Casting the Shadow of our Past to Illuminate the Future of Singapore

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Abstract—**Historical events are the repository of a nation's culture and identity. The interpretation of shared narratives offers a unique socio-cognitive lens to understanding the social ties that bind citizenry and country, and point us to the likely trajectory for the future. This study examines how historical events in Singapore are viewed, with intersections on attitudes to immigration, national pride, and political orientation. As the city-state enters the next phase of socio-political development, issues pertinent to population, rootedness, and political values are paramount to the management of social diversity and identity politics. A survey of 470 undergraduates rated their affective opinion and perceived importance of 38 historical events in Singapore. Interestingly, the social representation of history varies according to individual political ideology. Respondents with conservative beliefs more readily affirmed the importance of events that exemplify nation building whereas those with more a liberal political orientation place greater emphasis on socio-political disasters. The findings suggest selective attention in how history is narrated, and/or how it shapes individual differences. The results are discussed in relation to the rapidly evolving socio-political climate and the emerging contestations on immigration and political discourses in Singapore.**

Index Terms—**History, identity, narratives, Singapore.**

I. INTRODUCTION

History provides a rich repository of events, notable people, monuments and institutions from which a national community constructs its identity and stories about its people – their successes, trials and tribulations, as well as moments of triumph when these are overcome [1], [2]. When strategically strung together, pieces of shared experiences and incidents of national pride help heighten the commonalities among different groups in society and their identification with the nation-state, thus casting the light on their shared identity rather than intragroup differences. Moreover, incidents of national pride also enhance the country's international image, increasing the various social groups' identification with the nation, while simultaneously drawing a clearer boundary between 'us-the-nation' and 'them-the-other-nation' [3].

However, relatively young nation-states such as Singapore face immense challenges when attempting to articulate a cohesive historical representation of its people – partly because they have relatively few historical memories or moments to draw on.

What then are the key factors that determine the likely shape and form of Singapore's future social representations? What influences the national narrative and identity? Are there sufficiently shared experiences and corroborated historical representations among the people to bind the citizenry to the nation-state?

II. THE CASE OF SINGAPORE

Singapore, a relatively young nation-state, gained its independence from Britain, and the then-Federation of Malaya half a century ago. An island with almost no natural resources, the mainly ethnic Chinese populated Singapore is flanked by two large Muslim neighbours – Malaysia and Indonesia – and located in a politically turbulent region. At the time of its independence in 1965, the nation-state had no local defence force and little skilled labour to speak of, and unemployment was around 10 per cent [4]. With a largely migrant society in an open economy, Singapore's multiethnic, multireligious, and multicultural population coexisted uneasily. Occasional incidents of racial riots did not augur well for Singapore's survival as an independent nation-state, from the start.

Fast-forward 50 years later, Singapore is a thriving, modern city-state, running like a well-oiled machine. From an initial per capita income of US$511 in 1965 (source: World Development Indicators database) which at the time was the third highest among Southeast Asian countries, Singapore now boasts a per capita income of US$56,498, making it the third richest country in the world in 2013. The city-state is also home to the world's busiest port and world's best airline, and named the best place to do business in the world in 2013 by the World Bank.

It should therefore come as little surprise that historical representations of Singapore that have taken root thus far have emphasized the city-state's tenacity and ability to rise against all odds and move rapidly from a backwater, Third World country to First World developed status within a relatively short span of four decades.

Singapore's success has often been attributed to its first generation leaders – chief of whom is Singapore's founding father at Independence, the country's first prime minister Lee Kuan Yew – who astutely identified factors crucial for Singapore's survival: the need to turn around the economy; attract international investments; educate its people; give its people of migrant stock a stake in the country; enhance social order and racial and religious harmony; establish an effective national defence force tasked with ensuring national security; and build the country into one of international repute.

The government's single-minded focus and decisiveness

in pursuing and achieving these outcomes could be seen in its systematic approach at engineering a conducive social environment [5]. This was accomplished through the moulding of then-existing institutions and the establishment of new institutions – such as the Housing and Development Board (HDB) and ethnic self-help groups – and accompanying policies to facilitate this transition. In particular, the Singapore government was keenly aware that incidents of deadly racial riots and social disorder would hamper efforts to attract the much-needed international investments that were key to the country's economic development. Political leaders thus employed a mix of hard and soft power [6] to encourage a spirit of social harmony among the different ethnic groups.

Singapore's mass media frequently carry the political leaders' exhortations and constant reminders of the importance of racial and religious harmony and social integration. In 1977, the government tightened its grip on newspaper outlets through the enactment of the Newspaper and Printing Presses Act, which effectively enhanced the government's ability to influence the day-to-day operations of the newsroom [7]. The government also systematically curtailed the public space, putting in place out-of-bounds (OB) markers that constrain the range of acceptable topics for public discourse and dialogue, and even extended their jurisdiction into cyberspace [8], [9]. This soft persuasion is firmly supported by draconian laws such as the Internal Security Act, which allows the police to detain anyone suspected of compromising national security. Social harmony and integration became, without a doubt, a widely-accepted value that has been acquiescently internalized by the populace. This thus explains Liu *et al.*'s [10] observation that Singapore's historical representations showcase the various ethnic identities as positively incorporated within the overarching frame of national identity.

