disengaged Stayers**:

- a) those with financial means who have already made the decision to emigrate and may even have obtained the right to permanent residency elsewhere, but are just waiting for the right time to make the move overseas (e.g., **Business Consultant** and **Sound Engineer**); and
- b) those for whom emigration was never an option because they do not have the required skills and financial assets to move elsewhere (e.g., **Video Editor** and **Store Owner**).

Disengaged Stayers from the first group are individuals whose applications for permanent residency have been approved; those who are waiting for their applications for permanent residency to come through; and those who have already made concrete plans to apply for permanent residency and emigrate within a certain time period. These are "people who are closer to self-actualization goals," observed **Seasoned Communicator**. "Because we can assume that creature comforts are a given... with some slight fluctuations in

quality of life... they are in the position to think: ‘Is there enough space for us to think about freedom of expression, arts, intellectual rigor, etc.?’” As a result, “disgruntlement is most acute for this group.”

With more foreign talent being recruited in recent years, **Disengaged Stayers** are anxious about their own ability to compete with these foreign imports and to hang onto their current jobs, as well as worried about their children’s future in an increasingly competitive environment. As such, they look upon emigration as an option to remove the anxiety from their lives. These **Disengaged Stayers** are also concerned that the education system’s tendency to pigeonhole children from a young age would have a disadvantageous impact on their children’s career prospects and their future.⁵⁰

“Already, my kindergarten-going twins are being labeled as slow learners, inattentive, and unable to follow simple instructions, just because of one incident, when the things they brought for show-and-tell did not coincide with what the teacher would accept, and they had tried to reason with her,” lamented **Business Consultant**, a father of four boys.

Business Consultant is worried that such incidents, if repeated, would stifle his children’s initiative and creativity. He also wonders if records from nursery school would have a negative impact on national assessments of his

⁵⁰ In Singapore, national assessments are carried out at regular intervals until the child reaches 18 years of age. How the child performs at each stage would affect his or her ability to study certain core subjects that are prerequisites for particular career paths. Thus, the child’s performance during these national examinations would, in turn, dictate his or her eligibility for a professional or general degree, or a technical vocation. Great emphasis is given to paper qualifications in Singapore, especially college degrees, because of the career and earnings potential upon graduation. In contrast, technical vocations are associated with someone who earns lower pay and is of a lower intelligence.

children's capability. On his career front, **Business Consultant** was also feeling hemmed in by government rules and regulations which, he believed, are stifling the growth of businesses in Singapore. At the time of our interview, **Business Consultant** was planning to extricate his family and himself from what he views as an unhealthy environment, and to move to Australia within the next four years.⁵¹

The second group of **Disengaged Stayers** has no financial means to relocate. The **Disengaged Stayers** among my research participants are diploma-holders or high school graduates in the 40s, with teenage children who are struggling in school. All of them were, at one time or another, laid off during the economic recession in early 2000, and had subsequently found it difficult to get a good paying permanent job. These **Disengaged Stayers** "stay not because they want to stay, but because they cannot go out. [They] don't have the mobility." Frequent comments given by participants who fell within this subtype were: "This government doesn't care about the people. All they care about is making money. They don't govern like they're running a country! More like running a corporation;" and "All government policies are for getting money from their people. All take and no give. It's their policies that are turning people away, because they're always taxed!" Another common complaint voiced by participants such as **Video Editor** and **Store Owner**, both Chinese women in

⁵¹ Being the father of four young sons, it is no wonder that **Business Consultant** would be planning far in advance for his family's relocation, especially since the Singapore government requires parents relocating overseas with their sons to place a S\$75,000 (or US\$48,000) surety on every boy past the age of 10. This is to ensure that the boy will return to Singapore for national service as soon as he is 16-and-a-half years old. For **Business Consultant**, this could amount to a hefty sum of S\$300,000 (or US\$192,000) should he relocate after his youngest son turns 10

their late 40s was: “The government doesn’t care about the people. Once elected, the MPs are only concerned about toeing the PAP line, because they know which side of their bread is buttered.”

This second group of **Disengaged Stayers** is cynical about the government’s sincerity in obtaining feedback from ordinary Singaporeans and believes that any attempts to engage the government in the hope of changing their immediate environment would be futile. For example, one such **Disengaged Stayer** commented that the Remaking Singapore exercise was “just another movie that you sit and watch... just another nice show put up by the government. Don’t expect any difference because nothing much will change.”

Having been retrenched during the economic downturn of 1999 to 2001, job insecurities have hit this group of bitter Singaporeans particularly hard. Reports of top officials, business leaders, and foreign talent being paid top dollar have only added to their resentment. Probing further, I found that many **Disengaged Stayers** have become increasingly disillusioned with the mantra of meritocracy, which they see as only benefiting the elite few.

Other common grouses are the high costs of living and medical expenses. Because Singapore does not have a welfare system, concerns over how to meet daily expenses are topmost on Singaporeans’ minds. They also worry about their retirement, and whether their CPF monies would be enough to see them through the golden years. These **Disengaged Stayers** are increasingly looking to emigrate to the less developed countries in the region. Many have not ruled out the

possibility of retiring to neighboring countries such as Malaysia, Indonesia, and Thailand, or even China, where the costs of living are relatively more affordable, and they can stretch their monies much further.

From the above, it is apparent that what distinguishes the **Disengaged Stayer** from the **Self-Adjuster** is their attitude towards the nation-state. Unlike **Self-Adjusters** who re-immense themselves in activities that would benefit society, **Disengaged Stayers** have generally disconnected and detached themselves from their surrounding environment. They are just making the necessary minimal contributions to society mandatory by law, such as paying taxes. These people are “quitters from emotional point of view, because they quit passion for the system years ago. They are the free riders of the system.”

External Loyalists

The passion with which individuals feel for their nation-state is not something they would publicly express. Yet, the attachment that some Singaporean emigrants feel for Singapore is unmistakable. Observed **Seasoned Communicator**, “One thing that struck me was that people migrate having suffered the process, shed tears, and felt upset over the development [occurring in Singapore]. PM Goh’s stayers / quitters dichotomy was oversimplified.⁵² These [people who emigrated] are the ones with extreme passion, and have strong feelings for Singapore... To brand them as quitters is terribly unjust.”

⁵² Here, **Seasoned Communicator** was referring to then Prime Minister Goh’s comment that those who stuck it out with Singapore were stayers, and those who did not and chose to move overseas were quitters.

This point was reiterated by **Business Lecturer**, who observed, “Singaporean emigrants are still contributors to Singapore economy. They give it the external outlook. It’s silly to believe that only those who physically remain contribute.”

In Chapter 2, I defined **External Loyalists** as Singaporeans and former Singaporeans who have relocated overseas. This term would include:

- (1) Singapore emigrants (that is, both former and current citizens) who have taken up citizenship in their country of residence;
- (2) Singapore citizens living and working abroad and who hold the right to permanent residency in their country of residence; and
- (3) Singapore citizens living and working abroad for an extended period of time, but who do not hold the right to permanent residency in their current country of residence.

Reasons for Emigrating

External Loyalists made the life-changing decision to emigrate when they decided they could no longer mold themselves to fit into the Singapore system. Some, such as **Crisis Manager** and **Professional Artiste**, both of Indian origin, had become disillusioned at how things in Singapore had evolved and felt they no longer shared the same goals as the nation-state. Explained **Crisis Manager**, “I grew up believing in a Singaporean Singapore.... I believed in the [national] pledge: ‘regardless of race, language, or religion’... That we can rise above divisions to face adversities. That’s what we are still today.”

“But as we went along and as the government tried to protect its political longevity, rather than the people... They [the PAP] believed their longevity was Singapore’s. That’s a mistake. They started reacting to patterns — and that caused them to change and chop electoral rules.”

“When Anson⁵³ was lost, there was the mistaken belief that it was minority votes that swung the ground in Anson... After Anson, the script has changed.⁵⁴ Singapore became very ethnic focused. My ideal was taken away from me. Taking something important away from you... there’s nothing holding you back. When my ideal was re-scripted, it broke my own confidence.”

Although **Crisis Manager** made the decision to emigrate in 2001, he continues to hold fast to his vision of the Singaporean Singapore, which he hopes to nurture among Singaporean emigrants in Perth. He makes the Kangaroo Hop (Singapore-Perth-Singapore commute) regularly, flying back to Singapore almost once every two to three months, to attend to his business and clients in the city-state.

These **External Loyalists** often assert that they decided to emigrate “for the sake of the children’s education and future.” Many emigrants who fit my description of **Passive Externals** left Singapore because they were worried about their children’s future prospects in the city-state, especially if their academic performance was not good enough for them to gain entry into local tertiary institutions, and into professional degree programs. During the time I was doing field research in Perth in April 2004, the number

⁵³ Anson was the first constituency to vote for the opposition, after 16 years of PAP rule since 1965.

⁵⁴ Here, **Crisis Manager** is referring to the by-election of 1981 that ended the PAP’s stranglehold on local politics. Joshua Benjamin Jeyaretnam (popularly known as JBJ), then the secretary-general of the Workers’ Party, won the seat from a PAP candidate and became the first opposition Member of Parliament since Singapore’s independence in 1965. PAP leaders reacted strongly to the loss, and launched a series of studies to find out why the people of Anson voted against PAP.

of aspiring emigrants was on the rise. **Former Journalist** confided she had heard from a reliable source that “100,000 families are on waiting list to come to Australia. They have put in their applications.”⁵⁵

“Nine out of 10 would say they left for the sake of their kids’ education... The 13 years I’ve been here, among the people we know, at least 12 families have come; another 50 more are desperate to come. 100 per cent because of children,” observed **Former Journalist** knowledgeably. She had also left Singapore for the sake of her sons’ education.

Café Operator, a Malay in her late 30’s who runs a café serving Halal food, confided, “Now, when I talk to my relatives on the phone, they say, “Stay there, don’t come back.” Last time, they used to say we *gila*⁵⁶!”

Another common reason given for emigrating was the generally uncaring Singapore society, and the inability to express one’s opinions and participate as equal partners building a home that everyone wants to live in. Emigrants point to the existence of OB markers: “Don’t like it? Leave!... There’s no value to citizenship!” (responses from **Former Architect** and **Insurance Agent**). Many also found the nanny state stifling, and wished there were a clearer line to delineate the public from the private.

Personal and Financial Costs of Emigration

Looking back, however, all participants agreed that emigration is a costly exercise, both emotionally and financially, as they had to leave friends and loved ones

⁵⁵ Migration agents I interviewed also confirmed these figures.

⁵⁶ *Gila* is Malay for crazy.

behind to start life anew in a foreign country. Many of my research participants emigrated because they felt powerless in their fight against an unforgiving education system and culture in Singapore, and the looming presence of the Singapore government in their private lives. If given the opportunity to do it all over again, most of my research participants were certain they would not have emigrated if the Singapore system and culture were more forgiving.

“Migration is not a decision taken lightly. It’s a very difficult decision. It’s a situation where you do it only as a last resort,” observed **Former Journalist**.

The financial costs of emigration for Singaporean families with sons are especially high. Under current rules and regulations in Singapore, those with sons above the age of eleven have to either put down \$75,000 cash (approximately US\$48,000) per son as surety in an escrow account, and sign a bond with the government with the personal guarantee that their sons will return to serve national service when they reach the age of eighteen. The parents would forfeit the sum of S\$75,000, should their son fail to return for national service. On his part, the son would also have to serve a three-year prison sentence, if he wishes to return to Singapore subsequently (interviews with migration agents; see also Contact Singapore web site:

<http://www.contactsingapore.com.sg/>).

Participants were also quick to dispel the notion popularized by the Singapore government and media, especially in the 1980s, that make emigrants out to be ingrates, milking everything they could from the Singapore society before leaving for better prospects elsewhere when their homeland had nothing more to offer. “Government

propaganda says that people leave [Singapore] to have big houses and cars. It's actually the other way around! People were leaving to renounce materialism and all that Singapore stands for!" remarked **Former Journalist**.

In fact, life in the new, foreign country has never been easy. Often, many participants found themselves up against a brick wall even when applying for jobs in the fields they were qualified for and had immense experience, having worked more than ten years in the field while in Singapore. After living on fast-dwindling savings for several months, many had no choice but to take any job that pays the bills, even if it meant a menial job at subsistence pay. "When I went to Perth, I had to start from scratch. First, I worked my way up in Hungry Jack's (the Australian equivalent of Burger King) until I was manager of my own store. Then I went on to be a supermarket manager, and then relieving store manager of Woolworths,⁵⁷" recalled **PR Consultant** matter-of-factly and without a trace of bitterness.

Feeling Singaporean Abroad

Many emigrants I interviewed claim they remain extremely concerned about the future of Singapore, despite now living overseas. The common catch phrase frequently cited when I asked **External Loyalists** if they still had strong feelings for Singapore, was: "Aiyah, you know what they say lah... 'You can take a Singaporean out of Singapore, but you can't take Singapore out of the Singaporean'." Many **External Loyalists** confessed that they avidly follow news from Singapore, and frequently meet with fellow Singaporeans. These emigrants always look forward to such gatherings with

⁵⁷ Woolworths is a major department store chain in Australia.

fellow Singaporeans because they feel at home. It is almost as though they are instantly transported back to Singapore, recreating the quintessentially Singaporean experience, speaking Singlish freely, discussing Singapore politics and policies, and sharing Singapore food. Conversations at such gatherings often revolve around the latest news from Singapore, the latest changes in government policies, the Singaporean food they miss, the best place in Singapore for this or that, some mutual friend's dilemma with emigration, etc.

Said **Academic**, a Chinese lecturer at an Australian university, "I am still emotionally committed to Singapore. I feel sad that Singapore has not gone as far as it could. That the people who are committed have shut up. I'm rather skeptical about the political activists and their agendas. But there are people who are genuinely concerned about the direction of the country but have become disillusioned because of their inability to change stuff or influence policy directions."

Other emigrants also echo **Academic**'s sentiment. They assert, they are still interested in what is going on in their former city-state, having continued to monitor news from Singapore, and feel immensely proud of its recent achievements — some examples given were the city-state's impressive development from a Third World country in the 1960s to a First World country in 1999; the national flag carrier Singapore Airlines being named the best airline in the world for several years running; the various "firsts" that Singapore garnered in international surveys such as the most competitive city-state, or the busiest port in the world, and Changi International Airport as the best international airport

in the world. **External Loyalists** — in particular, **Pragmatic Nationals** and **Passive Nationals** — continue to gain vicarious satisfaction through identification with Singapore.

When asked if they would participate in national efforts to remake the city-state, some emigrants claim they are constantly looking for avenues to provide feedback to the government, and are more than willing to participate in projects for the betterment of their former homeland and its people. But often, these assertions came with the *proviso*: “if approached by the government.” Personal invitations from the Singapore government to participate in national initiatives are viewed as a subtle stamp of official approval of their activity in the particular area. Those invited to participate often respond enthusiastically to such invitations. The general reluctance among overseas Singaporeans to independently volunteer is probably associated with their inability to assess the Singapore government’s reaction to overseas Singaporean contributions. This stems from the fact that the Singapore government has often expressed suspicion of activities conducted outside the territorial boundaries of Singapore that are not officially sanctioned.

Despite their assertion that they were eager to contribute in any way possible to Singapore’s future development, **External Loyalists** are largely skeptical about the extent to which they can initiate change, given the political leaders’ tendency to favor the status quo. “At the back of the mind, we are cynical because the regime will not give up things that work. It will work with the system they have,” was a common observation. These **External Loyalists** also noted that even if incremental changes are brought about through their efforts, these are often limited to the economic sphere. Contrary to

Hirschman's proposition that people who exit no longer have voice, some **External Loyalists** continue to make themselves heard, either by expressing their views and opinions on public policy through letters to the editor of the Forum section of *The Straits Times* and similar sections in other language newspapers, or by attempting to influence public policy through various government feedback mechanisms.

Distinguishing Between Types of External Loyalists

Following my field research, I came to realize that my proposed fine-lined differentiation between types of **External Loyalists** among overseas Singaporeans is only possible because of the growing number of Singaporean emigrants in recent years. If this study had been undertaken more than 20 years earlier, during the period of time when the Singapore government was still publicly antagonistic towards Singaporean emigrants, it may not have been possible to observe the suggested nuances between the different **External Loyalists**. Some types of loyalists, for example the **Supportive Externals**, may not even have existed. This type of **External Loyalist** only came into being in recent years — specifically from 1991 onwards — when Singapore's top leaders began taking a more conciliatory stance towards overseas Singaporeans, and acknowledging the need to engage and maintain links with Singaporean emigrants, so that they would be encouraged to contribute to their former homeland. The Singapore government's efforts to include and engage overseas Singaporeans may be seen in the parliamentary establishment of the Singapore International Foundation (SIF) in 1991, and the launching of subsequent programs such as Contact Singapore in 1997, Singapore Overseas Network (SONs) in 2002, and Overseas Singapore Unit (OSU) in 2006.

Below is a more detailed discussion of the different types of **External Loyalists**.

(1) **Supportive External Loyalists**

In Chapter 2, I described **Supportive External Loyalists** as generally supportive of their (former) nation-state. This can be seen from their willingness to adhere to the culturally and politically prescribed norms of engagement in their dealings with Singaporean institutions and political leaders.

Supportive Externals, accounting for 15% of the **External Loyalists** among my participants, still feel passionately about their homeland, continue to maintain strong links with their former nation-state, and would not hesitate to do their bit for Singapore, if the opportunity or need ever arises. Some travel frequently to Singapore on business trips, conferences, and academic exchanges. Others are involved in activities that promote Singapore food, culture, and theater in Australia. Many, because of their wide-ranging contacts in Singapore, continue to engage their former homeland from afar, with some plugging into consultative bodies that provide feedback to the government, or offering their views to personal friends who are high-ranking officials in the government. Before emigrating, these **Supportive Externals**, such as **Crisis Manager** and **Professional Artiste**, were **Enthusiastic Internal Loyalists** who had independently contributed to public debates over public policy from an apolitical standpoint. But repeated disappointments over the years at the incremental changes have worn them out, and they subsequently grew disillusioned with the system. One common illustration used by Singaporean residents and emigrants

alike was: “When you stand up and fight, everyone says “Yeah!” but no one stands behind you. Like a general, you take a horse and ride, but when you turn around, there’s no one behind you.”

Crisis Manager’s explanation as to why he finally chose to emigrate succinctly summarizes the range of responses I received from participants whom I believed are **Supportive Externals**.

“I left because I felt ineffectual, ineffective,” declared **Crisis Manager**. “I left because things will not change quickly enough in my time... and I was not prepared to test theories.”

Supportive Externals believe they can continue contributing to Singapore, and be able to achieve greater success creating their ideal of the Singaporean Singapore from the outside, rather than within Singapore. At the same time, they are realistic enough to acknowledge that their efforts outside of Singapore will still be closely watched.

Observed **Freelance Writer** candidly: “Community activities in Singapore are more top-down... so it’s difficult to start a group without being suspected of something... If we are too successful, we might be watched very closely, and attempts may be used to sideline us... Too successful, they want to infiltrate. Too antagonistic, they want to kill you off...”

However, these **Supportive Externals** in Perth are optimistic that as long as they “stay focused on the objective to celebrate Singapore and Singaporeans in a nonpolitical way, and to ally ourselves with the Western Australian

mainstream,” they would be able to show the powers-that-be that they do not have any agenda, except to contribute in their own small way to raising awareness of Singapore and the Singaporean culture from overseas.

Interestingly enough, most **Supportive Externals** still believe they need government endorsement to succeed, even on foreign land.

Said **Aspiring Actress**, a budding young actress who would like to see the development of a Singaporean culture, “I want to *work* with the system. Not get *framed* by the system.... It makes your point much stronger if you work within the system. It gives you the credibility that you are right. Nobody can touch you.”

(2) **Dissident External Loyalists**

In Chapter 2, I described **Dissident External Loyalists** as generally supportive of the national community, but antagonistic toward the authorities and/or regime. This group of emigrants is disillusioned with the current authorities and regime in their country of origin. They often act in a self-appointed role as a check on the government and maintain that they act with the good of the national community in mind. Unlike **Supportive Externals** who adhere to the culturally and politically prescribed limits even though they now reside overseas, **Dissident Externals** knowingly and intentionally flout those clearly defined limits instituted by the powers-that-be, thus putting themselves on a direct collision course with the authorities.

As mentioned earlier, many Singaporeans are pragmatic enough not to openly antagonize the Singapore government, because they are not prepared to

bear the financial consequences of such actions, and types such as **Dissident Internals** and **Externals** are the exception rather than the rule in Singapore. As a result, I could not find any participants in my sample who would fit the description of this type of loyalist, although I can think of three opposition politicians and political activists living abroad in self-exile, such as Francis Seow, Tang Liang Hong and Zulfikar Mohamad Shariff, who might fit in this category.

All three men — Seow, Tang, and Zulfikar⁵⁸ — have a history of conflict with Singapore’s political leaders, and have campaigned against the Singapore government. In 2003, the three men founded Melbourne-based Association For Democracy In Singapore, purportedly to fight for freedom of speech and democracy in Singapore. These men see themselves as loyal to the people of Singapore, and fighting for the cause of Singaporeans. They profess to campaign for greater democracy in Singapore and often criticize the Singapore government and institutions for the lack of freedom of speech and human rights, and the presence of the Internal Security Act in the Singapore law books that allows for detention without trial. The Singapore government and politicians have publicly questioned the men’s loyalty to Singapore and their underlying motives, however, especially since the Singapore government has always maintained that efforts to engage in national politics should be confined within the territorial boundaries of the nation-state.

The efficacy of the actions of the three men on foreign soil is questionable, partly because of their inability to sustain interest in their cause, whether among

⁵⁸ See Appendix E for a more detailed discussion of each of the men.

foreign governments, international human rights observers, or Singaporeans overseas, and because the alleged violation of human rights is not to the level as that seen in other countries such as Haiti. Political observers believe that the three men suffer from what has been described as the “cut flowers effect” (*The Straits Times*, March 13, 1999).

Observed then-Nominated Member of Parliament (NMP) Simon Tay, “They have the vitality at first, but over time, the context changes, their distance affects their view of what’s going on and they become irrelevant to people back home” (*The Straits Times*, March 13, 1999).

(3) **Passive Externals**

In Chapter 2, I described **Passive Externals** as those who continue to maintain close ties with friends and relatives living in Singapore, but who do not participate actively in any officially sanctioned, overseas Singapore groups.

