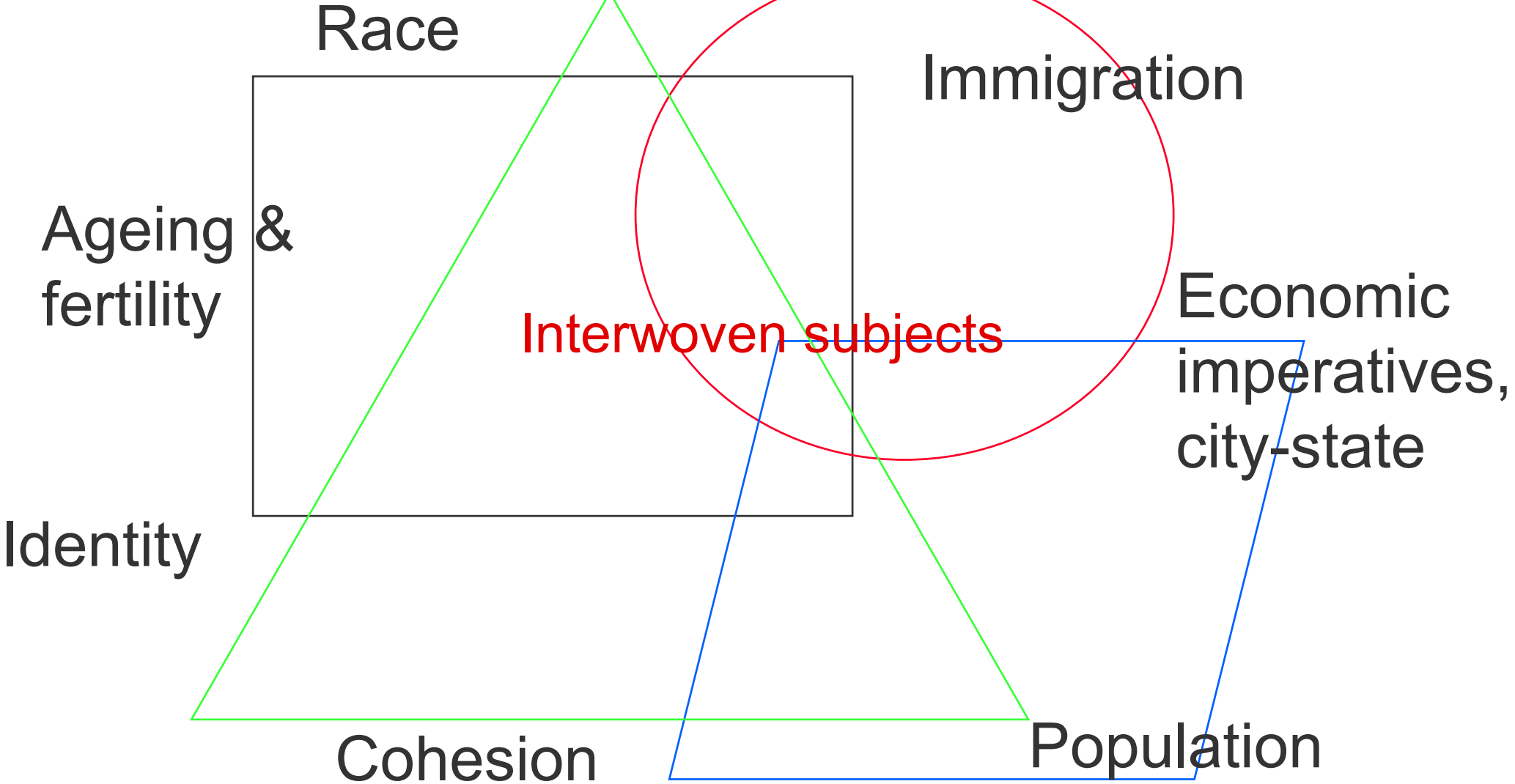


Population Association of Singapore
Inaugural Public Lecture

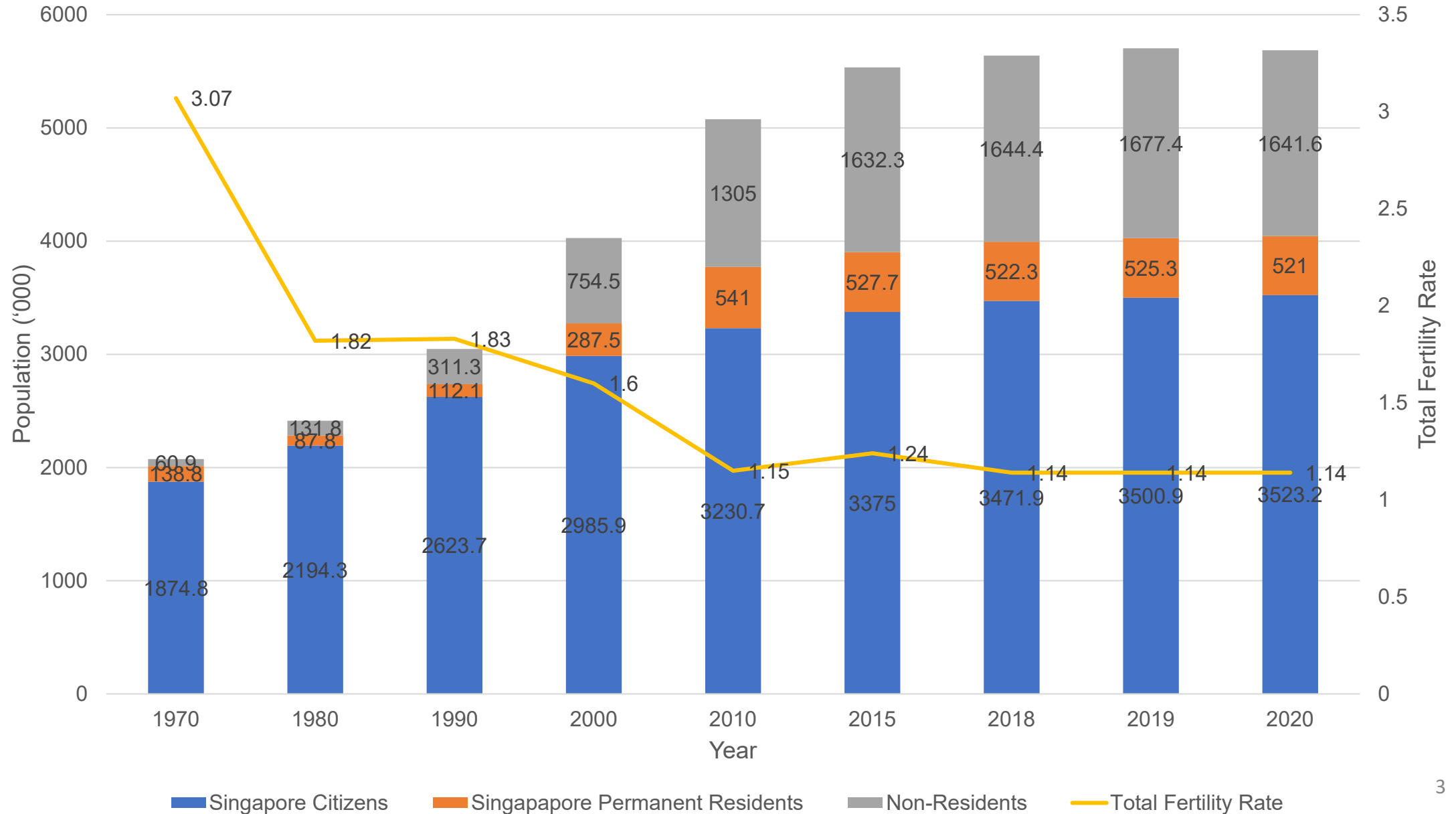
**Distilling Immigration through
Identity Politics and National Narratives**

Panel Discussion
3 December 2022, Saturday

Leong Chan-Hoong, PhD
Head, Policy Development, Evaluation, and Data Analytics
Kantar Public, Singapore