However, there have been signs of change, with a hint that these historical representations, to date officially endorsed and corroborated by an acquiescent populace, will now need to take into account and incorporate the views of an increasingly vocal and less compliant population.

The rapid increase in immigrants in recent years has sparked tensions between locals and foreigners, adding yet another dimension to the tenuous balance within the multicultural, multilingual society. Locals have increasingly voiced their unhappiness with the Singapore government's welcoming stance towards immigrants – especially those termed as "foreign talent" – which is seen to be encouraged at the expense of grooming and nurturing local talent. Moreover, Singaporeans also blame the immigrants for bidding up property prices, overcrowding in public places and the public transportation system, and vying for jobs with locals. Demands have been growing for the Singapore government to champion the needs of Singaporeans.

As Singaporeans become increasingly wired and plugged into the networked globe, and gain greater exposure and access to more liberal and enlightened perspectives, the government is finding it increasingly challenging to firmly establish the confines of political space and manage the expectations of the people.

Signs of changing winds in the political front were evident during the national elections of 2006 and 2011, which saw voters increasingly turning to alternative media for up-to-date information and to express their views and commentary on the election campaign [11], [12]. Those elections were tapped as the tipping point for the Singapore political landscape. Although the impact was first felt in 2006, it was only in 2011, with the relaxation of rules governing the use of new media, that a more level playing field for all political parties was achieved.

For the first time since Independence, the ruling People's Action Party (PAP) had its poorest showing at the polls in 2011 – winning just over 60% of the popular vote [9], [12]. It was also the first time that the PAP lost a group representation constituency (GRC) "since these team-based, multi-seat GRCs were introduced in the 1988 general elections" [13]. The loss of Aljunied GRC by nearly 10 per cent was also widely viewed as a huge setback for PAP, as it led to the loss of three PAP ministers, and the admission of five opposition Members of Parliament (MP) from the Workers' Party (WP). Observers interpret this as Singaporeans sending a clear signal that they are impatient for change [11], [12]. "The results, if anything, confirm that the political landscape is more diverse, more competitive (pp. 274)" [12]. As Ortmann [14] observed, "Singapore has gone from being simply an authoritarian regime to a (*sic*) being a *competitive* authoritarian regime" (153, emphasis in original).

It is undeniable that in the past four decades, the PAP government has put in a stellar performance and propelled Singapore to the forefront of the international stage. However, this has come at the expense of a "more open and vibrant political system" [12], and an inclusive society where the people's views are genuinely sought and incorporated in policy making. Unlike the older generation of Singaporean voters who lived through Singapore's initial years of independence, post-independence Singaporean voters attach greater importance to post-material aspirations and values, such as "electoral fair play, civil liberties, and quality of life" [12]. As such, the younger generation of Singaporeans frowns on electoral tactics such as the redrawing of electoral boundaries, the sudden announcement of newly-formed GRCs, and the use of slander lawsuits against opposition politicians.

In recent years, the opposition parties have also successfully recruited and fielded well-educated candidates with impressive credentials and track records that match those of the PAP's. As a result, the ruling party could no longer set itself apart from the opposition parties based on its stable of high caliber candidates.

Singapore politics has certainly come of age, with opposition parties seeing much value in closely collaborating and strategically coordinating their campaigns to avert three corner-fights that would weigh on their chances at the polls. For the first time in 20 years, the opposition parties also challenged all parliamentary seats at the 2011 elections, except for former Prime Minister Lee Kuan Yew's Tanjong Pagar GRC. Opposition parties sought to position themselves as alternative parties to the PAP, emphasizing the need for a check on the government, and portraying themselves as being

more in touch with the people's needs than the elitist PAP candidates.

As the political landscape continues to evolve and develop, new forms of social representations will likely come to the fore. This is thus an opportune time to look at what aspects of the current historical representations will continue to resonate with the Singaporean youth of today, so that they would serve as key ingredients of social representations in the near future. To determine this, we conducted a survey of young Singaporeans who were asked to rate their feelings towards various historical events, and evaluate the significance of these events.

III. METHODS

A. Participants

Four hundred and seventy (470) undergraduates took part in the survey on "Singapore Symbols and Attitudes". The sample comprises mainly ethnic Chinese (89%), females (68%), and students in business and management-related courses (>50%). The majority are born and raised in Singapore (96%) and most of them are currently pursuing their first year undergraduate program in the first author's university. The mean age of sample is 21.25 years old (SD = 1.75 years).