Passive Externals account for three-fourths of the total number of **External Loyalists** in my research sample. Even though they now live away from Singapore, many still consider Singapore their home. These **Passive Externals** left the city-state because of personal reasons, for example, for a change in lifestyle, because of an overseas job posting or postgraduate studies, to settle down with a foreign spouse, or for the sake of their children’s education. They monitor news from Singapore on a regular basis — usually about once a month — and are in regular contact with family and friends who still reside in the city-state. However, they do not aspire to fill the activist role.

Passive Externals who left in the 1980s and did not reap the benefits of the economic boom maintain they are proud of how far Singapore has come since its independence in 1965. The more recent emigrants who enjoyed the economic benefits of the 1990s expressed their admiration for the political leaders, and the PAP government's skill and foresight in guiding the city-state.

Some of the usual comments were: "The government has been very good to us. I agree with some of its policies;" "The government enforced English as a first language and that gave Singaporeans greater opportunity when they went abroad." "If not for Lee Kuan Yew,⁵⁹ Singapore would not be recognized by a lot of people. I'm proud that Singapore is such a small place, and yet internationally recognized." "I do salute certain things about Singapore government, in terms of economy; space to practice religion. Can't deny that it is good."

A large proportion of participants asserted they are proud to identify themselves as Singaporeans. They also expressed their pride at the high respect Australians have for Singaporean emigrants — because Singaporeans are widely regarded as efficient and hardworking and, unlike other migrant groups, are self-sufficient and proud enough to not be "on the dole." The Chinese Singaporeans were especially quick to draw differentiations between themselves and the Chinese emigrants from Mainland China, Hong Kong, or Vietnam.

From my interviews, I gathered that **Passive Externals** were likely to return to Singapore should the opportunity arise, probably for short sojourns or

⁵⁹ Lee Kuan Yew is the first Prime Minister and current Minister Mentor of Singapore. He is often referred to as the father of modern day Singapore. Recently, he was named one of the most influential personalities in Asia by Time Magazine.

even extended job postings. Those who have settled into their life overseas do not see themselves relocating back to Singapore permanently, as they feel they do not quite fit into the Singapore of today. They are likely to passively watch developments in the city-state from afar, rather than respond to the Singapore government's calls to offer their opinions and participate in feedback mechanisms. A handful may even be persuaded to participate and contribute in Singaporean groups overseas, especially if they determine that these are independent, apolitical groups that serve the interests of Singaporeans overseas. This could also facilitate their transition to becoming **Supportive Externals**.

(4) **Rejecters**

In Chapter 2, I described **Rejecters** as generally unsupportive of the national community, authorities or regime. Because of their lack of emotional attachment and commitment to the nation-state, they are regarded as free riders of the system (Hirschman 1970).

Rejecters accounted for 7.5% of **External Loyalists** in my participant pool. Interestingly, all the **Rejecters** among my research participants were recent emigrants in the 40s; most of them have only basic vocational skills. This group of people appeared to have borne the brunt of the effects of certain national policies over the years and, as a result, was privately antagonistic towards anything associated with Singapore or the Singapore government. Some were laid off during the economic crisis in the late 1990s and early 2000s. Due to their age, ethnicity, and competition from foreign workers, many could not find fulltime

jobs. With house mortgages and car loans to pay and daily expenses to worry about, these **Rejecters** found day-to-day living in the city-state a nightmare. They blame the Singapore government for not creating job opportunities or extending help to people in their age group who have to start from scratch.

In addition to financial worries, **Rejecters** with families usually have children who are struggling to cope with the demands of the Singapore educational system. As a result, these **Rejecters** saw a bleak future for themselves and their children, and came to the conclusion that emigration would be their family's passport to a better life. However, they emphasized that the decision to emigrate is not one they wanted to make, but was thrust upon them due to their particular circumstances. Many asserted that if given the choice, they would rather have stayed on in Singapore where they were born and spent a large part of their lives. As such, **Rejecters** such as **Studio Technician** are bitter with what they view as the Singapore society's and government's callousness towards and rejection of this non-elite class of people. They blame the Singapore government for creating an elitist society that does not cater to those with lesser abilities.

Although unhappy with the way the system worked, these **Rejecters** did not attempt to initiate changes to the system, for they felt such efforts would be useless. They remain bitter about their experiences in Singapore, even though they have emigrated. During our interviews, they spoke bitterly about government policies, the system, and the politicians. When I asked these **Rejecters** why they chose not to participate in any feedback sessions to the government, their reply was that “[the government's] main objective [from these sessions] is to learn how

to deal with the people,” rather than for the genuine intention of getting useful feedback. When I pointed out that the government had made recent changes to its policies based on the feedback sessions, their take was: “Ya, changing... but not good enough! They are overturning policies due to political motivation.”

“Where are their values? It all boils down to votes. Nothing to do with the people’s welfare,” was **Studio Technician**’s analysis of the situation.

“But what about the Prime Minister’s goal of making everyone a stakeholder in Singapore?” I asked.

“What stakeholder?” asked **Marketing Manager**. “Now that I’m out of there [Singapore], I don’t care what they’re doing there. They can do what they like!”

Grateful for the opportunity to start life anew, these **Rejecters** enthusiastically channel their energies to assimilating into their adopted country as soon as they relocate. Consequently, they have chosen to disconnect themselves from Singapore and anything associated with the city-state, except for continued correspondence with their immediate family members who still live in Singapore.

Political Alienation and Apathy

As discussed above, one of the most significant findings from my interviews with research participants is the absence of **Dissident Internal** and **External Loyalists** among the research participants in this case study, and the large numbers of **Self-Adjusters** and **Passive Externals** among the participants. Taken in totality, these figures suggest an

engrained culture of political apathy and passivity among Singaporeans. Political observers believe this stems from Singaporeans being “primarily subjects on the receiving end of administrative decisions to which their consent is sometimes sought, rather than political actors or citizens with the capacity, motivation and opportunity to influence the political and economic decisions that shape their lives” (Tan and Chiew 1990, 329). Additionally, as Terence Lee points out, “[active] citizenship and participation in the Singapore context not only has legal social, and cultural limits, but comes with political and ideological boundaries that can and will be strictly enforced at the sole discretion of the authorities” (2002, 108).

This political alienation of a large proportion of the population inevitably breeds a culture of political apathy.

Other common explanations for the observed political passivity among Singaporeans range from assertions that Singaporeans are, by and large, happy with the PAP government and see no need for political opposition, to the fact that Singaporeans are a pragmatic lot of people who believe that the costs of being a political opposition far outweigh the benefits of having a hand in shaping Singapore’s politics, given the heavy fines levied on opposition politicians who were found to have defamed Singapore’s top leaders. As Terence Chong observes, “Apathy... protects us from personal distress and embarrassment” (*The Straits Times*, January 14, 2005).

Seasoned Communicator, a long-time political observer and regular participant in government consultative committees, believes that this widespread political apathy among Singaporeans is the result of national politics that is conducted in a top-down manner. He noted, “Many ministers talk down to the people. No persuasion. Preaching,

telling, teaching, whipping. That's what it is. And this has a direct bearing because, one, you don't allow for contrarian views to be aired; two, you don't allow for people to feel they can fight for causes; lobbying is bad.... We are told from young that we shouldn't have strong beliefs."

MOVING WITHIN AND BETWEEN CATEGORIES

In addition to the discussion of **Internal** and **External Loyalists** above, my research revealed that one's predisposition toward the nation-state is not set in stone. Such predispositions change over time and space, depending on the individual's perception of the underlying situation and whether the nation-state is able to provide a conducive enough environment for the individual to pursue and attain his or her personal goals. As a result, it is not unusual to find an individual moving within as well as between the **Internal Loyalist** and **External Loyalist** categories in a chameleon-like manner.

One obvious example is when an individual emigrates and moves across national boundaries: doing so transforms a (former) **Internal Loyalist** into an **External Loyalist**. It appears that **Disengaged Stayers** are likely to be transformed into **Rejecters** once they emigrate; and **Contented Internal Loyalists** and **Self-Adjusters** are likely to become **Passive Externals** when they move overseas. Additionally, a small proportion of those who were once **Enthusiastic Internal Loyalists** may become **Supportive Externals**, while the rest may become **Passive Externals** once they relocate.

This tendency for Singaporeans to move between the **Internal** and **External Loyalist** categories is commonly seen among the educated, internationally mobile,

younger generation, who view themselves as global citizens. It has become a growing trend ever since the 1980s, following the Singapore government's deliberate campaign to encourage local companies to expand into overseas markets,⁶⁰ and for young Singaporeans to gain overseas experience. On the reverse side, the Singapore government's more conciliatory stance toward Singaporean emigrants has also encouraged overseas Singaporeans to return to the city-state in search of opportunities.

Another observed trend is the tendency for an individual to move between the five different categories within the **Internal Loyalist** group (**Enthusiastic**, **Dissident**, **Contented**, **Self-Adjuster**, and **Disengaged Stayer**), or the four different categories within the **External Loyalist** group (**Supportive**, **Dissident**, **Passive**, and **Rejecters**), as a result of changes in their personal circumstance that may constrain or further motivate them to participate in community activities or to attempt to influence the policy making process.

There are growing signs among the **Enthusiastic Internals** I interviewed that these individuals are starting to question how much change they can realistically effect, especially when their well-meaning efforts and suggestions are repeatedly rebuffed or politely brushed aside. Several veteran participants of government-led initiatives appeared to be losing heart over what they viewed as cosmetic changes to present government policies, despite the government's averred stance that "no sacred cows would be spared" (*The Straits Times* 2002) — the recent Remaking Singapore exercise being

⁶⁰ This was undertaken upon the advice of the Economic Review Committee in 1986, which underscored the pressing need to develop an external wing to the economy, so as to minimize its dependence on local demand.

one such example. Some, such as **Objective Participant**, **Political Analyst** and **Civil Rights Activist**, have scaled back their participation in government committees, thus making the transition from **Enthusiastic Internals** to **Self-Adjusters**.

These veterans also confessed that there were times when they felt “sufficiently down, and did think about migration.” Being pragmatic Singaporeans who are constantly taking stock of their current situation and would not hesitate to move onto greener pastures that could increase or enhance their economic worth, **Enthusiastic Internals** are not ruling out the possibility of emigrating in the future, which would transform them into **External Loyalists** should they decide to relocate.

The following are illustrations of some interesting trends found among my participants:

Some observed trends

- (1) *Enthusiastic Internals* → *Self-Adjusters*
→ *Disengaged Stayers* | → | *Supportive Externals*
- NB:*** *The line “ | ” denotes the territorial boundary separating **Internal Loyalists** from **External Loyalists**.*

Professional Artiste and **Crisis Manager** are examples of **Enthusiastic Internals**-turned-**Supportive Externals**. Both men had actively participated in activities benefiting the Singaporean community before they made the decision to emigrate. **Crisis Manager** was an active volunteer with self-help groups, and often shared his opinions and observations with government officials and through government feedback mechanisms, while **Professional Artiste** had participated in various consultation groups and who counts, among his classmates, several high-

ranking government officials and ministers with whom he still shares his personal views on national issues. However, both men made the decision to emigrate, after growing increasingly disillusioned with their efficacy in working with the system in Singapore. There was probably a brief period of time when these two men were **Self-Adjusters**, and maybe even **Disengaged Stayers**, before they emigrated.

Since emigrating, however, both men have continued to keep abreast of developments in Singapore, and have immersed themselves in activities promoting the Singaporean culture and Singapore’s presence in Australia. They continue to express their passion for Singapore even when abroad and have, on occasion, voiced their opinions through established as well as informal feedback channels to the Singapore government. They have, in effect, become **Supportive Externals**.

(2)

<i>Disengaged Stayer</i> → <i>Passive External</i> → <i>Self-Adjuster</i> → <i>Enthusiastic Internal (?)</i>

Other cases may be more complicated. Take, for example, that of **Local Poet**. Prior to leaving Singapore for postgraduate studies on a national scholarship, **Local Poet** had expressed his desire to possibly emigrate in the future. At the time, **Local Poet** was a young father with a hefty mortgage on a condominium purchased at the height of the property boom in the mid-1990s. Upon completing his studies, however, **Local Poet** chose to return to Singapore and establish himself within the literary circles. He believed he would be able to accomplish more by plugging into the city-state’s burgeoning local arts scene,

than if he were to stay in Australia and attempt to make a name for himself from scratch. The thought of “going it alone” in a foreign land was also daunting, in view of his financial and family obligations.

Local Poet could be described as having been transformed from a **Disengaged Stayer**, to a **Passive External**, when he left for further studies on a government scholarship. Upon returning to Singapore from his short sojourn, **Local Poet** consciously sought to establish a name for himself in the local literary circles, and participated in efforts to promote Singapore literature overseas. In effect, **Local Poet** had become a **Self-Adjuster**. Given time, **Local Poet** is likely to become an **Enthusiastic Internal Loyalist**, should the opportunity arise for him to participate in national policy debates and consultative committees on how best to promote the local arts scene.

(3)

<i>Disengaged Stayer</i> → <i>Passive External</i> → <i>Self-Adjuster</i>

Another complex example is that of **PR Consultant**. A Eurasian-Peranakan of European mother/Peranakan Chinese⁶¹ father parentage, **PR Consultant**'s mixed heritage is apparent in his green eyes, light brown but slightly graying hair, and rotund Chinese face. “People who look at me think I am

⁶¹ ‘Peranakan Chinese’ is a distinctive cultural group that evolved through the centuries from the intermarriage of Chinese immigrants and native Malays in Singapore. The men are referred to as Babas and the women Nonyas. Over the years, the Peranakan Chinese have developed a distinct culture — language, way of dress, worship, and cuisine — that is a fusion of the Chinese and Malay cultures. They speak a *patois* that is predominantly Malay, but is peppered with a heavy sprinkling of words adapted from a Chinese vernacular such as Hokkien.

Chinese. So at the hawker centers here, they always speak to me in Mandarin. I tell them, ‘Sorry lah. *Wo bu hui jiang ‘zhua-ji.’*⁶² Please speak English, Malay, or Hokkien.’”

A first generation Eurasian in his mid-50s and father of two boys, the non-degree holder climbed the corporate ladder to become Vice President at an international hotel chain. He left a successful career to move to Perth with his family in the early 1980s, after determining that for himself, personally, “success is not equated with the millions in my account, but by family closeness.”

PR Consultant asserted, “I had everything to lose by leaving Singapore. I spent 17 years building up a career! I do not have a degree; I got myself where I was through sheer hard work. I did not feel like moving to Perth...[but] my motherland could not meet my basic needs.”

“The push factors for me were housing and education,” he revealed. “Housing, because at that time, I lived with my in-laws. Like everyone else in Singapore, my wife and I couldn’t buy a landed property. It was simply beyond our reach!”⁶³

The couple made the decision to emigrate shortly after his elder son entered grade school.

⁶² The italicized sentence is a smattering of Mandarin and Hokkien words. The speaker’s intention is to explain his inability to speak Mandarin. The correct sentence should be ‘*Wo bu hui jiang Hua Yu,*’ — literally, ‘I don’t know how to speak Mandarin.’ Here, **PR Consultant** uses what has become a common play on words by the local Singaporeans. *Wo bu hui jiang* literally means ‘I don’t know how to speak’ in Mandarin. *Zhua ji* is Hokkien (a popular Southern Chinese vernacular) for money. This clever twist on the Chinese languages conveys to the listener the message that he does not speak Mandarin, and that he is not a rich Chinese businessman.

⁶³ **PR Consultant** and his wife were unable to buy public housing due to legal technicalities: the couple’s combined income exceeded the permissible monthly household income bracket by S\$1,000, and because his wife was listed as co-owner of a landed property with her father.

“I saw my son suffer four years in the educational system. He had to take Mandarin, just because I have a Chinese surname! I’m a first generation, pure Eurasian! Chinese dad, European mum. I studied Malay in school, and don’t know a word of Mandarin. I am Peranakan, and my mother tongue is English!”

PR Consultant’s decision to emigrate was made easier by the fact that his wife’s sister and family had also relocated to Perth. Having family support in a new country helped tremendously, especially when **PR Consultant** found out that his close to twenty years of work experience with multinational companies in Singapore did not count for anything in Australia, and that he would have to take on menial jobs in order to provide for his family when his meager savings ran out. Consequently, **PR Consultant** and his family immediately applied for Australian citizenship as soon as they qualified for it, as this would allow the couple to withdraw their CPF monies, and ensure a more comfortable lifestyle for their family.

More than a decade later, having seen both his sons through college, **PR Consultant** was ready to launch his second career. The chance came when an old colleague looked him up in Perth to persuade him to return to Singapore and to put his past experiences to work as a PR consultant with a big multinational company. He took up the offer without a moment’s hesitation. That move, in effect, transformed the **Passive External** to a **Self-Adjuster**.

Now, back in Singapore, the **Self-Adjuster** is convinced that his decision to emigrate was a step in the right direction. He chuckles at the highly stressed work environment in Singapore and does not hesitate to offer his detached and

often caustic view on issues ranging from Singapore’s social policies to the city-state’s education system and government-led national initiatives to boost the population count and remake Singapore. **PR Consultant** views his tenure in Singapore as temporary, good only for as long as his skills and experience are appreciated. For him, Perth is now home as that is where his family is, and he revels at his mobility made possible by his decision to emigrate seventeen years earlier.

(4)

<i>Disengaged Stayer</i> → <i>Rejecter</i>
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Studio Technician is an example of a **Disengaged Stayer** who became a **Rejecter**. A Chinese man in his mid-40s, **Studio Technician** was extremely disillusioned with his life in Singapore, the Singapore government, and the city-state’s top leaders, having personally experienced a loss of self-esteem when he was laid off during the economic downturn of 2002. With a mortgage to pay and mouths to feed, **Studio Technician** turned to his representative for help, but soon regretted it. He felt stonewalled by his member of parliament and his aides, who suggested that **Studio Technician** sign up for one of the state-sponsored retraining programs. “Can you imagine? Why must I retrain? It is not as if I do not have any technical skills!” was his grouse.

In addition, **Studio Technician** recognized that his children were unlikely to survive the rigors of the Singapore educational system and was particularly worried about their future prospects, especially if they are unable to gain entry into the local tertiary institutions because of their poor performance in the national examinations. **Studio Technician** felt that his family and himself were

discriminated against, by the stringent government policies. This, coupled with his twin brother's urging to join him in Australia, triggered his decision to emigrate.

Studio Technician continues to harbor a feeling of bitterness towards his former homeland, despite having emigrated.

“What loyalty? I have no commitment or identity. Singapore doesn't want me,” was **Studio Technician**'s blunt assertion.

The above exposition, based on my research findings, illustrate that many factors go into shaping an individual's emotional commitment and affect for the nation-state. As a result, an individual may move through different loyalist categories, depending on the number of different phases s/he undergoes during his or her lifetime.

THOSE WHO DO NOT FALL WITHIN ANY CATEGORY

There is a particular group of people that does not appear to fit nicely into any of the categories in my typology. **Retired Educator**, a Chinese lady in her 50s who frequently travels between her two houses in Singapore and Perth, does what is widely referred to as the 'kangaroo hop' every couple of months between Singapore and Perth. She and her husband spend enough time in both places to be considered residents of the two countries. It is difficult to ascertain if people like them may be more accurately described as **Internal Loyalists**, or **External Loyalists**, or if they should be placed in a separate category of their own.

CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSION

To have common glories in the past, a common will in the present;

to have accomplished great things together,

to wish to do so again,

that is the essential condition for being a nation.

— Ernest Renan (1823-1892)

“What is a Nation?”

Delivered as a lecture at Sorbonne, 1882,

and reprinted in *Becoming National: A Reader*,

edited by Geoff Eley and Ronald Grigor Suny, 1996.

At the beginning of this study in Chapter 1, I noted that national loyalty is an issue of growing concern among state leaders around the world, and that this would be a particularly good time for us to assess, rethink, and confront our still-nebulous understanding of national loyalty, given the speed with which our national and global contexts have changed in this past decade. Specifically, I was interested in establishing what national loyalty means in this age of international migration, and to determine how

nation-states and their leaders may develop and nurture national loyalty in their people. In the chapters that followed, I developed and expanded on Hirschman's exit-voice-loyalty framework by introducing a more comprehensive typology of national loyalists that would capture the nuances of national loyalty in the light of our changed global landscape. This was further refined using Singapore as a case study.

Thus far, this research has successfully accomplished what it set out to do: (1) it has updated current scholarship on national loyalty by incorporating recent studies on transnationalism and international migration with Hirschman's exit-voice-loyalty framework; (2) it has dispelled the notion that national loyalists are a homogeneous group of people; (3) it provided a more systematic approach to distinguishing between the different types of national loyalists found both within and outside the territorial boundaries of the nation-state; and (4) it has updated and better specified Hirschman's concept of loyalty.

OVERVIEW OF MAIN FINDINGS: THE CASE OF SINGAPORE

Extending Hirschman's Typology: Introducing External Loyalists

An individual's physical location is not an unambiguous indication of the depth of emotional attachment and loyalty that the individual has to his or her homeland; neither does it limit one's propensity to voice his or her opinions to the powers-that-be.

In Chapter 2, I also drew attention to the fact that Hirschman's supposition that all exiters are disloyal and voiceless — stemming from his assumption that exiters are

necessarily powerless in changing the way things work in their former nation-state — was flawed. Instead, I proposed that there can be **External Loyalists**, as well as **Internal Loyalists**. As such, I pointed out as too simplistic Hirschman's assertion that only those who do not exit (or emigrate) are loyal. In fact, as my research findings have shown, emigrants may actually exhibit traits that attest to their being even more loyal or emotionally committed to the homeland than those who choose to stay within the territorial boundaries of the nation-state. I also discovered during my interviews with Singaporean emigrants in Perth that even though they now live away from Singapore, many continue to voice their opinions on national policies through the national media or by tapping into their network of well-connected contacts. Some were even invited by the Singapore government to participate in national policy study committees, thus contradicting Hirschman's simplistic supposition that all who exit (or emigrate) no longer have voice.

Personal Motivations of Internal and External Loyalists

My participants revealed that the decisions to: (1) stay or emigrate, and (2) participate in government initiatives or to remain detached, are often complicated by the need to balance one's attachment and predisposition to the nation-state on the one hand, with assessments of personal ideals and life goals, financial ability to relocate, and family commitments on the other. In the final analysis, self-interests ranging from the drive to enhance one's personal worth through further education, amass wealth, climb the social or corporate ladder, to one's concern with the needs of the next generation usually hold sway rather than the noble, moral obligation and debt the individual owes to the

Singaporean society. As Chong (2005) points out, putting one's self-interests first is characteristic of capitalist societies, where the individual's economic potential is "deeply prized... and serves as a brutally objective evaluation of a citizen's self worth in an elitist society" (*The Straits Times*, January 14, 2005), and is the by-product of apathy.

