CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Study Concern

1.1.1 <u>Theme</u>. Singapore was once a British colony. Today, she has attained an economic stature that is not only respected in Asia, but also in the world.[1] How does Singapore, with only a population of slightly more than four million people and often ridiculed as a 'tiny dot' on the map, manage to outdo so many other countries in economic terms?[2] How does Singapore, with hardly any natural resources and who only gained independence after separation from Malaysia in 1965, achieve so much economically in so short a time? To answer these questions, it is necessary to understand the national mindset promoted by the Singapore government since independence.

One good way to capture this national mindset is to look at the functions of the Economic Development Board (EDB) in Singapore. This body was set up by the government in 1961 and given two especially crucial responsibilities - attracting foreign investments into Singapore and developing local businesses into competitive enterprises. The former chairman of the EDB, Philip Yeo, once exhorted:

> Almost every country that had industrialised before us had strengths in raw materials, large home markets, well-developed industrial skills and relevant education systems. Singapore had none of these advantages. Yet, we succeeded. Why?

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[1] On page 54 in its 7 December 2001 issue, the influential publication on Asian affairs, *Asiaweek*, listed the per-capita Gross National Product (GNP) of Singapore as even higher than that of Britain - US$24,664 for Singapore as against US$23,793 for Britain.
[2] According to *Singapore 2001* published by the Ministry of Information and the Arts, the total land area of Singapore (main island and offshore islands) adds up to only 682.7 sq km.

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> Singapore's economic success over the past 36 years was due to our focus on growth and our emphasis on doing all the things necessary to support that growth. We invested heavily in infrastructure and education. But more importantly, we dared to challenge convention, and have continued to do so ever since.
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> These initiatives needed vision and daring - in short, a pioneering spirit. It is this spirit that must be kept alive if Singapore is to remain successful in the next millennium.
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> Some Singaporeans worry about the stress from a fast-paced life, and ask why we are so keen to be No. 1. They want to know what is wrong with being No. 2. Nothing is wrong with being in the No. 2 position, but that is not the point.
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> The issue is about desiring to be and working at being No. 1. It is a mindset; a competitive spirit; not so much the absolute position we actually achieve.
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> If we are satisfied with being No. 2, we will gradually slip to the third position, the fifth position, then 10th and 20th and so on.
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> Similarly, if we are No. 1 and we take it for granted, we know for sure that someone will overtake us.[3]

Philip Yeo's words tersely reflect the mindset constantly preached by the Singapore government and diligently lived out by many Singaporeans - in order not to lose out, one must always compete to stay ahead.[4] While this mindset is not necessarily wrong, the worrying thing is that many in Singapore seem to have placed economic pursuit as their overriding concern in life. In fact, Christian men in Singapore seem especially vulnerable to this tendency as observed by Australian missiologist and former Singapore Bible College lecturer, Keith Hinton, who did a study of trends in Singapore churches and revealed the findings in his book *Growing Churches Singapore Style*.

Firstly, Hinton (1985:113) observed that Singapore Christians were clustered in the higher-educated and higher-income stratas of society - 94.5 % of them were literate; 28.0 %

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[3] This is an excerpt of Philip Yeo's message in the *1997 EDB Yearbook* which was reproduced on page 15 of *The Sunday Times* on 26 October 1997 under the heading: 'Why we must be obsessed with being No. 1.' *The Sunday Times* is the leading English-language newspaper in Singapore on Sunday.
[4] This mindset is commonly known in Singapore as the *kiasu* mentality. Literally, *kiasu* means 'fear of losing'.

were professional or technical persons; 24.0 % were holding administrative or managerial positions.[5] Secondly, Hinton (1985:185) also noted that Singapore Christian '... males were generally more career oriented, and many male converts became absorbed with secular ambition and lapse from active Christian involvement before the age of marriage ....'

Though his observations were made some time ago, working patterns in Singapore today seem to increasingly validate Hinton's views. For example, as the Singapore economy spans outward and embraces a regional emphasis, more Singapore men are required and expected to travel as part of their work. This willingness to do business travel and be away from home is often tied up with the quest to do well and succeed in the marketplace. This working lifestyle poses a potential threat to family life. Vincent Teo, who was travelling extensively for fourteen years in his previous job as a marketing director, but is now a marriage and family counsellor, aptly describes the threat this way:

> Travelling overseas on work assignments is a common way of life for Singaporeans these days. Multi-national companies who made Singapore their regional headquarters employ staff with regional responsibilities. Many local companies taking on a regional push are also recruiting staff who must be willing to travel as part of their job description.
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> I remember when I first took on a regional job in 1980. There were hardly any Singaporeans on the plane. Nowadays, you will probably meet someone you know in the same plane if you travel frequently enough.
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> This new travelling pattern can put a strain on marriages if husbands and wives are not consciously aware of the need to continue to maintain communication and closeness.[6]

The family is an important institution to God. We are to protect and strengthen it. How then can the Christian man in Singapore succeed in the marketplace without weakening his

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[5] Hinton quoted these figures from *Religious Trends in Singapore with Special Reference to Christianity*. This book was co-written by Bobby Sng and Poh-Seng You, and published by the Singapore Graduates' Christian Fellowship and Fellowship of Evangelical Students in 1982.

[6] Teo, Vincent 1998. Absence and Distance. *In Touch with the Family* (November/December), p12.

commitment to his family? What does the Bible have to say about success at work and at home for the family man? What masculine strengths and weaknesses respectively enhance and hinder the man's ability to relate, especially to those in his own family? What can Christian men in Singapore do as model citizens in upholding strong family values? In an attempt to address these concerns, the following theme is proposed for this dissertation:

> The success culture in Singapore and its challenges to the Christian man in building a strong family.

1.1.2 <u>Problem statement</u>. The lack of land and natural resources in Singapore means that the country has to depend very much on human resources (the people) to survive as a nation. Hence, the government has always been challenging the people to be productive and competitive in order to maintain an economic edge over others, especially countries in the East Asia region.

Singapore's nation building has very much been focused on striving for economic success. Christians in Singapore are not spared the constant reinforcement of this national emphasis in their daily work. The sociological profile has shown that many are largely in the higher-educated and higher-income categories, implying that many of them are high achievers with demanding jobs. Especially for Christian men, there is this tendency to reduce the needs of spouses and children to only the material, thereby neglecting their non-material and emotional well-being. In families where both husbands and wives work, the caring of the children has largely been delegated to housemaids, baby-sitters, grandparents or child care centres.

The inherent danger in this societal pattern is that material abundance without emotional intimacy at home can stress and strain family relationships. In fact, the priority of career over family seems to be already breeding in the working culture of the male population in Singapore even before marriage. A survey conducted by the Social Development Unit

(SDU) in Singapore has revealed that many single men cited holding a demanding job (46.2 %) as the main reason for not placing a priority on marriage.[7]

Dr David Z Nowell, a scholar in historical theology and ordained Baptist minister in the US, is of the opinion that the act of neglecting the home for work is a preferred choice rather than an absolute necessity on the part of the contemporary man. He comments:

> There is no mandate that a man find success in the business community; we are not legislatively required to return a high standard of living for our families. But most of us choose to participate in that search for success and prosperity, a search that often gets in the way of what is mandated - if not legislatively then at least ethically and most certainly biblically - to be a good husband and father (Nowell 1995:2-3).

Undoubtedly, the national emphasis on competing and staying ahead of others has instilled in many Singapore men a certain drivenness. While this drive to be ambitious is not necessarily bad, Nowell cautions against allowing it to be a controlling force in one's life. He points out that such a driven person sees achievements as more important than relationships. This perception hinders the person's ability to cultivate strong relationships since people are only regarded as objects to be manipulated to reach one's goal. Also, Nowell asserts that unrestrained drivenness makes a person obsessed with the appearance of success in that he wants to look good before others all the time. Things that publicly display power and prestige become his greatest obsessions in life. Indeed, even a wife becomes '... less a partner with whom life is shared than she is a trophy to be displayed' (Nowell 1995:180-81).

Robert Lewis and William Hendricks who co-authored the book *Marriage Roles* claim that the fundamental male mindset can be summed up in one word - *performance*. Men like to win and are performance-oriented. Hence, it is results that often matter to them, not processes so often demanded in relationship building (Lewis & Hendricks 1991:117). When applied in

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[7] *The Straits Times* 21 April 1997. Marriage not a priority for young Singaporeans: SDU survey, p21. The SDU is a 'matchmaking' agency initiated by the government to encourage marriage and population growth.

the context of the family, Lewis and Hendricks are basically sharing the same sentiments as Nowell, that is, performing well as breadwinner for the family to the neglect of being a love giver and caregiver at home is a preferred choice rather than an absolute necessity for the man. The sad consequence of this is that he sacrifices so much nourishing his family materially but so little nurturing their non-material wellness.

1.1.3 <u>Relevance</u>. How does this study contribute to the discipline of practical theology? First, it must be stressed that practical theology is essentially dialogic in that it brings a number of elements into conversation with one another (Ballard & Pritchard 1996:82). Thus, this study intends to critically correlate insights from Christian theology with other disciplines. It will also raise theological issues concerning the biblical meaning of success and family headship; examine the history and experience of Singapore society and identify the current state of family life; relate the wisdom of behavioural science to the provision of pastoral guidance to Christian men. With these intentions in mind, this study aspires to contribute relevantly to the specific field of pastoral care and counselling within the discipline of practical theology.

In their book, *Foundations For A Practical Theology Of Ministry*, James N Poling and Donald E Miller speak of six types of practical theology. According to their classification, the study at hand will fall under Type IIB in which practical theology is viewed as a '... critical correlation in terms of method which focuses primarily on the formation of the church as a community of faith' (Poling & Miller 1985:47).[8] While this study will seek interdisciplinary collaboration between Christian theology and the social/behavioural sciences, the primary target for action and response is still the church as a community of faith. Hence, the relevance of this study lies in its attempt to be a pastoral guide on strong family living for the community

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[8] For a complete discussion of all the six types of practical theology listed by Poling and Miller, read Chapter Two of their book.

of believers in Singapore in general and the Christian men in particular, as they express their faith and interact with others in the wider society.

Since it is intended that this study be a critical correlation of insights from biblical studies, theology, history, sociology, psychology and counselling, sources will have to be wide ranging and include relevant books, reports, surveys, statistical findings, journals, magazines, newspapers, dissertations and theses. This study will also include a first-hand opinion poll using questionnaires to augment the library research.

In sum, this study attempts to make the following contributions:

- To expose the false belief that homemaking should not be a masculine responsibility, and to challenge Christian men in Singapore to lead their families as God-honouring husbands and fathers in a materialistic and success-oriented society.

- To help the Church in Singapore in the ministry of building strong Christian families so that a good witness can be presented before a highly secularised society.

- To nurture professionalism in the ministry by formulating a pastoral guide with which those in Christian full-time vocation or voluntary work can use to effectively care and counsel Christian men with troubled family lives.

1.2 Study Purpose

1.2.1 Aim. Based on the concerns already mentioned, the overall aim of this study is:

To critically correlate insights from the normative Christian sources and other disciplines so as to formulate a pastoral counsel on building strong families for Christian men in Singapore as they live out their faith and interact with others in a success-oriented society.

1.2.2 Objectives. To achieve this aim, the following objectives are to be fulfilled in this study:

- To understand how the historical experiences of Singapore have contributed to the success of the country.

- To understand the present social situation in Singapore and where the society is tending to head toward, with special attention on how this will impact family life.

- To understand the meaning of success from a secular perspective.

- To understand the meaning of marriage and family from the social and behavioural sciences.

- To understand the dynamics of marriage-family life.

- To understand the male psychology and how it affects marriage-family relationships.

- To perform a biblical-theological evaluation of these insights, and to reflect on how these can be used to help Christian men build strong families.

- To suggest how Christian men (and the Church) in Singapore can act toward building strong families.

1.2.3 Hypothesis: This study is motivated by the assumption that the Christian man needs to reinterpret, not reject, the spirit of competition and excellence in Singapore in order to establish a successful career and a strong home at the same time.

1.2.4 Delimitations. This study is limited to the context of Singapore. In many ways, Singapore is unlike other countries. She has many unique features that cannot be totally found or reproduced elsewhere. These include her scarcity of land, lack of natural resources, history, political culture, and small yet highly urbanised population made up of many races.[9] Such a combination has posed unique challenges that Singapore has to deal with as a country. Hence, suggestions that will be forthcoming in this study are to address the Singapore situation specifically.

Secondly, this study aims only to help Christian families in Singapore. In other words, this study attempts to provide some suggestions to people who have essentially professed faith and belief in the teachings of the Bible. In the event that these suggestions be found helpful and applicable to non-Christian families, it will be most heartening though this is not the predetermined intention.

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[9] The population of Singapore is predominantly ethnic Chinese (almost 80 %). Malays, Indians and Eurasians are the other racial groups.

Lastly, this study is limited in that it is primarily an attempt to address Christian men in Singapore. While wives and children will not be entirely ignored, the main task in this dissertation is to help Christian men build strong families without losing their masculine dignity.

1.3 Definitions of Terms

In order to better appreciate the scope of this study, the following terms in the theme stated earlier are defined:

1.3.1 Success. In the Singapore context, success is commonly understood in terms of the popular *Five Cs* - cash, condominium, car, credit card and country-club membership. Thus, this study will critically evaluate the adequacy of defining success primarily as the attainment of possessions, position and prestige.

1.3.2 Culture. This does not refer to the traditional and customary practices of a given racial group in Singapore. Rather, it is used to indicate the national mindset as evident in the primary interests and pursuits of Singaporeans as a people and as individuals.

1.3.3 Christian. In secular Singapore, *Christian* is a rather loose term in that it has been used to describe things that associate with Roman Catholicism, or even with cults like the Jehovah's Witnesses and Mormons. In this study, the term will be used strictly to describe things that associate with the Protestant tradition in which personal faith in Jesus Christ for salvation is essential.