B. Instrument

The survey consists of three sections. The first section asks for demographic related information, such as ethnicity, gender, age, and courses; the second section measures attitudes to immigrants, national pride, and political orientation. The third and final section requires participants to rate a list of historical events on perceived evaluation and importance. Details on Sections Two and Three are as follows:

C. Attitudes to Immigrants

Participants were asked to rate on an 8-item scale measuring overall sentiment toward immigrants using a 7-point Likert scale with end points of 1 (Strongly disagree) to 7 (Strongly agree). An example of the instrument is: "I would not mind at all if an immigrant family moves in next door". The instrument shows a Cronbach's alpha of 0.82, indicating that it is a reliable scale. A higher measurement score indicates a more positive attitude towards migration.

D. National Pride

The instrument comprises 6 items measuring the level of national pride. Participants rated each statement using a 7-point Likert scale with end points of 1 (Strongly disagree) to 7 (Strongly agree). An example of this instrument is: "The fact that I am a Singaporean is an important part of my identity". The instrument has a Cronbach's alpha of 0.90. A higher measurement score indicates a strong sense of pride and rootedness to the country.

E. Political Orientation

The single-item question (What is your political orientation?) measures an individual's political value using a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (Liberal) to 5 (Conservative). A higher measurement score indicates more conservative political values.

F. Evaluation and Importance of Historical Events

Participants are shown 52 local and key historical events and were asked to rate each episode along on two separate dimensions using a 7-point Likert scale. The two dimensions are evaluation (1-Extremely negative, 7-Extremely positive) and importance (1-Not at all important, 7-Extremely important). Participants first responded to the measurement on evaluation before answering the column on perceived importance.

TABLE I: KEY HISTORICAL EVENTS IN SINGAPORE

No	Event (Year)	Evaluation Score		Importance Score	
		Mean	SD	Mean	SD
1	WWII Japanese occupation (1942)	2.38	1.57	5.65	1.42
2	Maria Hertogh Riots (1950)	2.91	1.38	4.76	1.54
3	David Marshall fails to obtain full governance from Britain & quits (1956)	3.55	1.23	4.63	1.35
4	*Majulah Singapura* is composed (1958)	5.48	1.26	5.47	1.49
5	PAP wins GE (1959)	5.07	1.32	5.27	1.45
6	HDB is formed (1960)	5.67	1.18	5.75	1.30
7	Bukit Ho Swee fire (1961)	3.22	1.33	4.21	1.34
8	Merger with Malaya (1962)	3.73	1.48	4.93	1.52
9	Operation Cold Store (1963)	3.78	1.11	4.19	1.27
10	Racial riots (1964)	2.61	1.41	5.28	1.45
11	MacDonald House is bombed (1965)	2.76	1.36	4.60	1.52
12	Merger dissolves, Lee Kuan Yew sobs on national TV (1965)	4.09	1.59	5.01	1.64
13	Admission of Singapore into UN (1965)	5.47	1.28	5.54	1.36
14	Bilingualism in schools introduced with English as first language (1966)	5.86	1.22	5.93	1.29
15	First batch for NS men enlisted (1967)	5.07	1.57	5.51	1.45
16	Singapore joins ASEAN (1967)	5.49	1.30	5.57	1.37
17	Set up DBS & Jurong Town Corp, reorganize EDB (1968)	5.11	1.22	5.09	1.42
18	"Stop at Two" family planning launched (1970)	3.74	1.43	4.57	1.55
19	Britain withdraws its troops (1971)	4.84	1.49	5.12	1.48
20	SQ is formed (1972)	5.35	1.28	5.31	1.44
21	Merger of Nantah and University of Singapore (1980)	4.73	1.21	4.62	1.45
22	Changi Airport opens (1981)	6.00	1.15	5.99	1.29
23	Singapore Cable Car accident (1983)	3.08	1.24	4.27	1.42
24	MRT officially launched (1988)	5.85	1.09	5.93	1.20
25	Goh Chok Tong took over as PM from Lee Kuan Yew (1990)	5.29	1.20	5.43	1.34
26	Hijack of SQ 115 (1991)	2.64	1.53	5.12	1.48
27	Tampines New Town awarded World Habitat Award (1992)	4.62	1.22	4.31	1.53
28	The caning of Michael Faye (1994)	4.09	1.25	4.36	1.48
29	Introduction of GST (1994)	2.74	1.50	4.97	1.66
30	Asian Financial Crisis (1997-98)	2.65	1.52	5.53	1.37
31	Completion of NEWater (2000)	5.45	1.26	5.47	1.39
32	SQ 006 Taipei Crash (2000)	2.82	1.38	4.67	1.49
33	SARS Outbreak (2003)	2.37	1.59	5.79	1.39
34	Free Trade Agreement with USA (2003)	5.10	1.30	5.36	1.37
35	Nicoll Highway Collapse (2004)	2.57	1.47	5.14	1.42
36	NKF/TT Durai scandal (2005)	2.45	1.42	4.95	1.55
37	Casino gambling approved (2005)	3.57	1.60	4.82	1.57
38	Mas Selamat escapes (2008)	2.31	1.43	5.52	1.53

The list of historical events was chosen from a wide range of sources, including scholarly publications on Singapore culture and history, the curriculum for civic-education in national schools, and a Wikipedia entry on the "History of Singapore". To avoid the primacy of recent events in shaping response patterns, critical events that occurred in the last four years were excluded (i.e., until 2008). Depending on the dimension, higher measurement scores indicate either a more

positive assessment or greater perceived importance in the political history of Singapore. The list of events can be found in the Appendix.