The foregoing finding cogently illustrates that the depth of emotional attachment one has to his or her nation-state cannot be discerned just by observing his or her behavior alone — whether s/he chooses to stay or leave, and to voice or remain silent. Rather, the varying degrees of national loyalty observed must be situated upon an understanding of the individual's current state of mind, how s/he assesses his or her attachment to the nation-state, and the specifics of the individual's personal context. Through in-depth interviews and interaction with the participants in this study, I was able to verify and further specify the existence of the different subtypes among the **Internal Loyalists** and **External Loyalists** in my proposed typology.

Complicating Hirschman's Unconscious Loyalist

My research findings strongly affirm my criticism of Hirschman's *unconscious loyalist* in Chapter 2. Hirschman had described *unconscious loyalists* as individuals who willingly stay with an entity despite its deterioration, and pointed to their silence as proof of their loyalty. I suggested that Hirschman's *unconscious loyalist* is more complicated than he had made it out to be, and observed that his term actually referred to three noticeably distinct types of **Internal Loyalists** — that is: (1) **Contented Loyalists**; (2)

Self-Adjusters; and (3) **Disengaged Stayers** in my proposed typology. The differences between these three types of loyalists are mediated by the individuals' emotional attachment and predispositions toward the nation-state.

As my findings show, **Contented Loyalists** are unlikely to ever consider emigrating because they identify strongly with Singapore and are immensely proud to be associated with Singapore. On the other hand, **Self-Adjusters** are those who have established that living and working in Singapore is their best option for the moment. These include (1) Singaporean citizens who had emigrated and hold the right to permanent residency elsewhere but have since returned to Singapore to live and work; (2) former Singaporean citizens who had emigrated and taken up citizenship in their country of residence, but who are now living and working in Singapore; and (3) Singaporeans who had intended to emigrate, but either: (a) faced spousal or family objections; or (b) came to the realization, upon weighing the pros and cons of emigration, that the costs of emigrating were too great and were, thus, ultimately persuaded that staying with Singapore was their best possible option. Upon deciding to stay, these **Self-Adjusters** reaffirm their commitment and establish stronger roots in their chosen community by immersing themselves in the activities of the local groups. Privately, these **Self-Adjusters** may have reservations about certain government policies, and are often skeptical about the government's declared aim to seek the public's opinion and

agreement on national issues. Nevertheless, some of them may be motivated to contribute to issue-specific causes in which they firmly believe, or that they believe would improve their families' quality of life.⁶⁴

Finally, **Disengaged Stayers** are cynics who continue to stay in Singapore only because (1) they do not have the required skills or financial means to emigrate; and (2) they are staying only for the short-term, as they have either obtained permanent residency elsewhere, or have already made plans to emigrate within a certain period of time. They may be viewed as free riders that have emotionally exited from the nation-state.

Absence of Dissident Internal and External Loyalists

In Chapter 2, I highlighted Hirschman's overemphasis on constructive voice and his failure to consider the existence of adversarial voicers. I proposed extending Hirschman's model to include voicers who were critical and antagonistic towards the authorities and their policies, thus causing the authorities to view them as potential threats and thorns in their side. These critical voicers were identified as **Dissident Internal** and **External Loyalists** in my proposed typology of national loyalists.

My research findings, however, show there were neither **Dissident Internal Loyalists** nor **Dissident External Loyalists** among my research participants. One

⁶⁴ One example is the online portal, Families Against Casino Threat in Singapore (FACTS), put together by concerned Singaporean parents who were against the government's plan to legalize gambling and allow casinos in Singapore. FACTS gathered 30,000 signatures from Singaporeans in its online petition, citing their concerns over the impact of gambling on families with children in Singapore. The issue-based group has since dissolved and faded into oblivion, following the government's decision in August 2004 to build two integrated resorts.

plausible explanation is the high level of structural and institutional constraints placed on participation in politics in Singapore that has cultivated a general culture of pragmatism, non-confrontation, and an internalized reverence for authority among Singaporeans.

As mentioned earlier, Singaporeans are, in general, pragmatic and practical people who carefully weigh the pros and cons of their situation — especially the financial costs and possible impact on their reputation such as the loss of “face” — before deciding how best to proceed. Over the years, the PAP leaders have, on occasion, discredited and questioned the integrity of opposition politicians, publicly chastised them, and successfully sued several opposition leaders for defamation. These high-profile cases often end with the defendants settling the case out of court by issuing a public statement of apology at a press conference, in addition to publishing an apology in *The Straits Times*; on numerous occasions, these lawsuits result in the PAP leaders being awarded monetary compensation of several million dollars. Opposition politicians such as Joshua Benjamin Jeyaretnam and Tang Liang Hong have been declared bankrupt and made ineligible to stand for future elections as a result. Having witnessed the financial and personal costs of opposing the PAP government, many pragmatic Singaporeans have come to the conclusion that it does not make economic sense to be part of the opposition and participate in politics, unless they are invited to stand on the PAP ticket. Hence, there have not been any Singaporeans who have shown themselves to be openly antagonistic towards the PAP government.

This finding that the **Dissident Internal** and **External Loyalist** types do not exist in Singapore may actually be peculiar to the specifics of the Singapore case, stemming largely from the result of the city-state’s particular historical trajectory, demographics,

and political and cultural environment — and a possible limitation associated with this study. It would be prudent to eliminate these types from the typology as applied to the Singapore case, although it may be a little premature to eliminate these types from the general typology as formulated.

Future research to further refine this typology of loyalists should, instead, make use of other case studies to assess if in fact these two types of loyalists exist, given the particular contexts, and the institutional and cultural conditions facilitating the growth of such loyalists, if any. Doing so would allow future scholars to assess if these inconclusive types suggested by the Singapore case study should, indeed, be discarded and disregarded from the general typology, or if those inconclusive results were an anomaly that arose as a result of the peculiars of the Singapore case.

Figure 6.1 is a graphical illustration of the refined typology of loyalists that incorporates research findings from the Singapore case to update the initial typology proposed in Chapter 2.

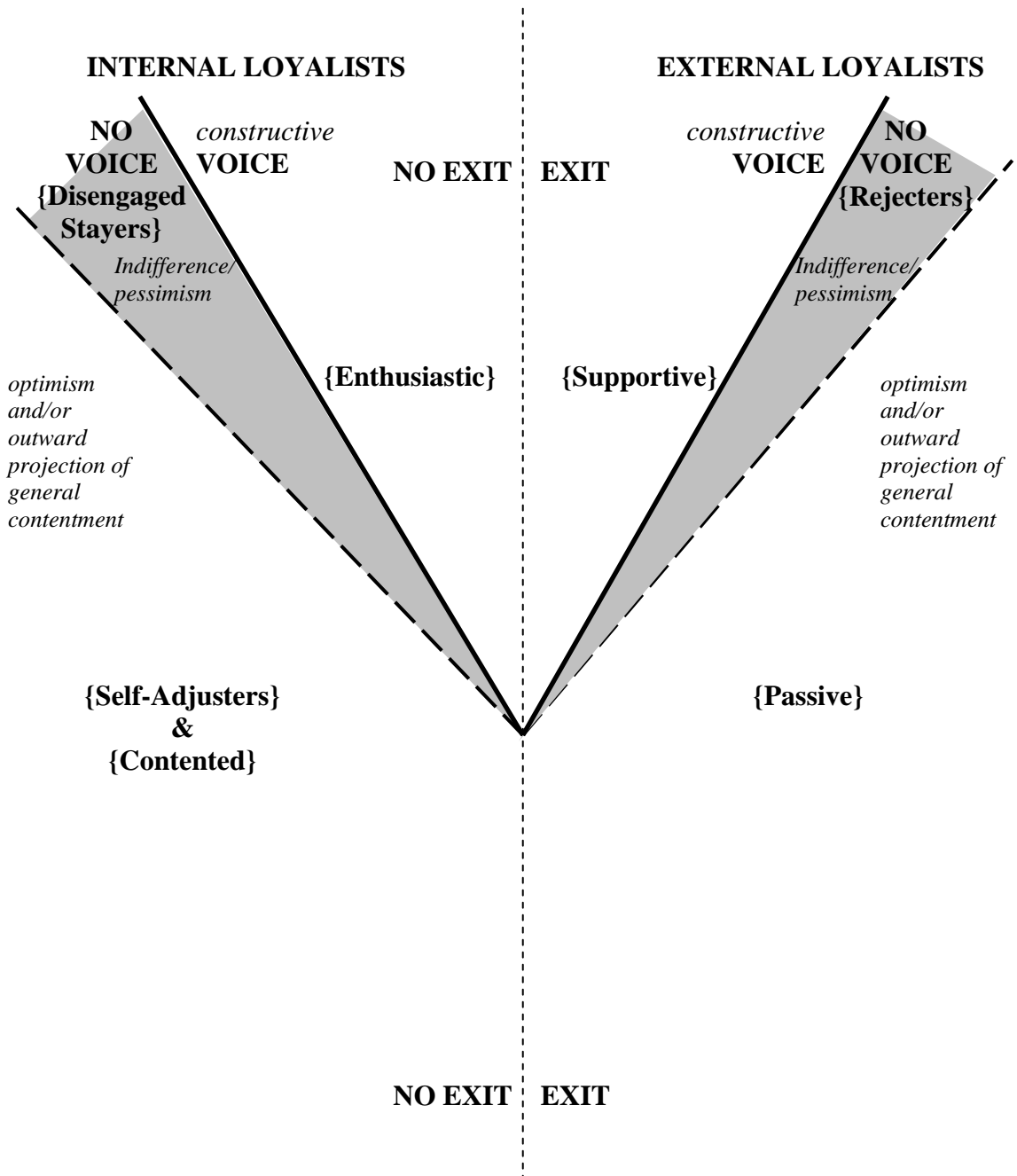


Figure 6.1: Modification to Hirschman's Framework:
The Case of Singapore

Personal Changes Over Time and Space

Another interesting finding from this study was the observation that modifications to an individual's particular circumstance over time and space could actually change his or her emotional attachment and predisposition toward the nation-state. In Chapter 5, I had illustrated and discussed this at length, using examples drawn from the experiences of **Local Poet**, **Crisis Manager**, and **PR Consultant**. For example, I found that **Local Poet** had gone through several different loyalists types, following the changed circumstances of his personal life. When I first got to know **Local Poet**, he was a **Disengaged Stayer** eager to experience life overseas. When he finally had the opportunity to pursue graduate studies in Australia on a government-sponsored scholarship, he became the typical **Passive External Loyalist**, keeping in close contact with friends, former colleagues, and family, and avidly reading news from Singapore. Upon graduating, **Local Poet** returned to Singapore and immersed himself in the local literary circle, convinced that this is where he will make his mark. Following his overseas sojourn, **Local Poet** was no longer the detached onlooker of before, but a **Self-Adjuster** who was actively involved in promoting Singapore's local literature to universities abroad. Ultimately, I believe he will become an **Enthusiastic Loyalist**, if given the opportunity to participate in national committees formed to chart the direction of Singapore's local literature. As this example has shown, individuals such as **Local Poet** can move within and between the **Internal** and **External Loyalist** categories, as his or her individual circumstances change.

SUGGESTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH ON SINGAPORE

Future Research According to Age Groups

At the beginning of this dissertation, I briefly mentioned that my research findings revealed interesting trends in the 30- to 39-year-old age group and 40- to 49-year-old age group, the target groups being aggressively sought by immigrant-friendly countries. Below, I discuss some of these trends, and suggest how future research on Singapore should examine these two age groups.

Suggested Future Research # 1: 40 – 49 Age Group Versus 30 – 39 Age Group

The detailed breakdown of each type of loyalists by their age group is as follows:

<u>TYPE OF INTERNAL LOYALISTS</u>	<u>30 – 39 yrs</u>	<u>40 – 49 yrs</u>
Enthusiastic	0%	42%
Dissident	0%	0%
Contented	33%	0%
Self-Adjusters	67%	25%
Disengaged Stayers	0%	33%

Table 6.1: Types of Internal Loyalists Between the Ages of 30 – 39 and 40 – 49

<u>TYPE OF EXTERNAL LOYALISTS</u>	<u>30 – 39 yrs</u>	<u>40 – 49 yrs</u>
Supportive	25%	18%
Dissident	0%	0%
Passive	75%	64%
Rejecters	0%	18%

Table 6.2: Types of External Loyalists Between the Ages of 30 – 39 and 40 – 49

As expected, there were no **Dissident Internal** and **External Loyalists** among my participants in either of the two age groups. Also significant was the finding that there were no **Contented Loyalists** among my participants in the 40- to 49-year-old age group, while **Contented Loyalists** accounted for one-third of the participants in the 30 – 39 age group. While there were no **Disengaged Stayers** and **Rejecters** among the participants in the 30 – 39 age group, **Disengaged Stayers** accounted for 33% of **Internal Loyalists** and **Rejecters** 18% of **External Loyalists** among participants in the 40s. These figures suggest a rather high level of cynicism and disillusionment among participants in the 40s. Interestingly, there were no **Enthusiastic Loyalists** among those in the 30s, yet these loyalists made up nearly half of the **Internal Loyalists** (42%) among those in the 40s.

The differences between the two age groups may be traced to the different goals and concerns of individuals from the two age groups. Participants in the 30s were born into an independent Singapore (popularly referred to as the post-1965 generation), grew up in a prosperous and progressively developed nation-state, and are more educated. They are likely to be single professionals or, if married, have young families with children that are not yet at the school-going age. These loyalists are largely satisfied with their current level of creature comforts, and have yet to encounter national policies that

may impinge on their private lives and possibly trigger life-changing decisions.

Generally, participants in the 30s have been happy with the PAP government and are proud to identify themselves as Singaporeans.

This group's concerns and current level of satisfaction and outlook are different from those in the 40s who, in addition to assessing their families' current needs, are having to look ahead to their retirement needs in the near future, as well as their children's tertiary education. Participants in the 40s who have teenage children are likely to worry about their children's ability to gain entry into the local university, and their children's future employment prospects; some were laid off during the recent economic downturn, and those above the age of 45 have had difficulty finding jobs. The government's steadfast stand against implementing a social welfare program and its continued support for the foreign talent scheme during the economic downturn have caused many in the 40s to grow increasingly bitter toward the government and government policies, which may explain the relatively high number of **Disengaged Stayers** and **Rejecters** among participants in this age group. At the same time, a large number of participants in the 40s who are well educated, well connected, and more politically aware are frequently invited to participate in national committees. These individuals often view the invitations as a chance for them to contribute to the future direction of Singapore. As such, they respond enthusiastically to what they believe is their moral obligation to their national community.

It would be interesting to conduct a longitudinal study of the post-1965 population (that is, those who are in their 30s who were born after Singapore's independence), to see if their goals, needs, and level of satisfaction have changed in 10 years' time, when this

group of people move into the 40 – 49 age group and are parents of older school-going children, and how this may impact their orientation toward Singapore. Also, are we likely to see many of the **Self-Adjusters** becoming **Enthusiastic Loyalists**? If so, what were the factors that facilitated this transformation?

And what happens to the people in the 40s when they move into the 50 – 59 age group? How different are their goals going to be when they are in the 50s, as compared to before? Are we likely to see a surge in the number of **Self-Adjusters** among those in the 50s, given the large number of **Enthusiastic Loyalists** who confided that they may soon retire from the scene, with many either scaling back, or have expressed their desire to scale back on, their participation in national committees?⁶⁵

Suggested Future Research # 2:
25 – 29 Age Group

Another area that may also be of interest to future researchers is research on individuals between the ages of 25 and 29 years. Results from preliminary interviews I conducted with undergraduate Singaporean students in Perth revealed that many of them are eager to emigrate to Australia. The usual reasons cited were their quests for an international work experience and exposure, the lack of freedom of expression and freedom of speech in Singapore, and the stressful environment in Singapore. Some would like to look for a job in Australia immediately upon graduating from college; others say they would go back to Singapore to find work and earn enough money, before eventually

⁶⁵ Recently, these same **Enthusiastic Loyalists** have also begun to question the efficacy of their participation in national committees. Although they plan to retire from public eye, the **Enthusiastic Loyalists** I interviewed said they would continue to contribute to areas where they feel most passionately about, but not necessarily at the national level.

emigrating. They consider themselves lucky to have experienced and been exposed to a different culture and society. They also value their Australian undergraduate degree, as it increases their chances of obtaining permanent residency in Australia, and is a good stepping-stone to an Australian work experience.

Given that these youths are the future leaders of the country (if, in fact, they return home), a better understanding of their goals and concerns would be an important step toward ensuring a core population of national loyalists among the young that forms the critical mass of people that remains committed to Singapore. Perhaps, a comparative study of students studying in Singapore and those overseas would reveal the differences in attitudes that the two groups of youths may have toward the nation-state.

Suggested Future Research # 3:
Assessing the Singapore Government's Outreach Efforts

As mentioned in Chapter 4, the Singapore government has launched several government-sponsored initiatives in an effort to maintain and nurture links with Singapore emigrants. Singapore International Foundation (SIF) was set up in 1991 largely to cater to Singaporean students studying overseas, while Contact Singapore was launched in 1997 with the aim of recruiting both Singaporean and foreign talents from overseas. These initiatives are run as independent entities helmed by nonpartisan Singaporean civil servants, although Contact Singapore functions as the recruiting arm of the Public Service Commission, while the SIF received an initial S\$25 million government grant.

In March 2006, the Singapore government launched Overseas Singaporean Unit (OSU) in London to maintain strong links with Singaporeans abroad. Six months later in

August 2006, the OSU launched the Overseas Singaporean Portal (<http://www.overseassingaporeans.sg/>) that features live news updates from Singapore, online forums on topics related to Singapore, web chats, as well as the latest job postings in Singapore. The importance placed on the functions of OSU cannot be missed — it reports directly to the Prime Minister’s Office.

Launching the Overseas Singaporean web portal for Singaporean emigrants is just the first step in initiating a relationship with external Singaporean communities. The real work for maintaining links with Singapore emigrants truly begins after all the hype around the online portal has died down. If past experiences are any good indicators to go by, the likelihood that Singapore authorities would slide into a unidirectional communication and constrain the limits of discussion through the use of OB markers is quite high. When that happens, the Singapore government may dispel criticisms by pointing to the provision of the information infrastructure in the form of the online portal as proof of their desire to maintain links with Singaporean emigrants. No matter how advanced communication technologies may become, however, nothing can substitute for the iterative interaction and warmth of personal relationships. As Lily Kong and Brenda Yeoh observe, “the bonds between members of the community and between people and place are, at best, tenuous, and require nurturing” (2003, 8). What this all boils down to is commitment on both sides — the Singapore government and Singaporeans on the one hand, and Singaporean emigrants on the other — to maintain and nurture a long-term, long-distance relationship with the hope that something more would come out of it. Otherwise, as Kwok Kian Woon and Miriam Ali bleakly pointed out, “the best that Singapore can aspire to is to be a *virtual nation*, an abstract entity, imagined by a number

of people who have had some association with the country and can choose to connect with it whenever they wish, just as in logging on to cyberspace, clicking on to the electronic hypermarket of free-floating identities” (1998, 119; *italics* in original).

Future research should focus on assessing the viability of the OSU, especially after it has been in operation for a period of time — say, five years — to determine if OSU has, indeed, made the difference in engendering rootedness among the overseas Singaporean population, or if it is duplicating the efforts of Singapore International Foundation and Contact Singapore.

SOME POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

<p><i>Policy Recommendation # 1:</i> <i>Investing in the Education of Young Singaporean Emigrants</i></p>

Education ranks high on the list of concerns among overseas Singaporeans, and was cited as one of the main reasons for emigrating. Many Singaporean emigrants report that their children do exceptionally well, once they are removed from Singapore’s stressful education system that emphasizes rote learning and requires distinctions in all subject areas, including their second language. Until now, the Singapore government has not studied in depth the potential loss of talent from this group of Singaporean emigrants, nor has the government taken concrete steps to nurture this pool of external talent that has remained relatively untapped over the years. All official talk with regard to encouraging Singaporean emigrants to return and contribute to the city’s development have so far been confined to rhetorical statements such as the need to “make them part of the family

and treat them as part of the family” (Lee, National Day Rally Speech 2006).

Singaporean leaders have also frequently taken the high moral ground and, in a manner resembling that of a father instructing an errant child, have reminded Singaporeans of their moral obligation to give back to society. Perhaps it is time the Singapore government made concrete policies that would attract Singaporean emigrants back to Singapore, rather than employing a detached approach toward this growing overseas community.

Firstly, Singaporean emigrants residing overseas do not enjoy the same access to educational subsidies as their counterparts who continue to live in Singapore. As such, one way in which Singapore could show that it is genuinely interested in reconnecting with Singaporean emigrants — including Singaporean women with foreign spouses and former Singaporeans who have renounced their Singaporean citizenship — would be to offer tertiary scholarships to their children who hold the right to permanent residency (or even foreign citizenship) in their current country of residence. According to the Australian Bureau of Statistics, there were 46,318 Singapore-born residents living in Australia as of June 30, 2005⁶⁶, of which nearly a quarter are between the school-going ages of 0 and 24; it is not known how many children were born to Singapore emigrants after they took up residency in Australia. As such, it would be prudent for the Singapore government to offer scholarships to this currently untapped pool of potential talent with ties to the city-state.

These scholarships could be specifically tailored to the needs of the children of Singaporean emigrants, such as giving them the flexibility to use the scholarship monies

⁶⁶ See Appendix B (Table B.5) for more details.

to finance their education in well-known colleges and universities in their current country of residence, thus allowing those who hold permanent residency in their country of residence to simultaneously fulfill their residency requirements while obtaining quality education. In return, scholarship holders may be required to serve out work attachments with government-linked companies in Singapore during their vacation months, which would bring these young talents back to city-state, thus allowing them to re-immense themselves in the local cultural context and to explore job opportunities in Singapore. Additionally, the scholarships could stipulate that these young emigrants must find work with a company in Singapore in the two years immediately following their graduation, thus ensuring that a small proportion of overseas Singaporeans will indeed return to Singapore to live and work and, hopefully, stay on for a longer period of time.