1.3.4 Man. This does not refer merely to the male gender. The *man* under study here is the one who is provider, husband and father, that is, the *working family man*.

1.3.5 Family. This is the nuclear family composed of father, mother and dependent child(ren) staying with the parents. Members of the extended family, like grandparents, are not included. One-parent, no-parents and childless households are also not considered in this study.

1.4 Study Methodology

To accomplish the task of this study, the model advocated by Don S Browning in his book, *A Fundamental Practical Theology*, will be adopted. In exploring practical wisdom and understanding, Browning spells out four movements in the process of doing practical theology.

1.4.1 Descriptive practical theology. In this movement, 'social-systemic, material, and psychological determinants are traced and explained as well as possible ....' (Browning 1991:48). The wisdom and insights from non-Christian texts and sources that help in addressing the concerns and issues raised in this study will be discussed.

Poling and Miller (1985:70) call this first step the description of lived experience whereby attention is given to the context under study, including how things are understood and valued there. This step will naturally bring into light events and patterns that describe contextual perceptions and practices as they are at present.

Ballard and Pritchard (1996:77) add that the present experience should only be the starting point of the study because a tension has been uncovered. Any considered response of change must be analytical of the present. And that calls for open discussion and dialogue with multiple sources of information and expertise.

1.4.2 Historical practical theology. In this second movement, Browning (1991:49) pays attention to the question: 'What should be the norm?' For Christians, the texts that guide and direct normative Christian perceptions and practices are found in the Bible, church history and the writings of Christian thinkers. Hence, in this movement, the concerns and issues raised in the study will be addressed by exploring and reflecting on these normative texts.[10]

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[10] Ballard and Prichard (1996:77-78) assert that mere exploration of information from the multiple sources, both Christian and secular, only indicates possibilities and does not provide answers. For concrete answers to be forthcoming, reflection must take place. Only then will there be a discovery of a need to change; a recognition that all is not well; an acknowledgement that things are not what they ought to be.

This is likened to an exercise in apologetics in which a Christian perspective on experience is stated and defended in a rational manner. The aim is to maintain the Christian position as '... at least one valid perspective on the modern world' (Poling & Miller 1985:86).

1.4.3 Systematic practical theology. In a picturesque manner, Browning (1991:51) describes this movement as the '... fusion of horizons between the vision implicit in contemporary practices and the vision implied in the practices of the normative Christian texts.' To arrive at this fusion, trends that emerge as a result of progress and modernity are evaluated against the central Christian witness to determine if there can be any harmonious integration.

In more direct language, this is the time when the discrepancy between 'what is' and 'what ought' is openly discussed; when the continuity and discontinuity between the descriptive and the normative can be debated and judged (Poling & Miller 1985:88-89). It can be a crucial time of both threat and strength in that normative Christian perceptions, beliefs and values will have to respond to the challenges of contemporary realities.

1.4.4 Strategic practical theology. This last movement in Browning's model is actually a resumption from where the first descriptive phase has left off. Browning (1991:242) calls it a transformational movement - 'the shift of the church from conservatism and caution to venture and risk' after a critical correlation of wisdom and insights from the normative Christian texts and the other disciplines. This movement is also described as a return to contextual experience so that guidelines and specific plans that have been developed can be tested for their relevance in real life (Poling & Miller 1985:93).

Ballard and Pritchard (1996:142) sum up this last phase as that which moves reflection into action in order to bear the following range of outcomes:

- educational activity

- new attitudes

- refinement of skills

- corrective action

- new action

- prayer and celebration.

1.4.5 <u>Opinion poll and conversational partnerships</u>. This study begins with some predetermined assumptions of how Christian men in Singapore view success and their families. To test these assumptions, an opinion poll using questionnaires will be carried out.[11] A random sample of working family men from two congregations will be picked, and their responses tabulated and interpreted. Below are the predetermined assumptions, each with its related statements.

<u>Assumption I</u>: The Christian man's view of success is very much influenced by the achievement-oriented culture in Singapore.

<u>Statement 1</u>: I compete with others so that I can stay ahead of them.

<u>Statement 2</u>: I compete with others so that I can bring out the best in myself.

<u>Statement 3</u>: I measure achievement in terms of getting the desired results.

<u>Statement 4</u>: I measure achievement in terms of experiencing the satisfaction of having tried hard.

<u>Assumption II</u>: The Christian man in Singapore cares much about his family, but he tends to do so materially rather than emotionally.

<u>Statement 1</u>: I work hard at providing well for my family so that they can be materially comfortable.

<u>Statement 2</u>: I work hard at relating closely with my family members.

<u>Statement 3</u>: I expect my family members to be understanding when work takes me away from them.

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[11] The method of questionnaire survey as suggested in Chapter Seven of William Wiersma's book, *Research Methods in Education: An Introduction (6th edition)*, will be adopted.

Statement 4: I enjoy doing things *with* my family more than doing things *for* them.

Assumption III: The Christian man in Singapore still holds to the traditional views of masculinity.

Statement 1: I fail as a man if I cannot be the sole breadwinner in my family.

Statement 2: I lead my family by sharing substantially in home responsibilities.

Statement 3: I fail as a man if I have integrity of character but no influence of control.

Statement 4: I lead my family by listening to their views before making decisions that will affect our home.

The findings of this opinion poll will be used toward the end of this study to give an indication of how Christian men in Singapore are trying to balance work and home.

Qualitative interviews in the form of conversational partnerships will also be used to better hear and understand the work-family complexities faced by some Christian men.

Biblical-theological formulations will then be employed to address the larger socio-cultural concerns with the view of enhancing family life in the face of many competing demands.

CHAPTER II

DESCRIPTIVE PRACTICAL THEOLOGY:
EMERGENCE OF SINGAPORE'S SUCCESS CULTURE

2.1 From Colony to Self-Government

2.1.1 Arrival of Raffles. As Britain ended her war with France in 1815, the government and the East India Company decided to ease their commitments in South East Asia, and to work out a peaceful and fair trading arrangement with the Dutch in the region. The British restored Java and Malacca in the region to the Dutch in exchange for the remaining Dutch territories in India.

Meanwhile, Sir Thomas Stamford Raffles, the British Lieutenant-Governor of Bencoolen, harboured messianic ambitions to boost British trade in South East Asia. He viewed Britain's role in the region as a crusade 'to free the peoples of the eastern archipelago from civil war, piracy, slavery and oppression, and to restore and revive their old cultures and independence under the influence of European enlightenment' (Turnbull 1989:6).

When Raffles first reached Bencoolen in 1818 as the appointed Lieutenant-Governor, he was greatly concerned with the vast expansion of trade carried out by the Dutch in Sumatra. Hence, he visited Lord Hastings, the Governor-General of India, with the intention to persuade him to support his plans of increasing British influence in Sumatra. He failed to convince Lord Hastings who, however, did authorise him to protect British trade route through the Straits of Malacca. Raffles's specific instructions were to secure an agreement with Acheh at the northern tip of Sumatra and to establish a port at Riau, Johore or some other southern sites without antagonising the Dutch. Upon receiving his instructions, Raffles

went to the Malayan island of Penang and enlisted the help of an old friend in the person of

Colonel William Farquhar.[1] Raffles reckoned that Farquhar's long experience in Malaya,

together with his intimate knowledge of local politics, would be very useful to him. Moreover,

Farquhar also shared the same antipathy toward the Dutch (Turnbull 1989:7).

Raffles immediately sent Farquhar south to locate a base while he himself finalised

arrangements at Acheh. His actions irritated Colonel James Bannerman, then Governor of

Penang.[2] He insisted that Raffles delayed his trip to Acheh pending further instructions from

Lord Hastings in India. Raffles agreed verbally, but then secretly sneaked out of Penang and

went south to team up with Farquhar.

On 28 January 1819, Raffles and Farquhar anchored their fleet of eight ships off St

John's Island, close to the mouth of the Singapore River. The local villagers came to

investigate and Raffles learnt from them that the Temenggong was the ruler figure in

Singapore. What was more heartening to Raffles was the news that there were no Dutchmen

on the island (Turnbull 1989:8).

The next morning on 29 January, Raffles and Farquhar landed on Singapore soil and

met the local Malay chief, Temenggong Abdul Rahman. Raffles reached a quick agreement

with the Temenggong the next day. The local chief gave permission to the East India

Company to set up a trading post on Singapore island. In return, the British would guarantee

protection and the annual payment of three thousand Spanish dollars (Chew 1991:36).

However, Raffles later negated this agreement when he ceremoniously signed a treaty

on 6 February with the Temenggong's elder brother, Tengku Long, who was then officially

recognised as the Sultan of Johore.[3] This treaty allowed the British to maintain trading

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[1] Farquhar was then in Penang and planning to return to Britain for retirement. He had been the British Resident of Malacca until its return to the Dutch in 1818.

[2] Bannerman interpreted Raffles's actions as trying to interfere in his sphere of influence.

[3] Both the Temenggong and Tengku were then engaging in an intriguing fight for the Johore throne. Singapore was part of the Johore sovereignty.

facilities in Singapore together with an annual payment of five thousand Spanish dollars and a guarantee against external attacks. At the same time, the enraged Temenggong was pacified with the assurance of a half share of any port or trade levies collected from native vessels (Chew 1991:37).[4]

The Dutch were furious when they learnt of this treaty because they claimed Singapore to be part of Riau, and thus, under their control. They considered driving out the British by force. Farquhar made an urgent appeal to Bannerman in Penang for military reinforcements. Bannerman urged Farquhar to flee Singapore, and assured the Dutch that Raffles acted without proper authorisation.[5] Seizing the opportunity to settle an old score, Bannermore notified Lord Hastings in India and accused Raffles of being impetuous and irresponsible in leaving his new trading post almost defenceless.

But the news of the new settlement in Singapore was greeted with loud cheers from the trading community in India. Also, Lord Hastings was angered by Bannerman's apparent attempt to justify himself in the face of possible reprimands from London. Hence, Hastings sided with Raffles and provisionally supported the Singapore arrangement pending final approval from the London office. Bannerman was also ordered to help Raffles in the defence of the Singapore settlement.[6]

When the news of Raffles's action reached London in August 1819, there was fear of an Anglo-Dutch confrontation. But the British saw the importance of a port south of Malacca in order to prevent the Dutch from having 'all the military and naval keys of the Straits of

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[4] This benefit eventually persuaded the Temenggong to pen his signature on the treaty together with Raffles and his elder brother.

[5] At this time, Raffles had returned to his base in Bencoolen, leaving Farquhar to oversee the daily running of the new settlement in Singapore.

[6] It is worth noting that Farquhar stayed in Singapore during the whole crisis. He even succeeded in intercepting and diverting to Singapore five hundred Indian troops returning from Bencoolen to India. His courage helped Singapore through her first crisis.

Malacca.' This position on Singapore sparked off a long 'paper war' with the Dutch which eventually was won by the British (Turnbull 1989:10-11).

By 1821, under the Residency of William Farquhar, Singapore had grown into a highly cosmopolitan settlement. There were nearly 3 000 Malays; more than 1 000 Chinese; and 500 or 600 Bugis, together with Indians, Arabs, Armenians, Europeans, Eurasians and other minority groups. The first Chinese immigrants actually came from Riau and Malacca, and many of them had intermarried with local Malay women to form a distinct Baba Chinese community (Turnbull 1989:13).

It must be noted that Singapore was still not under British rule during this time. In fact, it was some kind of a three-power rule featuring the Johore Sultan, the Temenggong and the British Resident. It was only on 7 June 1823 that British rule became more direct when an agreement was signed with the Sultan and Temenggong. The British gained control of the whole of Singapore, except the reserves of the Sultan and the Temenggong. The two Malay royalties were also adequately compensated for life in monetary terms when they agreed to give up certain rights and privileges. With this new agreement, British laws would be enforced in Singapore, but 'with due respect to the usages and habits of the [Malay] people.' However, this still stopped short of Singapore becoming a British colony (Chew 1991:39).

In 1824, Singapore eventually became a British possession as a result of two treaties - the Anglo-Dutch Treaty signed in March in London, and the Treaty of Friendship and Alliance signed in August between the East India Company, the Johore Sultan and the Temenggong of Singapore. The latter treaty was negotiated by the then Resident of Singapore, John Crawfurd, on behalf of the British (Turnbull 1989:27).[7]

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[7] Crawfurd had succeeded Raffles as the Resident of Singapore. Earlier in April 1823, Raffles had replaced Farquhar with himself as the Resident following serious disagreements between themselves.

In 1858, the East India Company came to an end, and India came under the direct rule of the British Crown. However, Singapore continued to be administered by the British from the Indian capital of Calcutta. It was only on 1 April 1867 that the British ended the Calcutta administration, and Singapore officially became a British Crown Colony (Turnbull 1989:73).

To say that Raffles founded Singapore would be factually inaccurate. She was already historically existing under Malay rule when Raffles first stepped ashore. But Raffles saw the economic potential of Singapore in view of her strategic location at the meeting point of important trade routes. This belief in Singapore gave him the dare and drive to set up a British trading post on a narrow coastal strip by the Singapore River (Chew 1991:38).[8]

As the course of history would reveal, Singapore was blessed to have three men as her early pioneers - Raffles for his visionary first step onto Singapore soil; Farquhar for his tenacity during the early dangers; and Crawfurd for his win-win pragmatism which persuaded the Malay rulers to release control over Singapore in exchange for some handsome compensations. Indeed, colonising Singapore was good for those concerned only because of the economic profits and rewards involved.

2.1.2 Early economic progress. The treaties reached in 1824 with the Dutch and the Malay royalties assured Singapore's political future as a British possession. Soon, she became the focal point of British investment as well as Chinese immigration because of her increasing commercial potential. Singapore's strategic position gave her a clear advantage over other British ports in the Straits of Malacca. Situated at the southernmost tip of the Straits of Malacca, and blessed with a sheltered deep-water harbour, Singapore suited the needs of sailing traders very well. By using Singapore as their port of call, these sailors could time their

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[8] Actually, Raffles only visited Singapore three times - twice in 1819, and then for eight months from October 1822 to June 1823. He largely supervised Singapore at a distance from his base in Bencoolen, West Sumatra. It was Farquhar who worked arduously with the Malay power figures for the survival and growth of Singapore in her infant years.

journeys in such a way that they could take full advantage of the monsoon winds to get their ships to cover good distances (Wong 1991:42-43).