G. Procedure

Participants in the survey were undergraduates in the first author's university. They were invited to take part in a study on "Singapore Symbols and Attitudes" during their classes. Prospective participants were given the questionnaire at the start of the lesson and they had the option to submit the completed survey in the following week should they decide to take part in study. Participation was strictly voluntary and anonymous. The classes were either taught by the first author or from a course taught by her colleagues.

TABLE II: FACTOR ANALYSIS (WITH VARIMAX ROTATION) ON EVALUATION DIMENSION

No	Events (year)	Factor 1' Nation Building
1	*Majulah Singapura* is composed (1958)	.67
2	PAP wins GE (1959)	.63
3	HDB is formed (1960)	.69
4	Admission of Singapore into UN (1965)	.70
5	Bilingualism in schools introduced with English as first language (1966)	.69
6	First batch for NS men enlisted (1967)	.65
7	Singapore joins ASEAN (1967)	.78
8	Set up DBS & Jurong Town Corp, reorganize EDB (1968)	.71
9	Britain withdraws its troops (1971)	.47
10	SQ is formed (1972)	.70
11	Merger of Nantah and University of Singapore (1980)	.61
12	Changi Airport opens (1981)	.73
13	MRT officially launched (1988)	.65
14	Goh Chok Tong took over as PM from Lee Kuan Yew (1990)	.64
15	Tampines New Town awarded World Habitat Award (1992)	.48
16	Completion of NEWater (2000)	.61
17	Free Trade Agreement with USA (2003)	.49
		Factor 2' National Challenges
18	WWII Japanese occupation (1942)	.62
19	Maria Hertogh Riots (1950)	.58
20	David Marshall fails to obtain full governance from Britain & quits (1956)	.45
21	Bukit Ho Swee fire (1961)	.61
22	Merger with Malaya (1962)	.21
23	Operation Cold Store (1963)	..31
24	Racial riots (1964)	.72
25	Merger dissolves, Lee Kuan Yew sobs on national TV (1965)	.34
26	MacDonald House is bombed (1965)	.67
27	"Stop at Two" family planning launched (1970)	.17
28	Singapore Cable Car accident (1983)	.63
29	Hijack of SQ 115 (1991)	.64
30	Introduction of GST (1994)	.46
31	Asian Financial Crisis (1997-98)	.70
32	SQ 006 Taipei Crash (2000)	.67
33	SARS Outbreak (2003)	.73
34	Nicoll Highway Collapse (2004)	.75
35	NKF/TT Durai scandal (2005)	.67
36	Mas Selamat escapes (2008)	.69

Note: The caning of Michael Faye (1994) and Casino (2005) were removed from analysis as both items were evenly loaded on both factors

IV. RESULTS

Data analyses were performed in three stages. Descriptive statistics were first tabulated for the ratings on perceived evaluation and importance. This is followed by a factor analysis on each of the two dimensions, and lastly, the correlations between the latent factors and measurements on attitudes to immigrants, national pride, and political orientation were analyzed.

TABLE III: FACTOR ANALYSIS (WITH VARIMAX ROTATION) ON IMPORTANCE DIMENSION

No	Events (year)	Factor 1 Nation Building
1	*Majulah Singapura* is composed (1958)	.65
2	PAP wins GE (1959)	.65
3	HDB is formed (1960)	.66
4	Merger dissolves, Lee Kuan Yew sobs on national TV (1965)	.47
5	Admission of Singapore into UN (1965)	.71
6	Bilingualism in schools introduced with English as first language (1966)	.74
7	First batch for NS men enlisted (1967)	.69
8	Singapore joins ASEAN (1967)	.72
9	Set up DBS & Jurong Town Corp, reorganize EDB (1968)	.65
10	Britain withdraws its troops (1971)	.46
11	SQ is formed (1972)	.68
12	Merger of Nantah and University of Singapore (1980)	.52
13	Changi Airport opens (1981)	.76
14	MRT officially launched (1988)	.65
15	Goh Chok Tong took over as PM from Lee Kuan Yew (1990)	.62
16	Tampines New Town awarded World Habitat Award (1992)	.40
17	Completion of NEWater (2000)	.59
18	Free Trade Agreement with USA (2003)	.47
		Factor 2 Social Resilience
1	WWII Japanese occupation (1942)	.56
2	Maria Hertogh Riots (1950)	.62
	David Marshall fails to obtain full governance from Britain & quits (1956)	.52
3	Bukit Ho Swee fire (1961)	.69
4	Merger with Malaya (1962)	.56
5	Operation Cold Store (1963)	.68
6	Racial riots (1964)	.61
7	MacDonald House is bombed (1965)	.74
8	"Stop at Two" family planning launched (1970)	.44
9	Singapore Cable Car accident (1983)	.49
10	The caning of Michael Faye (1994)	.48
		Factor 3 Reputat-ional Resilience
1	Hijack of SQ 115 (1991)	.55
2	Introduction of GST (1994)	.60
3	Asian Financial Crisis (1997-98)	.57
4	SQ 006 Taipei Crash (2000)	.52
5	SARS Outbreak (2003)	.79
6	Nicoll Highway Collapse (2004)	.74
7	NKF/TT Durai scandal (2005)	.57
8	Casino gambling approved (2005)	.45
9	Mas Selamat escapes (2008)	.72