The following are six compelling reasons for offering scholarships to young Singaporean emigrants with the right to permanent residency elsewhere: (1) the Singapore government can ensure that the younger generation of Singaporean emigrants would have more than just the current — often tenuous — family ties that bind them to Singapore, or the occasional skimming of the latest Singapore news from the Overseas Singaporean Unit's web portal; (2) bringing these Singaporean emigrants back to Singapore for work attachments would allow them to experience life in present day Singapore, rather than the blurred memories of the Singapore they left behind; (3) Singaporean emigrants who have spent some years away can renew their understanding of the Singapore here and now, and the friendships with old classmates they had years ago that have, in all likelihood, grown fuzzy over time and space; (4) the Singapore government would be able to tap into the growing external pool of homegrown talent that

spent most of their formative years in Singapore and who are more likely to see Singapore as more than a temporary transit point; (5) it would show that the Singapore government is genuinely interested in nurturing relations with Singaporean emigrants and encouraging them to return and contribute to Singapore's economic development; and (6) these externally-oriented Singaporeans have much to offer to Singapore's future development and would give a much-needed boost to the **Enthusiastic Internal Loyalist** and **Self-Adjuster** populations.

Studies have also shown that in their attempt to make sense of their identity, these second-generation emigrants are more likely to return to their country of origin for short visits or to find work. Even if these Singaporean emigrants decide not to stay on, there is a high possibility that they would form part of the **Supportive External Loyalists**, and continue to maintain a vested interest in the city-state's development, especially since they would have benefited tremendously from the Singapore government's investment in their education and the career opportunities that stemmed from the scholarship award. Moreover, such a policy that nurtures the talent of young Singaporean emigrants may also help win converts from among the **Rejecters**, especially if their children were awarded such scholarships from the Singapore government.

This policy to offer scholarships to young Singaporean emigrants should be viewed within the context of Singapore's drive to attract foreign talent to the city-state. It may also be better received among the locals, especially since the target group is Singaporean emigrants. After all, the Singapore government currently offers generous educational subsidies to foreign students studying in Singapore, with the only stipulation being that they must work in the city-state in the two years immediately following their

graduation. Even though Singaporean students applying for entry to local universities need a passing grade in their second language at high school level, these foreign students do not face the same stringent requirements. They are not even required to show proof that they can speak and write one of Singapore's official languages other than English. All that matters is that these foreign students contribute to Singapore's economic development in the two years after graduating with a degree. Of course, the Singapore government hopes that these foreign students will continue to stay on and make the city-state their home, but many foreign students view Singapore as just a momentary point of transit before heading to another country, or back home.

*Policy Recommendation # 2:
Appointing a Nominated Member of Parliament for Overseas Singaporeans*

As discussed in Chapter 4, the Singapore government flatly turned down the Remaking Singapore Committee's policy suggestion to enfranchise overseas Singaporeans through the appointment of a Nominated Member of Parliament member to represent the needs of the growing overseas Singaporean community. Perhaps this stemmed from the government's belief that overseas Singaporeans are already enfranchised, following the parliament's decision to allow overseas voting.

Starting with the General Elections 2006, overseas Singaporeans who live in selected cities such as Shanghai, London, and New York, were able to travel to pre-designated overseas polling stations to vote for the representative of the constituency in Singapore with which they are registered. Even though it appears that every vote counts

— even that of the overseas Singaporean — Singaporean emigrants clearly do not benefit from the services of their constituency representative in Singapore, by virtue of the fact that they currently reside overseas.

With an estimated 150,000 Singaporeans living and working overseas, and contributing to Singapore's external economic growth — an upward trend that will continue because of official encouragement — the Singapore government should take concrete steps to cater to the needs of this growing constituency, which are necessarily different from their fellow constituents back home. A Nominated Member of Parliament to represent this group of people could be one way to ensure that the needs of this group are addressed. Such a nominee would, ideally, have lived many years overseas, and may even hold the right to permanent residency elsewhere. By appointing a representative for overseas Singaporeans, the Singapore government can show that it genuinely cares for the wellbeing of Singaporean emigrants who are the drivers of the city-state's external economy. Such a move would also keep its leaders in touch with the general concerns of overseas Singaporeans who may one day return home, encourage them to more actively follow parliamentary sessions in Singapore, and would help them settle back in Singapore more easily when they decide to return to live and work.

Eventually, the Singapore government could even consider putting several potential candidates on the ballot. These candidates may be nominated by overseas Singaporeans, and screened using several stringent criteria similar to those currently used for the presidential nominees, as well as the Nominated Member of Parliament. Such a move would ensure that overseas Singaporeans would have the opportunity to vote for their representative in parliament, making the selection process more democratic.

*Policy Recommendation # 3:
Extending the Right to Dual Citizenship*

As discussed in Chapter 4, Singapore does not allow dual citizenship at the moment. Consequently, permanent residents of Singapore who wish to take up Singaporean citizenship must first renounce their current citizenship. Overseas-born Singaporean citizens that hold dual citizenships and intend to retain their Singapore citizenship have to renounce their foreign citizenship at the age of 21, failing which they would automatically forfeit their Singaporean citizenship on their 22nd birthday. Also, Singaporeans that have emigrated and taken up a foreign citizenship have to formally file to renounce their Singaporean citizenship.

The underlying rationale of this policy hinges on the assumption that each individual can only be loyal to one country, and that such a policy would ensure loyalty only to Singapore. However, this policy ignores the fact that one's identity is multi-faceted, and does not take into consideration the context of today's globalized world.

This “no dual citizenship” policy is incongruent with the Singapore government's current effort to attract foreign talent, retain internationally mobile homegrown talent, and to encourage the return of Singaporean emigrants. Clearly, it discourages permanent residents from applying for Singaporean citizenship, and places obstacles in the path of former Singaporean citizens who have formally renounced their Singaporean citizenship but who may wish to return to Singapore to live and work, especially since they would need to satisfy several bureaucratic criteria in their application for a work visa.

In recent years, many young Singaporeans have voiced their discomfort at being forced to choose between two citizenships at the age of 21, when they are on the cusp of

their productive lives. Many young Singaporean talents have been lost as a result of this policy, as most have chosen to keep the citizenship of the other — usually Western developed — country. A notable example is Assistant Professor Elaine Chew of the University of Southern California (USC) who does computer modeling research on music intelligence — that is, “what people know and hear when they listen to music” (*The Straits Times*, September 30, 2006).

Chew was born in the U.S. to Singaporean parents, which entitled her to two citizenships — U.S. and Singapore. She pursued her undergraduate degree at Stanford University on a Public Service Commission (PSC) scholarship. When the PSC refused to allow her to do a double major in music and computational mathematics and to continue on with her graduate studies, Chew broke her bond with the PSC. That same year, she was asked by the Singapore government to “swear allegiance to only one country” (*The Straits Times*, September 30, 2006). “Chew chose to keep her U.S. citizenship: ‘If I had chosen to renounce the US... I would have given up all hope of fulfilling my dreams. At age 20, it was too early to give up one's dreams.’” (*The Straits Times*, September 30, 2006). Keeping her U.S. citizenship also allowed Chew to tap into other scholarship opportunities that were available only to U.S. citizens.

Chew’s accomplishments received national recognition in 2005, when she was awarded the Presidential Early Career Award in Science and Engineering, reportedly “the highest honour in the US for young professionals in science and technology” (*The Straits Times*, September 30, 2006). Her talent in a relatively unknown field would not have been recognized, nor would it have been nurtured, if she had chosen to keep her Singaporean citizenship. Chew, whose parents live in Singapore, says of the U.S.: “This

is where I can carry out my work in a welcoming and conducive atmosphere, where my research in a previously little known field has been allowed to flourish to the point where now top students are coming to USC to join my research group.” (*The Straits Times*, September 30, 2006).

Clearly, the Singapore government should rethink its dual citizenship policy, especially since it may be turning away many homegrown talents with dual citizenship. As Chew’s example shows, it is highly unlikely that former Singaporeans who have renounced their Singaporean citizenship would return to the city-state for anything more than a short vacation trip. Already, countries such as India and the Philippines have taken steps to engage their overseas communities. In 2005, India granted dual citizenship to their non-resident Indians (NRIs) in 16 countries, which would allow them indefinite stay and the right to buy property in India, but does not grant them voting rights, nor the right to be elected to public office.

Even if Singapore decides not to go the full length by granting dual citizenship, the government should rethink its current policy of enforcing the ultimatum requiring the individual to swear allegiance to one country, since this would only foster a sense of resentment among those forced to make a choice. It has also probably increased the number of **Rejecters** among **External Loyalists**. Instead, the government could explore the possibility of issuing a visa-free travel permit to Singaporean-born people — including those who have renounced their Singaporean citizenship — that would allow them to travel to the city-state without applying for a visa, or to live and work in Singapore indefinitely without going through the rigors of applying for a work permit.

*Policy Recommendation # 4:
Changing the Criteria for Withdrawal of CPF monies*

Currently, Singaporeans are allowed to withdraw their CPF monies only after the age of 55, and only the amount remaining after some minimum sums mandated by law are set aside. Those who have renounced their citizenship are allowed to withdraw all of their CPF monies, regardless of their age at the time of application. Many former Singaporeans I interviewed revealed that they chose to renounce their citizenship in order to gain earlier and total access to their CPF monies, which amount to quite a hefty sum and would ensure them of a comfortable life overseas.

Clearly, renunciation of Singaporean citizenship should not be the qualifying criterion for the withdrawal of CPF monies, since it cheapens the value of the Singaporean citizenship. Instead, a more stringent litany of proofs could be devised to determine if the Singaporean emigrant is, indeed, not intending to return to live and work in Singapore. These qualifying criteria could include documentary proofs:

- (1) of the Singapore emigrant's right to permanent residency overseas;
 - (2) that s/he is not a taxable individual in Singapore — e.g., s/he has not returned to the city-state to live and work for the past five years;
 - (3) that s/he does not own any property in Singapore;
 - (4) that s/he is not earning any rental income from properties in Singapore;
- and
- (5) that s/he is not employed overseas by the Singapore government or a Singapore-based company.

LESSONS LEARNED FROM THE SINGAPORE CASE

Singapore moved from a third world to first world country status with astonishing rapidity, achieving developed country status in a mere 35 years and making the city-state the model for many developing countries to emulate. Yet, despite its leaders' careful planning, the city-state has also fallen victim to its economic success.

What are some of the policies that have worked well and that may warrant adopting, and what about those that need fine-tuning?

Below are some key lessons other countries can learn from Singapore.

- (1) The absence of **Dissident Internal Loyalists** and **Dissident External Loyalists** was possible only because distributive economic policies benefiting a large proportion of the population were concurrently implemented with and complemented draconian policies aimed at stemming dissent. Effective as a state-building tool and for ensuring a minimum threshold of loyalty in the initial stages of development, this carrot-and-stick maneuver is not sustainable over the longer term. Instead, policies that facilitate the growth and self-generation of **Enthusiastic Internal Loyalists** and **Supportive External Loyalists** should also be explored and implemented concurrently.
- (2) Singapore's relentless pursuit of economic development and the leaders' objective assessment of the most productive use of resources — human, physical, financial, etc. — has fostered a pragmatic culture among the technocrats, resulting in the demolition of many historic places that are

integral to an understanding of Singapore's history and public memories in the name of development. Many participants who have lived through the rapid changes to Singapore's landscape over the years poignantly asked: "How do you expect me to root my child to this country when all the places are gone? How do you anchor this rooted-ness?" This loss of familiarity also makes it easier for the locals and Singaporean emigrants to detach themselves from the territorial state. Clearly, urban planners need to make a more conscious effort to preserve the historical landscape and community activities within the locale, even as development beckons, for the physical landscape that is contingent upon the country's particular history is one of the most obvious characteristics that makes one country distinct from another. This is especially essential in national identity and rebranding exercises, when countries seek to distinguish themselves from each other in a rapidly globalizing world with homogenizing tendencies. Otherwise, these countries would have to create expensive national monuments, such as The Esplanade Theatres on the Bay, touted as a state-of-the-art art center and an iconic building of Singapore, which cost the city-state S\$600 million to build, and S\$30 million a year to maintain.

- (3) Political leaders of new multiethnic states should give local cultures the space to evolve and develop their distinctive characteristics and collective memories, as these cultural groups play an important role in providing the building blocks for the spontaneous development of national culture and identity. Several participants had lamented the early leaders' single-

minded pursuit of economic development at the expense of nurturing a distinctive national character, history, and identity that all Singaporeans can relate to. They believe the government's interference in the citizenry's social life has stunted the emotional growth of the young nation.

- (4) Over the years, the pragmatic Singaporean culture has produced Singaporeans who have no qualms about clinically excising anything that may hold them back in their personal lives and careers. When given ultimatums, such as choosing between Singapore and another country, these pragmatic people would not hesitate to stay with the one that offers them the most opportunities in their personal lives and careers. It is not known how many Elaine Chews Singapore has lost as a result of its "no dual citizenship" policy, but the importation of foreign talent can hardly make up for that loss. In a globalized world with increasing competition for talent, states can no longer afford to pick and choose whom they wish to keep. As India's experience has shown, every person with ties to the country should be regarded as much-needed human resource and potential contributor to the national economy.
- (5) Large national consultative committees are not necessarily the most efficient way for seeking public participation and establishing the best course of action for the country, especially if the committees were all formed to give advice on national policies addressing similar issues. Singapore's experience reveals the problems of continuity, a lack of follow-up action on recommended policies and, where policies have been

implemented, a lack of assessment of policy results. It would be more effective to set up smaller consultative groups to oversee and review the implementation of recommended policies put forth by the initial national consultative committee, so that they are able to assess the effectiveness of those policies, and suggest ways of fine-tuning them where necessary.

APPENDIX A

OFFICIAL STATISTICS OF POTENTIAL EMIGRANTS,
RELEASED BY THE SINGAPORE GOVERNMENT

<u>Year</u>	<u>No. of CNCCs issued</u>	<u>Estimated Emigrants†</u>
1986	2014*	5040
1987	3825*	9560
1988	4707*	11770
1989	3052*	7630
1990	2528*	6320
1991	1978 [#]	3956
1992	1848 [#]	4620
1993	1725 [#]	4313
1994	1883 [#]	4708
1995	1854 [#]	4635
1996	2240 [#]	5600

Table A.1: Number of Certificates of No Criminal Conduct Issued, 1986-1996

* figures obtained from Paul P.L. Cheung's conference paper presented at the International Conference on Migration, 7-9 February 1991

figures from *The Straits Times*, 1997.

† Cheung estimated the number of emigrants by multiplying the number of CNCC applications by 2.5 persons.

APPENDIX B

OFFICIAL STATISTICS OF SINGAPORE EMIGRANTS
IN AUSTRALIA, RELEASED BY THE
AUSTRALIAN GOVERNMENT

<u>YEAR</u>	<u>No. of Singaporean-born Persons</u>
1981*	11,960
1986*	15,840
1991*	23,988
1996 [#]	31,393
2000 [#]	34,458
2005 [#]	46,318

Table B.1: Number of Singaporean-Born Residents in Australia

* Source: Bureau of Immigration and Population Research Statistics Section. Community Profiles 1991 Census: Singapore Born. Commonwealth of Australia 1994.

Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics 2005. Migration, Australia: 2004-05 (Publication 3412.01), <http://www.abs.gov.au/AUSTATS/abs@.nsf/DetailsPage/3412.02004-05?OpenDocument> (accessed July 20, 2006).

<u>Year of arrival</u>	<u>Number of Settlers from Singapore</u>	<u>% Change</u>
1990-91 [†]	1275	
1991-92 [†]	867	(-32.00)
1992-93 [†]	472	(-45.56)
1993-94 [†]	502	6.36
1994-95 [†]	650	29.48
1995-96 [#]	841	29.38
1996-97 [#]	925	9.99
1997-98 [#]	694	(-24.97)
1998-99 [#]	650	(-6.77)
1999-00 [#]	884	36.00
2000-01 [#]	1361	56.51
2001-02 [#]	1493	9.70
2002-03 [#]	1751	17.28
2003-04 [#]	2224	27.01
2004-05 [#]	3036	36.51
2005-06 [#]	2685	(-11.56)

Table B.2: Singapore Settler Arrivals, 1995-96 to 2005-06

* Source: Commonwealth of Australia 2006. Settler Arrivals 1990-91 to 1999-00, Australia: States and Territories, <http://www.immi.gov.au/media/publications/statistics/index.htm>, released September 2006 (accessed October 6, 2006).

† Source: Commonwealth of Australia 2002. Australian Immigration Consolidated Statistics Number 21: 1999-2000, <http://www.immi.gov.au/media/publications/statistics/index.htm>, released September 2006 (accessed March 6, 2004).

Source: Commonwealth of Australia 2006. Settler Arrivals 1995-96 to 2005-06, Australia: States and Territories, <http://www.immi.gov.au/media/publications/statistics/index.htm>, released September 2006 (accessed October 6, 2006).

<u>State/Territory</u>	<u>No. of Singaporean-born Persons</u>
Western Australia	10,270
New South Wales	8,510
Victoria	7,610
Queensland	4,520
South Australia	1,390
Australian Capital Territory	720
Northern Territory	250
Tasmania	250
TOTAL	33,590

Table B.3: Number of Singaporean-Born Persons in
Australia in 2001, by State/Territory

Source: Community Information Summary, published by Australia
Department of Immigration and Multicultural Affairs 2006,
<http://www.immi.gov.au/media/publications/statistics/comm-summ/summary.htm> (accessed July 20, 2006); figures obtained from
2001 Census.

<u>State/Territory</u>	<u>Year ended 30 June 1996*</u>	<u>Year ended 30 June 2005[#]</u>
Western Australia	361	936
New South Wales	187	427
Victoria	135	829
Queensland	126	293
South Australia	20	129
Australian Capital Territory	8	16
Northern Territory	0	47
Tasmania	5	8
TOTAL	842	2,685

Table B.4: Number of Singaporean-Born Settling in
Australia During the Year and by State/Territory

* Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics 1997. Migration, Australia: 1995-96 (Publication 3412.01), <http://www.abs.gov.au/AUSSTATS/abs@.nsf/DetailsPage/3412.01995-96?OpenDocument>, released April 8, 1997 (accessed April 14, 2004).

Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics 2005. Migration, Australia: 2004-05 (Publication 3412.01), <http://www.abs.gov.au/AUSTATS/abs@.nsf/DetailsPage/3412.02004-05?OpenDocument> (accessed July 20, 2006).

<u>Age Group</u>	<u>Estimated Singaporean-born Resident Population</u> (as of 30 June 2005)
0-5	523
5-9	1799
10-14	2,413
15-19	2,522
20-24	4,102
25-29	6,638
30-34	5,419
35-39	3,604
40-44	3,861
45-49	4,497
50-54	3,882
55-59	2,989
60-64	1,365
65-69	1,148
70-74	696
75-79	439
80-84	237
85 and over	184
All Ages	46,318

Table B.5: Singaporean-Born Residents in Australia,
by Age Group

Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics 2006. Publication 3412.0: 2004-2005,
<http://www.abs.gov.au/AUSTATS/abs@.nsf/DetailsPage/3412.02004-05?OpenDocument>, released March 29, 2006 (accessed July 20, 2006).

<u>Age Group</u>	<u>As percentage of Singaporean-born population in Perth</u>
0-12	7.6%
12-24	26.5%
25-54	51.7%
55-64	8.1%
65+	6.2%

Total number of Singaporean-born population in Perth = 9,765

Table B.6: Singaporean-Born Residents in Perth, by Age Group (as of 2001)

Source: Perth Statistical Division, http://www.omi.wa.gov.au/omi_people.asp (accessed July 20, 2006), figures taken from 2001 Census.

<u>Financial Year</u>	<u>Number of Singapore-born Residents granted Australian Citizenship</u>
1990-1991	957
1991-1992	766
1992-1993	656
1993-1994	457
1994-1995	427
1995-1996	443
1996-1997	273
1997-1998	343
1998-1999	310
1999-2000	370

Table B.7: Number of Singapore Emigrants Granted Australian Citizenship

Source: Commonwealth of Australia 2002. Australian Immigration Consolidated Statistics Number 21: 1999-2000, <http://www.immi.gov.au/media/publications/statistics/index.htm>, released July 2002, ceased production (accessed March 29, 2004).

APPENDIX C

PROFILE OF THE SINGAPORE EMIGRANT

The First Wave: 1960s to 1970s

The Eurasians are, perhaps, the earliest emigrants from Singapore, many moving to Australia in the 1960s. At the time, Australia had implemented their White Australia Policy, which was favorable to Eurasians with European lineage or European-sounding family names. “Many early migrants were mostly Eurasians. There was a huge influx because Australia wanted them. They are partly European, and integrate easier than the Chinese, Malay or Indian,” explained **Professional Artiste**, a longtime Singapore observer now residing in Perth.

“The Eurasians left when Singapore became independent. They felt comfortable with their status when the Brits were there, but they feared that with independence, they would have no place in Singapore. So they left.”

“The first wave of Eurasians came in 1960s or ’70s. That was before CPF.⁶⁷ They had no sizable income; came here not necessarily highly qualified. Took up jobs not the same as in Singapore. The early ones who came had post-colonial hangover. They assimilated, didn’t want to offend anybody, and had no [distinctive] culture. Unlike the migrant now who has infrastructure that he or she can go into, the early migrant didn’t have it. So they were very compliant with Australian norms and society.”

⁶⁷ CPF is the acronym for Central Provident Fund.

The Peranakan Chinese⁶⁸ emigrated soon after, for the same reason that “they could not fit into the new Mandarin Singapore,” where all children with Chinese last names had to learn Mandarin as a second language, whether or not it was their mother tongue.

The Second Wave: 1980s

The 1980s saw a huge influx of Singapore emigrants to Australia; their number rose particularly in the period immediately after 1986, which saw a recession in Singapore, the first major economic downturn since its independence. According to statistical figures given in an article published in *The Straits Times*⁶⁹ in 1997, the Criminal Investigation Department issued 4,707 Good Conduct Certificates⁷⁰ (GCCs) in 1988, more than double the 2,014 certificates issued in 1986 (figures obtained from paper presented at International Migration Conference by Paul Cheung, then chief statistician with Singapore Population Census Board).

Those who left Singapore in the 1980s were mostly the Chinese and Indians — some emigrated to evade national service;⁷¹ some because they had grown disillusioned

⁶⁸ The term, ‘Peranakan Chinese’ refers to the offspring from intermarriages between Chinese immigrants and the native Malays in Singapore. The men are known as Babas, and the women Nonyas. Through the centuries, the Peranakans developed a distinct culture that is a fusion of the Chinese and Malay cultures. They speak a *patois* that is predominantly Malay, with a sprinkling of words from a Chinese vernacular, such as Hokkien.

⁶⁹ *The Straits Times* is the only English-language broadsheet published daily in Singapore under the umbrella group of Singapore Press Holdings (SPH).