This navigational convenience also attracted many trading junks from China. These junks brought in many Chinese immigrants who had given themselves to some kind of bonded labour. This marked the early rise of immigrants from China to Singapore. In fact, from 1819 onwards, the increasing need for labour, trading and artisan skills had encouraged a steady influx of Chinese and Indian immigrants to Singapore. Besides ships from the East, those from the West also found Singapore ideal for their Indian Ocean-South China Sea journeys (Wong 1991:44-45).

The natural advantages of Singapore as a port were also complemented by a regulated incentive - trading was permitted without the imposition of duties or port charges. This free-port status was also another major reason why both Asian and Western traders found Singapore attractive (Wong 1991:47).

The Suez Canal in 1869 ushered in steam shipping but it did not undermine Singapore's importance as a port. Steam vessels needed much coal and fresh water, and Singapore was able to provide these supplies abundantly.

In 1914, the Panama Canal became operational for sea travel. But the Suez Canal still provided a cheaper route for goods from East Asia to the Atlantic. Hence, Singapore kept her importance in world trade yet again (Wong 1991:51-52).

Undoubtedly, the period of peace and security as a British entity had contributed greatly to the economic development of Singapore in her very early years. Wong Lin Ken, a Singapore historian, described how this played a significant part in Singapore's future years:

> Under the shelter of Pax Britannica, Singapore developed unthreatened by war until the Japanese invasion of 1941 - a 122-year period of uninterrupted peace which permitted the development of a trade infrastruture that survived the rigours of the Japanese Occupation and made it possible for post-war

Singapore nationalists to face new challenges with solid historical advantages (Wong 1991:63).

The migrant workers contributed much to Singapore's progress during this time. They worked hard to give themselves and loved ones back in their homelands a better life. Herein lies the early seed of a money-making culture in Singapore.

2.1.3 Japanese Occupation. The increase of Japanese aggressiveness in the 1930s was of much concern to the British. Japan occupied Manchuria in 1931; resigned from the League of Nations in 1932; and invaded China in 1937. It then became British policy to beef up her defence of Singapore in anticipation of Japanese aggression. A dry dock was completed in 1938 and capable of taking the largest vessels afloat at that time. Army barracks were built and could house a full infantry battalion. In addition, two new air bases were set up in Tengah and Sembawang. Batteries of heavy artillery and anti-aircraft guns were deployed at Changi to cover the eastern approaches to the naval base.

In spite of this shoring up of her defence capabilities in the Far East, Britain did not station a peace-time fleet in Singapore. London believed that a naval force could reach Singapore in seventy days should the need arise. Meanwhile, the existing army and air units would protect the naval base until relief came. Another reason why the Royal Navy was not stationed in Singapore was the fact that the Japanese navy was far away and they had no air bases within striking distance. Hence, Britain assumed that a small garrison with strong seaward defence was sufficient in the protection of Singapore. In fact, so sure was London of this defence system that Singapore was considered impregnable. However, behind this proud boast of 'Fortress Singapore' was a sad story of discord between the military commanders on the ground and the War Office in London.

In 1937, British ground commanders had alerted the War Office that the defence of Singapore island was bound up with the defence of the whole Malayan peninsula. They

predicted that the Japanese might attack Singapore down the peninsula from the north.[9] This led Major-General William Dobbie, General Officer Commanding Malaya, to push for the construction of defence works in North Malaya and Johore, but his suggestion was rejected by the War Office.[10] Even pressures from Australia and New Zealand failed to move London. These two allies had warned Britain that Singapore was very much a 'sitting duck' without the protection of a peace-time fleet. The War Office stubbornly stood by its decision, stressing that Britain's priority was to concentrate her naval strength in Europe against looming German hostilities (Turnbull 1989:158-59).[11]

In August 1939, Major-General L V Bond was appointed the new General Officer Commanding Malaya. He foresaw that it would be impossible to hold Malaya without sufficient ground troops as his forces would be spread too wide and thin. He proposed to his air comrades of a concentrated ground defence in Johore and Singapore until being reinforced. Bond had assumed that the air bases north of the peninsula would be strong enough to deter an attacking force before it actually reached Malaya.[12] The air commanders counterargued that concentrating defence on the south would allow the enemy to capture the northern air bases easily, and in turn, making Singapore isolated and vulnerable. This was one of many disagreements among the military commanders on the ground concerning how best to defend Singapore (Murfett 1999:180-81).

Meanwhile, political will in London relating to the defence of Singapore also proved to be very half-hearted. British Prime Minister, Winston Churchill, flatly objected to proposed air

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[9] As events later turned out, they predicted correctly.

[10] Johore is immediately north of Singapore and the two are only separated by the narrow Straits of Johore. At that time, there were three air fields along the east coast of Malaya but no military units to protect them.

[11] When war finally broke out in Europe in September 1939, Britain revised the time estimate for sending a naval task force to Singapore from 70 to 180 days. She again reappraised her position in 1940 when threatened by German invasion - she had to reduce her Far Eastern commitments and rely on the American fleet at Pearl Harbour to deter Japan.

[12] Bond was wrong. The Royal Air Force was actually too weak to deal with the Japanese when they finally attacked.

reinforcements for Malaya.[13] He was under the illusion that Singapore was already well-defended. As far as Churchill was concerned, the Japanese would not attack unless the war in Europe crippled Britain. He also insistently believed that the Americans would intervene immediately should the Japanese attack.

By now, it was very apparent that the Far East Command would receive little help should the crucial hour come. What made this even more painful was the fact that the ground commanders had actually predicted correctly where and how the Japanese would invade. In fact, in anticipation of this, they had a grand defence plan, codenamed *Matador*, aimed at checking the Japanese by beating them in seizing the southern ports of Thailand. This would keep the Japanese at bay, but there was one great flaw in the whole plan - executing it. To carry out *Matador*, the British would first have to violate Thai sovereignty in order to seize the targetted ports, and the Thais had vowed to fight off any intrusion into their territory (Murfett 1999:183-84).

In spite of her precarious position, there was an uneasy calm in Singapore all this while. Not much civil defence works were going on because the British felt that these projects would divert precious labour away from tin and rubber production. Moreover, they wanted the local communities to have a false sense of security, believing that Britain was in control of the situation and more than capable of defending her colonial subjects (Murfett 1999:189).

Admittedly, not all British shared this same indifference towards defending Singapore. In 1941, two senior military men assumed their duties in the Far East - Lieutenant-General Arthur Percival was appointed General Officer Commanding Malaya, and Brigadier Ivan Simson was the new Chief Engineer Malaya Command. Both of them were appalled at the

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[13] Sir Robert Brooke-Popham, Commander-in-Chief of land and air forces in the Far East, had appealed for more aircraft. But British engagement in Europe and the Middle East would not permit this. However, between June 1940 and April 1941, the number of Commonwealth troops was trebled, but they lacked the support of artillery and tanks (Turnbull 1989:161).

ease and calm they saw in Singapore. The lack of interest in organising the locals for defence works and the soft-living of troops stationed here greatly disturbed these two top brasses (Turnbull 1989:162).

In a bid to force the Japanese to end their fierce war with China, the USA, Britain and Holland imposed economic sanctions on Japan. In retaliation, Japan forced France to provide her with military bases in Indo-China. This gave the Japanese a naval base just 750 miles from Singapore and air fields only 300 miles away from northern Malaya. In the light of this development, Percival wasted no time in urging London for reinforcements. Unfortunately, Churchill refused to heed because of the war with Hitler's Germany in Europe. What made Churchill's stand even more ridiculous was that Britain had no formal or unified defence arrangement for the Far East with the Americans and the Dutch even up to this point (Turnbull 1989:163).

Percival was not the only one to feel frustrated. Ivan Simson's suggestions in October 1941 to build defences along the northern coastline of Singapore and around Johore Bahru were also snubbed by Churchill. Even his proposals for air-raid shelters were rejected. It seemed that the British Prime Minister had decided to turn a deaf ear to his own commanders on the ground. Eventually, it had to take the demands of a loud and angry Australia to make Churchill relent.[14] One of Britain's fastest and most modern battleships, *Prince of Wales*, was sent to the Far East accompanied by the cruiser, *Repulse*, and an aircraft-carrier (Turnbull 1989:164).

As this battle fleet set sail, Japan confirmed her decision to attack South East Asia in November 1941. The aim of this offensive was to force the USA and Britain to lift their sanctions so that Japan would have enough resources to complete her war with China. The

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[14] Many Australian troops were in Singapore on combat duty at that time.

25th Japanese Army, under the command of the ruthless Lieutenant-General Tomoyuki Yamashita, was ordered to strike and carry out Japan's southern campaign (Turnbull 1989:165).

Back in Singapore, the arrival of the *Prince of Wales* and the *Repulse* on 2 December 1941 brought great cheers from the people. But unknown to many, the accompanying aircraft-carrier had run aground, thereby depriving the two newly arrived battleships of very vital air cover.

These two ships had hardly settled into the naval base in Singapore when the Japanese began their offensive with deadly speed and surprise. Within hours on the night of 7/8 December 1941 (Malayan time), Japanese fighter planes attacked and destroyed the American fleet in Pearl Harbour. Simultaneously, they also invaded Hongkong and the Philippines; landed troops in southern Thailand (Songkhla and Patani) and northern Malaya (Kota Bharu); and bombed Singapore.[15] Hence, the British lost the initiative right from the start. They were unable to launch the proposed *Matador* strategy which was to enter into southern Thailand and forestall any Japanese offensive before it reached Malaya. As it was, the Japanese beat the British in gaining control of southern Thailand, thereby effectively nullifying the *Matador* plan.

The lightning strikes of the Japanese shook the British into desperate action. Both the *Prince of Wales* and *Repulse* were rushed to the north to intercept the invaders. But without a supporting aircraft-carrier, coupled with the fact that the northern air field in Kota Bharu was already in Japanese hands, this trip was really a suicide mission. Both the *Prince of Wales* (proudly nicknamed by the British as *HMS Unsinkable*) and the *Repulse* were sighted and

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[15] Some twenty-seven thousand Japanese troops landed almost unopposed in southern Thailand and northern Malaya.

sunk by the Japanese air force on 10 December 1941 (Turnbull 1989:166). The Japanese now controlled the high seas!

The superior Japanese air force also knocked out more than half of the British planes in North Malaya and easily captured the weakly defended air fields. Without air cover and with an almost empty naval base, only the ground troops were left to defend Singapore and they had to do this by fighting a retreating battle through the whole stretch of the Malayan peninsula.[16]

As the battle-hardened Japanese troops stormed down the peninsula relentlessly with the aim of reaching Singapore, Commonwealth troops were scurrying back in constant retreat. Meanwhile, back in Singapore, the locals were horrified at the sight of Europeans being evacuated out of the war zone while they were left behind to face their impending fate (Turnbull 1989:167-69).

In January 1942, the Commonwealth defenders entrenched themselves in Singapore for a last-ditch effort to fight off the invaders. This left the whole northern shore of Singapore open and vulnerable (Turnbull 1989:173).

On 8 February 1942, Singapore was heavily bombed by day and shelled by night. That evening, under the cover of darkness, the Japanese crossed into Singapore with speed and stealth. The crucial battle for Singapore had begun. Civilian casualties were extremely high during the last days of fighting, and the town was filled with the stench of filth and death. Realising that the cause was lost and not wanting a bloodbath to take place, Churchill gave Percival the permission to surrender on 14 February (Turnbull 1989:182-83).[17]

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[16] At the outbreak of war in Malaya, there were only three infantry divisions - one Australian and two Indian, but these were largely poorly trained and equipped. Britain did send the 18th Division as reinforcement but could not assemble an air and naval task force because of the war in Europe and the Middle East.

[17] When he carried out his Singapore offensive, Yamashita had only 30 000 troops left. On the other hand, Percival had some 85 000 men under him when he made his last-ditch defence of Singapore. Clearly, the disparity between the fighting spirit of the invaders and that of the defenders was telling.

But unknown to the British, the invading Japanese were actually running very low in ammunition by then. Any prolonged fighting would have jeopardised their attempt to capture Singapore. However, the defenders of Singapore could only see their own hopeless position, not the worries of their seemingly invincible enemies. So, the British officially surrendered to the Japanese on 15 February 1942. The fall of Singapore took '30 days faster than its attackers had planned, but 4 months faster than the final "period before relief" as anticipated by the British' (Murfett 1999:236-38).

Commenting on the fall of Singapore, Ong Chit Chung, a military historian, felt that the fall of Singapore was the tragic result of too many half-measures. There was a shortfall of 16 battalions; indequate artillery and no tanks; and only 158 obsolete aircrafts as opposed to the 336 modern ones accepted as standard deployment. The one man who could have corrected all these discrepancies was Winston Churchill, but he did not. Thus, Ong (1997:249) concluded:

> The responsibility or blame must rest squarely on the shoulders of Churchill. It was Churchill who placed Malaya below the Middle East and Russia in terms of priorities. It was Churchill who consistently underestimated the Japanese threat.

The conquering Japanese marched into Singapore and renamed it *Syonan*.[18] They began a reign of terror. There were instances of rape, torture, beatings and detention. To intimidate the people with greater fear, heads were even decapitated and put on public display. Though the conquerors had preached the equality of all Asians, they clearly treated the locals as inferior to themselves (Thio 1991:96). Rather than fulfilling their promise to liberate their fellow Asians from colonialism, the Japanese were more interested in becoming the new

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[18] *Syonan* means 'Light of the South' and the Japanese had intended to make Singapore a centre of Japanese imperialism in the south.

masters so that they could control the resources in South East Asia to support their war against China (Turnbull 1989:192).