Singapore Demography – similar to other developed economies



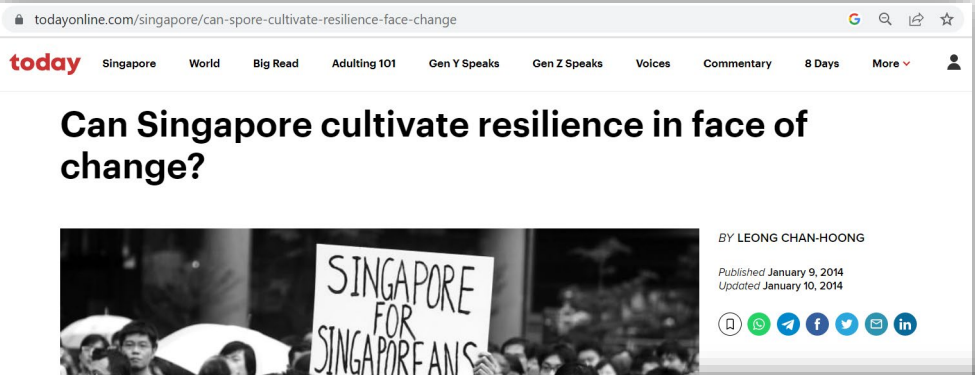
Singapore Resident Ethnic Composition (1970 – 2020)

| Ethnicity (100%) | 1970 | 1980 | 1990 | 2000 | 2010 | 2015 | 2020 |
|------------------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|
| Chinese | 77.0 | 78.3 | 77.8 | 76.8 | 74.1 | 74.3 | 74.3 |
| Malay | 14.8 | 14.4 | 14.0 | 13.9 | 13.4 | 13.3 | 13.5 |
| Indian | 7.0 | 6.3 | 7.1 | 7.9 | 9.2 | 9.1 | 9.0 |
| Others | 1.2 | 1.0 | 1.1 | 1.4 | 3.3 | 3.2 | 3.2 |

Source: Singapore Population Census, www.singstats.gov.sg

Racial composite remains stable over last 50 years

BUT EXCLUDES NON-RESIDENTS



2013 Population White Paper and immigration influx

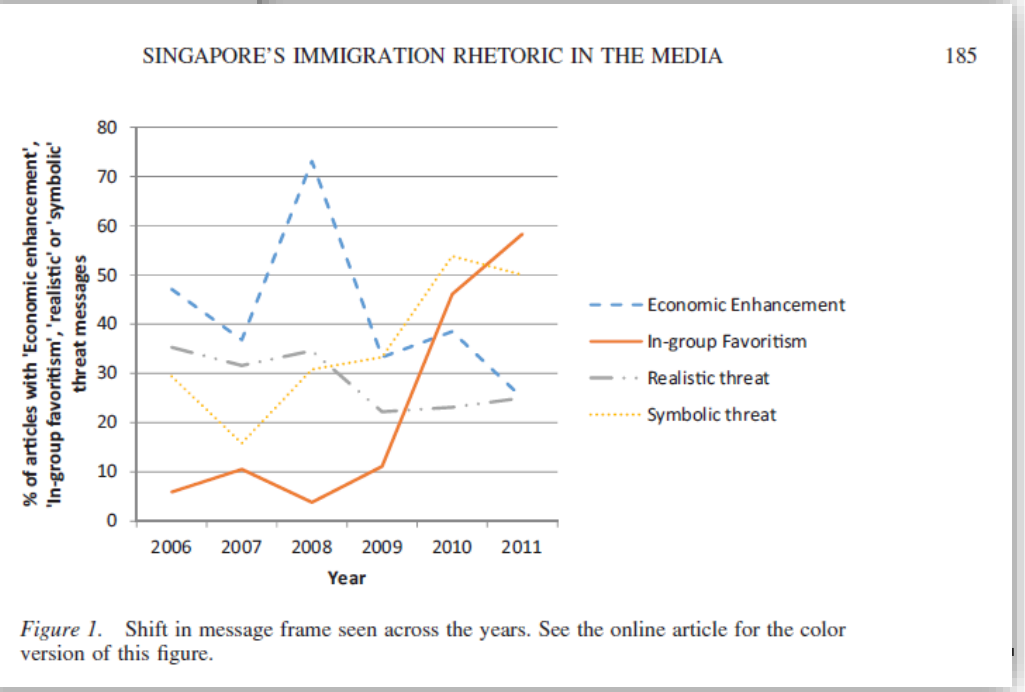
Immigration – a raw and emotive subject for many then