⁷⁰ Although the number of GCCs issued is not an accurate measure of emigration from Singapore, it is, nevertheless, a good gauge for determining the extent of the number of aspiring emigrants to Commonwealth countries such as Australia, Canada, and New Zealand. These Commonwealth countries require applicants to submit GCCs together with their permanent residency applications.

⁷¹ Since 1967, all boys who reach the age of eighteen are required to undergo two years of mandatory national service, followed by two weeks of reservist duties annually until the age of 45. National service (NS) was implemented when political leaders, such as then-Prime Minister Lee Kuan Yew, realized the

with the system of meritocracy which, they claimed, only served the elite few; and many left citing as reasons children's education, a change of lifestyle, business opportunities, or retirement. And there were also others, such as **PR Consultant**, who were unhappy with government policies that precluded them from owning their own house.

“The push factors for me were housing and education,” revealed **PR Consultant**.

“We couldn't qualify for an HDB⁷² flat, because our combined income exceeded the allowable limit by \$1,000. We couldn't buy an HUDC⁷³ apartment because my wife's name was on the title deed of a landed property with her father... that's the house we were living in. I was caught in a bind between the devil and the deep blue sea! It wasn't an option to rent — like everyone else, I wanted to own.”

Education, in particular, was a common reason cited for the participant's decision to emigrate. In Singapore, a university degree is touted as the passport to a better life, higher earning potential, and the leveler of social class. Many families, especially those in the middle-income group, were particularly concerned about their children's future prospects in the city-state, upon seeing their children struggle with their second language. They were worried that their children would fail to satisfy the second language requirement and be ineligible for enrollment with the National University of Singapore

precarious position Singapore was in, being surrounded by two Muslim neighbors, and not having its own national defense forces to defend the land. At the time, the British had stationed troops in Singapore, but Britain was getting ready to pull the troops out, as part of the decolonization agreement. NS is credited for bringing together and nurturing bonds among Singaporean males from diverse backgrounds.

⁷² HDB is the acronym for Housing Development Board, the government body that builds public housing that accommodates more than 90 per cent of the resident population in Singapore. It was set up in 1972, as part of an effort to make housing affordable and available to every Singaporean, so as to strengthen their stake in their homeland.

⁷³ HUDC is the acronym for Housing and Urban Development Corporation. It was set up in 1974 to provide housing for Singaporeans whose income levels make them ineligible to purchase an HDB flat, but who could not afford to buy landed property.

(NUS), which was the only local university between 1979 and 1987. Under the second language policy, all applicants to the NUS must show proof of proficiency in two languages — the English language, as well as their officially conferred native language⁷⁴ — by achieving a ‘pass’ grade at the senior high school level, in addition to having done well at the GCE Advanced Level examinations.

PR Consultant made the decision to emigrate shortly after his elder son entered grade school.

“I saw my son suffer four years in the educational system. He had to take Mandarin, just because I have a Chinese surname! I’m a first generation, pure Eurasian! Chinese dad, European mum. I studied Malay in school, and don’t know a word of Mandarin. I am Peranakan, and my mother tongue is English!”

PR Consultant elaborated further. “I married a Portuguese. Both my wife and myself do not speak Mandarin. So I hired a Chinese tutor to tutor my son in Mandarin. Every time the Chinese tutor cancels the lesson, my boy would cry. I asked myself: How to allow my child to go on in life with a crutch??? I can’t! Because one day, when it is taken away, he will fall down! My wife is a teacher who firmly believed in the system... who believed in the whole second language argument... until she saw how my son suffered.”

⁷⁴ Ethnic Chinese were required by law to take Mandarin as their second language; ethnic Malays, *Bahasa Melayu*; ethnic Indians, Tamil. Those who fell in the other category were summarily placed, based on their paternalistic lineage. For example, although **PR Consultant** is Eurasian by lineage— his father is Chinese, and his mother European — he is categorized as Chinese because of his Chinese family name. **PR Consultant** and his Portuguese wife have two sons who are similarly classified as Chinese due to their Chinese family name. They were compelled by Education Ministry rules to study Mandarin as a second-language in school, but this put them at a severe disadvantage academically: the two boys was unable to do well in Mandarin as they do not come from a Mandarin speaking home, and neither of their parents speak nor understand Mandarin.

Another example was **Former Journalist**, who moved with her family to Perth in the 1980s. **Former Journalist** left a well-paying job with the state-run media, while her husband resigned from a management position with an American multinational corporation. They made the decision to move after observing how their sons were struggling with the demands of the education system, particularly the second-language requirement.

Speaking of her son's experience, **Former Journalist** recounted, "[My elder son] struggled with Chinese all his life. No amount of tuition will have him enjoy a subject that was shoved down his throat. His attitude toward school was very negative. So we decided to take him out of the environment."

The move overseas is often undertaken at a tremendous economic cost to the parents such as **PR Consultant** and **Former Journalist** who were unable to find jobs they were trained for, despite having worked at least ten years with large corporations in Singapore.

The first five years in a foreign land were tough ones for these new immigrants who were previously employed in positions that paid S\$60,000 – S\$80,000 a year, and were used to having hired help to look after their children, their housekeeping needs, and preparation of meals. While **PR Consultant** took up menial jobs at a fast food restaurant and a mega-mall in Perth, **Former Journalist** and her husband decided to run their own mom-and-pop retail store.

Their decision to emigrate appears to have paid off.

In particular, **Former Journalist's** elder son has embarked on a high profile career with an international bank, after graduating with honors from a prestigious

Australian university, while her second son was in his final year at college at the time of the interview. **Former Journalist** stressed that her children's future would have been bleak, had they stayed on in the rigid and rather unforgiving Singapore educational system that places heavy emphasis on constant assessments that date back to their performance in grade school.

“There's an elitist attitude about education. Above average, not good enough. Must be exceptional to survive. Kids have no life, no childhood.”

At the same time, many of these parents who were looking to emigrate with their children were also busy executives who were reassessing their hectic pace of life in Singapore, and asking themselves if this was the kind of lifestyle they wanted to lead. For **Elderly Entrepreneur**, then a sales executive who traveled extensively in the Asia Pacific to negotiate business deals for his company, the choice was clear.

“I spent most times at the clubs. Was lucky because I was one of the few who could afford club membership. Hardly saw my children. When I come back, they're already asleep. I started asking myself: ‘What sort of life is this? Work, work, work... chasing the almighty dollar.’ If not going to the clubs to network, it was shopping.”

“By moving here, I had the opportunity to grow up with my kids. Back there [in Singapore], I hardly saw my children,” revealed **Elderly Entrepreneur**, a Eurasian in his 70s who settled in Perth in 1981.

The Third Wave: 1990s

Emigration to Australia climbed again in the late 1990s, this time coinciding with the worst economic crisis since Singapore's independence in 1965. Many participants

believe this push to emigrate may be traced to the huge emphasis the Singapore government had placed on economic returns all these years — economic prosperity that has been the bedrock of support for the PAP government’s 40-year rule.

Academic observed: “When the economy goes down, there’s greater interest in migration than before. Because of [Singapore’s] economic emphasis, people need to measure things in purely economic terms. Those are measures of success. When they were not getting those things, they would go elsewhere. The Singapore government needs to take responsibility... They have used national songs⁷⁵ to win emotional side of Singaporeans but when it comes to the crunch, people measure things economically.”

The latest wave of Singapore emigrants to hit Perth has caused some unease among longtime residents there. The earlier waves of Singaporean emigrants went to Australia with less money, less education, made a more conscious effort to assimilate into their new community and were rather discreet in their dealings with the Australians. The new emigrants, however, seem to be cut from a different cloth: they are more educated, more self-confident, and see less need to adapt themselves to the local way of life.

Business Lecturer, a Chinese in his late 30s who has been in Perth for 10 years, observed, “There are some distinct stages these emigrants go through: they’ve got to get into things not possible in Singapore, for example, an expensive car — a BMW; big house; big backyard, etc. Most who move here are semi-retired. They find it difficult to get a job equivalent in status or money. Some migrate because of a lifestyle choice, for quality of life. So they sell everything [in Singapore] and buy a big house, big car, etc.

⁷⁵ Here, **Academic** is referring to the spate of national songwriting contests held in the 1980s that yielded a cache of nationalistic songs such as “Count On Me, Singapore,” “Stand Up for Singapore,” and “One People, One Nation, One Singapore.”

They compensate for things they didn't enjoy back home. They play golf everyday because here, it is cheaper. But after a while, the novelty wears off. They become bored, so they start looking for a business to set up."

The Fourth Wave?: 2000 to 2006

The new millennium saw another surge in the wave of emigrants, with Singapore's unemployment rate rising to its highest level since 1965. Worries over their children's ability to gain entry in the local university continue to be the push factor in families' decision to emigrate. Said **Former Teacher**, a young Muslim mother with two children who used to teach in one of Singapore's grade schools and was undergoing training to be a nursing aide in Perth, "My eldest daughter was an average student. Primary 3, marks went down, her self esteem also. I started worrying: 'What's going to happen when she reaches Primary 6?' At least, even if she is not good in studies in Australia, there are still vocations to go into."

These newer emigrant families usually live apart — often the wife and children in one country, and the husband in another — due to pragmatic considerations and their need to fulfill the permanent residency requirements. **Former Accountant** traded her managerial position with a multinational company in Singapore for her current life as a stay-at-home mother and housewife. She moved to Perth to set up home with her three children, while her husband continued to work out of Singapore. He flies back and forth every few months for a visit.

What is, perhaps, notable about this latest wave was that the recent emigrants were no longer just the young and educated, or the rich retirees. Rather, a growing

number of forty-something year old Singaporean heartlanders — those that political leaders have long referred to as the core of Singaporean society — who speak only a smattering of Singlish (or localized pidgin English) were bravely moving abroad in search of employment, armed with several decades of work experience and the occasional vocational diploma.

One such emigrant is **Studio Technician**, a Chinese man in his late 40s. He had been laid off from his job and was having problems finding another when his family class application for permanent residency in Australia came through. **Studio Technician** decided to move to Brisbane first, where he would stay with relatives while looking for a job, house, car, and schools for the children. He planned to have his wife and children follow six months later. What pushed **Studio Technician** into making this life-changing decision was his inability to secure a fulltime job due to his age and lack of paper qualifications,⁷⁶ the dismal state of the Singapore property market, and worries over their children's ability to cope with the competitive education system.

I met with **Studio Technician** while he was in Singapore for a short visit. When I asked him why he chose to emigrate, he told me bluntly: “I am moving for the future of my family and my children. I leave to get respect. I am not employable here! Singapore doesn't want me! No place for people over 40... I need to find some place where I can be employed and survive. Everything is about survival. Can hardly survive in Singapore... The question for me is: how do I survive daily?”

⁷⁶ Although the city-state holds fast to its image of meritocracy, national surveys reveal that non-degreed retrenched individuals over forty years of age have a difficult time securing fulltime as well as part-time employment, as employers tend to favor younger graduates fresh out of college.

“If not *crème de la crème*, can forget about surviving! What kind of future is there for me in my old age, or for my children, especially if they cannot succeed academically?” he asked.

In the case of **Sound Engineer**, he chose to send his family to Australia while he remained in Singapore to work, because his daughter had won admission to a reputable high school in Melbourne. For him, “family was the deciding factor” in his decision to emigrate. At the time of our interview, **Sound Engineer** was both hopeful and a little apprehensive about his impending move to Australia. He, nevertheless, saw it as an adventure. “I a bit scared when we first decided. So I asked my wife, ‘How, ah? ... if cannot find a job?’ She said ‘Never mind lah, can always work odd jobs, or make *nasi lemak* to sell’. After I hear her say like dat, I feel much better.”

Many participants felt Australia offered greater chances at starting life anew. What they appreciated about Australia was the ‘fair-go’ attitude, where an individual is not judged by his or her educational qualifications, outward appearance, or the work s/he does. Vocational skills are highly respected, unlike in Singapore, where greater emphasis is placed on higher education and academic knowledge.

Insurance Agent, a Chinese man in his 60s, decided to stay on and find work in Australia upon completing his college degree in the 1970s, offered this observation, “Australia is extremely compassionate. Singapore has no compassion. Therefore, her people don’t feel the commitment to the country. No second chance. They need a second chance government. It’s the harshness of society that chases away Singaporeans! [They] don’t feel attached to it. Some say: ‘Give me ticket I also won’t go back!’”

Interestingly, there also appears to be, among these newer emigrants, an emerging group with loftier aspirations and ambitions: that of a socially conscious Singaporean emigrant. Many echoed the same sentiments voiced by **Crisis Manager**, an Indian emigrant who moved to Perth in 2002, and “want[s] Singaporeans to give back to the underprivileged” in Western Australia.

Crisis Manager shared his vision for the new Singaporean emigrant in Australia during our hour-long interview: “Ordinary Australians will be able to distinguish Singaporeans not by accents, but also by the guys that roll up their sleeves to help. I want to shed the image of Asians as bloodsuckers that don’t contribute or give back. Hopefully, I will be able to bring an aspect of Singapore into the context of the new community.”

APPENDIX D

PROFILE OF RESEARCH PARTICIPANTS

INTERNAL LOYALISTS

Enthusiastic Loyalists

Cabinet Minister is one of the up-and-coming junior politicians to watch. A government scholar, Cabinet Minister has an impressive record of achievements in his chosen profession. Prior to joining the PAP and standing for elections, Cabinet Minister offered objective criticisms of the government, which led many political observers to view him as a possible agent of change and counterbalance within the largely conservative cabinet. Below are some quotes from the one-on-one interview.

On emigration:

“[Emigration] is not a problem partly because we’ve changed our attitude. We recognize that the economic and social spheres are outgrowing the boundaries of Singapore. Our economic sphere is not Singapore-the-little-red-dot. There is a network that extends beyond.

On emigrants:

“For people who go overseas, the key is to keep them part of a viable network. We need Singaporeans overseas to look out for opportunities, to represent us, to look after our investments.”

On cities and hinterland:

“Singapore is downtown Manhattan, not upstate New York. Our larger hinterland is Southeast Asia and Australia.... There’s always a need for a New York — a city, a metropolis. People should not — and will not — be trapped by the confines of the city. Cities must have a hinterland. If, politically, we did not take a turn in 1965, we will still be a city.”

On the increasing calls for dual citizenship:

“My response to this is: I don’t have to cheapen citizenship just to make you happy and aggravate those who are here slugging. Not yet.”

On the government's response to emigration:

“Deliver a better life for those who can't get out and options for those who can get out.”

Conscientious Objector, a Chinese in his late 60s, is one of the longest serving opposition members of parliament. His tenacity and ability to retain his seat in parliament has won him the admiration of Singaporeans and even praise from members of the ruling party.

On Singapore's rapid change:

“Singapore has been in a turmoil all these number of years. Societal change has been so rapid that Singaporeans have been so disoriented. They don't know if they are coming or going... There's rapid change all the time. Singaporeans are, in a way, disorientated.”

On his contribution to Singapore politics:

“My greatest achievement is to show that people can go into politics... I proved to Singaporeans not to be fearful, and to stand for elections.”

On OB (out-of-bounds) markers:

“There's no such thing as OB markers. There are no OB markers, yet there are OB markers everywhere. One must be guided by one's common sense and do the thing that is right for Singapore. Do things that are good for Singapore. Don't criticize PAP members personally, because you can't prove it. First, you mustn't have malice towards others; then, you mustn't go beyond the OB Markers.”

On nation-building:

“I also want to help Singapore. I also want to build Singapore. You must have to have opposition to be democracy. I'm also involved in nation-building... it all depends on what nation you want.

On loyalty:

“My loyalty is because I grew up in Singapore. I have nothing against this country or the PAP. I have no chip on

my shoulder along the way. Somehow or other, I've always felt that Singapore is my home. Migration is not in my mind at all, despite the fact that I'm in the opposition. I was never persecuted, or hurt in any way to [cause me] to be in the opposition."

Engineer is a Chinese-educated, middle-income engineer and member of one of the opposition parties. He helps out at the weekly "Meet-the-People" sessions for one of the opposition member of parliament, and is active at the grassroots level in the opposition constituency. His party has fielded him as its candidate in the past three General Elections, and he believes opposition parties should be given more leeway to participate in Singapore's development. He asserts, "Opposition party members are loyal to Singapore. They are also working for the people of Singapore. They may not totally agree with the PAP government, but that doesn't necessarily make them disloyal to Singapore."

Objective Participant, a Chinese medical specialist in his 40s, has been a regular participant in government initiatives and national committees since the late 1980s. Educated in London, Objective Participant had thought about staying put as he had a good job, and had adapted well to the lifestyle. But he decided to return to Singapore after he was headhunted and offered a job by a local hospital. "Being Singaporean, I felt I had to come back and contribute something," he explains. He offers objective, yet critical, opinions, and is known to speak his mind when approached by the local media.

On rootedness:

"Rootedness comes with sense of participation and franchise... For Singapore as a nation, one of the greatest aspects of franchise is choice of government. That is very important. If even the ability to choose government is taken away from you, you are no longer engaged in treating the country your home."

On the concept of home versus that of a hotel:

"If you have a say, you feel like you live in a home. If you don't have a say, you feel like you are living in a hotel where the landlord has you on sufferance. Then, you look at how things are run. For example, do they lock the doors at 10 p.m. or 12 midnight?"

On the feeling of ownership and emigration:

"The question is: who owns the country? The PAP? Are they stewards or owners? The tenant becomes afraid of the

household manager because he's grown too powerful! As a result, you do not dare to complain about plumbing, etc. That's when the emigration mentality takes root... because the manager runs the house with ruthless efficiency. But it is run in such a controlled manner that the tenant is forced to find another home!"

On political apathy:

"The political machinery of the PAP is too overpowering, therefore opposition members do not have much of a platform. Singaporeans feel very politically apathetic, as it is. If the final political will is so removed from you, you've lost it now."

On voting:

"If, at least, all Singaporeans have a chance to vote, you retain a sense of control over your destiny. But the vote is, by and large, unavailable. Even if Singaporeans get to vote, the choice is between PAP and someone completely hopeless. As a result, Singaporeans start to resent the lack of choice."

Opposition Leader comes from a middle-income family, and is an unmarried Chinese in her 40s. She is one of the more articulate members of the opposition, but chooses her words with care when asked for her comments on political issues. She has never considered emigration as an option, because "I didn't see the need to move. My family and friends are here."

On her political awakening:

"My father follows politics very closely. I was brought up with political debate discussions... 2001 GE [General Elections] had very few contested wards. Only one in three Singaporeans voted. The PAP had a 75 per cent sweep. My conscience told me I had to do it [join the opposition]. I believed it important, and decided to translate it into action."

On Remaking Singapore:

"We [the opposition parties] were not involved in feedback to the RSC [Remaking Singapore Committee]. There is a

danger in us getting involved. Harder to take a step back to look at it objectively... also, we don't want to be subject to government perimeters."

On loyalty:

"Why should we spend time, take risks to do all this, if we are not patriotic?"

Seasoned Communicator, an Indian in his 40s, has been a regular participant in government initiatives and national committees and political commentator since the 1980s. He has more than 20 years' experience in broadcast media, and currently owns a multi-million dollar media communications company that consults to many government agencies. He had considered emigrating before, but held back because of two things: his aged parents, and because "I feel that I haven't done enough to try." "There are things I can do before I make the decision to migrate," although he is not ruling out the possibility of emigration in the future.

On loyalty:

"It is the duty of every citizen of country to do whatever you can, in whatever way, unselfishly."

On rootedness and Remaking Singapore:

"In the end, we need to ask ourselves: 'Who are we? What do we want? Are we serious about rootedness? Or are we just dealing with it superficially?' "

On the danger of group-think:

"There needs to be a genuine desire on the part of the political leadership to avoid group-think. It is suffering from a serious disease of group-think. Even a best group of people, if they don't allow for exchange of ideas, get cocooned. A few years ago, PM Goh Chok Tong said, "We don't need the opposition. We battle it among ourselves." Even the best 400m sprinter could be a gold medalist but is never able to better himself unless he has someone to pace you (*sic*) or compete with you (*sic*). He will be the gold medalist, but will never improve his time. The PAP, with best intentions, wins the race without credible people to pace them. Are we better off for it? Is the PAP better off for it? I don't think so."

On national education:

“We need to make it more experiential. We need to revive oral tradition — the sharing of anecdotes and stories. These are important because they give us a sense of rootedness. Today, we are displaced.... Those in the 60s to 80s should be garnered to go down and start sharing [their stories]. We should revive it at multi-levels. Only then would we have the pride in Singapore as a home. Any semblance of a propaganda exercise must be vanquished!”

Dissident Internal Loyalist

NIL

Contented Internal Loyalists

Administrative Executive is a lower-middle income, unmarried Chinese in her 30s who did her post-graduate degrees in two countries — UK and Australia. Despite her overseas stints, she still sees Singapore as home — even though her siblings have emigrated. She cites, as reasons, the fact that she grew up in Singapore, all her friends are still living and working in the city-state, she enjoys regular fellowship with her church mates, and is familiar with and feels “at home” in Singapore. She is also proud of Singapore’s relatively uncorrupt government, the strong emphasis on conservative values, and the efficient work culture. Born in Malaysia to parents who were Malaysian citizens, she was a Singapore permanent resident until she reached the age of 21, when she gave up her Malaysian citizenship to become a Singapore citizen.

Civil Servant is a middle-income, unmarried Chinese in her 30s who works with one of the national security bodies. She firmly believes that Singapore is the best place, and cannot fathom why anyone would want to emigrate. “Singapore good, wat. There’s nothing wrong with it. Why would I want to migrate? My family and friends are here, I have a steady job.... If I want to go overseas, I can travel to those places during my vacation. No need to move there! Better to stay here than be a second-class citizen elsewhere. No matter what, Singapore is still my home.”

Hair Stylist is a middle-income Chinese in her 40s who runs her own hairdressing salon and is married with a daughter. To her, Singapore is the best place for bringing up her child because it is safe; is socially and economically stable; has a good education system; has a relatively uncorrupt, government; and is an Asian country that still holds fast to its traditional values. Although she keeps up with the latest fashion trends, as is required by

her line of work, Hair Stylist is still very much a traditional Chinese at heart and believes in instilling strong Asian values in her child, such as respect for authority and diligence. Emigration has never crossed her mind, because “I would find it very hard to survive in a western country, or even China. If you ask me to go there for a holiday, can. But I won’t be able to live there long term.” She strongly believes that most people can survive and live quite comfortably in Singapore if they are hardworking, have the eagerness to learn, and a persevering attitude.