The local Chinese bore the brunt of the Japanese cruelty.[19] This was because of the on-going Sino-Japanese War as well as the fierce resistance put up by Chinese volunteer fighters in the battle for Singapore. Even after the fall of Singapore, Chinese guerillas from the Malayan People's Anti-Japan Army (MPAJA) and the Malayan Communist Party (MCP) continued to engage the Japanese in cat-and-mouse battles.[20] Hence, the Japanese harboured great hatred and suspicion towards the Chinese population (Turnbull 1989:191).

One Singaporean who had lived through this period of fear and terror was Lee Kuan Yew who later became the first Prime Minister of Singapore. Recalling a personal encounter, Lee (1998:53-54) said:

> As I passed this group of soldiers, I tried to look as inconspicuous as possible. But they were not to be denied attention. One soldier barked 'Kore, kore!' and beckoned to me. When I reached him, he thrust the bayonet on his rifle through the brim of my hat, knocking it off, slapped me roundly, and motioned me to kneel. He then shoved his right boot against my chest and sent me sprawling on the road. As I got up, he signalled that I was to go back the way I had come. I had got off lightly. Many others who did not know the new rules of etiquette and did not bow to the Japanese sentries at crossroads or bridges were made to kneel for hours in the hot sun, holding a heavy boulder over their heads until their arms gave way.

The Japanese also seemed to adopt a divide-and-rule strategy. In fact, they divided the population even more deeply than the British because of the different treatment they gave to the different communities in Singapore (Turnbull 1989:205). They were generally friendly to the Malays. This was probably because of the help they received from Malay agents before the start of the Malayan campaign. These agents had provided the invading forces with valuable

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[19] The act of persecution was known as *sook ching* and the Japanese used it to purge the local population of anti-Japanese elements.
[20] Later, a unit called *Force 136* was formed to set up an intelligence network against the Japanese. Besides these resistance fighters, another group called *Dalforce* was also battling the invaders. It was made up of local supporters of the nationalist and communist movements in China, and led by the British officer, Colonel John Dalley (Thio 1991:108-09).

information about British defences and suitable landing sites. They also acted as guides and interpreters for the Japanese who in turn promised to respect the religion, customs and possessions of the Malays.[21] In particular, the Malays in Singapore were given extended holidays, advanced pay and generous provisions to celebrate their religious festivities. They were also trained in new skills so that they could do jobs which were once done only by non-Malays (Thio 1991:98-100).

Like the Malays, the Indians were also generally well treated. Japanese propaganda won over the Indians by promising to support the independence movement in India against the British.[22] To express their sincerity in this support, the Japanese left Indian properties unharassed during the first three days after the fall of Singapore.

On the other hand, the Eurasians were badly treated like the Chinese. Those with direct European ancestors were immediately interned. Others were warned to view themselves as Asians and discard their social aloofness by joining the other communities in manual labour (Thio 1991:101-02).

On the whole, life for the locals during the Japanese Occupation was hard and spartan. Historian Eunice Thio described the harshness this way:

> The average family subsisted on a diet of broken rice grains made into porridge - with sweet potato and tapioca to provide bulk - and a few fragments of salt fish or *ikan bilis* (dried white bait) added for flavour. Cornmeal, ground *ragi*, and sago replaced the almost unattainable wheat flour. Bread was heavy and fibrous, being made of bran and palm-oil residue (Thio 1991:104).

In the year 1944, the fortunes of war began to turn against the Japanese. In November, the Americans conducted their first bombing raids on Singapore harbour. The aim was to mine

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[21] These Malay agents were members of the Kuala Lumpur-based dissident organisation called the *Kesatuan Melayu Muda*.

[22] Subhas Chandra Bose, a Bengali revolutionary and President of the Indian National Congress in 1938-39, arrived in Singapore in July 1943. He had disagreed with Mahatma Gandhi and Jawaharlal Nehru on the issue of the use of force against British colonialism. The Japanese used him in Singapore to spearhead the armed struggle for India's freedom against the British.

the harbour waters and to destroy rail and sea communications. The last days of Japanese Occupation were just as unbearable for the people - 'long queues for rice; water, gas and electricity were breaking down because of poor maintenance; hospitals were badly equipped and stocked; soaring prices; widespread malnutrition' (Turnbull 1989:212).

It was not until 15 August 1945 that the Japanese formally surrendered. But the news was only made public in Singapore two days later with the statement that the 'Emperor has decided to end the war.' On 21 August, the press officially announced Japan's unconditional surrender for the first time (Turnbull 1989:213). The following month on 12 September, all Japanese forces in South East Asia ceremoniously surrendered at the City Hall in Singapore and the British Union Jack was raised up again (Thio 1991:109).

But this return of British power was a hollow one. The rapid collapse of British forces during the battle for Singapore and the pitiful sight of British prisoners of war doing forced labour after the fall permanently destroyed the image of British superiority and invincibility. Incapable of defending her colonial subjects, Britain's right to reimpose colonial rule in Singapore was irreversibly undermined. Among the younger Singaporeans who could not reverentially respect the British as their elders did was Lee Kuan Yew himself. He concluded that the destiny of Singapore should not be left to the whims and fancies of foreign powers, but should be the sole responsibility of Singaporeans themselves. Lee said on one occasion:

> My colleagues and I are of that generation of young men who went through the Second World War and the Japanese Occupation and emerged determined that no one - neither the Japanese nor the British - had the right to push and kick us around. We are determined that we could govern ourselves and bring up our children in a country where we can be proud to be self-respecting people.

> When the war came to an end in 1945, there was never a chance of the old type of British colonial system ever being re-created. The scales had fallen from our eyes and we saw for ourselves that the local people could run the country.[23]

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[23] Lee, Kuan-Yew 1962. The Battle for Merger. *Towards Socialism* 5, 10-11.

An unfriendly mood greeted the British as they returned to Malaya and Singapore immediately after World War II. MCP and MPAJA guerillas, who had fought underground with the British against the Japanese during the war, emerged to challenge the reimposition of colonial rule. These were communist forces and they looked to the successful communist movement in China as their inspiration. At the same time, those in Singapore who had gone through the ordeal of the Japanese Occupation had developed a strong sense of belonging to the island. This gave rise to a new political consciousness soon after the war years, geared toward the fight for Singaporeans to become masters of their own homeland (Thio 1991:110-11). The war had taught them to rely on themselves to guard their own interests if they did not want to be expended and exploited by others again.

2.1.4 New political consciousness. The British had somewhat anticipated a difficult return to colonial rule after what happened during the war. Hence, they had planned to allow Malaya and Singapore to exercise self-government eventually. Almost immediately after their return to South East Asia, they formulated the Malayan Union scheme in October 1945. Under this formulation, the nine Malay states, Penang and Malacca would become the Malayan Union (still a Crown Colony) while Singapore remained a separate colony by herself. This separation of Singapore from the Malayan Union was to ease the fear of the mainland Malays toward the huge Chinese population in Singapore in any political reorganisation (Yeo and Lau 1991:117-18).[24]

Shortly after the war, the MCP agreed to disarm itself and work toward its goal of a communist Malaya and Singapore by political subversion. The MPAJA also disbanded itself in January 1946. By this time, the MCP had some seventy thousand supporters in Singapore alone and its strongest vehicle of influence was the General Labour Union. With this powerful

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[24] Later events revealed that many political parties in Malaya and Singapore were not in favour of the Malayan Union scheme because of British unwillingness to transfer power to the locals speedily and generously.

machinery, the communists used labour unrests to protest against widespread unemployment, food shortage and soaring prices. On 15 February 1946, the British Military Administration refused the MCP permission to hold a procession to lament the first anniversary of British defeat in Singapore. On the eve of the planned procession, 27 leading communists were arrested; 10 of them were banished without trial by the British (Turnbull 1989:224).

The period of military administration ended when civil administration returned in April 1946. Earlier, the British-formulated Malayan Union scheme was forced upon Malaya and Singapore. This then provoked the formation of Singapore's first indigenous political party, the Malayan Democratic Union, in December 1945. This party supported the Malayan Union, but only with Singapore as part of it and not as a separate colony. The eventual aim was to make Singapore part of a self-governing Malaya within the British Commonwealth (Turnbull 1989:225).

On the Malayan peninsula, the Malayan Union scheme also provoked Malay activists there to form the United Malays National Organisation (UMNO) in March 1946. UMNO felt that to accord immigrant people with political status equal to that of the native Malays was unfair. The British were surprised by the strong opposition of the Malays and consequently revised the scheme. Eventually, the only feature of the original Malayan Union scheme that survived was the separation of Singapore from Malaya. The British also accepted UMNO's proposal for a gradual assimilation of immigrants into the Malay states which would work toward independence under British guidance. This agreement saw the Malayan Union giving way to the Anglo-Malay Scheme in May 1947 (Turnbull 1989:226-27).[25] The MCP condemned this move as pro-Malay and pro-British. They had wanted a self-governing Malaya

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[25] This provisional scheme was later superceded by the Federation of Malaya in February 1948 with Singapore as a separate Crown Colony.

inclusive of Singapore in which all communities would enjoy equal rights (Yeo & Lau 1991:120).

Singapore's first post-war general election in 1948 to fill six elected seats in the Legislative Council was poorly supported - only 25 562 voted out of a potential electorate of around 200 000. However, the newly formed Singapore Progressive Party (SPP) contested and won three of the six seats. In the course of constitutional reforms, this party helped to set up the Public Service Commission (PSC) in 1951 and the Central Provident Fund (CPF) in 1954. Both of these have remained as vital institutions in Singapore to this day.[26] Like all other political parties in Singapore at that time, the primary objective of the SPP was to gain self-government for Singapore through gradual reforms with the view of eventual independence as a merged Singapore-Malaya entity (Yeo & Lau 1991:122-23).

Meanwhile, the MCP was frustrated by the little progress in getting Singapore into Malaya. They failed to exploit labour unrest and to influence the constitutional debate toward this merger, resulting in the birth of the Federation of Malaya in February 1948 without the inclusion of Singapore. Hence, in May and June, these communists became militant and resorted to acts of violence on the Malayan mainland.[27] This led the British to declare a state of emergency in the Federation of Malaya. Almost at the same time in Singapore, the island's first indigenous political party, the Malayan Democratic Union, dissolved itself voluntarily. They had also been pushing hard for a Singapore-Malayan union like the MCP, and thus, feared that the British might link them with the communists and act against them (Turnbull 1989:233).

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[26] The PSC helps to recruit top talents into government service while the CPF is government-enforced savings to enable Singaporeans to look after their own financial welfare. By 1970, 30 % of the total population in Singapore were owning low-cost public homes purchased through the use of their CPF savings (Drysdale 1984:406).

[27] This armed struggle lasted for twelve years and was confined to the mainland of Malaya.

While all this tension was developing in Singapore and Malaya, six young men studying in Britain formed a Malayan Forum discussion group in London in 1949. This group aimed at building support for a Malayan independence movement through their discussions. Among them was a group of Singapore students who resolved to work for the island's independence as part of a united Malaya where racial equality and fair distribution of wealth would be practised. Lee Kuan Yew was one of these Singapore students.[28] In August 1950, Lee returned to Singapore after his law studies at Cambridge University. He quickly established himself as a 'sharp and effective courtroom lawyer' and was the legal adviser to many trade unions (Turnbull 1989:245-46).

In 1954, MCP activists reappeared on the political scene but now advocating a return to constitutional struggle. They met Lee Kuan Yew and after long negotiations, they agreed to work with Lee for constitutional reforms based on a policy of cooperation. Through this agreement, Lee got to know two prominent Chinese-educated leaders - Lim Chin Siong and Fong Swee Suan.[29] Lim and Fong later teamed up with Lee to form the People's Action Party (PAP). The resolve of this party was to urge all anti-colonial forces to cooperate in this nationalist struggle for an immediate Singapore-Malaya merger with the view of eventual independence from colonial rule (Yeo & Lau 1991:130-31).[30]

In February 1954, the British made public the Rendel Report and announced that a general election would be held in 1955 under the guidelines spelt out in the report.[31] This

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[28] Lee Kuan Yew was a third-generation Baba Chinese. He was born in 1923 into a middle-class family. After the war, Lee read law at Cambridge University and excelled academically. Through the Malayan Forum, he met economist Goh Keng Swee and physiologist Toh Chin Chye. Goh was the founder and first chairman of the forum while Toh was the second chairman.

[29] The ethnic Chinese in Singapore then received their education in two ways - the English-educated Chinese were taught in schools where the medium of instruction was English, and the Chinese-educated ones were taught in schools which used Chinese as the medium.

[30] It must be noted that Lee Kuan Yew himself was anti-colonial rather than anti-British as some misunderstood him to be. Also, though he hated the ruthlessness of the Japanese during the war years, he still admire them as a self-respecting people until today.

[31] In the Rendel Report, it was recommended that large degree of power be transferred to the locals. There would be 25 elected representatives in the legislature. The Cabinet would be accountable to this legislature, and

announcement stirred up a heightened interest to form new political parties and alliances in Singapore. One of these was the PAP, inaugurated in October 1954. Lee Kuan Yew was its first secretary-general and Toh Chin Chye was its first chairman (Turnbull 1989:248).[32]

It must be noted that this new party was actually an alliance of two camps - the non-communist camp under Lee Kuan Yew and the pro-communist camp under Lim Chin Siong. Though Lee was the most vocal member of the PAP, it was Lim and his camp that were the real force because they commanded the support of the trade unions and the Chinese masses (Turnbull 1989:254).[33]

The much anticipated election was held in April 1955 under the recommendations of the Rendel Report. The PAP contested but did not fight to win to form the government. Lee had reckoned that to govern under the Rendel recommendations would be too constraining for him. Hence, the PAP contested only for 4 seats and won 3 of them (Turnbull 1989:252).