A. Descriptive Statistics

For each historical episode, the mean score, standard deviation, and number of missing variables on both dimensions (i.e., negative/positive, not at all

important/extremely important) were tabulated. In order to ensure that the social representation and consciousness of these events are meaningful to the respondents, historical items that have five or more missing entries were eliminated from subsequent analysis. This resulted in a final pool of 38 items from the original slate of 52 items (See Table I).

B. Factor Analyses

In the second stage, the data were factor analyzed in each of the two dimensions using the Principal Component Method, followed by a Varimax rotation. For the evaluative measure (negative-positive), the FA results suggest a two-factor solution that explains 38.58% of the common variance (See Table II). The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) measurement of sampling adequacy reported 0.91, and the Barlett's Test for Sphericity was significant, $\chi^2(703) = 7,058.70$, $p<0.001$, indicating that this is a good factor model. The first factor was coined as *Nation Building*. Historical events that loaded highly on this dimension reflect the major developmental milestones in the social, political, and economic history of the city-state. These include the composition of the National Anthem (1958), the formation and launch of landmark social institutions such as the Housing Development Board (1960), Development Bank of Singapore (1968), Changi Airport (1981), and the Mass Rapid Transit system (1988), and strategic policies that ensure the survival and international competitiveness of the nation, such as the emphasis to learning English and bilingualism in schools (1966), and the conscription of national servicemen for defence (1967).

The second factor was classified as *National Challenges*. Items that loaded on this factor came from a range of human-linked crises, social catastrophes, economic hardship, and unforeseen tragedies encountered by the Republic in the recent past decades, and which had far reaching impact on all groups in society. These include the Japanese occupation in WWII (1942), Maria Hertogh riots (1950), Bukit Ho Swee fire (1961), Asian Financial Crisis (1997), the SARS outbreak (2003), and the National Kidney Foundation scandal (2005).

For the perceived importance dimension, Principal Component factor analysis recommended a three-factor solution that accounts for 48.40% of the common variance (See Table III). The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) measurement of sampling adequacy reported 0.95, and the Barlett's Test for Sphericity was significant, $\chi^2(703) = 8,451.51$, $p<0.001$, indicating that this is a good factor model. The latent factors are labeled as *Nation Building*, *Social Resilience*, and *Reputational Resilience*.

The first factor, *Nation Building*, conceptually echoes the latent variable derived from the evaluation dimension. The correlation between the two factors is strong ($r = 0.71$, $p<0.001$). Items that were rated positively were concurrently viewed as important in the historical discourse.

The second factor is coined as *Social Resilience*. Similar to the *National Challenges* factor, it reflects the relative weight assigned to crises and tragedies, regardless of whether it was an episode of chance or the act of man. Unlike *National Challenges*, however, items on the *Social Resilience* dimension were mostly dated, reflecting a historical period when Singapore was in the throes of a transitional phase that was rife with socio-economic challenges and geo-political uncertainties.

Historical misfortunes and crises dated from the 1990s are organized in the third factor, termed as *Reputational Resilience* because of the perceived impact these events have had on Singapore's international image. This third factor is a consortium of events that includes scandals, controversies, economic hardship and political incompetence; the exemplary includes the terrorist hijack of flight SQ115 (1991), introduction of the Goods and Service Tax (GST) (1994), the flight SQ006 crash in Taipei (2000), the decision to go ahead to build the casinos (2005); the National Kidney Foundation scandal (2005), and the escape of Mas Selamat, a high profile terrorist (2008). Although these events dealt an initial dent on Singapore's international image, the nation-state's ability to maintain and reaffirm its international repute, in spite of the initial negative press, shows its *Reputational Resilience*.

C. Inter-Scale Correlations

The inter-scale correlation can be found in Table IV. *Nation Building*, a factor that cuts across both evaluative and importance dimensions, predicted the sense of rootedness and is correlated with positive attitudes to immigration. *Reputational Resilience* and *Social Resilience*, are associated with national esteem and liberal political values, respectively. Non-Chinese (ethnic minorities) rated higher on the importance of nation-building events (Mean(Chinese) = -0.04; *M*(non-Chinese) = 0.36; $t(422) = -2.60$, $p<0.05$), whereas the Chinese (majority group) rated higher on both the importance of events associated with reputational resilience (Mean(Chinese) = 0.04; Mean (non-Chinese) = -0.30; $t(422) = 2.17$, $p<0.05$) and the evaluation of events associated with national challenges (Mean(Chinese) = 0.04; Mean (non-Chinese) = -0.31; $t(438) = 2.31$, $p<0.05$).