Librarian is a lower-middle income, unmarried, Chinese diploma holder in her late 20s, who is currently pursuing a distance-learning Master’s degree. She agrees that the PAP government has, in general, been a good one, having built a safe and comfortable environment as compared to the region. “In a way, you can say that my loyalty has been bought by the PAP government. They have created such a comfortable environment here, so much so that I don’t want to move anywhere else,” was the way she put it. The characteristics that have spawned Librarian’s sense of pride in Singapore are the general lack of corruption in the Singapore government, social harmony and tolerance among the four major ethnic groups, and the social, economic, and political stability that Singapore has enjoyed the past 40 years.

Studio Director is a middle-income Chinese and father of two who is in his 30s. None of his family members have emigrated, or studied overseas. The introvert believes that he would not be able to fit into the life overseas, especially since he has no prior overseas experience or certification. His aim in life now is to do all he can — that is, work hard and earn money — to secure the future of his two children.

Systems Administrator is a middle-income Chinese in her 40s who was adopted by an Indian family. She is married with a daughter, and is a staunch Christian. In her opinion, some of the reasons that make Singapore better than any other countries is its high level of racial and religious tolerance — “Where else can you see a mosque, Hindu temple, Chinese temple standing side-by-side with each other?” — stable government, and meritocracy. She is unfazed by what has been described as a restrictive political environment. “As long as you obey the laws and don’t get involved in politics, Singapore is quite a nice place to live. It’s close to places like Indonesia and Thailand, so on weekends, you can take short trips to all these places. It’s a cosmopolitan city-state, has efficient public transportation, and no political instability. Other places all have more problems than here. Besides, there’s no perfect government in this world; and Singapore isn’t too bad on that score.”

Self-Adjuster

Academic Observer is a Chinese academic and social observer in his 60s who spent several years in Canada, but ultimately decided to move back to Singapore. Although

outspoken, critical, and even cynical about government policies, Academic Observer has chosen to concentrate his research narrowly at the more microscopic community and grassroots levels.

On rootedness:

“There’s no problem of rootedness. You think there is a problem?? It is the government that makes it a problem! What is the problem? Going by net migration numbers alone, Singapore is a net gainer! If people are nationalistic, they won’t move. By the same logic, we shouldn’t be receiving people who are coming here. This notion that people were rooted in a nation is fundamentally flawed. It’s an ideological issue that does not have substance in people’s daily lives.”

On loyalty:

“We can’t worry about rootedness and encourage PRC engineers to stay for good. Why only accuse Singaporeans who move out as disloyal, and not other nationals who move here as disloyal? Duplicity is serious. You can always have one yardstick for yourself and another for others.”

Academic Thinker is a middle-income Chinese lecturer at one of the local universities. Educated overseas on a government scholarship, the lecturer in his late 30s is cognizant of the challenges facing the government, and has offered his objective opinions and recommendations in the form of academic and policy papers. He is also active on the local arts scene.

On Remaking Singapore:

“Is it any different from *Singapore 21*, 1987?... I am skeptical about these things [Remaking Singapore]. They are valuable for a variety of things: political theatrics; political drama; space for people to perform and feel they’ve achieved something. But there are limiting possibilities about what can be thought.”

On emigration:

“Can you blame Singaporeans? We are a nation raised on economic gains; the government’s legitimacy is based on returns!”

On the challenges of managing participation:

“At one time, the government didn’t need the input of the people; [the leaders] involved them because they felt they needed to. Now, they involve them because they *need* to. So they choose those whose input is valuable.... they look at those who are the experts and who are not too problematic. They ask their questions, and these people are answering questions put forth by government. But in time to come, people don’t want to be patronized in such a way.”

On the sense of crisis:

“We see, at very regular intervals in Singapore... there exist sense of crisis... ‘We are a nation of crisis! Let’s remake ourselves!’ This possibly is some strategy of some kind — we don’t want people to be too blasé about Singapore.”

On the use of crisis in Singapore’s political discourse:

“By always saying that the nation is in crisis, you’re asking the people to think of the nation. You threaten people or frighten people — that they need a strong PAP government to protect us against ourselves. Or you celebrate the nation — exaggerate the nation — through pure spectacle. Crisis is one of the dominant discourses [in Singapore] because it gives nation life,”

On the use of consultative exercises in Singapore:

“If, in spite of putting faith in government, they cannot deliver what the people want, then what? Plug in with consultation! This generates the sensation that every Singaporean is involved; it’s a self-reflexive activity meant to preserve integrity as a nation.”

On the concept of nation:

“The nation is real only because we talk about them. Nations need to problematize: ‘Oh dear! This is a nation in crisis!’ This need is due to the nation being real only when you talk about it. And nations are most alive when they are in trouble.”

“We should think of the nation as an aspiration rather than something they (*sic*) are or will be... an aspiration that can never be reached. Once you reach the ending point, that’s when the nation as a concept is dead.”

Civil Rights Activist is a Chinese philosophical thinker in his 40s. Encouraged by the government’s more open, consultative stance, he participated in the Remaking Singapore Committee, but was disappointed with the outcome, as well as the restrictive ways in which the meetings were conducted and opinions sought. He has decided against participating in any future government-led initiatives. Instead, he is turning his attention to independent, active groups in his areas of interest — theater and gay rights.

On loyalty:

“I’m loyal to Singapore — the people — not PAP. The problem is one bloody party has managed to erode so much of state institutions: the judiciary, the media, the parliament. One party has become the instrument! You can’t be loyal to this whole entity. In the U.S., you can separate the administration from party. In Singapore, you can’t.... People don’t feel loyalty to this government, except the vested interest groups.”

On his disappointment with the outcome of Remaking Singapore:

“We are in a sorrier state than we thought. My mistake is in believing that I can change things. The problem with Singapore is its leaders are too pragmatic and too lazy to think too much.... It is one thing to understand issues and choose not to do (*sic*) decisions. A lot of times, it seems they are not aware.”

Graphic Designer is a middle-income Chinese in her late 30s who has always wanted to experience working and living overseas. Over the past 10 years, she has actively considered emigration, but has never gone past the initial inquiry stage because of her strong sense of responsibility towards her parents. Now, due to her age, her obligation — as an unmarried daughter — to take care of her aging parents, and her recent financial commitment from her decision to purchase a flat to house herself and her parents, she realizes that emigration is no longer an option. She satisfies her wanderlust by taking frequent vacations to exotic places every year.

Local Poet is a middle-income Chinese in his late 30s, and father of one. He had thought about emigrating previously, and was looking for opportunities that would allow him to experience the lifestyle overseas. He eventually left for Australia, after winning a

government scholarship to do a yearlong graduate degree in creative writing. Since returning from Australia, Local Poet has chosen to reintegrate into the Singapore society, where he deems his contributions lie in the local writing scene. He also believed the learning curve is less steep in Singapore where he is already relatively known, as compared to Australia, where he has yet to make a name for himself. The way he put it was: “I would rather be a big fish in a small pond, than a small fish in a big pond.”

Malay Publisher is a middle-income Malay Muslim in the late 40s with a print journalism background. He had filed a family application for, and obtained the right to, permanent residency in Australia. However, when it came time to emigrate or lose the right to permanent residency, Malay Publisher decided to stay in Singapore. The decision was triggered mostly by his wife’s and children’s reluctance to leave friends and families behind. Since making the decision to stay, Malay Publisher has reintegrated himself, and is actively participating and organizing activities for various charities and organizations within the Malay Muslim community.

Political Analyst, a Chinese consultant in his 40s, was a regular participant at numerous government initiatives and national committees over the past twenty years. Disappointed at the general apathy around him, the way the committee meetings were conducted, and the seeming disregard for many of the committees’ recommendations, Political Analyst has turned down numerous invitations to participate in national committees, choosing, instead, to voice his opinions only in issues that he feels passionate about, such as national heritage.

Polytechnic Lecturer is a middle-income Indian in his early 40s and a father of two. Previously, he had thought about emigrating but shelved the idea since getting married. He says his wish now is for his children — the next generation — to have the opportunity to be educated overseas. Polytechnic Lecturer is also a frequent contributor to the Forum page of *The Straits Times*, which publishes Letters to the Editor — essentially, commentaries on recent news reports. He has written on a range of subjects, from issues on Remaking Singapore, to Singapore’s recent decision to build integrated resorts and legalize gambling in casinos. He sees this as his way to contribute to and participate in Singapore’s development, and to help transform Singapore into an even better place for his children to grow up in.

On loyalty:

“I am loyal because I am still contributing to the national economy and contributing to society. I contribute to society by sending letters with my views and suggestions on national policies to the Forum page [in *The Straits Times*]. I am paying taxes to the government and adding to their tax revenue, which they use to fund various programs and projects. I’m also contributing to CPF, which the government uses for its investments.”

PR Consultant is a Eurasian-Peranakan (Peranakan Chinese father, European mother) in his late 50s. He left Singapore for Perth, Australia, in the early 1980s and at the height of his career as the Vice-President of Public Relations at an international hotel chain.

On his initial feeling towards emigrating:

“I spent 17 years building up a career. I do not have a degree; I got myself where I was through sheer hard work. I did not feel like moving to Perth. My sister-in-law had migrated; my wife and children went to Perth for a holiday, and loved it there.”

Two factors — the couple’s inability to buy and own a house or flat in Singapore due to legal technicalities, and their concern over their son’s performance at school, particularly their second-language (Mandarin) — eventually pushed their decision to emigrate. PR Consultant became an Australian citizen two years after emigrating to Perth, and chose to give up his Singapore citizenship in order to withdraw his CPF money.

On his initial years in Australia:

“When I went to Perth, I had to start from scratch. First, I worked my way up in Hungry Jack’s (the Australian equivalent of Burger King) until I was manager of my own store. Then I went on to be a supermarket manager, and then relieving store manager of Woolworths”

Seventeen years later, PR Consultant returned to Singapore to work, after being headhunted and persuaded by one of his former colleagues who was now with a headhunting firm. With his sons now happily married and settled in good-paying jobs in Perth, PR Consultant decided it was time for him to seize the second chance at a career that was being offered to him.

PR Director and her husband left Singapore for Australia and stayed there for two years before uprooting and returning to Singapore in 2005. She is a Chinese in her early 40s, married to an Indian journalist for nearly 20 years. They have no children. Although PR Director and her husband both do not have university degrees, they had established themselves in their careers, she in hospitality public relations, and he in the publishing business. Well traveled for much of the last 20 years, they had always said they would retire to Australia some day. For them, that day came when the company where he had been managing editor of several renowned international titles was sold. Because they had done their homework on Australia and they knew it wasn’t easy getting a job there, they made their plans before leaving Singapore. He decided to go into the retail business and set up two stores catering to the well heeled. They also started their own editorial consultancy in Singapore. The plan was that he would continue to work on editorial

projects for his Singapore-based clients “by remote” from Australia, making quick business trips to Singapore when needed to meet with his clients. In Australia, their job search proved to be fruitless. He had to rely more and more on his Singapore projects, and soon found himself having to make one-week trips to Singapore once a month – out of his own pocket – to source for new clients as well as keep his current clients happy. Eventually, she found a job in the public relations field, but in a more junior position than she had been. Just when it looked as if she was being given a chance to start her career in Australia — with the possibility of moving to another city — he told her that he was thinking of spending more time in Singapore, possibly several months at a time. His decision was triggered by business (his retail business was failing) as well as personal reasons (a sister to whom he had been very close had terminal cancer). Rather than choosing to live separately, she decided to move back to Singapore with him. They both found employment in Singapore within a short time, she with the same hotel and he with a publisher with whom he had previously worked.

Retired Teacher is an Indian in his 60s who used to be an active member of the grassroots organization in the constituency in which he still lives. A Malaysian by birth, Retired Teacher was educated in Malaysia and came to Singapore to be trained as a teacher, after obtaining his high school diploma. He became a Singapore citizen soon after. He has two daughters, one of whom is married to a Malaysian and emigrated with her family to the U.S. ten years ago. Retired Teacher has no intention of emigrating — “What for? I’m an old man already. I’m so used to Singapore. My daughter has asked us several times to join her. But I’m not used to the weather there. Too cold. I told her it would be better if I visit her.” Retired Teacher and his wife usually visit their daughter and her family in the U.S. each summer. Although critical of some government policies and statements made by Singapore political leaders, he usually ends his criticisms by philosophizing, “It’s the same everywhere. There is no perfect government in the world. We really can’t complain about our government. They have been quite good.”

Returnee is an upper-middle income Chinese with two children currently studying in Australia. He made the decision to emigrate for the sake of his children’s education. His intention, then, was to settle permanently in Australia, where his children would attend the universities there, and he would start a small business. Before emigrating, he ran a successful timber business, which he sold, together with his landed property. With those monies, he proceeded to purchase a house in Adelaide, and to set up business. Having no experience in the Australian market, nor any Australian certification, Returnee found it hard to make a living. Just barely a year later, Returnee decided to cut his losses: he sold the house in Adelaide, rented a house in Singapore, and proceeded to move his whole family back to Singapore. He now laments his decision to emigrate and his hastiness in selling his business and house in Singapore, confiding that he had lost almost half a million Singapore dollars in the process. Since returning to Singapore, Returnee and his wife have started another business, and are advising their friends and families to learn from their costly mistake, to do their homework and think twice before emigrating to Australia.

Stay-At-Home-Mum is a mother of one in her early 30s who gave up a promising career in broadcasting when her husband was posted to Austria. Soon after graduating from the local polytechnic, the Chinese diploma holder went on to pursue her undergraduate degree in Australia, before landing a job with an multinational company. Living overseas is not new to her, and she enjoyed the couple's three years in Vienna. Even though the couple had obtained permanent residency in Austria, they decided to return to Singapore so that their son would have the chance of growing up in an Asian environment, and to go to school in Singapore. The couple was concerned that they would not be able to instill strong Asian values and Chinese cultural identity in their son, should they choose to stay on in Austria, because of the general lackadaisical attitude among the Austrians, and the small Asian migrant population there. They were also worried that their son would be disadvantaged in an Austrian school, as he would have to learn German; they were also not sure if the Austrian education syllabus would be transferable should they decide to return to Singapore. Moreover, should they decide to return to Singapore later, they would have to teach their son Mandarin, so that he can fit into the Singapore school system. After weighing the pros and cons, the couple decided that it may be less traumatic to make the move back to Singapore now — when the son is just 18 months old — rather than later. Now, back in Singapore, Stay-At-Home-Mum admits she suffered a reverse culture shock initially upon her return, having to readjust to a different system of social norms and family expectations, which included relearning how to deal with prying relatives who insisted on knowing everything about her personal and married life. She laments the lack of privacy in the city-state and acknowledges that the overall environment is more stifling in Singapore, but says “it is not too much of a problem unless you purposely violate the law.” Stay-At-Home-Mum is not ruling out the possibility of relocating in the next five years, should her husband be given another overseas job posting, although she would much prefer to have her son complete his sixth grade before they relocate again.

Disengaged Stayers

Business Consultant is a Malay in his early 40s with four young children. The youngest child of a prominent Muslim who advises the government on issues affecting the Malay/Muslim community, Business Consultant converted to Catholicism when he married a Singaporean Chinese he met while working in Kuala Lumpur. Because of his religious conversion, which is a rarity in Singapore, his parents disowned him. They have since reconciled. He remains Catholic, and his children are being raised in the Catholic faith. He owns a consulting firm in Singapore, with a branch office in Kuala Lumpur. In 2004, he set up a branch office in Australia, in preparation for his family's emigration a few years later. Upset that his two elder sons had been labeled “slow” and “troubled” by their teachers at the S\$1,000-a-month kindergarten they attended (in 2004), he was adamant about taking his children out of the stifling Singapore education system, and was

particularly eager to emigrate before the eldest of his four sons turned 10.⁷⁷ “The education system doesn’t teach its students how to think. I didn’t learn to think for myself until I had graduated university and was working in another country,” he said.

Store Owner is a lower-middle income Chinese in her early 40s with two school-going children. She runs a retail gift shop with her husband. “Emigration is for the rich only (*sic*), or for graduates. Not for people like us,” says Store Owner, who only has high school education. However, she readily admits, “If can migrate, of course I want to go! People like us cannot survive here. Very difficult to make money; everything so expensive.” She pronounces as hogwash the widely accepted mantra of meritocracy, and asserts that all the government is always looking for ways to tax the people. She points to several government policies, including the imposition of a resale levy of 20 percent on the sale proceeds of HDB flats. The resale levy was introduced in 2003, following complaints that people were profiting from regular trading of HDB flats, and driving the prices of these public housing units above the reach of lower-income families.

Sound Engineer is a middle-income Malay/Muslim in his early 40s and a father of three school-going children. All of his children attended the public school and the *madrasah* (religious school) in Singapore, and Sound Engineer had been saving up money with the intention of sending them to the Middle East for their higher education. Sound Engineer never once thought of emigrating, as both his family and his wife’s family live in Singapore. Nevertheless, he became convinced, upon visiting his friends who had emigrated to Australia, that such a move would be beneficial for his children’s future and religious development. Among the pull factors were the presence of a supportive Muslim community, strong communal ties among migrant families, and good religious schools. His wife, who had visited Australia with him, also supported the move. What further strengthened his resolve to emigrate was his children’s growing disinterest with school, their sliding grades, and his concern that they may be easily led astray in an increasingly westernized Singapore society, especially as they approach the teenage years. In addition, his eldest daughter’s grades were good enough to win her a place in a prestigious religious school, as well as a scholarship that would fund her first year of study there. Sound Engineer decided that his daughter would leave for Australia first, and stay with his bosom friend while attending school there. In the meantime, he would file a family application for permanent residency in Australia. It took almost two years before their family application was processed and granted. Although his siblings were unhappy about his decision to emigrate, they, nevertheless, helped contribute money to Sound Engineer so that he would be able to post the required S\$75,000 surety for his son, who was above the age of 10. What followed was a whirlwind of activities including the sale of the

⁷⁷ Under Singapore laws, Singaporean parents who move overseas for work or study and who are bringing their sons above the age of 10 out of the country would have to post a S\$75,000 bond for each son. This is to ensure that the boy(s) will return to Singapore to serve the mandatory two-and-a-half years of national service. Should the boy fail to return to Singapore when he is 18, he would have to serve the equivalent two-and-a-half years in jail before he is allowed to live and work in Singapore; the money posted by his parents would also be forfeited.

family car, the sale of their HDB executive flat, and the concurrent purchase of a three-room HDB flat and that of a detached family house in Australia. Sound Engineer chose to stay on in Singapore for another six months, before leaving to join his family in Melbourne. He figured six months would be enough time for him to tie up the loose ends — rent out the three-room flat, and earn another six months of salary. Although nervous about how he and his family would fit into the Australian lifestyle, and about his ability to earn his keep, Sound Engineer was looking forward to a new beginning and the myriad of possibilities.

Video Editor is a middle-income Chinese in her late 40s married with two school-going children. For the past 10 years, she and her husband, a Malay/Muslim in his 60s with strong ties to his religious community, have discussed the possibility of emigration, because of her concern over their children's futures. She did not believe her children would be able to make it to any of the Singapore universities, judging from how poorly they did in school. She believed their inability to be university graduates would have a negative impact on their future. At the same time, Video Editor found herself retrenched and unable to find a job for nearly six months, being passed over for jobs because of her age. She became increasingly disheartened, often voiced her unhappiness with government policies — “The government doesn't care about the people. Once elected, the MPs are only concerned about toeing the PAP line, because they know which side of their bread is buttered” — and criticized the ministers for being “the last ones to take a pay cut in a recession, and the first ones to up their salaries when times are good.” The decision to apply for permanent residency was a difficult one as neither she nor her husband had university degrees and they were both above the 45-year-old cut-off age for applications. Moreover, their son was already 12 years old. When they finally decided to apply to emigrate, Video Editor's husband changed his mind because his elder brother, who was an Australian citizen and had lived there for over 30 years, died and there was some furor over whether he should be buried according to Islamic rites. Video Editor's husband decided then that he did not want to live in Australia and risk a tug-of-religion conflict, should he die in Australia like his brother.

EXTERNAL LOYALISTS

Supportive External Loyalists

Academic is a lecturer at one of Perth's universities, where he obtained his doctoral degree. Prior to pursuing his Ph.D., **Academic** had worked in government-linked companies as well as government agencies. A Singaporean-Chinese in his late 30s, **Academic** is married to a Taiwanese; they have a daughter. He makes frequent trips to Singapore, where he presents conference and policy papers on Singapore.

On the concept of home versus hotel:

“If you live in Singapore, your home is the hotel. If you think about your home as a hotel, then your country becomes like a hotel to you, too.”

On emigration:

“People use children as excuse for leaving country. I suspect that the person facing stress isn't the children, but the fathers and mothers. I told my peers: think carefully because you're better off in Singapore.”

Business Lecturer, a middle-income, Chinese lecturer at one of Perth's universities, is in his 30s and is married to an Australian with whom he has two children. He has lived in Australia for 15 years, where he finished his Master's and Ph.D., both funded by scholarships. His parents and younger brother still live in Singapore, although his brother is looking to migrate because “things are tough in Singapore.” “‘Very hard to make money’ is the often-heard refrain.” Business Lecturer made the decision to take up Australian citizenship two years ago, because “I wanted to contribute. This is my home. I want to be an Australian citizen.” Yet, he maintains, “My roots are still in Singapore.” Business Lecturer travels frequently to Singapore and the Southeast Asian region, where he is oversees his university's external degree program in Business.

On changing citizenship:

“It was hard to let go of citizenship. It was with lots of sadness that I gave up my [Singaporean] citizenship. But I had no choice, because the country has no dual citizenship policy. If dual citizenship is allowed, I would be one of the first to raise my hands and reapply.”

On Singaporean emigrants in Perth:

“Singaporeans tend to keep a low profile in Perth. It's ingrained in the culture of Singaporeans... because of the style of government, which is paternalistic in nature. They made it clear, in an unseen contract: ‘Let us govern the country. You just make the money. Let us do the governing’. The result is Singaporeans are very apolitical. There's nothing we can do about it. Singaporeans tend to be very private. Don't want to tell too much about themselves because of this fear... lingering fear of being caught out with things that they say.”

On the challenges of managing participation:

“The Singapore government realizes that it is dealing with a different breed of people altogether. So they open up debates with conditions, but under a controlled environment. The government wants it both ways. They put changes in place, to try to portray to the external community that Singapore does tolerate opposition. It’s all about attracting foreigners to Singapore. So they do it in controlled manner. But Singaporeans are not dumb. They are very cynical about it. All this predominates from Lee Kuan Yew. Paternalistic government that treats Singaporeans like teenagers. ‘If you live in my house, you must obey my rules.’”