The victorious party in this election was the Singapore Labour Front (SLF). It won a total of ten seats. The leader of the SLF, lawyer David Marshall, was a Singapore Jew. With his party's victory, Marshall became the first Chief Minister of Singapore. On the other hand, Lee Kuan Yew became the 'de facto opposition leader' in the Legislative Assembly (Yeo & Lau 1991:133).

As Lee's foresight had anticipated, Marshall had great difficulty exercising his role as Chief Minister. For one thing, the Rendel recommendations were clearly pro-British as key ministerial functions were in the hands of the colonial masters. For another, the place and

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comprised 6 local ministers and 3 British ministers. The British would take charge of External Affairs, Defence, Internal Security, Finance, Law and the Civil Service. The local ministers would be selected from the party that won the general election in 1955.

[32] The PAP had pledged to contest in the 1955 election for: immediate independence for Singapore in union with the Federation of Malaya; repeal of emergency regulations; common Malayan citizenship; Malayanisation of the civil service; free compulsory education; encouragement of local industry; amendment of trade union legislation; a workers' charter.

[33] Many of the Chinese in Singapore were from the Hokkien dialect group. As Lim Chin Siong spoke Hokkien fluently, he was able to sway the Chinese mass to his side.

power of the Chief Minister was not clearly defined, resulting in Marshall constantly clashing with the British Governor of Singapore. A frustrated Marshall found himself in 'titular power without substance' (Turnbull 1989:253).

While Marshall was having problem with the British Governor, Lee Kuan Yew was trying to sort out his own dilemma in working with the communist element (MCP) in his party (PAP). Lee wanted an independent, democratic and socialist Malaya inclusive of Singapore through open constitutional struggle, but the MCP wanted a communist union even through a violent take-over. However, the English-educated PAP leaders (with Lee as one of them) could not be seen as anti-MCP at this time as they needed the Chinese-educated MCP activists to help win over the huge Chinese-educated masses in Singapore. On the other hand, the MCP would also not want to jeopardise its alliance with Lee because the PAP was a good cover for its subversive work in Malaya and Singapore.

Shortly after assuming office, Marshall had to deal with strikes and riots inspired by student and labour activists in May and June 1955.[34] Behind these unrests was the instigative hand of the MCP. Unable to keep law and order with a firm hand, Marshall finally resigned on 7 June 1956 and was succeeded by his party mate, Lim Yew Hock (Yeo & Lau 1991:133-35).

Unlike Marshall, Lim Yew Hock came down hard on the communist activists. He ordered massive hunt-down of the communists, resulting in almost the whole top-level leadership of the MCP being detained, including Lim Chin Siong (Yeo & Lau 1991:136-37).[35]

Later, Lim Yew Hock went to London for constitutional talks that lasted from 11 March to 11 April 1957. He then brought home many points of agreement with the British concerning constitutional reforms, paving the way for Singapore to become a self-governing

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[34] These included the Chung Cheng High School 'sit-in', and the Hock Lee Bus Company riot in which many were killed.
[35] This purging of the communists benefitted the non-communist wing of the PAP in the long term as it enabled the party to be built up without the influential Lim Chin Siong.

state in the British Empire. Among these was the right of the British Governor to suspend the Constitution and govern himself in 'extreme' circumstances. The British also insisted that those who had a record of subversive involvement be barred from being elected into the first Legislative Assembly of the new state of Singapore. In Assembly debates, Lee Kuan Yew himself was very supportive of these points of agreement with the British. Lee then prepared the PAP in earnest to contest in the 1959 general election.

Unlike what they did in 1955, the PAP wanted to win the 1959 election in order to form the government. It contested in all the 51 seats and won 43 of them at the polls on 30 May. Among other factors, the decisive PAP's victory was due to its sincere efforts to reach all Singaporeans, including the Chinese-educated and lower-income voters, thus avoiding being labelled 'pro-colonial' or 'capitalistic' (Yeo & Lau 1991:137-39).

As voting was made mandatory for the first time in 1959, Lee's victory at the polls gave him a very strong mandate from the people to govern. 89 % of the almost 600 000 eligible voters went to the polls. And with the strong endorsement from the people, Lee Kuan Yew led them into a new era as the first Prime Minister of the self-governing state of Singapore. But before forming the new government, Lee secured the release of eight party associates who were earlier detained at Lim Yew Hock's order. Six of them, including Lim Chin Siong, publicly signed a statement in support of the PAP's non-communist position. Indeed, 1959 helped to define Singapore's style of democracy - 'citizens speak through the ballot box, and a government takes charge with a strong hand.'[36]

When Lee's government was in place, the office of Governor was abolished, and the British Commissioner became the leading British authority in self-governing Singapore. Though very much in the background, the Commissioner had great powers - he was entitled to

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[36] *The Straits Times* 3 June 1999. We begin a new chapter ... a people's government. pp 42-43.

see the agenda of cabinet meetings together with all cabinet papers; he was also the Chairman of the Internal Security Council with the power to suspend the Constitution and assume charge in time of emergency (Turnbull 1989:265-66).[37] As the British took a back-seat in the governing of Singapore, Lee Kuan Yew was planning to push harder forward. He was not content with just moving Singapore from colony to self-government; he wanted Singapore to be independent in union with the Malayan mainland.[38] But all the unrests during this period of political and social turbulence had warned Lee to keep working at another important union if Singapore was to progress further - making Singaporeans see themselves as one united people regardless of race, language or religion.

2.2 From Merger to Independence

2.2.1 Merger with Malaya. From 1955, the PAP had pushed for immediate merger of Singapore and Malaya. But the Malayan Federation under Tunku Abdul Rahman had opposed it. They feared the large Chinese population in Singapore and viewed them as communist-oriented. Hence, Lee's first task in power was to win the trust of the Tunku. Under the 1959 Constitution, both Britain and Malaya had control over the internal security of Singapore through a right to vote at the Internal Security Council. This would be revised in 1963. Lee warned the Tunku that when this revision came, the internal security of Singapore would no longer be under the control of the British or the Malayan Federation. Lee's warning was well heeded by the Tunku because of rising tension in Singapore after the PAP came into power. In their desperate attempts to undermine Lee's rule, communist activists stirred up student and labour unrests, and succeeded somewhat to win over the ground. This was evident in two by-

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[37] In self-government, Singaporeans controlled National Development, Finance, Home Affairs, Labour and Law, Health, Education and Culture. The British continued to control the Defence and Foreign Affairs portfolios. For the first six months of self-government, former Governor, William Goode, acted as the Head of State (*Yang Di-Pertuan Negara*). In December 1959, he was succeeded by a Singaporean, Yusof bin Ishak, who was the former chairman of the Public Service Commission.

[38] It was common knowledge that Lee always believed that tiny Singapore had no permanent future unless it became one with the Malayan mainland and shared in its rich resources.

elections sometime later in 1959 where the PAP candidates were decisively defeated by their opponents. In the face of these defeats, the PAP leaders threatened to resign from government. This situation also worried the Tunku who was afraid that a pro-communist government might replace the PAP, and Singapore would become a base for communist subversion of the Malayan mainland (Yeo & Lau 1991:139-40).

The pro-communist elements in the PAP were in turn anxious to know that the Malayan Federation was warming up to the idea of merger. These people opposed merger because they knew that should it become a reality, they would be persecuted by the anti-communist central government when it exercised its power in internal security. Thus, the pro-communists in the PAP attempted to influence party policy by trying to get into the Central Executive Committee (CEC). But they failed because Lee denied all of them cadre membership in the PAP.[39] Finally, in a battle of political wits, thirteen PAP Assemblymen who were pro-communists were expelled from the party, ending their attempt to capture control in the PAP.

This expelled faction then formed the *Barisan Sosialis* (BS) with Lim Chin Siong as Secretary-General and Lee Siew Choh as Chairman. The aim of the BS was to topple the PAP in open opposition. Lee Kuan Yew answered the challenge by calling on Singaporeans to support the PAP-backed merger at a general referendum to be held on 1 September 1962. Almost 71 % of the votes favoured the PAP-backed merger, and the call of the BS to cast blank votes only garnered 26 % support. The people of Singapore were ready to move with Lee Kuan Yew to be a part of a greater Malaya.

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[39] Under the PAP's Constitution, only cadre members could be elected into the CEC.

But on his part, the Tunku wanted merger only within the larger framework of Malaysia. This was the proposed union of Malaysia, Singapore, Sabah, Sarawak and Brunei.[40] The Tunku wanted to balance the large increase of Chinese from Singapore with the indigenous peoples from the other three places.

Not taking its defeat at the referendum lying down, the BS linked up with the Indonesian Communist Party (PKI), intending to stop the merger from gathering strength.[41] In response, the Internal Security Council, in which the Malayan government had a say, mounted a purging campaign on 2 February 1963. More than 100 people were detained, including Lim Chin Siong and 23 other BS members. With these dissidents out of the way, Malaya, Singapore, Sabah and Sarawak finally came together and formed Malaysia on 16 September 1963 (Yeo & Lau 1991:142-43).

In accordance with the Malaysia Agreement concluded in July 1963, Singapore handed over control in foreign affairs, defence and internal security to the central government. However, she still had great powers over finance, labour and education. Singapore could also retain her own executive government, Assembly, Head of State and Public Service Commission. In addition, 15 seats in the new Malaysian Legislature were allotted to Singapore. On her part, Singapore was obliged to contribute 40 % of her income from taxes to the central government, and this amounted to 27 % of her total revenue then (Turnbull 1989:274).

With the realisation of merger, Singapore seemed to be heading for better days. Moreover, PAP rule had improved the life of people generally, and brought material benefits by way of broad industrialisation, and redistribution of national wealth through subsidised

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[40] Sabah, Sarawak and Brunei were collectively called British Borneo. Eventually, Sabah and Sarawak agreed to join Malaysia while Brunei decided against.

[41] The PKI in turn influenced President Sukarno of Indonesia to authorise sabotage and terrorist activities against Malaysia. This period of hostility in the early days of Malaysia was known as the 'Confrontation'.

social services, housing, education and health care. The status of women was improved and industrial relations were relatively peaceful. Vigorous attempts were also made to enforce law and order - gangsters were arrested and kidnapping gangs broken up.[42] All these created a favourable social and industrial environment for foreign investments to come. But sadly, the journey on the merger road was a disastrous one for the PAP (Turnbull 1989:276). And Singapore learnt a hard truth - she could not take her incipient success for granted as a harsh turn of events would easily spoil it all.

2.2.2 Separation from Malaysia. After merger, Singapore leaders were dismayed by the little political and economic freedom they had. This was largely due to the ambiguous terms of merger.[43] A conflicting situation could not be avoided.

In the 1963 general election in Singapore just after merger, politicians from the Malayan mainland came over to the island to contest in it. They were all defeated. The following year in 1964, the PAP decided to 'reciprocate' by contesting in the Malayan general election. Though defeated, the PAP's participation sparked off a loud protest from Malay politicians on the mainland who condemned it as a challenge to Malay supremacy (Yeo and Lau 1991:144).[44]

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[42] In fact, the government has since legislated some very stern and harsh laws to keep society from fracturing. For example, American teenager Michael Fay committed gross vandalism when he was residing in Singapore, and was sentenced to jail plus six strokes of the cane in 1994. The enraged American Congress and media pressured President Bill Clinton to demand that the sentence be lifted. But the Singapore government only agreed to reduce the caning from six to four strokes. Indeed, for those who observe the law, they will feel very much secured and protected; but for those who violate it, they will find the law coming down hard on them without fear or favour.

[43] The economic ambiguities resulted in disputes over Singapore's contribution to the central treasury, textile exports to Britain, and the central government's intention to close the Bank of China (this would badly affect Singapore's trade with China). Singapore felt that the central government had shown little concern over her industrial development and unemployment situation.

[44] The Tunku and Lee had mutually agreed before the merger that political parties from the mainland and Singapore would not cross over to each other's territory to contest in any general election. But the PAP contested in the mainland because Lee felt that the Tunku had not kept his word. Also, Singapore was only given 15 out of 159 seats in the central parliament when it could have qualified for 25. Besides, no PAP men were appointed to high positions in the central government, not even Lee himself. Feeling overlooked, Lee decided to increase the PAP's share of power in Malaysia by contesting in the 1964 general election on the Malayan mainland. It proved to be a costly move as it eventually led to racial tension between the Malays and the Chinese in Singapore.

At the time of merger, the PAP government had undertaken to safeguard Malay political, educational, religious, economic and cultural interests in Singapore. Special financial aids were also extended to Malay children. However, all these measures paled in comparison to the very preferential treatment given to the Malays on the Malayan mainland. In addition, many Malays in Singapore then felt that their established way of life in village houses was threatened by the proposed urban renewal plans of the government. They would have to relocate and live in modern high-rise apartments built by the government. When pressured by Malay representatives to give greater concessions to their community, Lee Kuan Yew firmly refused except in the matter of education (Turnbull 1989:282-83).

Malay activists from the Tunku's UMNO party cited the PAP's participation in the mainland's general election and 'indifference' towards the Malays' plight in Singapore as evidences of Lee's anti-Malay position. They accused him of trying to unite the Chinese against the Malays and mounted a malicious campaign in Singapore with racial undertones. This resulted in two bloody riots in Singapore between the Chinese and the Malays in July and September 1964.

It was clear that the Tunku's UMNO party was bent on building a 'Malay Malaysia' with Malay domination. But Lee defiantly called for a non-communal 'Malaysian Malaysia' and formed the Malaysian Solidarity Convention (MSC) to push for this.[45] This further antagonised the UMNO activists who now charged Lee for harbouring ambition to be the Prime Minister of 'Lee Kuan Yew's Malaysia'. They demanded a suspension of the Singapore Constitution, outlawing the PAP and Lee's detention as a political criminal. But the Singapore

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[45] The MSC comprised the PAP, two Malayan parties and two Sarawak parties. The aim was to use the grouping to win the majority of seats in Malaysia to form the government in order to realise 'Malaysian Malaysia'.

leader was saved from the 'jaws of martyrdom' when the British Prime Minister, Harold Wilson, warned the Tunku against Lee's detention (Yeo & Lau 1991:145-46).