Interestingly, the social representation of history varies according to individual political ideology. Respondents with conservative beliefs more readily affirmed the importance of events that exemplify nation building. Without inferring any causal connection, the finding suggests selective attention on how history is narrated, and/or how it shapes individual differences. The findings are discussed in relation to the rapid evolving socio-political climate and the emerging contestations on the immigration and political discourses in Singapore.

TABLE IV: INTER-SCALE CORRELATIONS

	Attitudes to Immigration	National Pride	Political Orientation
Factor 1 Nation Building	.12*	.35***	.10*
Factor 2 Social Resilience	.08	-.01	-.10*
Factor 3 Reputational Resilience	-.00	.13**	.06
Factor 1' Nation Building	.13**	.48***	.08
Factor 2' National Challenges	-.02	.09+	-.00

+ p=.06; * p<.05; ** p<.01; *** p<.001
Note:
F_1, F_2, F_3 denotes latent factors from the dimension measuring importance;
F_1 and F_2 are latent factors from the dimension measuring evaluation

V. DISCUSSION

In line with findings from past empirical studies, historical

events are broadly distilled along two major themes anchored in nation-building and in overcoming crises [3], [16]. Historical events that exemplify nation building and development are legacies to the sense of nationhood and collective esteem. In terms of historical importance, the social representation in the latter category is further differentiated according to two types of narratives, namely *Social Resilience* and *Reputational Resilience* (See Table III). Most of the events in the former took place pre-independence in a tumultuous period when the socio-economic and political survival of the city-state looks bleak and uncertain. These events are ostensibly from a distant era that few respondents could resonate affectively, in contrast to the more recent events underscored in the third factor, *Reputational Resilience.* The latter – with an assortment of scandals, controversies, and economic austerity – seemingly had a greater impact on Singapore's international image even as the city-state was able to emerge from the initial damages and safe guide its reputation as a safe and incorruptible city-state.

From the foregoing, it is also evident that young Singaporeans feel a deep sense of *National Pride* (and hence rootedness) and this sense of rootedness is further enhanced by historical nation-building events associated with national institutions that have become an icon in their own right (e.g., the setting up of Housing and Development Board, Development Bank of Singapore, Jurong Town Corporation, Economic Development Board, and Singapore Airlines), or international events that highlight Singapore's image as an independent state, able to hold its own on the international stage (e.g., Singapore joining the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), the opening of Changi Airport, and the signing of a Free Trade Agreement with the US). This finding is in line with Schatz and Lavine's [15] observation that when people perceive that the national institutions are able to provide the necessary services for its citizens, they tend to more strongly identify with the nation-state. In view of the emphasis given by the national education curriculum to the central role of these national institutions in Singapore's social and economic development, these findings come as little surprise as well.

Additionally, *Reputational Resilience* adds to one's national pride and rootedness. In particular, individuals are more willing to identify themselves with a country of good international standing and repute, than one that is not, since such association will add positively to their own self-identity and self-esteem. Interestingly, the ethnic Chinese rated higher on the importance of *Reputational Resilience*, which seems to indicate that the international standing and image – hence, 'face' – of Singapore is important to the Chinese.

Where political orientation is concerned, *Nation-Building* events resonate more with those who hold a conservative political outlook, whereas respondents with a more liberal political orientation tend to pay more attention to the management of national challenges arising from conflict among social groups (e.g., racial riots) and incidents of national crises (e.g., SARS outbreak). This stems from the differences in how the two groups view defining moments of the nation. In particular, those with a conservative political orientation tend to favor the building of national institutions that govern social interactions and help maintain a semblance

of stability and the status quo, whereas those with a more liberal outlook may view national crises and conflict as favorable openings and opportunities to correct possible imbalances in society so that a new, more equitable equilibrium, is forged. This conjecture warrants a closer examination in future research.

Nation-building events also ranked higher with non-ethnic Chinese (or the minorities). This may be due to the need for the minority groups to identify with the nation, and to feel a stronger sense of national belonging than is the case with the majority ethnic Chinese group.

Interestingly, however, despite all the recent unhappiness towards immigrants and recent rhetoric to put Singaporeans first when shaping national policies, nation building was found to correlate to positive attitudes to immigrants, regardless of evaluation or perceived importance of events. The fact that the Singapore government has time and again emphasized the immigrant origins of Singapore, and the economic benefits that immigrants have brought to the city-state may have led to this positive attitude towards immigrants and cognition among locally-born Singaporeans that their ancestors were once immigrants to Singapore. This message is also embedded in the national education program, as well as mass media reports. Moreover, this positive attitude towards immigrants may also be attributed to the age group of our respondents, many of whom are undergraduates who have yet to enter the workforce where competition with immigrant colleagues will likely leave a less desirable impression. A survey of working adults could possibly yield a slightly different response.