On meritocracy:

“Singapore is a meritocracy and elitist society. But meritocracy only applies to the elite group in Singapore. The caveat is: it only applies to those who have basic goods. You must have all the right goods in place to matter — you must have participated in several ECAs, taken up leadership roles in schools and organizations, taken music lessons, performed social work, etc... If you have no degree, didn’t go through the system, meritocracy does not apply to you. You can only rely on the survival of the fittest.”

On one’s ties to the country:

“Economic ties are not a very strong hold to tie the loyalty of a person with their country. Look at the Taiwanese, Indonesians... they all feel they can contribute to change in their own country. Singaporeans are like Hongkongers. They go where there are economic gains to be made. Hongkongers have gone back to Hong Kong, because it is still the place to make money.”

Crisis Manager is a middle-income Indian in his 40s and father to four boys who emigrated to Perth with his family in 2002. He runs his own public relations / crisis management / media management company, and has clients in both Singapore and Perth. As a result, he travels frequently to Singapore, where he counts, among his clients, government agencies and statutory boards. Crisis Manager’s decision to emigrate was prompted by several factors: the increasing emphasis on ethnicity (“I grew up believing in a Singaporean Singapore. But after Anson 1979, script changed. Singapore became

very ethnic focused. My ideal was taken away from me... When my ideal was re-scripted, it broke my own confidence.”); his children’s lost childhood (“Childhood is about enjoying themselves, about living. Once you take away that confidence, it’s all going to go. If children have confidence, they would be able to make a life in this world.”); and because the couple had “a lot of family in Sydney. Economic considerations dictated our move to Perth. It’s nearer to my markets and clients, and I am still able to maintain business clients from here.”

On the issue of stayers and quitters:

“It was the government who taught the people how to quit! We quit Malaysia, which was a natural part of Malaya. And look how children are brought up in schools?! Not good in a subject? Drop it! Because the school wants to maintain its ranking. The whole quitting mentality is institutionalized! The separation from Malaysia taught us to be resilient, but now, everybody is very fragile.”

Freelance Writer emigrated to Perth with her husband in the late 1980s. Even though she now lives away from Singapore, she travels there frequently to work on book projects with government agencies and statutory boards. When in Perth, she is busy planning and organizing activities that would showcase the Singaporean culture, and “to celebrate what it means to be Singaporean; what it means to be part of Singapore.” She explains, “I am not prepared to write off a huge chunk of life that has been formative. Like it or hate it, it’s an enormous part of me.”

Lawyer is a Chinese partner in a prestigious law firm in downtown Perth. Educated in London, he met his wife while studying there. They have three children. Lawyer describes himself as being “passionate about Singapore because as whole entity, it’s a very inspiring story. It continues to fascinate not because of independence till now, but also because of how it is trying to reinvent itself to become another inspiring story, from this point onwards.” Because of his passion to know more about Singapore, he spends hours at the library each week poring over *The Straits Times* and publications from Singapore. An adviser to the Singapore student associations at Perth’s universities, Lawyer has also been instrumental in organizing cultural and social activities with the aim of bringing together Singaporeans living in Perth. He hopes this would encourage more Singaporeans to express their Singaporean identity, and to participate and contribute to Singapore’s development.

Professional Artiste is an Indian musician, writer, and stand-up comic in his 50s who emigrated to Perth in the 1980s. He says he left because “I felt ineffectual; ineffective.” But he maintains that he continues to be passionate about Singapore. “If anything happened to Singapore, it will affect me very deeply.” Even in Perth, Professional Artiste continues to take an active interest in developments in Singapore, and often offers

feedback to the relevant authorities. He also makes it a point to return to Singapore at least once a year, where he would perform at local pubs to help raise funds for charitable organizations and nursing homes for the elderly.

On loyalty:

“Loyalty in Singapore is bought. Those who talk loudly about loyalty are those that have the going good for them. That sort of loyalty is highly suspect.”

On Singaporean identity from 1945 till now:

“One minute, I’m singing God Save the King and saluting the Union Jack; the next minute, I’m singing Sayonan and saluting the Japanese flag. The third minute I’m learning the Singapore anthem, *Majulah Singapura*, new flag, new president, new pledge; and then I’m learning how to sing Negaraku, then another new flag. What is the big deal? Is this what Singapore is all about?”

Dissident External Loyalists

NIL

Passive External Loyalists

Asian Produce Supplier, and upper-middle income Chinese in his 50s, emigrated to Perth with his family at the age of 50. The father of three and former sales executive cites pull factors such as the reasonable lifestyle, his children’s education, and the ability to spend more time with the children as reasons for emigrating. Also, he explains, “I had opportunity in Australia. If no opportunity, I would not have come over.” He is now a successful importer and supplier of Asian products and produce to the local Asian markets and restaurants in Perth. Asian Produce Supplier and his family live in a wealthy neighborhood that is largely populated by wealthy Chinese.

On changing citizenship:

“What would make me give up my citizenship? Just to get my CPF money. There really is no need to take up Australian citizenship. PR status good enough.”

Aspiring Actress is an unmarried Chinese graduate student in theater studies who is in her 30s. She was educated in Perth, but returned to Singapore after graduation because of parental pressure. She worked in Singapore for a year, but found it difficult to fit into the Singaporean lifestyle. It wasn't long before Perth started to beckon again, and she decided it was time to pack up her bags. This time, she wants to stay for good. "I don't want to be jaded by things like restriction in theater space. Cost-wise, Perth is cheaper and more conducive for the arts... I like the lifestyle here. If I can afford to go back, I will go back. But to start from scratch would be a waste of time and resources." Aspiring Actress says, "I don't miss home because the whole atmosphere is recreated here. I celebrate festivals with friends, with the usual observations of rituals and traditions, except that we don't really know what the point of it all is."

On being Singaporean:

"Being Singaporean is about adapting. We are like the gypsy people... We adapt very fast. We learned to survive as a society in the last 39 years. We were forced by circumstances to do things very fast."

On Singaporean identity:

"CMIO policy is what is problematic about Singaporean identity. Being a Singaporean isn't restricted to being born in Singapore, but to engage in the Singaporean experience."

On loyalty:

"So long as I give something back, I don't have to be in Singapore."

On participation:

"I want to *work* with the system. Not get *framed* by the system... It makes your point much stronger if you work within the system. It gives you the credibility that you are right. Nobody can touch you."

Elderly Entrepreneur is a Eurasian in his 70s and father of three when he emigrated to Perth in the early 1980s. He said, "I made a conscious decision to migrate for family lifestyle reasons." As a high-level sales executive responsible for the Asia Pacific region, Elderly Entrepreneur traveled frequently because of work. "I hardly saw my children. When I come back, they're already asleep. I asked myself: 'What sort of life is this? Work, work, work chasing the almighty dollar?!' If not going to the clubs to network, it is shopping. By moving here, I had the opportunity to grow up with my kids. Back there,

I hardly saw my children.” Now an Australian citizen, Elderly Entrepreneur still takes an active interest in Singapore’s developments and are proud of its achievements since gaining independence in 1965.

On emigrating:

“I have no regrets moving. If step forwards, don’t look back with regrets. Otherwise you tear yourself apart.”

On changing citizenship:

“I do not believe in keeping two passports. If you want to migrate, that’s it! Cut your bridges! It’s an either-or decision. Go forward once you’ve decided.”

Dentist is a dentist in his late 30s, married to a Caucasian homemaker he met while studying for his Masters overseas. They have two young daughters, both of whom are raised in the Western way of life. Dentist’s late mother was European, and his father, a Chinese, is a retired professor who has since remarried another Chinese. Interestingly, Dentist regards himself as Chinese, despite his Eurasian roots (his mother being European) and his inability to speak Mandarin even though it was his second language at school. He follows closely the news in Singapore, and tries to make a three-week trip to Singapore each year during Chinese New Year with his growing family. Although he was never very close to his father and his disabled younger sister, Dentist’s relationship with them has improved since the birth of his children. Because his dentistry degree is from Singapore, he cannot practice as a dentist in his adopted country; he can only teach dentistry and work as a clinician once a week under the auspices of his university. He would not hesitate to return to Singapore to work, except that his wife is close to her parents and does not like the lifestyle in Singapore. The fact that he is “non-white” and therefore loses out on advancements in his profession in his adopted country continues to grate on him, and he doesn’t think he would ever give up his Singapore citizenship.

Café Operator is a Malay/Muslim diploma holder and mother of two in her 30s who operates a small Halal eatery in the suburbs of Perth. Both Café Operator and her husband took up Australian citizenship as soon as they qualified. Their decision to emigrate took shape after they made trips to Perth to visit her friends who lived there, and immediately fell in love with the place, wide open spaces, and less stressful lifestyle. At first, their decision did not sit too well with their relatives. “Now, when I talk to my relatives on the phone, they say, “Stay there, don’t come back.” Last time, they used to say we *gila*⁷⁸.” Café Operator has noticed a remarkable change in her children’s grades

⁷⁸ *Gila* is Malay for crazy.

and attitude towards school. “My children are happy to go to school here. If son in Singapore school, no confidence to speak out. There, too regimented. Here, they are encouraged to explore and ask questions.”

Cell Group Host is an Indian in his 40s married to a Chinese. They have two children. The family recently emigrated — “a relatively new transplant, just over a year old” — and was settling into life in Perth. Both **Cell Group Host** and his wife are unemployed, and planned to take a year off to figure out what they were going to do next, whether it was to set up business, early retirement, or to look for a job. They continue to maintain strong links with friends and family in Singapore, and to network with recent Singaporean emigrants.

Computer Analyst is a Chinese upper middle class woman in her early 40s married to a Hong Kong-born Chinese. Like her younger sister Fitness Enthusiast, she holds Australian and Canadian citizenships. She has two young daughters who are being raised Chinese as her husband is adamant about retaining his cultural roots. In her 20s, Computer Analyst was married to a Caucasian from Canada, and they relocated to Singapore for two years in the 1980s while he did his Masters at the local university. She has spent more than 20s years overseas and, until her second marriage, continued to see herself as a “banana” – “yellow on the outside, white on the inside.” Computer Analyst doesn’t speak Mandarin or Cantonese, which is her husband’s mother tongue. Her daughters, on the other hand, speak mainly Cantonese and some English. Her father, to whom she was very close, had hoped she would return to Singapore but various personal and career reasons held her back. In the past year, she has seriously considered spending more time in Singapore with her elderly father, but again, her family circumstances do not permit.

Computer Technician is a Malay/Muslim diploma holder in his 40s and a father of two. He and his wife decided to emigrate to Perth, after visiting their friends who had emigrated there in the mid-1990s, and observed their relatively relaxed and stress-free family life. They saw how happy their friends’ children were, and realized that their children growing up in Singapore had less of a childhood in comparison. “Children have opportunity to be children here. In Singapore, it’s a lost childhood. Here, they are more vocal and confident.... The Singapore education system is tough on kids. When they take exams, parents also take exams.” Through the encouragement of their friends, they got to know a migration agent who helped them through the complex application process. The former computer technician is now training to be a nurse at one of the local colleges. He points to the financial assistance system as a plus point — “System here has family and child assistance” — explaining that the couple receives money for the upkeep of their two children. “The government is even paying for me to learn!” Former Technician intends to apply for Australian citizenship as soon as he qualifies, so that he can “give up my citizenship and take out my CPF money.”

Deli Franchisee, a Chinese in her 50s, is a mother of two undergraduates who recently emigrated with her family to Perth. “The reason we came here was for our children’s education. Our son is progressing well in school. Back in Singapore, he won’t be progressing that much. In Singapore, he would be in ITE.⁷⁹ Here, he’s already in second year university and doing very well.” She and her husband chose to get on the franchisee route, as they felt that the cash business would generate money quicker than putting out job applications. The first year was a difficult one. “I didn’t know that food business was so seasonal. When it is down, it is really down. It’s very dry. Our takings were very low. In summer, the business is so bad, because no one wants to eat pies.” She is thankful for the support she receives from her church mates. “There are times when I don’t know why we’re here. In Singapore, we are kind of complacent. We take a lot of things for granted — even God. Here, we have no one to turn to. Our siblings are not here, our parents are not here. So we turn to God.”

Divorcee has lived in Australia for twenty years, and is now an Australian citizen. She moved to Australia after her husband, an Australian expatriate working in Singapore, was sent back to Australia when it got too expensive for Australian companies to maintain their expatriate employees. “My husband has been to Perth before, and liked the place. So he suggested going there. That was how we ended up here.” They have one child. She says of her divorce: “It took me two years before I managed to have the courage to tell my mom that I was divorced. Two years. Can you imagine? Otherwise she would pressure me to go back. I don’t want to go back. Here, I have everything. There, I will have nothing. And I will have to start from scratch. I won’t be able to afford to buy a car or an HDB flat. See how expensive HDB flats are? My daughter also told me, ‘Mommy, I don’t want to move to Singapore. We can go there for holidays, but I don’t want to live there.’”

Fitness Enthusiast, an upper middle class homemaker in her late 30s, is a former national athlete who represented Singapore in international competitions during her teenage years. Married to a Caucasian, she is a citizen of Australia and Canada. She has spent more than half her life overseas, and does not see herself moving back to Singapore. Both her sons are in grade school, and she and her husband are consciously raising them in the Western way of life. She remembers how difficult it was for her to study Mandarin when she was attending school in Singapore, and does not wish to force rote learning upon her sons. Nevertheless, she keeps up with local Singapore news, and her emails to friends are often about what her observations on what is happening in Singapore. Although she eschews the highly pressurized, Singapore way of education, Fitness Enthusiast continues to fill her sons’ daily schedule to the brim with cram schools, various sports activities, music lessons, after-school tuition, etc. She has very

⁷⁹ ITE is the acronym for Institute of Technical Education, a vocational school that conducts certified technical courses from which its students would graduate with a diploma. Most Singaporean parents view a diploma from ITE as the choice of last resort, as ITE graduates would only earn about \$1,000 per month, and career advancements are almost nil, unless the individual is willing to further his studies by enrolling in external degree programs.

few friends left in Singapore; her mother, Australian Chinese from birth, returned to Australia 10 years ago after her divorce; her father has since remarried someone from China. In recent years, she and her family have made one major trip to Asia each year, mostly to Korea and China, where her father has a home.

Football Fan, a Malay/Muslim in his 40s, obtained his undergraduate degree in theater studies in Perth — “When I came here, I really fell in love with the place, man. It’s quiet, subtle.” He chose to return to Singapore, however, believing that he had much to contribute on the local arts scene. Back in Singapore, Football Fan worked with the local arts and theater groups and organizations, but soon found himself disillusioned with the industry. “In my industry... feel there is no future in art scene in Singapore. I felt that if too long involved, will drain out.” Fortunately for him, Australia started relaxing its immigration rules and was actively seeking immigrants from among those who had previously studied in Australia. That was when Football Fan decided it was time to return to Perth. After all, he had more than a fighting chance at permanent residency, since he had graduated from one of the universities in Perth. “If have the chance, why not settle here?”

On loyalty:

They doubt our loyalty just because we are Malay and Muslims, and Singapore is surrounded by Muslim countries. During Malaysia Cup⁸⁰, we go to Malaysia. We support Singapore. If anything happens to playmates, we will defend. Why doubt our loyalty?”

On history:

“We are younger generation. Older generation may have history.”

“If anything happens to Singapore, do you doubt Singaporean Chinese loyalty in fight against Malaysian Chinese?”

On the Malay dilemma:

“Malaysians treat us as Singaporeans, not Malays... Malaysian Malays say we are very different from them. They are worried of religion more than race.”

⁸⁰ Malaysia Cup is one of the highlights of the annual football season that pits the Singaporean teams against Malaysian teams. Many Singaporean fans travel across the causeway to Malaysia to cheer the home team on.

Former Accountant is a stay-at-home mother of three whose husband is a pilot with a commercial airline. It was her husband who decided that the whole family should emigrate. Former Accountant was a chartered accountant who had worked with MNCs and big name accounting firms in Singapore. She resigned from a high-level executive position, where she oversaw the Asia-Pacific operations of where multinational company, to move to Perth with her children when their family application was approved. Her husband continues to work out of Singapore, and spends time with the family in Perth during his vacation. Former Accountant was taking a certification course that would allow her to teach or work as an accountant under Australian rules. She describes herself as a stay-at-home mother, maid, and single parent.

On emigration:

“The move here hasn’t been easy. The second month I was here, I was standing in the kitchen doing housework, and I started to cry. ‘Is this how my life is going to be from now on?’ I felt a sense of loss. Had to give up a lot of things to come here. But my children are happy here, so it’s been worth it.”

Former Architect is an upper-middle income Chinese in his 50s with two children who is now an Australian citizen. He gave up his Singapore citizenship so that he could withdraw all of his CPF money. In 1992, Former Architect applied to emigrate to Australia, spurred on by the his close friends who were also emigrating at the time. While in Singapore, Former Architect ran his own architectural firm, which he sold at a loss to an Indian who absconded without paying the full sum. To make up for the shortfall, he and his wife then proceeded to sell their properties — one in the heart of Kuala Lumpur in Malaysia, and two (a bungalow and an apartment) in upscale parts of Singapore — at a loss, but chose to hang onto his commercial property in the belief that he would have a guaranteed sum from the monthly rental income. Now in Perth, he has bought a detached house in an upscale neighborhood and drives a Mercedes. He is now a franchisee in the food business, and is constantly on the lookout for business opportunities.

Former Architect’s Wife emigrated to Perth after her husband successfully filed a family application for permanent residency. She still looks back at this decision with regret. “We came at the wrong timing. We were offered PR in 1992, but didn’t come till September 1996. Here we work 24/7. Cannot survive otherwise.” Former Architect’s Wife feels displaced since moving to Perth, partly because she no longer moves in the same social circle as her previous network of friends—“all of them are *tai-tais*.⁸¹” She continues to maintain strong ties with family and friends in Singapore, whom she telephones every week. Ironically, even though the couple’s decision to emigrate was, in part, triggered by their desire to give their daughters the opportunity to be educated in

⁸¹ *Tai-tai* is Cantonese for wealthy lady of leisure.

Australia, their elder daughter has since returned to finish her undergraduate studies at one of Singapore's local universities. "She was accepted by one of the universities in Perth, but turned it down. She was upset at being labeled as not being able to make it in the Singapore education system. So when she was accepted by the Singapore university, she took it."

Former Journalist is a middle-income Chinese and mother of two boys who emigrated with her family in the early 1990s, and is now an Australian citizen. Former Journalist left a well-paying job with the state-run media in Singapore, while her husband resigned from a management position with an American multinational corporation, to settle in Perth. The couple ran a retail store in Perth for the first few years they were there. Former Journalist says she emigrated for the sake of the children's education and future. "My eldest son struggled with Chinese all his life. No amount of tuition will have him enjoy a subject that is shoved down his throat. His attitude toward school was very negative. So we decided to take him out of the environment."

On emigration:

"Migration is not a decision taken lightly. It's a very difficult decision. It's a situation where you do it only as a last resort."

On reasons for emigrating:

"9 out of 10 would say they left for the sake of their kids' education... The 13 years I've been here, among the people we know, at least 12 families have come; another 50 more are desperate to come. 100 per cent because of children."

On changing citizenship:

"My husband and I took up Australian citizenship for practical reasons... to make travel easier since our boys had Australian citizenship. We also had no means to post bond for boys. This was the only way that boys can return to visit their grandparents."

Former Security Personnel is a Eurasian in his 50s from a lower-middle income family who emigrated to Perth with his family in the 1980s. He has an extended family network in Perth, as most of his siblings now live there. "I was born in Singapore, raised in Malaysia. Australia is my adopted home." His decision to emigrate was triggered by his desire to give his children the opportunity to make the life they want ("I wanted to give my son a better opportunity to make choices; a variety of choices. I wanted him to grow up the way a kid should grow up.") and his concern over their lost childhood and lack of

family life. “Back in those days in Singapore, my wife worked till 11 p.m. My son was young... six or seven years old. Goes to afternoon school, let out at 5:30 to 6 p.m. He had to go to Mandarin tuition at 7 p.m. By the time he finished his schoolwork, he’d go to bed at 10 or 11 p.m. He had no time for play and growing up. Lots of pressure on the kids... I also hardly saw my family. Sometimes, I was on overseas assignment. I asked myself if this were the life I wanted for me and for them?” Three times, he applied unsuccessfully for permanent residency before his brother, who had settled in Australia, offered to sponsor his family application. The timing was just right, as his son was about ten; if it were later, he would have had to post the S\$70,000 bond before his son can leave Singapore.

On changing citizenship:

“We made up our minds. We didn’t want the hassle of coming and going back and forth for reservist.”

Former Teacher is a Malay/Muslim diploma holder in her 30s and a mother of two who wears a *tudung*.⁸² “When we came here, my first impression was, “Eh? *Orang puteh*⁸³ should have advanced. But here, so *kampung*⁸⁴!” While visiting friends in Perth, Former Teacher was struck by the knowledge her friends’ children displayed on a wide range of subjects, their ability to do research and to independently tackle school projects. She believes that “my kids will get better education in terms of system. This system allows them to explore. In Singapore, we are always harping on incidental learning. So they introduce project work. But project work will fail, because parents always come in. They help do the projects so the kids can score well. The end goal for parents and kids is always good results; not how much you learned.” Like other Singaporean parents, Former Teacher was worried that her children’s average performance at school would have a negative impact their future. “Our eldest daughter was an average student. Primary 3 marks went down, self esteem also. I started worrying: ‘What’s going to happen when she reaches Primary 6?’ At least, even if she is not good in studies in Australia, there are still vocations to go into.” The couple’s decision to emigrate was helped, in part, by the existence of a strong network of friends who all live within a few houses of each other in a property development that was built by a Malay Muslim property developer. “We all like family. Always *makan*⁸⁵ and interaction. Always meet... have chat... *makan*... like dat lah. Quite relaxed... still have time. In Singapore, life very hectic, very stressful. Here, we go like *kampung* like dat. Six to seven o’clock, everybody with family. A lot of time with family. Not like in Singapore, where you work until late.”

⁸² *Tudung* is the traditional Islamic headscarf worn by Muslim women to mark their commitment to their religion. It covers their hair and drapes down to their shoulders, leaving only their face uncovered. The number of women wearing the *tudung* in Singapore has risen over the past few years.

⁸³ *Orang puteh* is Malay for white man, usually used to describe Caucasians.

⁸⁴ *Kampung* is Malay for village. Often associated with the idyllic, laid-back lifestyle of yesteryear.