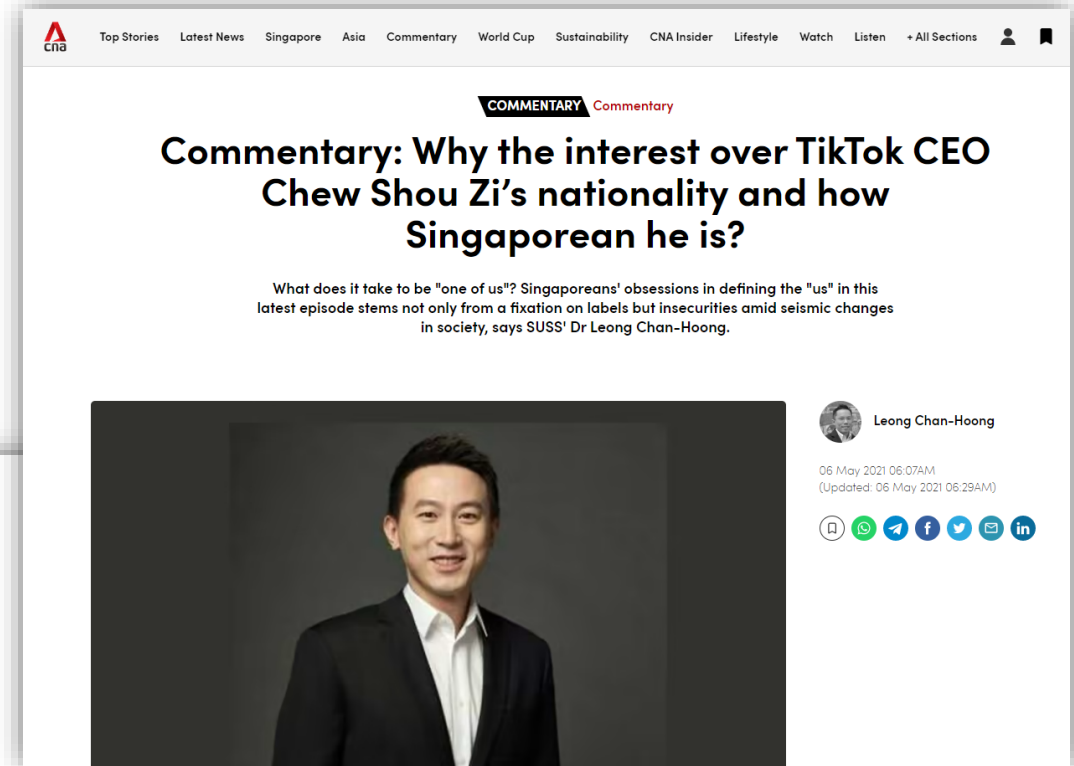
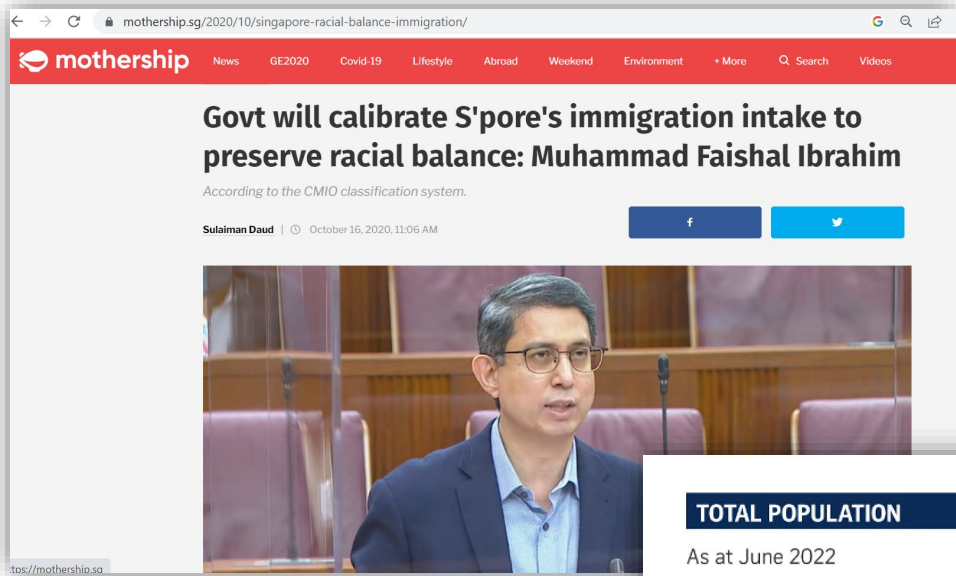
International Perspectives in Psychology: Research, Practice, Consultation
 2017, Vol. 6, No. 3, 179–193
 © 2017 American Psychological Association
 2157-3883/17/\$12.00 http://dx.doi.org/10.1037/ipp0000073