VI. CONCLUSION AND LIMITATIONS

This survey was conducted based on a convenience sample of respondents who are undergraduates between the ages of 18 and 23 years. Although the sample provides good insight on how historical representations may shape the future narrative of Singapore, it is unlikely to capture the full range sentiments and experiences of Singaporeans. A large proportion of the respondents (89%) were ethnic Chinese, which does not reflect the ethnic distribution of the Singapore population, of which ethnic Chinese account for 74%.

Additionally, for each item, respondents were forced to choose a response on the Likert scale of 1 to7, without an option for "Don't know". Respondents were thus made to rank an event, even though they may not have any knowledge of the event. This will likely have an impact on the findings. In future surveys, an option to allow respondents to choose "Don't know" will be included.

From the above findings, it appears that future social representations of Singapore will continue to draw on national institutions – such as HDB, DBS, Changi Airport – that have built themselves into icons of national and international repute. This is because of the looming presence these institutions have had in nation building, Singapore's international image, and the effect these have had on Singaporeans' sense of national pride.

Additionally, Singapore's history as an immigrant nation will continue to resonate with the people, as evident from the fact that the respondents, regardless of political orientation,

continue to hold a positive attitude towards immigrants.

To be all-encompassing, however, social representations of history will need to draw upon defining moments of the nation, which may be both positive (e.g., moments of triumph and success) and negative (e.g., crises and challenges) in nature. However, these are not just any defining moments of the nation. Rather, what holds them together, and allows them to resonate with Singaporeans, is the positive impact these defining moments have had on Singapore's international image. Thus, for example, nation-building events that have an element of social resilience and reputational resilience will carry greater currency with future Singaporeans, both ethnic Chinese as well as non-Chinese.

APPENDIX

No.	Event (Year)	Description
1	WWII Japanese occupation (1942)	Japanese military occupation of Singapore from 1942 to 1945, following the fall of the British colonial government in February 1942
2	Maria Hertogh Riots (1950)	Civil violence erupted in the streets of Singapore on 11 December 1950 after a Court ruling that a child who had been raised by adoptive Muslim parents should be returned to her biological Catholic parents. A total of 18 people were killed and 173 injured in the racial riots.
3	David Marshall fails to obtain full governance from Britain & quits (1956)	David Marshall, the first Chief Minister of Singapore from 1955, resigned from his post after failing to win self-government for Singapore in June 1956.
4	*Majulah Singapura* is composed (1958)	*Majulah Singapura* ("Onward Singapore" in Malay), the national anthem of Singapore, was composed in 1958 and selected as the official state song when Singapore attained self-governance the following year.
5	PAP wins GE (1959)	The People's Action Party (PAP) came into power as Singapore's first fully-elected government in the general election of 1959, under the country's first Prime Minister Lee Kuan Yew.
6	HDB is formed (1960)	The Housing & Development Board (HDB) was created in 1960 to tackle the national housing shortage and massive damage from World War II. Today, more than 82% of Singaporeans live in public housing developed by the HDB.
7	Bukit Ho Swee fire (1961)	A fire which broke out in the slum settlement of the Bukit Ho Swee district on 25 May 1961, killed four people and injured 16,000. The disaster brought home the dire housing shortage and poor living conditions of the time.
8	Merger with Malaya (1962)	Singapore officially became part of the Federation of Malaya on 16 September 1963, following a referendum on the terms of integration a year earlier, on the linkage between self-determination and decolonisation.
9	Operation Cold Store (1963)	Operation Cold Store was an islandwide security crackdown on 2 February 1963 in which over 110 allegedly anti-government left-wing activists were arrested and detained.
10	Racial riots (1964)	The 1964 race riots saw widespread violence flare up between ethnic Chinese and Malay groups in separate incidents in July and September of that year.
11	MacDonald House is bombed (1965)	The bombing of MacDonald House, which housed the Hong Kong and Shanghai Bank, was perpetrated by saboteurs from Indonesia, in a campaign of terror against the formation of Malaysia.
12	Merger dissolves, Lee Kuan Yew sobs on national TV (1965)	Singapore's unexpected and sudden ousting from the Federation of Malaya in 1965 caused first Prime Minister Lee Kuan Yew's emotional public outburst, which was a startling contrast to his image as a strong and determined leader.
13	Admission of Singapore into UN (1965)	Singapore became the 117th member of the United Nations on 21 September 1965, a month after it gained independence.
14	Bilingualism in schools introduced with English as first language (1966)	Bilingualism, a key feature of Singapore's education system, was introduced in 1966. The main medium of instruction in schools is English, but all students learn an official Mother Tongue Language (Mandarin, Malay or Tamil). A primary objective is to promote English as the common language among the diverse ethnic groups in Singapore.
15	First batch for NS men enlisted (1967)	National Service (NS) or conscription in Singapore requires all male Singaporean citizens and second-generation permanent residents to enlist when they reach the age of 18 years.
16	Singapore joins ASEAN (1967)	Singapore is a founding member of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), along with Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines and Thailand.
17	Set up DBS & Jurong Town Corp, reorganize EDB (1968)	The Development Bank of Singapore (DBS) and Jurong Town Corporation (JTC) were established in 1968 to take on industrial financing and development, respectively, which were part of the original mandate of the Economic Development Board (EDB). The EDB is the lead government agency for planning and executing strategies for Singapore's economic growth.
18	"Stop at Two" family planning launched (1970)	Population control measures in Singapore to try and slow the alarming increase in post-war birth rates resulted in the "Stop at Two" campaign, to encourage families to have fewer children.
19	Britain withdraws its troops (1971)	Britain's decision to bring forward the withdrawal of its troops from Singapore exacerbated economic and political insecurity. At the time, the military bases contributed to over 20 per cent of Singapore's gross national product, and Singapore's post-separation relationship with Malaysia remained tenuous.
20	SQ is formed (1972)	Singapore's national carrier was formed in 1972 when the Malaysia-Singapore Airlines was split into two entities, Singapore Airlines (code: SQ) and Malaysian Airline Systems.
21	Merger of Nantah and University of Singapore (1980)	Nanyang University (Nantah), the first Chinese-medium university in Southeast Asia, was merged with the University of Singapore to form the National University of Singapore in 1980.
22	Changi Airport opens (1981)	Singapore's main airport, Changi Airport, is one of the largest single development projects in Singapore's history, and a global aviation hub that is among the top 10 busiest international airports.
23	Singapore Cable Car accident (1983)	An accident on the Singapore Cable Car system killed seven people and left 13 others trapped in cabins, in one of Singapore's most high-profile public transport disasters.
24	MRT officially launched (1988)	The Mass Rapid Transit (MRT) system, Singapore's islandwide railway network, is the backbone of the integrated public transport system in Singapore.