⁸⁵ *Makan* is Malay for food.

Graduate Student is a Chinese in her 20s who is pursuing her Master's in one of Perth's universities. She graduated with an Australian undergraduate degree, but returned to Singapore to work in print journalism. An ardent environmentalist, she joined the Singapore Nature Society's efforts to save one of Singapore's last remaining wetlands, and participated in organizations concerned with animal rights. Even though she is away from Singapore, Graduate Student continues to monitor news from Singapore through the local media websites, and even contributes the occasional letter to the Forum page of *The Straits Times* when she finds a topic that resonates with her. Graduate Student confides that unlike the majority of Singaporean students, she will not be taking up permanent residency in Australia. "I like Australia. The quality of life is higher. But it is a racist country, and I don't feel comfortable in a racist country." She says of her plans after graduation: "I plan to work overseas. Don't plan to root myself in Singapore straight away."

Handicraft Business Owner, a Chinese in her 50s, met her husband in Perth. They have three children, all of whom were born in Australia. Even though she has lived in Perth for 20 years, she has not taken up Australian citizenship. A staunch Christian, Handicraft Business Owner draws her emotional support from her network of church mates who are mostly Singapore emigrants.

On Singapore:

"I am proud that Singapore is such a small place, and yet internationally recognized. I am also proud of Singaporeans because the government enforced English as first language, which gave them greater opportunity."

Honors Student is a Chinese in his 20s studying communications at one of Perth's universities. He continues to watch the developments in Singapore with interest, and even "send emails to the Feedback Unit whenever I see something that catches my attention." He travels back to Singapore to spend time with his family when he has a term break. During one of his school vacations, he returned to Singapore and did an internship with the Ministry of Information and the Arts. He has also helped out with the Meet-the-People sessions at the constituency where he lives, and was struck by how politically unaware Singaporeans are. "There are channels for complaints. But the people are not educated enough or politically aware about possibilities."

On participation:

"If Singaporeans are so much more aware of things and how things are run, they would know they have role and part to play."

On loyalty:

“My heart is still with Singapore. If country needs me, will go back definitely. I served two-and-a-half years of national service, so tend to have a little more attachment to country.”

Hospitality Executive is a single woman in her early 40s, the child of an Indian career diplomat and Chinese housewife. She spent her early years in Australia, relocated several times with her family to countries in Europe and elsewhere in Asia, then returned to Australia for her university education. In her 20s, she moved back to Singapore to discover her roots, following in the footsteps of other young Singaporeans who had been raised overseas. But a series of flops in her personal life and career made her rethink her decision. Eventually, she decided to give up her Singapore citizenship and move back to Australia. Even though Australia recognizes dual citizenship, she chose to give up her Singapore citizenship so that she could withdraw all of her CPF money. Nine years after that decision, she accepted a job offer in another Asian country; but when that position didn't work out, she moved to Singapore to look for a job, buoyed by the fact that there were many expatriates in senior positions in Singapore, even within the government sector. She was confident that she would get a job offer in Singapore with an expatriate package within three months, which was the length of time she could stay in Singapore without having to apply for a visa, but that didn't pan out.

Insurance Agent is a Chinese in his 60s who has lived away from Singapore since the mid 1970s, when he first left for his undergraduate studies in Australia. After graduating, he stayed on in Australia, found a job, fell in love, and got married. He only became an Australian citizen 15 years ago. “It took so long because mom was still alive,” he explains. In 1990, he went back to Singapore as an expatriate. “At the time, I was holding both Singapore and Australian citizenships. I was asked to make a choice as to which citizenship I want to keep, and I chose to keep the Australian one. I can still reapply as PR because wife is still citizen.” Feeling stifled because of the smallness and congestion in the city-state, he left his Singapore posting after only a year. Insurance Agent continues to keep up with news from Singapore, although he stressed, “I don't make it a point to follow. But I like to be well-informed as to what's going on back there.” Insurance Agent travels back to Singapore every two years to visit friends and family.

On citizenship:

“If I were allowed to keep citizenship, I would have. But the Singapore government forced the issue. Had to choose one. I wanted to revoke my Singapore citizenship because I couldn't hold two. After revoking my citizenship, they asked me to reapply for PR! Just a bureaucratic joke!”

Lawyer-turned-Housewife is a Chinese in her late 30s, and mother of two. She quit her career as a legal officer in Singapore to join her husband who was pursuing his Ph.D. in Australia. Even though they have lived in Perth for close to ten years, Lawyer-turned-Housewife and her husband have not taken up Australian citizenship. Both their children — a son and a daughter — were born in Australia. Lawyer-turned-Housewife believes their decision to emigrate was made all the more easier because they had “no property. No family. We came freshly married; never thought that we would stay on. We thought we would go back and service flat; have dual income; start family; have a helper; buy a car... the usual aspirations of a typical Singaporean family.”

On their decision to emigrate:

“In 1995, my hubby was offered residency. All who had Master’s and up were offered residency. We saw it as a chance to explore options... Perth is near (*sic*) enough to Singapore. It’s an ideal ‘trial’ immigration place — affordable to travel for both us and our families in Singapore, and less painful for our parents to see us leave.”

On home:

“Perth would be home now, because Singapore is not where we started our family.”

On changing citizenship:

“The subject [of citizenship] is too difficult. It seems like too drastic a move to cut off, especially when there are older folks, parents, still around. I would consider taking up citizenship because I want to be involved in voting. That would be a primary reason to be a[n Australian] citizen. If I like to have a say with the vote.”

Malay Restaurateur is a Malay/Muslim in his 50s who runs a successful Malay restaurant in Perth, where he is also one of the leaders in the Malay community. He left Singapore in 1986, “because of the national service system.” At the time, he and six others bought a one-way ticket to Perth with the intention of overstaying illegally. Two of his friends who were found out were deported and can no longer travel to Australia. In 1992, he became an Australian citizen, but he maintains, “I am still loyal to Singapore.... I am still concerned about Singapore because of relatives and friends who are still there. Friends who visit me say I did the right thing. Now, it’s too late for them. Singapore now empty.” His pride at how well he is doing in Perth is apparent. “My friend in Singapore earns \$8,000 a month. But not enough. He sold car. From condo, he downgrade to executive. Now normal HDB. But I... ‘I’m safe.’ Friends tell me that if they had known

the success I have, they would have followed me [to Australia]. In Singapore, I cannot afford all this — a house, condo, business, two Mercs. I'm from Singapore. But I can't survive in Singapore. Here, it is cheap to live."

On participation:

In Singapore, I never offered views. I scared. Until come to Australia... In Australia, free country. Can scold Singapore. No human rights in Singapore."

On the Singapore government:

"In Singapore, the government takes care of PAP people, but not our people."

On Singaporeans:

"Singaporeans are like nothing. Don't own anything. Only money in pocket belongs to you."

Migration Agent is a Chinese/Muslim in his 50s who is married to a Malay/Muslim with whom he has two children. The couple continues to maintain two residences — one in Perth, and another in Singapore — because his wife still works with a commercial airline in Singapore, while he visits Singapore frequently because of work. Migration Agent was a government scholar who was earmarked for high-level positions before he paid back his bond with the government. Since leaving the civil service, he has served as technical consultant with multinational companies as well as international organizations. He says, "I will always be a Singaporean, even though I hardly lived there. It is disappointing to find things going from bad to worse, every time I go back for a visit."

Newly Unemployed is a Chinese in his 20s who graduated from one of Perth's universities. He moved to Australia with his divorcee mother, who had obtained permanent residency there. After graduating, Newly Unemployed returned to Singapore where he worked as an administrator with a school that provides computer training for workers. Unhappy and feeling unappreciated in his job, he voluntarily resigned after four years, and returned to Perth to start anew, where he continues to keep abreast of political and policy developments in Singapore.

On Remaking Singapore:

"I'm skeptical about the policies. They keep saying, "We are remaking; no sacred cows will be spared." It's just getting rid of basic safety net. No remaking of the government *per se*."

Orchard Farmer is a Malay/Muslim diploma holder and father of two in his 40s. A former lab technician at one of Singapore's private hospitals, Orchard Farmer now owns orchards producing stone fruits such as peaches, nectarines, and plums, which he tends to on weekends. On weekdays, he is a fresh meats supplier to restaurants in Perth, and runs a retail Halal butchery in the suburbs of Perth. Like most Singaporean emigrants, Orchard Farmer decided to emigrate because of the relatively relaxed lifestyle and for the sake of his children's future. His wife was the one who insisted that they emigrate, and had actively sought the help of a migration agent who later became a close family friend. The couple has since taken up Australian citizenship, and given up their Singapore citizenships so that they can withdraw their CPF monies for use in Australia.

Publisher, a Chinese in his 50s with an only child, runs a printing business in Perth. Both Publisher and his wife were disabled from young, after being struck by a bout of polio. Twenty years earlier, Publisher and his wife, had attended a disabled people's conference in Adelaide, and were impressed by the way the Australians treat the disabled. They realized that Australia was more accepting of disability than Singapore, and was cheered by the disability-friendly environment, as compared to Singapore. The couple traveled annually to visit their friends in Australia, and the thought of emigrating took root. Five years ago, the couple decided to apply to emigrate to Australia so that their only daughter could attend school there. "The Singapore education system is too stressful for our daughter. She enjoys studying here." Their application for the business temporary resident visa,⁸⁶ which is valid for four years, was successful, because of their prior experience at running a printing business in Singapore. Publisher and his family moved to Perth, where his teenage daughter is studying aviation.

Retired Civil Servant is a career diplomat in his 70s. When he retired, he and his wife chose to live in Australia, which was his earliest overseas posting and where they had raised their young family. Like several other retired senior civil servants of his generation, he chose to retire to Australia rather than Singapore because of the lifestyle. He continues to receive a monthly pension from the Singapore government. He would not consider giving up his Singapore citizenship. The family no longer owns property in Singapore.

Retired Civil Servant's Wife is also in her 70s. A housewife all her life, she agreed with her husband's decision to retire to Australia as the family had lived overseas nearly all of their married life. Both their children had been raised overseas, primarily in Australia, which is where they eventually settled. Their son and daughter gave up their Singapore citizenship for Australian citizenship. She followed in their footsteps recently and gave up her Singapore citizenship.

⁸⁶ This temporary visa may be converted to permanent residency if **Publisher's** business achieves a turnover of A\$200,000 during the four-year period.

Rejecters

Elderly Pastor is a middle-income, retired Chinese banker in his 70s who emigrated with his family in the 1980s and is now an Australian citizen. While in Singapore, he was an active member in the ruling party, but grew increasingly disillusioned at some of the “extreme measures” used to deal with some of the long-time parliamentarians. He turned down an offer to field him as a candidate in the general elections. That incident, as well as his recovery from cancer, and concern over his children’s education, collectively pushed his decision to emigrate. “My only thought was my children’s education. To seek the best possible way to fund my three sons’ education as fairly as possible to each one of them.” Elderly Pastor gave up his Singapore citizenship as soon as he obtained his Australian citizenship. Elderly Pastor attributed his recovery from cancer to his faith in God, and is now the founder/pastor of his own church in Perth, whose members are mostly Singaporeans and Malaysians.

On emigration:

“My children’s education was all paid for, because of the educational system. The government here supports higher education and gives financial support to undergrads who are PR. All my children’s undergraduate degrees were subsidized education; I didn’t need to pay a cent.”

Marketing Manager is a middle-income Chinese graduate in his 40s married to a Filipino Chinese optometrist with whom he has three school-going children. When the opportunity to emigrate and run an optometry business in Perth arose, Marketing Manager and his wife decided to seize it, so that their children would have the opportunity to grow up in a more relaxed environment, where they could experience a different system of education. His grouses about Singapore ranged from the Singaporean’s general lack of social graces, to the regimented education system, to the general disregard for the disabled and elderly.

On loyalty:

“What stakeholder? Now I’m out of there, I don’t care what they’re doing there. They can do what they like!”

Studio Technician is a middle-income Chinese in his 40s with two school-going children. Since being retrenched in 2000, the diploma holder had been unsuccessful in his attempts at finding a full-time job because of his age. He tried all avenues, and even approached his member of parliament for help. He was told to go for retraining. “Can you imagine? Why must I retrain? It is not as if I do not have any technical skills!” His twin brother, who had successfully emigrated to Brisbane, encouraged him to apply for permanent residence in Australia and offered to be his sponsor. This proved to be the

turning point for Studio Technician. With the help of his brother, Studio Technician filed a family application for permanent residency and was told, two years later, that his application was successful. As he was still unemployed, Studio Technician was free to move, and left for Brisbane first, where he stayed with his brother while he looked around for a suitable house to purchase, and to schools for his children. During the six months when the family lived apart, his wife, an administrative executive, would serve out her notice and look for potential tenants for their condominium. The couple decided that this was the best arrangement, as it would allow their children to make the transition between the two different school systems without much disruption. Leaving Singapore at the end of May would allow their children to start a new academic year in Australia in August.

On emigrating:

“I am leaving for the future of my family and children. If not *crème de la crème*, can forget about surviving! I leave to get respect. I’m not employable here! Need to find some place that can be employed (*sic*) and survive.”

On Remaking Singapore:

“It’s just another movie that you sit and watch... just another nice show put up by the government. Don’t expect any difference, because nothing much will change.”

On loyalty:

“What loyalty? I have no commitment or identity. Singapore doesn’t want me. There is no place for people over 40, like me.

On stayers:

“Those who stay are the ones who are stuck — cannot leave — or the rich, because they can leave anytime.”

On the general environment in Singapore:

“Everything is about survival. Can hardly survive in Singapore. Why must people work so hard?... All government policies are for getting money from their people. All take, no give. It is their policies that are turning people away. Because they are always taxed. What kind of future is there for me in my old age, or for my children especially if they cannot succeed academically?”

On feedback:

“The objective is to learn how to deal with the people. The people at the top are not listening to the feedback. Then, they say the people are asking for too much.”

NO CLASSIFICATION OF TYPE

Retired Educator is a middle-class Chinese in her late 50s. She makes the regular “kangaroo hop” between Singapore and Perth, where she and her retired husband stays for a couple of months at a stretch, having bought themselves a retirement property. Her only son, a civil servant, still stays in Singapore. The couple spends enough time in both places to be considered residents of two countries. It is, thus, difficult to ascertain if these people may be more accurately described as **Internal Loyalists**, or **External Loyalists**, or if they should be placed in a separate category of their own.

On loyalty:

“I still pay taxes. I still consider Singapore my home. I go back every three months. How am I not loyal?”

On citizenship:

“I truly believe that we are becoming a borderless world. Very soon, we won’t need passports to travel. Everything will be done through the computer. They can track who you are and where you are coming from. It wouldn’t matter what your citizenship is any more.”

On stayer versus quitter:

“All this debate about stayer, quitter... it’s too simplistic. It’s the government’s way of making something out of nothing.”

On offering feedback to the government:

“I was thinking of telling the government... But my son is a civil servant. So... I better zip up my mouth. The government isn’t listening. What for I waste my breath?”

APPENDIX E

SINGAPOREANS LIVING IN SELF-EXILE

Francis Seow, a former solicitor-general-turned-opposition-politician, left Singapore for the U.S. in 1989, at the height of an official investigation into his alleged tax evasion and subversive activities. The investigation was launched soon after his failed attempt at winning a seat at the 1988 national elections, which saw a close contest between Seow's group and the group fielded by the ruling PAP. Seow and his party members polled 49.1% of the valid votes in that election, losing their seats to the PAP team by a mere 650 votes. The opposition team's relative success at the polls made them eligible to enter parliament, under the provisions of the Non-Constituency Members of Parliament (NCMP) scheme.⁸⁷ Seow subsequently lost his NCMP seat when he was fined S\$9,000 (equivalent to US\$5,625) in one of the tax evasion cases. Under the Singapore Constitution, a person is barred from remaining a member of parliament, if fined more than S\$2,000 (equivalent to US\$1,250) or jailed for more than 12 months (*The Straits Times*, various years). He now lives in Boston with his daughter, and was last reported to be a resident fellow with the East Asia Legal Studies program at Harvard Law School in the U.S.

Tang Liang Hong, a former lawyer-turned-opposition politician, currently lives in Melbourne. Tang was standing for elections in 1997 when he abruptly left Singapore for Malaysia, and then Australia, just days away from Election Day. He claimed he was fearful for his life because of alleged death threats. At the height of the campaign, PAP leaders had branded him an anti-Christian Chinese chauvinist, and accused Tang of inciting racial and religious discontent. PAP leaders saw Tang as a serious threat to multiracial, multi-religious Singapore. At the time Tang left for Malaysia, the PAP had filed 13 defamation suits against Tang. Assets held by both Tang and his wife were subsequently frozen. In November 1998, Tang was declared a bankrupt, making him ineligible for a parliamentary seat under the Singapore Constitution.

Zulfikar Mohamad Shariff currently heads the Melbourne-based Association For Democracy In Singapore, which aims to "fight for free speech [in Singapore] and educate foreigners on Singapore politics" (*The Straits Times*, October 19, 2003). Advisers to the association are former opposition Member of Parliament J.B. Jeyaretnam, Tang Liang Hong, and Dr. Chee Soon Juan. Zulfikar is the former head of an online Muslim discussion group, Fateha, set up in 1999. He left Singapore in 2002, at the height of a criminal investigation brought against him by then-Senior Minister Lee Kuan Yew, for posting articles that discussed sensitive issues such as Singapore's ban on Muslim schoolgirls wearing the *tudung* or Islamic headscarves to school⁸⁸, and the promotion of

⁸⁷ Under the Singapore Constitution, the opposition member and/or team with the highest number of votes is/are eligible to be sworn in as Non-Constituency Members of Parliament (NCMP). This scheme was introduced to increase the spectrum of opinions and to encourage critical voices in the Singapore parliament, which is predominantly made up of members from the ruling PAP party.

⁸⁸ Zulfikar was also one of the key figures in what was known as the *tudung* case. He had openly backed two Muslim families who had protested the Ministry of Education's ruling that banned Muslim girls from wearing the traditional Islamic headscarf to school.

Ho Ching, wife of Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong and Lee Kuan Yew's daughter-in-law, to the position of Chief Executive Officer of state-owned Temasek Holdings (*South China Morning Post*, September 2, 2004).

APPENDIX F

STATISTICAL PROFILE OF RESEARCH PARTICIPANTS

Ethnicity of Research Participants	Number	Percentage
Chinese	46	65.71%
Malays	10	14.29%
Indians	10	14.29%
Eurasians	4	5.71%
TOTAL	70	100.00%

BY LOYALIST CATEGORIES

<u>Internal Loyalists</u>	<u>Number</u>	<u>Percentage</u>
Chinese	20	68.97%
Malays	4	13.79%
Indians	4	13.79%
Eurasians	1	3.45%
Total number	29	100.00%

<u>External Loyalists</u>	<u>Number</u>	<u>Percentage</u>
Chinese	25	62.50%
Malays	6	15.00%
Indians	6	15.00%
Eurasians	3	7.50%
Total number	40	100.00%

<u>Unclassified Loyalists</u>	<u>Number</u>	<u>Percentage</u>
Chinese	1	100.00%
Total number	1	100.00%

Table F.1: Ethnic Composition of Research Participants

<u>Internal Loyalists</u>	<u>Number</u>	<u>Percentage</u>
Enthusiastic Loyalists	6	20.69%
Dissident Internal Loyalists	0	0.00%
Contented Loyalists	6	20.69%
Self-Adjusters	13	44.83%
Disengaged Stayers	4	13.79%
Total Number	29	100.00%

<u>External Loyalists</u>	<u>Number</u>	<u>Percentage</u>
Supportive Loyalists	6	15.00%
Dissident External Loyalists	0	0.00%
Passive Loyalists	31	77.50%
Rejecters	4	7.50%
Total Number	40	100.00%

<u>Unclassified Loyalists</u>	<u>Number</u>	<u>Percentage</u>
Unclassified Loyalists	1	100.00%
Total Number	1	100.00%

Table F.2: Types of Loyalists Among Research Participants

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INDEX

A

Australia 64, 65

B

Barry, Brian
disloyalty 26

Birch

silence 29

Birch, A. H.

residual loyalty 27

Birch, A.H.

silence 52

brain circulation 2

C

Central Provident Fund 101

Certificates of No Criminal Conviction 62–64

Chiam, See Tong 105

Contact Singapore 131–32

D

dual citizenship 127–28

E

emigration 107–11

external loyalist ... 19–20, 34, 44–49, 44, 57, 134,
161–78

dissident 35, 46–47, 136, 172–74, 194–96

passive 47, 136, 174–76

rejecter 48, 53, 176–78

rejecters 137

supportive 45, 170–72

G

Goh, Chok Tong

on stayers and quitters 124

Guetzkow, Harold

loyalty 36

H

Hirschman, Albert O.

unconscious loyalist 41

Hirschman, Albert O. 17

exit 20–23

exiter 21, 28, 29, *see also* traitor

loyalty 24–27

national loyalty 18–19

quality-conscious loyalist 25, 29, 35, 38

traitor 26, 44

unconscious loyalist 25, 30–31, 40–44

voice 23–24

Housing Development Board 102

I

internal loyalist 34, 37–44, 56, 137–61

contented 41, 44, 136, 146–48, 193

disengaged stayer 42, 43, 53, 155–61, 194

dissident 35, 39, 136, 144–46, 194–96

enthusiastic 38, 136, 138–44

self-adjuster 41, 43, 136, 148–55, 193

J

Jeyaretnam, Joshua Benjamin 105

L

Lee, Kuan Yew

on detractors 97–98

on economic pragmatism 100

on emigration 110

on loyalty 95–96

on Singapore's independence 93–94

on stayers and quitters 123–24

Loyalty Day 1

N

national loyalists 6

national loyalty 4, 6, 7, 19

neglecter 31, 42, 58

norms 36–37

O

Oldenquist, Andrew

alienated 42

loyalty 24

Overseas Singaporeans Unit 132

P

participant pool 69–70

Perth 68

pre-interview	71	political apathy	178
R		stayers	67
Remaking Singapore	117–22	Singapore 21 (S21).....	114–16
Remaking Singapore Committee		Singapore International Foundation	131
report	118	snowball sampling	13, 71–72
S		T	
Seow, Francis	173	Tang, Liang Hong.....	173
shared values	114	Tung, Roger	
silent individuals	58	autist	30, 41
Singapore.....	10–11	loyalty	5
emigrants	66	V	
external loyalist	45	voicers	58
future research	199	Z	
Loyalty Week	95	Zulfikar, Mohamad Shariff.....	173
national service.....	128–30		
policy recommendations.....	205		