Meanwhile, Lee continued to be belligerent in parliament, and the sessions in May and June 1965 were filled with abuses. Lee defiantly said: 'If we must make trouble, let us have it now instead of waiting for another five or ten years.' By now, the Tunku was increasingly angered by Lee's abrasiveness and insensitivity (Turnbull 1989:284).

So intense was the dislike for Lee in the UMNO camp that it openly supported the *Barisan Sosialis* candidate in a by-election in Singapore in July 1965. This was sad irony because it was well known that this opposition party was anti-Malaysia and affiliated to the Malayan Communist Party. But in spite of UMNO's support for the opposition, the PAP won decisively.

This crucial victory convinced the Tunku that the PAP already had the upper hand over the communists in Singapore. In other words, he believed that it had become very difficult, if not impossible, for the communists to use Singapore as a base to subvert the Malayan mainland.[46] Also, the Tunku viewed Lee as a great political threat to the Malays because of his very aggressive 'Malaysian Malaysia' stance. He realised that it was not possible to check Lee constitutionally, and repressive action would only have serious repercussions at home and abroad. The Tunku became more and more convinced that the only way out was for Singapore to leave Malaysia. That fateful day came on 9 August 1965 when Singapore parted with Malaysia and had independence thrust upon her (Yeo & Lau 1991:147).

Recalling his meeting with the press on the morning of that turning point in Singapore's history, at which he broke down briefly, Lee (1998:16) revealed:

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[46] It was this fear of communist subversion that had persuaded the Tunku to take in Singapore in the first place.

At that moment, my emotions overwhelmed me. It was only after another 20 minutes that I was able to regain my composure and resume the press conference.

I was emotionally overstretched, having gone through three days and nights of a wrenching experience. With little sleep since Friday night in Kuala Lumpur, I was close to physical exhaustion. I was weighed down by a heavy sense of guilt. I felt I had let down several million people in Malaysia: Immigrant Chinese and Indians, Eurasians, and even some Malays ....

Prior to merger, Lee was convinced that an independent Singapore would not be viable without the Malayan mainland. But as events had dictated, she had to separate from Malaysia and become an independent nation. The uncertainties ahead made independence a heavy load. Indeed, Singapore leaders felt that the country was like a 'child untimely borned', but they would have to prove their own 'prophecy of doom' wrong. They learnt that Singapore's potential would make others envious of her, and Singapore's small size would make her vulnerable to unfair treatment. Nevertheless, they had to lead all Singaporeans to believe in themselves and battle the odds together.

2.3 From Survival to Success

2.3.1 Battling the odds. The first priority for newly independent Singapore was her defence. The plan was to have a small regular army complemented by a large force of conscripted national servicemen.[47] But before this, volunteers were first needed for defence. Some cabinet ministers and members of parliament answered the call, leading the way in this first test of Singapore nationalism (Drysdale 1984:395-96).

In November 1965, the Ministry of the Interior and Defence (MINDEF) was set up. The first military advisers and instructors came from Israel.[48] While national service was

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[47] The national service policy was implemented in 1967 and required all able-bodied men of 18 years old to serve full time in the armed forces for 2 to 2 1/2 years.
[48] Actually, requests for military help were made to a number of countries but only the Israelis responded favourably.

designed to create and maintain a defence force at minimum cost, the primary objective then was to use it to nurture a sense of national unity (Turnbull 1989:294).

The government had to sensitively and actively promote a Singaporean identity without suppressing ethnic peculiarities.[49] Moreover, to guard racial harmony in Chinese-dominated Singapore, the government had to check the rise of Chinese chauvinism since the social ethos then had a distinct Chinese or Confucian flavour - discipline, hard work, competition, self-reliance and desire for material success (Turnbull 1989:292).

Lee Kuan Yew described the challenge to rid communal tension this way:

> Multiracialism in a permissive tolerant society became imperative for Singapore, in which were large components of people with diverse ethnic, linguistic and religious backgrounds. The problem was how to create a situation where the minority, either in ethnic, linguistic or religious terms, was not conscious that it was a minority, and that the exercise of its rights as equal citizens with all the others was so natural and so accepted by society that it is not conscious of the fact that it was sharing equal rights with the others in dominant ethnic groups (Drysdale 1984:397).

Another big task for young Singapore was to diversify the sources of her foreign investment. Hitherto, more than 70 % of Singapore's foreign investment came from Britain. It was time to build up new trading relationships. With the end of Indonesia's hostility toward Malaysia following the end of President Sukarno's rule, trade with Indonesia was greatly improved, beginning June 1966. As the USA became increasingly involved in the Vietnam War, Singapore served as an important supplies centre for the Americans. At a later time, the closure of the Suez Canal, following the Seven Days' War in the Middle East, fortuitously enhanced Singapore's status as a ship-repair centre as more vessels had to use Singapore as an alternative port of call (Turnbull 1989:293).

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[49] To tap the advances of the English-speaking world, and to retain the people's respective ethnic roots and identity, the government actively promoted bilingualism in its education policy - students would learn English and their own mother tongue (Mandarin, Malay or Tamil).

In the midst of all these positive happenings, Singapore received an unwelcomed news from the British on 18 July 1967 - they would withdraw all their forces from Singapore by the mid-1970s. Six months later, the withdrawal plans were brought forward by three years to 1971 because of acute economic problems in Britain. This acceleration of British withdrawal with the closing down of their military bases posed a big problem as many locals would lose their jobs. To compound this problem further, Singapore's industrialisation so far could not create enough new employment opportunities for all those who would be retrenched. Lee Kuan Yew rushed to London to ask the British to phase out the withdrawal over an eight-year period. But they only agreed to extend final withdrawal from March 1971 to December the same year (Drysdale 1984:400-01).[50]

The PAP went to the polls in April 1968 to seek a new mandate to steer Singapore out of this uncertain period. They won all seats and took more than 84 % of the total votes. In July the same year, the Economic Development Board (founded in 1961) was reorganised, its original function of financing being transferred to the Development Bank of Singapore (DBS).[51] The following month in August, sweeping labour laws were passed with the aim of making the labour movement more cooperative rather than confrontational.[52] An investment-friendly environment was meticulously put in place (Turnbull 1989:295).[53]

By August 1973, the government owned 26 companies wholly with an authorised capital of 670 million Singapore dollars and 33 others partially with some 200 million

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[50] The British also promised to hand over valuable assets, retrain redundant workers, help create an air defence system, and give a soft loan of 50 million British pounds.

[51] The DBS was to provide long-term financing to local manufacturing industries.

[52] Employment and industrial laws were amended in order to reduce the power of unionists to keep pressing for increasing fringe benefits.

[53] Several other statutory authorities were set up in the ensuing years to facilitate economic growth with strong infrastructures - the Public Utilities Board, the Telecommunication Authority of Singapore, the Port of Singapore Authority, the Jurong (Industrial) Town Corporation and the Monetary Authority of Singapore.

Foreign investors could lease land and buildings cheaply and speedily. Tax exemptions were also given to companies with pioneer status, and export-oriented ones enjoyed even further tax incentives. The government also secured treaties on the avoidance of double taxation with other countries (Cheng 1991:209).

Singapore dollars in equity. This made the government the most important entrepreneur in the development process (Chan 1991:164).[54]

Though critics had often charged the PAP government for being authoritarian because of its almost obsessive emphasis on order and stability, and intolerance of opposition politics, it was clear that Lee and his colleagues had earned the trust of Singaporeans. In the general elections of 1968, 1972 and 1976, the people gave them their resounding support by voting in an all-PAP parliament. Indeed, Singapore under the PAP battled and overcame the odds stacked against her survival after separation from Malaysia.[55] By example and propaganda, the government was preaching the message that the limitations of Singapore's small size could be surmounted by a spirit of diligence, competition and excellence. The people believed and wanted to not merely survive, but to succeed in making a better life for themselves.

2.3.2 <u>Achieving success</u>. The first eight years after independence saw Singapore achieving spectacular economic growth. External trade increased by more than 15 % per year from 1965 to 1973.[56] The country also diversified into other industries and grew rapidly as a financial and shipping centre for the region. In 1968, it was made the headquarters of the Asian Dollar Market and launched its own national shipping line; became a gold market in 1969; and completed the construction of its container port in 1972 (Turnbull 1989:295-97).

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[54] Singaporeans were used to living under paternalistic colonial rule. This mentality of allowing the higher powers to decide for them, together with their low interest in politics, favoured the development of a paternalistic style of government in Singapore. Also, state government in Singapore was much like secular management - achieving maximum output with the scarce human and material resources available in Singapore (Chan 1991:176-77).

[55] In fact, Singapore's economy grew by a high 8 % in 1965, the year of separation from Malaysia. Henceforth from 1966 to 1973, the annual average rate of growth at constant prices was 13 %. Unemployment dropped from 8.1 % in 1967 to 4.5 % in 1973. The problem was slowly changing from one of job shortage to that of labour shortage, especially skilled labour (Cheng 1991:194-97).

[56] In 1977, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) mooted to transfer Singapore from recipient to donor country status because of its consistently robust growth.

The spirit of diligence, competition and excellence as preached by the government was bearing fruit as Singaporeans began to enjoy a better life materially. Edwin Lee, academic historian at the National University of Singapore, observed:

> As different as the Malays, Chinese, and Indians are in their philosophy and ethos, they have all responded to changes which have taken place since the nation's independence, to rapid industrialisation and urbanisation, and to new standards in education and technology. They have responded at different speeds, but display common tendencies represented by smaller families, larger incomes, home and car ownership, working mothers, better-educated children, holidays abroad, and a generally higher quality of life. They are starting to dream together, as they work together, for all the good things that the future holds for those who dream the Singapore dream (Lee 1991:264).

With Singapore continuing to experience great measures of economic growth and success, Lee Kuan Yew handed his office as Prime Minister to Goh Chok Tong on 28 November 1990 after thirty one years at the helm.[57] This marked the rise of the second-generation of PAP leaders and the beginning of their task to continue Singapore's growth and success into the next millennium. The younger Goh has been described as 'capable of making tough decisions yet consults his colleagues and tries to build consensus for these decisions.' Like Lee, he too has the shrewdness of a politician though not the dynamic oral skills of his predecessor (Milne 1990:129).

East Asia was hit by its worst post-war economic crisis which began in 1997. Many economies in the region were badly weakened, and countries like Thailand, South Korea and Indonesia were on the brim of bankruptcy if not for the rescue efforts initiated by the International Monetary Fund. However, responding quickly and appropriately with certain institutional reforms, Singapore was one of the least hurt in this crisis. In fact, international confidence in Singapore continued to remain strong. In its Global Competitiveness Report

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[57] Goh, an economist by training, was former managing director of the national shipping line (Neptune Orient Lines) before he became a politician. Lee has since been Senior Minister in the Cabinet until today. With his experience in politics and statesmanship, he is acting like an adviser to the younger set of leaders.

1999, the Geneva-based World Economic Forum (WEF) placed Singapore as the most competitive economy after a study of fifty nine countries. Below is a summary table adapted from the WEF report:

TABLE 1: WEF's Global Competitiveness Rankings 1999

Ranking in Competitiveness		Singapore's Ranking by Competitive Criteria	
1st	Singapore	Openness	2nd
2nd	USA	Government	1st
3rd	Hongkong	Finance	2nd
4th	Taiwan	Infrastructure	7th
5th	Canada	Technology	2nd
6th	Switzerland	Management	12th
7th	Luxembourg	Labour	1st
8th	Britain	Institutions	2nd

Over the years, Singapore has learnt to compete with the outside world and excel. But this tendency is also readily observable among Singaporeans themselves as they compete and compare with one another in many areas. This is largely due to the system of meritocracy designed and nurtured by the government since the early years of independence. For example, prestigious government scholarships are given to outstanding students on merit alone, putting 'the child of a taxi driver on par with that of a merchant banker' (Mahizhnan & Lee 1998:5). As such, many young Singaporeans are already pushing themselves and striving for material success via the route of meritocracy. A young student who puts in hours into his studies will pour in hours into his work when he enters the working world.[58]

The government recognises that the people view success only in a narrow, economic sense in its recent report, *Singapore 21*, which spells out its aspirations for Singapore in the new millennium.[59] It now calls on the people to define success beyond the basic survival level to the higher social and spiritual dimensions (Government 1999:20).

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[58] Many parents are also pushing their children hard in their studies, as evident in the large number of students taking private tuition lessons. The desire to excel and succeed has generally made the school, the workplace and even the home, stressful and competitive.

[59] Five features are listed by the government as pillars of a 21st century Singapore - every Singaporean matters; strong families; opportunities for all; feeling passionately for Singapore; active citizens in nation-building.

Explaining the need for this redefinition, the report acknowledges:

> There are good historical reasons why Singaporeans view success narrowly.
> Economics was the imperative when the country first came into being. When
> we had nothing, having something was success. Education was pursued as the
> path to a good job.

> On the positive side, a narrow definition of success has helped to maintain
> Singapore's competitive edge by feeding the desire to excel. But it has also had
> undesirable social effects .... (Government 1999:18-19).[60]

Indeed, a survey conducted in conjunction with the *Singapore 21* report has revealed
that 64.1 % of Singaporeans feel keenly stressed by the fast pace of change in Singapore. To
help people cope, the report suggests that individuals retain the drive to succeed but widen
their definition of success (Government 1999:18).

The call now is not to let success be an end in itself, but the by-product of pursuing
satisfaction. When applied to the ambitious Singaporean working hard to be successful, what
this means is to put professionalism ahead of prestige - to stay at a task in order to deepen
expertise rather than switching job in order to do something more prestigious (Government
1999:21).[61]

As for the family, the report gloomily forecasts:

> As Singapore enters the next century, the family will come under increased
> strain. Nuclear families will be the trend. In most cases, both mother and father
> will be working. In a knowledge-driven workplace, their jobs will be less secure
> and more demanding. At home, their children will be open to more influences
> and be harder to manage (Government 1999:25).