25	Goh Chok Tong took over as PM from Lee Kuan Yew (1990)	Goh Chok Tong became Singapore's second Prime Minister on 28 November 1990, succeeding Lee Kuan Yew.
26	Hijack of SQ 115 (1991)	On 26 March 1991, Singapore Airlines Flight 117 (SQ117) was hijacked enroute to Singapore. A dramatic rescue operation resulted in the killing of all four hijackers before they could carry out their threat to kill their hostages.
27	Tampines New Town awarded World Habitat Award (1992)	The public housing estate of Tampines New Town was awarded the United Nations' World Habitat Award for Excellence in Housing Design, and lauded for its high-quality, high-density and affordable housing, winning international recognition for Singapore's housing policy.
28	The caning of Michael Faye (1994)	US teenager Michael Faye attracted international attention when he was sentenced to caning in Singapore for theft and vandalism.
29	Introduction of GST (1994)	Singapore introduced the Goods and Services Tax (GST) on 1 April 1994, a broad-based value added tax levied on import of goods, as well as nearly all supplies of goods and services.
30	Asian Financial Crisis (1997-98)	The Asian financial crisis that was triggered in July 1997 threatened much of East Asia's economic stability and raised questions about the region's fiscal policies and propensity for bad debt.
31	Completion of NEWater (2000)	In 2000, the Singapore government realized its plan to turn used water into potable water, through the NEWater factories.
32	SQ 006 Taipei Crash (2000)	Singapore Airlines Flight 006 was the scheduled passenger flight that crashed on the runway at Taiwan's airport, killing 83 of the 179 occupants on board.
33	SARS Outbreak (2003)	Severe acute respiratory syndrome (SARS), a viral respiratory disease, caused widespread panic because of its rapid spread within weeks. A severe form of pneumonia, SARS claimed the lives of 33 people in Singapore.
34	Free Trade Agreement with USA (2003)	The US-Singapore Free Trade Agreement (USSFTA) was signed in on 6 May 2003, lowering tariffs and allowing easier movement of citizens between the two countries.
35	Nicoll Highway Collapse (2004)	The collapse of a stretch of road along the Nicoll Highway was a construction accident that killed four people and injured three, raising questions about industrial safety.
36	NKF/TT Durai scandal (2005)	The scandal surrounding the charity National Kidney Foundation (NKF) involved the alleged misuse of funds by then-Chief Executive Officer T. T. Durai. The case gripped the nation because of the extent to which public trust was abused.
37	Casino gambling approved (2005)	Singapore's decision to legalise casino gambling in 2005 was hotly contested by a wide cross-section of society, and remains a deeply-divisive issue.
38	Mas Selamat escapes (2008)	The escape of terror suspect Mas Selamat from security detention triggered the largest manhunt launched in Singapore. He was eventually recaptured in Skudai, Malaysia, in April 2009, more than a year after his escape.

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