Content Analysis on Singapore’s Immigration Rhetoric in the Media

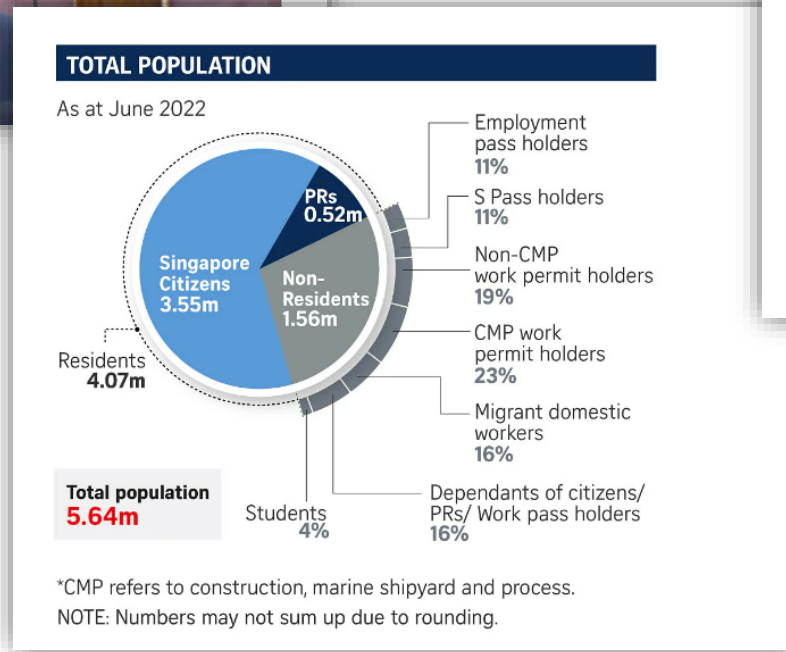
Clarence Lim and Chan-Hoong Leong
 National University of Singapore

The existing literature on acculturation focuses heavily on the immigrant and recipient nationals, and it rarely considers the players, such as the state authorities. The current study aims to identify dominant acculturation narratives and the temporal changes using content analysis of migration-related reports found in the state-controlled media. The study analyzed news reports from official statements on immigrant–host relations enunciated by policymakers, and state authorities in Singapore between 2006 and 2011. The analysis showed that national elections were held. Analysis showed overwhelming concern over realistic threats from inflow migration between 2006 and 2008; to address the state’s concerns, politicians stressed the common economic benefits brought to Singapore. However, between 2009 and 2011, the concern shifted to symbolic threats as a source of tension; policymakers responded with rhetoric on host heritage preservation, and advocated greater in-group favoritism to the status of the Singaporean identity. The shift in narrative occurred in the reversal of the onus of intercultural adaptation. The political discourse in the later half of the study period called for Singaporeans to take ownership of the immigrant groups adapt well (i.e., reverse assimilation). A more balanced view was observed in the later half with both immigrants and host responsibilities. Although no causal relations can be established, the figure illustrates the potential role and influence of the state authorities, and the sociopolitical context is unique to Singapore.