With the government embarking on its drive to attract capable foreigners to come beef
up the country's limited pool of local talents, Professor Tan Kong Yam of the National
University of Singapore has more sober news for the Singapore family:

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[60] Some of the undesired social effects identified are: an unforgiving society that does not believe in giving a
second chance to those who have failed; a risk aversion attitude that avoids trying new grounds for fear of
failing; mismatched talents in that some end up like 'square pegs in round holes' in life ('e g' a talented
violinist chooses to be a banker, even a mediocre one, because of the lure of better material returns).

[61] This writer has personally known ambitious Singaporeans who have been greatly stressed and depressed
because of premature or ill-timed career changes.

On the one hand, due to the open immigration policy necessitated by sustaining international competitiveness, ambitious and capable people from the region could gravitate to Singapore. They and their offspring increase the competitive and stress level in the country, including the educational system and the general cost of living through the bidding process on the limited supply of houses and cars (Mahizhnan & Lee 1998:167).

Truly, the road ahead for the Singapore family does not promise an easy ride. Even the government refrains from offering any easy answers. In his speech to the nation at the National Day Rally on 22 August 1999, Prime Minister Goh Chok Tong called on Singaporeans to make the country a 'first-class economy and a world-class home.' He passionately challenged the nation not to rest on its laurels but to press on to excel even further - in economic growth, in education, in sports and in the performing arts. But what he left out in his two-hour speech was a call to excel in family life. Ironically, 'strong families' is identified as one of the pillars of society in the government's vision spelt out in *Singapore 21*.[62]

Undoubtedly, Singapore has achieved great economic success. This is the result of belief, unity, and diligence combining to fire up perseverance, optimism, excellence and competition in the will of people. And this success culture is beginning to assert its influence in other spheres. People are not only challenged to be productive workers, but also to be active volunteers in social work and strong builders of family life. It certainly takes superhuman energy and effort to do these all at the same time. However, nation building demands that the public call cannot be anything less.

What then are some of the prevailing values in Singapore today in view of this success culture which is still largely materialistic? The findings of some recent studies on the population, the family and the younger generation will provide some answers.

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[62] Excerpts of Goh's speech appeared in the local daily, *The Straits Times*, on 23 August 1999 (front page and pages 26-30). Not long later, Lee Kuan Yew sounded a warning in his capacity as Senior Minister when interviewed by the Dutch newspaper *NRC Handelsblad*. He said: 'If the younger families decide that their careers count for more than their children's upbringing, we will have a very different generation that will not be as good; and it's irreversible.' Lee's comments were quoted on page 2 of the 17 September 1999 issue of another local daily *The New Paper*.

2.4 Success and Social Values

2.4.1 National core values. In multiracial Singapore, citizens are urged to see themselves as Singaporeans, but at the same time, cautioned not to lose their own ethnic identity.[63] For example, at the annual celebration of the nation's independence on 9 August, Singaporeans are called to come together and rejoice as one people regardless of ethnicity. On the other hand, the different races are also encouraged to openly and lavishly celebrate their own ethnic festivities. Besides, all the different ethnic groups have their own self-help agencies to attend to the welfare of their respective communities. Hence, the key to social cohesion in Singapore is not to assimilate the cultures of the minority groups into that of the dominant one, but to have a national ideology that will both integrate a pluralistic people and at the same time respect their essential differences. This national ideology was officially spelt out by President Wee Kim Wee when he addressed the opening of the Seventh Parliament in January 1989. The Head of State mentioned four core values to ensure continued prosperity and survival for the nation: placing community over self; upholding the family as the basic building block of society; resolving major issues through consensus instead of contention; stressing racial and religious tolerance and harmony (Jon Quah 1990:91).

In stressing community over self, the thrust is to go for a balance between individual and community interests. Concerning this, Lee Kuan Yew has this to say: 'Without a cohesive society, a people who care for each other, especially the successful for the less successful, we cannot succeed.'[64] However, communitarianism does seem to conflict with meritocracy which is also strongly emphasised by the government (Jon Quah 1990:88). On one hand, communitarianism implies that the majority of people should not be left behind. On the other

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[63] The latest racial profile is: 76.8 % Chinese, 13.9 % Malay, 7.7 % Indian and 1.4 % other races - Ministry of Information and the Arts 2001. *Singapore 2001*. Singapore: MITA.
[64] *The Straits Times* 21 September 1999. Singapore 21 'can help bond people early,' p31.

hand, meritocracy requires that only the best should be placed ahead, implying that many will be left behind. Indeed, Singapore is still very much a young nation in transition and her leaders will have to continue ironing out such seemingly contradicting policies.

In promoting the family as the basic institution in society, the government has been careful not to advance the Confucian model of the family so as not to disturb the non-Chinese racial groups. Given its proud tradition of being clean and honest, the government also takes pain to ensure that family ties do not breed nepotism in the national leadership (Jon Quah 1990:94-95).[65]

In choosing consensus over contention, the government intends to cement strong bonds with the people. It does not wish to resort to violence when working out national problems with the masses. When formulating major public policies, the leaders of the country have thus committed themselves to listen and consult (Jon Quah 1990:95-96).[66] Different measures have been implemented in recent years to facilitate this consultative style. One is the Feedback Unit which is established to help channel ground sentiments concerning public policy matters to the government. The other is the Nominated Member of Parliament scheme which is set up to bring in recognised professionals who have no political affiliation in order to improve the quality of parliamentary debates.[67]

Racial and religious harmony is advanced as a national core value simply because Singapore is not a homogeneous society in spite of her predominantly Chinese population. In fact, the Chinese themselves are divided into many dialect groups, each with its own distinct

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[65] It is interesting to note that there has been much criticism from outside Singapore concerning the rapid rise of Lee Hsien Loong, the elder son of Lee Kuan Yew, in his political career. The younger Lee is now the Deputy Prime Minister of Singapore. But the government has consistently maintained that Lee Hsien Loong has advanced purely on his own merit. In fact, the senior Lee once retorted when questioned by a foreign critic: 'If he is not my son, he will be the prime minister by now.'

[66] The paternalistic style of government adopted in the early years by Lee Kuan Yew and his colleagues has often been criticised as being authoritarian and dictatorial.

[67] This move is deemed necessary because the opposition members in parliament have often been alleged to lack the sharpness to take on the ruling PAP government when debating on public issues.

customs and practices. To preserve social cohesion, it is therefore, important that there is respect and tolerance of one another's rights, practices and beliefs (Jon Quah 1990:97).[68]

While most Singaporeans may agree that the core values preached by the government are good for social bonding, how willing are they to put them into practice? A recent study has revealed some interesting findings.[69]

TABLE 2: Attitude toward General Social Values (Kau, Tan & Wirtz 1998:43)

	% Disagree	% Neutral	% Agree
Respect for authority is important to society.	3.3	31.9	64.8
Conforming to social norms is very important.	20.8	49.4	42.9
Society should come before the individual.	8.2	52.2	39.6

In summarising the findings in Table 2, the study suggests that while most people agree that it is important to respect authority, most also do not conform to social norms and do not put society before self. Further analysis shows that the higher-income and better-educated Singaporeans are more likely to view social values negatively. In other words, such people are more likely to be individualistic; show least respect for authority; and less likely to conform to social norms (Kau et al 1998:48). When interpreted in the light of the national core values, what emerges is a society in which people may generally respect the government's rationale for enunciating these values, but they lack the personal conviction to practise them in real life.

2.4.2 People's aspirations in life. The same study has also made an assessment of the people's aspirations in life in terms of their attitude toward materialism.

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[68] The government has declared Singapore to be a secular state. Thus, it is only prudent that in the search for a national ideology, religious issues and preferences should be avoided.

[69] This value and lifestyles study was done by three professors in marketing at the National University of Singapore - Kau Ah Keng, Tan Soo Jiuan and Jochen Wirtz.

TABLE 3: Attitude toward Materialism (Kau et al 1998:78)

	% Disagree	% Neutral	% Agree
I admire people who own expensive homes, cars and clothes.	35.4	45.3	19.2
Some of the most important achievements in life include acquiring wealth and material possessions.	14.5	45.9	39.7
The things I own say a lot about how well I am doing in life.	14.0	47.4	38.7
I like to own things that impress people.	27.4	49.7	23.0
I don't pay much attention to the material objects other people own.	8.6	52.9	38.5

The table reveals that while most of the respondents do not really admire other people's wealth and do not own things just to impress, they do tend to connect doing well in life with having possessions and do consider acquiring wealth as one of the most important things in life (Kau et al 1998:112).[70] Hence, are Singaporeans materialistic? The findings seem to be saying 'yes' and 'no' at the same time. A possible explanation for this apparent ambivalence is that while Singaporeans may have a materialistic mindset, they are prudent enough not to express or exhibit it grossly in life.

One unique feature that characterises the behaviour of many Singaporeans is that of *kiasuism* ('fear of losing out'). Two distinct marks of *kiasuism* are: take what you can even if you do not really want or need it; as the argument goes, something must be good if most people want it.[71] What then results from *kiasuism* is a herd mentality where all go for the same

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[70] The profile of the respondents in this survey shows that 33.2 % of those with university/postgraduate qualifications and 31.2 % of those who earn more than S$3 000 per month are Christians (Kau et al 1998:212). Both these figures are the highest in their respective categories, reinforcing the belief that many Christians in Singapore are in the higher-educated/higher-income category of society. According to the latest available figures, 14.6 % of the resident population aged 15 years and above profess to be Christians (either Protestant or Roman Catholic) - Ministry of Information and the Arts 2001. *Singapore 2001*. Singapore: MITA.

[71] Two examples of *kiasuism*: 1) At buffet meals, there is a tendency for people to take as much food as they can onto the plate even if they cannot consume or do not need that amount. To avoid food wastage, some restaurants have threatened to 'fine' people who leave behind too much food on their plates! 2) Even though it is extremely expensive to buy and maintain a car in Singapore because of certain government controls, many people still consider owning a car as a dream rather than a nightmare. It is quite unbelievable to know that in tiny Singapore where public transportation is so affordable and efficient, there are many who are willing to shoulder great financial burden in order not to lose out in this 'race' for car ownership. However, it is true that there is a genuine need for some to have their own cars.

things and avoid the same things (Cunha 1994:73). No one dares or wants to be different from the crowd.

David Chan Kum Wah, a lecturer in the Department of Philosophy, National University of Singapore, candidly describes the prevalence of *kiasuism* in Singapore this way:

> The pressure to conform and to participate in materialistic preoccupations is so strong in Singapore that even those who are aware of the possibility of alternative pursuits find themselves drawn into the rat race.

> Every now and then, we find *kiasuism* becoming an obstacle to some objectives of the state. Unfortunately, this is not seen as reason for changing the values of Singapore society. Instead, *kiasuism* is used to persuade people to achieve economic and social objectives. If people are too *kiasu* to work abroad, then we must convince them that it is materially rewarding to do so. They are offered state support to ameliorate the risks, and new role models of entrepreneurship are held up for emulation. People are told not to miss opportunities for making money. The state's goals can be achieved in this way but, in the process, *kiasuism* is being reinforced (Cunha 1994:74).[72]

Hence, people tend to shun pursuits that do not promise monetary benefits as they take the cue from the government which unhesitatingly gives official and public recognition to government departments and statutory boards which have shown proof of efficiency in terms of economic profitability (Saw & Bhathal 1981:152). Indeed, it is not an overstatement to say that the government has unwittingly nurtured a materialistic attitude in many Singaporeans as a result of its very aggressive push for sustained economic growth.

2.5 Success and Family Values

2.5.1 What is family? One of the hottest debates in Singapore today is how a family should be defined.[73] A notion of what a family is made up of was articulated by Chan Soo Sen, Parliamentary Secretary (Prime Minister's Office and Community Development), at the Family

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[72] In order to sustain economic growth, the government has already started an external economic wing, expanding Singapore's business interests both regionally and globally. Singaporeans have since been encouraged and challenged to work abroad.

[73] For the purpose of this dissertation, the family is delimited to the nuclear family which comprises father, mother and dependent child(ren).

Festival 1999. In a newspaper report of the event, he described a family as one made up of 'man, wife and children living in the same household.'[74]

Chan's definition sparked off immediate responses from a number of notables. One of them was Claire Chiang, a nominated member of parliament and an active social worker. She rebutted in the same report that a family could mean 'a single woman with her aged parents, siblings forming a family or single parents taking care of their own children.'[75]

Another person who responded in the media to Chan's comments was Dr Robert Loh, President of the National Council of Social Services.[76] He retorted:

> We felt that the report in the papers will make those who do not follow the pattern of a traditionally structured family a bit upset, or they might even feel marginalised.
>
> The council is very interested in preserving family values and so we thought we would send a strong signal by saying that, look, we don't think traditional families are the only source of happy families.
>
> There are other ways in which families can be happy. Other kinds of structured families can be happy and hence also strong as a result.
>
> Family relationships are more important than just having a traditionally-structured family.

When further asked if he would consider homosexual couples or single mothers by choice as non-traditionally structured families to be accepted in Singapore, Loh added:

> The council is here to serve society. Is Singapore society ready to accept these things?
>
> We have to keep pace with society and these set-ups are still a no-no in our society.
>
> We cannot endorse and project or promote these values systems until and unless society accepts them.

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[74] *The Straits Times* 27 May 1999. What makes up a Singapore family? p40.
[75] The *1995 Department of Statistics Report* revealed that 16 % of Singaporeans did not live in traditional one-family nuclear households. In other words, there were other extended family members ('e g' grandparents) living in these households.
[76] Loh's comments were quoted in: *The Straits Times* 4 June 1999. Why Ally is not all right, p70.