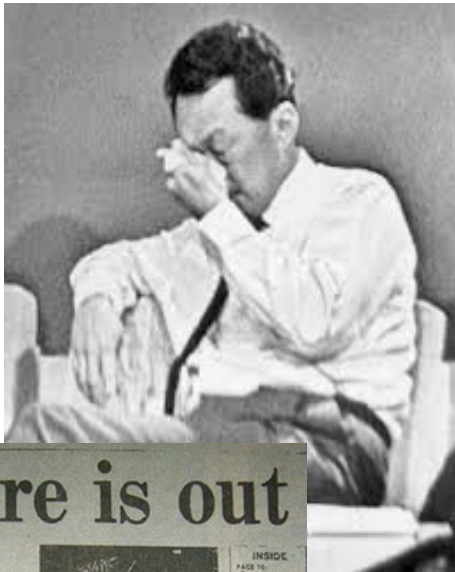


Immigration – Still a raw and emotive subject for many



<https://www.channelnewsasia.com/commentary/tiktok-ceo-singaporean-chew-shou-zi-who-is-he-bytedance-1347001>

Distilling Immigration through National Narratives



Diverse, fractured populace, hostile neighbour, and overcoming the odds to rise from 3rd world to 1st



- National narrative – a country’s “blue print” for our beliefs and experience
- Story board that guide people's thinking and how to relate to others
- Central to the construction of national identity and engender sense of cohesion and belongingness
- Defined by history and collective memories, stories of a nation’s origins and achievements.

National narrative and how it shapes discourse



China's Narrative

(1) The century of humiliation

Historical humiliation at the hands of foreign imperialism; oppression to China's ascension

(2) Unchanging culture

China an inherently peaceful actor

(3) History as destiny

Powerful, respected, and peaceful global actor in the past, to restore its rightful role in the future

(4) Filial piety and familial obligation

Obedience to authority. Collective interest



America's Narrative

(1) The libertarian narrative

Dynamism of the free market. Importance of individual autonomy, rights, and agency responsible for their own fate ("American Dream").

(2) Multicultural America

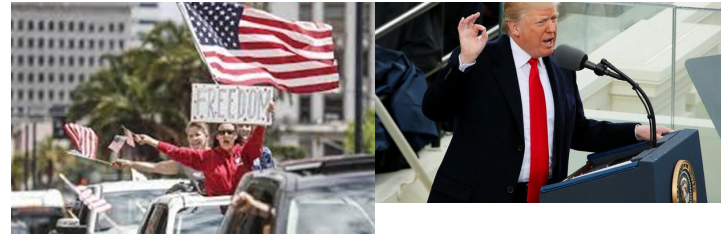
Immigrant society – see diversity as pillar of nation building. Key elements of identity rooted in English as common language, Christianity, religious commitment, rule of law

(3) Globalised America

Open and connected world is always a better one. Power in the hands of few which corrupts if unchecked

(4) American-first rhetoric

Sense of purpose in eliminating foreign threats and to establish an environment amenable to American interests



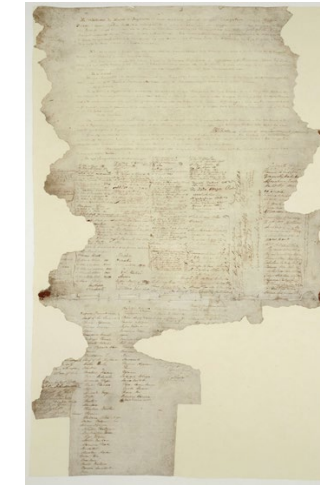
New Zealand's Narrative

(1) National narratives hinges on values of fairness and equality

(2) Historical injustice to indigenous people

Treaty of Waitangi as its first constitution

(3) Biculturalism – tensions and reconciliation between Maori (native) and Pakeha (Europeans settlers)



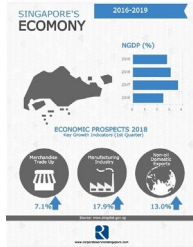
What is the Singapore Narrative?

Nation Building



- First instituted in 1967 to build Singapore's armed forces after gaining independence in 1965, **National Service** is a Singapore national policy that mandates all male Singaporean citizens and second-generation PRs to serve a period of compulsory service in the uniformed services.

- Singapore's highly developed **free-market economy is anchored in political stability**, low corruption rates and transparent public institutions, making the country a trusted partner for businesses. To add, prudent monetary and fiscal policies and a transparent legal framework underpin our low risk economy



- Singapore's **Housing and Development Board** (HDB) was formed in 1960 to provide affordable and high-quality housing for residents
- Built in HDB towns, housing units are integrated with amenities including clinics, community facilities such as parks, sports facilities and retail

- The **Ethnic Integration Policy** was also implemented to foster greater social cohesion by maintaining a diverse ethnic mix across HCB blocks and neighbourhoods

National Resilience

Overcoming challenges as a whole

Health threats: SARS & COVID-19

- Across both health crises, rapid containment of the outbreak was effected with strong political leadership, effective command, control and coordination at all levels, prompt and coordinated interagency responses, high levels of professionalism and dedication of Health care workers, and strong community support



National security: Jemaah Islamiyah Terrorism threats & counter-terrorism



- Singapore continues to identify counterterrorism as the nation's top security policy priority and has comprehensive strategies based on global and regional trends
- These include: vigilant security measures, regional and international law enforcement cooperation, efforts to counter radicalization to violence, and a campaign to prepare the populace for possible attacks.
- Singapore's Internal Security Department (ISD) prevented a series of bomb attacks by Singapore's JI branch, effectively crippling the network

Conflict

- As a multiracial and religious society, issues related to **race and religion** are often at the forefront of Singapore's conflicting issues (i.e., racial riots)



- Singapore also continuously faces the challenge of **inequality**, resulted from a weakened global economy due to the pandemic, soaring inflation, growing rich-poor divide and declining social mobility

What is the Singapore Narrative?

Nation Building

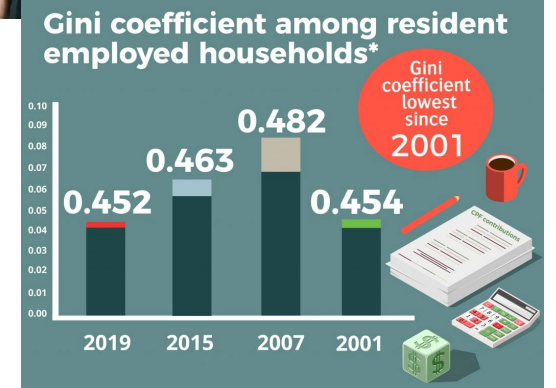
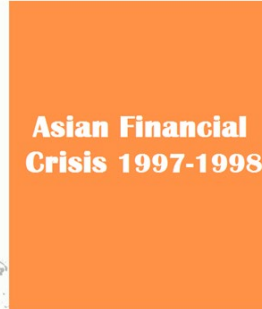
National Resilience

Conflict

Creating institutions, making sacrifices for common good

Shared experiences in overcoming the odds

Tensions, compromises, tradeoff



National narratives – at individual level

Shared Challenges

THE STRAITSTIMES

I had acute anxiety: DBS' Piyush Gupta on past mental health struggles

Will Covid-19 be the catalyst that normalises acceptance of mental health issues in the workplace? Perhaps when more bosses admit their own struggles.



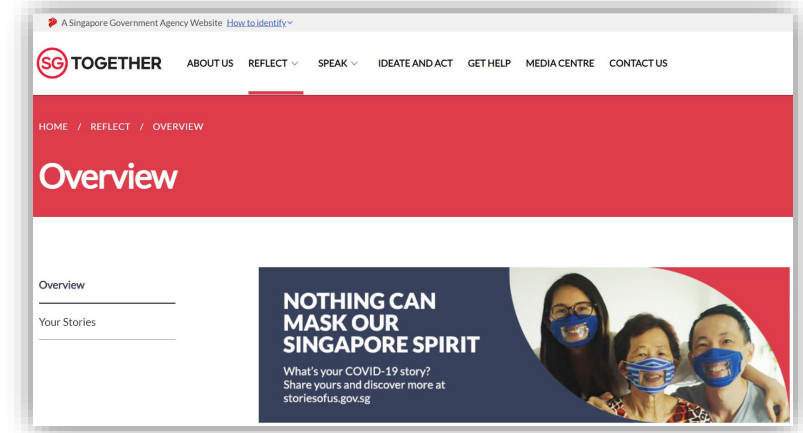
Shared Spaces



Shared Aspirations



How to Start a Restaurant or F&B Business in Singapore



The End

Leong Chan-Hoong, PhD
Head, Policy Development, Evaluation, and Data Analytics
Kantar Public, Singapore

Chan-hoong.leong@kantar.com
www.chanhoongleong.com