On the government's side, Abdullah Tarmugi, Minister of Community Development, also offered his opinion in this family debate. He defined a family flexibly to mean a married couple, a single parent with children or grandparents living with grandchildren. But he stressed that homosexual families are not recognised in Singapore society. Emphasising that the welfare of the child is more important than the actual composition of his/her family, Abdullah Tarmugi added:

> We cannot shun these families. We may not recognise them as families but we cannot withhold assistance for the children.
>
> What happens to the child is important whatever the parent has done, whether it is right or wrong. I don't want to moralise or be dogmatic. We all have our own morality.
>
> While we don't condone the lifestyle of single unmarried parents or unmarried couples with children we must look into the welfare of the children.[77]

The family debate was given yet another twist when an inter-ministerial work group, looking into cohesion and conflict in an ageing society, called for a review of family policies by the government.[78] The group redefined family to include grandparents, uncles and aunties. Anticipating the problem of an ageing society because of low population growth and a significant number who were either childless or single, the group felt that the extended definition of family would encourage people to turn first to their families, then the community, and lastly to the state for help.[79]

In the midst of this hot family debate, what comes out as most evident is the lack of a clear understanding of the type of family that Singapore wants to encourage and maintain. Why? The answer is best given by leading sociologist of the National University of Singapore, Stella Quah. She believes that the problem is largely due to the fact that 'the family has been

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[77] *The Straits Times* 6 June 1999. Family: Definition flexible, p29.
[78] The group proposed two recommendations: 1) Housing policies can be reviewed to encourage families to stay not only near parents, but also grandparents. 2) Tax incentives for those who live with economically inactive members of the extended family, and not just parents.
[79] *The Straits Times* 2 September 1999. Uncle, auntie ... They're part of family too, p40.

viewed as an instrument of social change in government policies since the 1960s (Stella Quah 1990:247). In other words, the government has been doing too much social engineering through its public policies in order to achieve its goals and objectives. And since the government has to adapt and adjust to changing conditions, policies have to be changed from time to time in order to be relevant and effective. The unintended consequence of this is that mixed and confusing signals are sent and received by the people from time to time, especially with regard to the family. The family planning policy is an example in mind.

In the 1960s, the slogan 'Two is Enough' was used to persuade people to have not more than two children. Various public incentives and disincentives were also implemented in order to discourage having a third child. This was during the time of high unemployment and population growth. Today, Singapore is enjoying high employment but facing the problem of low population growth and a fast ageing population. Hence, couples now are urged to have three children or more if they can afford it.

It must be admitted that the government has always done social engineering with noble intentions. However, the danger is not in these intentions but in the unintended and unanticipated consequences which may encourage unhealthy attitudes, values and lifestyles. Being highly pragmatic and goal-oriented, the government has shown that it will not hesitate to change or modify the conventional in order to accommodate something that promises to work well. The danger then is to inadvertently allow solutions to contemporary problems to bring harmful beliefs and practices into society.[80]

2.5.2 Spousal roles. In the midst of this debate on what a family is, what then is the general attitude of Singaporeans toward the family?

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[80] For example, in the current family debate, seeing the child's welfare as more important than his family structure may encourage couples to resort quickly to divorce or to practise cohabitation.

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TABLE 4: Attitude toward Family (Kau et al 1998:25)

	% Disagree	% Neutral	% Agree
I am close to my parents.	3.4	25.9	70.8
My family is the single most important thing to me.	4.6	26.0	69.5
I am close to my brothers/sisters.	4.7	26.8	68.4
I listen to the advice of my elders.	2.2	37.5	60.3

Table 4 clearly indicates that Singaporeans generally have a pro-family attitude. Other statistical analyses also reveal that the more family oriented are usually females, older in age, and either Malay or Indian in ethnicity. On the other hand, those with higher education and income tend to place less emphasis and priority on family matters (Kau et al 1998:48).[81] Clearly, the demands of a well-paid job secured through better education make it very difficult for one to devote as much time to the family as he/she would like to.

How then does this generally pro-family attitude express itself in spousal roles? To understand how these roles are perceived in Singapore, it will be beneficial to first take a peek at the general atttiude toward feminism today.

TABLE 5: Attitude toward Feminism (Kau et al 1998:94)

	% Disagree	% Neutral	% Agree
A woman's life is fulfilled only if she can provide a happy home for her family.	7.2	33.6	59.2
A women should seek her own career.	4.5	31.6	63.9
I believe that a woman can work outside the home and also take good care of her children.	4.9	25.8	69.3
Women are smarter than men.	20.7	63.3	16.0

Generally, Singaporeans are fairly chauvinistic on the issue of feminism. They are supportive of it only in agreeing that women should have their own career. Otherwise, most still hold on to very traditional beliefs about woman, and have high expectations about her balancing career and family (Kau et al 1998:114).

This conclusion is supported by another study (Stella Quah 1990:273) in which 3 000

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[81] The exception here is that the highest income group shows more support for the idea that the family is the single most important thing in their life.

people were interviewed, and 85.9 % of them expressed the opinion that a mother should put children before career. In fact, this was the view of 79.4 % of the married women working outside home and 78.5 % of those working at home.[82]

In 1996, the Ministry of Community Development (MCD) commissioned sociologist Stella Quah to carry out a comprehensive research on the contemporary family in Singapore. Some of the findings in her research were made public in mid 1999. According to these findings, parents in Singapore do care deeply for their children's welfare. More specifically, children's education is found to be of greater concern to parents in Singapore. A high proportion of them also indicated that they preferred to use reasoning rather than caning to discipline their children. Hence, the new generation of Singapore kids are treated as 'precious, helpless beings who need intensive care and nurturing.'[83]

It is this parental concern over child's education that prompted Roland Cheo to research into how private tuition would affect a child's grades for his master's thesis at the National University of Singapore.[84] He came out with this startling finding which was published in *The Straits Times*: among students of the same ability, those who spent more time on tuition fared worse than those who had fewer hours of grilling by private tutors.[85]

Cheo's study also showed that children who described their mothers as encouraging had better grades. Hence, he concluded:

> Instead of wasting their money hiring one tuition teacher after another, parents should really provide a comfortable environment for their children and be more involved and encouraging.[86]

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[82] The same survey also highlights that dual-income families increased from 27.1 % in 1980 to 39.8 % in 1990. Similarly, the mean income contributed by the wife in such a family increased from 36.2 % in 1980 to 41.0 % in 1990.

[83] *The Straits Times* 19 July 1999. Study On The Family: Kids' education is No. 1 worry, p1.

[84] According to a 1992 survey by *The Straits Times*, Singapore parents were reported to have spent an estimated S$260 million a year on tutors to help boost their children's grades. This is another example of *kiasuism* in Singapore.

[85] Cheo cited two reasons for this: 1) Students 'overstudied' a subject to the point that they were turned off by it. 2) The quality of tuition teachers was not high.

[86] *The Straits Times* 15 June 1999. Tuition 'may hurt grades,' p3.

Parents in dual-income families are caught in a bind indeed - they desire the best for their children but have to resort to less than personal means to nurture them because of work commitments. But who is expected to carry the greater load in homemaking and caring for children in a dual-income Singapore family? In her MCD-commissioned research, Stella Quah again found that spousal roles in Singapore were in line with the traditional view of husbands as providers and wives as nurturers. Among the dual-income families surveyed in this research, more than half the women cut back on work after marriage, but only about 1/3 of the men did so. In addition, 91 % of those surveyed believed that a working woman's primary responsibility was still to the home. It does seem that Singapore women are generally modern in that they want a career, yet conservative at the same time in that they give the home a higher priority.[87]

But the general consensus today is that there should be more effective support for working mothers who are burdened with both job and home responsibilities. As Singapore continues to advance and develop, not only do children at home need both parents, but the economy also needs both men and women in the labour force. Thus, a vital change in the attitude of men concentrating only on earning money and women trying to be both productive worker and effective homemaker simultaneously is needed.

The call then is for man and woman to be partners in family life. But this is a Herculean effort for the man because of the various reasons pointed out by Janet Salaff (1998:255-56):

- men with higher incomes have not increased their share of household chores

- they turn their energies to new money-making opportunities

- those with children who are no longer infants justify their withdrawal from housework because they think they are now less needed at home

- many bring work home or take courses or start own businesses as they rise in their careers.

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[87] *The Sunday Times* 18 July 1999. Traditional view of spousal roles persists, p35.

This general reluctance of the man to be more involved in family life is potentially detrimental to the home. This is because Singapore women today are much better educated. The modern Singapore female feels stifled being home bound, and values the sense of fulfilment and security that comes from working. Also, a highly educated woman today will want to discuss and make joint decisions with her husband over important home matters (Kuo & Wong 1979:57).[88] These aspirations of the modern woman in Singapore certainly require that the man discards his traditional view of 'man works outside and woman stays inside.'

Recognising the need to change this mentality, Abdullah Tarmugi (Minister of Community Development) urged at the 1999 Symposium on the Singapore Family:

> Both couples have to share the duties of holding a family together. The traditional roles of the wife being wholly responsible for the house is outdated - we have to review that.
>
> This thinking is outmoded - we ought to open up and the men have to do it differently and the women cannot also think their husbands can stay at home while they go to work.
>
> Each family will have to find its own equilibrium to keep the family together.[89]

As noted by Stella Quah, this call to review the traditional perception of spousal roles in the contemporary Singapore family is largely due to three social trends which do not necessarily pull in the same direction (1998:173-74):

- the need to uphold traditional social values in order to safeguard family stability and social order

- the need to sustain the national economy which requires both men and women in the labour force

- the need for gender equality which matches the emphasis on meritocracy.

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[88] It must be noted that the modern working woman in Singapore still sees her work as secondary to her roles as wife and mother (Kuo & Wong 1979:58).

[89] *The Straits Times* 18 July 1999. Singapore family strong but stressed, p4.

In sum, this discussion about spousal roles is not one about battle of the sexes. Rather, it brings into focus the need for married couples in Singapore today to work at becoming strong partners in the home and active participants in the economy. The working woman is not to neglect her traditional duty as homemaker, and the working man is to cultivate an 'untraditional' willingness to share family chores as co-housekeeper.

2.5.3 <u>Health of family</u>. As a result of this tension that arises from the need to review spousal roles, one question begs to be answered: how strong is family life in Singapore today? *The Sunday Times* disclosed in a report on 27 June 1999 that there were more than 5 000 couples who got divorced in 1998 - 4 186 non-Muslim couples and 1 465 Muslim couples.[90] These figures respectively indicate a 14 % increase in non-Muslim divorces and a 21 % increase in Muslim divorces when compared with those in 1997.

The composite table below shows how divorce has risen steadily in Singapore since 1980:

TABLE 6: Divorce Rates 1980-95 (Stella Quah 1998:53)

	1980	1990	1995
Under Women's Charter			
Total number of marriages	19 989	19 577	20 562
Total number of divorces	1 043	2 662	3 127
Divorce rate per 1 000 marriages	53.0	135.9	152.1
Under Muslim Law			
Total number of marriages	4 032	4 762	4 412
Total number of divorces	447	972	983
Divorce rate per 1 000 marriages	110.9	204.1	206.4
Average Age of Divorcees and Average Duration of Marriage			
	1980	1990	1995
Under Women's Charter			
Male's average age	36.6	37.0	39.7
Female's average age	32.8	33.5	36.2
Average years of marriage	11.6	12.0	13.0
Under Muslim Law			
Male's average age	35.0	35.9	38.3
Female's average age	29.9	32.2	35.1
Average years of marriage	9.0	8.8	9.8

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[90] In Singapore, Muslim marriages and divorces are handled by the Muslim (*Syariah*) Court.

The report in *The Sunday Times* also specified that in the first ten months of 1998 women applied for 1 600 personal protection orders to stop their husbands from battering them. And most of the women who filed for divorce in that year were in their 30s. It does seem that women in Singapore today are more aware of their rights and will not hesitate to take their husbands to court for marital abuse or unreasonable treatment.

Explaining the reasons for this assertiveness on the part of young women today, two Singapore women shared their views.[91] One of them was Esther Tzer Wong, a well-known counsellor in Singapore. She said:

> People usually start families and compete in the office to establish themselves when they are in their 30s.
>
> It can be a confusing period for women, because they either opt for a career or drop out of the workforce to look after their families.

Juliana Toh, principal therapist at the Singapore Counselling and Care Centre, offered another reason:

> Women who are financially independent are less likely to tolerate differences and so they are prepared to leave their children with their father. This is very frightening.

Indeed, how women perceive marriage today is quite different from the past. Marriage in the past was very much a social and economic necessity - to relieve the burden of parents; to insure against old-age destitution; to provide labour for farming; to perpetuate the family name. As such, women in the past were less assertive and more tolerant toward their spouses, and they also did not want the social stigma of being a divorcee. However, today's women are a different breed altogether - they practise a 'philosophy of egoistic hedonism' which regards personal happiness as supreme, even if it means having to divorce in order to experience it (Saw & Bhathal 1981:147-48).

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[91] Their views were quoted in: *The Sunday Times* 27 June 1999. Over 5,000 couples divorce; rise in cases, p3.

Perhaps, this search for personal happiness was best captured on statistics in a joint study by Aline Wong and Eddie Kuo, both were then professors in sociology at the National University of Singapore.

TABLE 7: Relative Happiness after Divorce (Wong & Kuo 1983:87)

	% Male	% Female
Much happier	48.4	42.2
Happier	37.9	46.8
Same	8.2	5.5
More unhappy	3.8	5.5
Much more unhappy	1.7	0.0

All the facts and figures have underscored some realities confronting the Singapore family today - the man still strives hard in his career; the woman also prefers to work, and has become more assertive and independent; divorce is rising steadily as couples increasingly take this option in ending their fights and differences. However, Professor Stella Quah still remained upbeat about the overall state of the Singapore family when she summarised the findings of her MCD-commissioned study.[92] She commented:

> A very positive picture. The majority of families are doing well and show a lot of affection. Spouses are satisfied with their marriages and there is a certain level of cohesiveness.
>
> Families can become stronger if they are helped. Dual-income families need more time to be with their families. Employers could help with better or more family-friendly regulations.
>
> The flexi-time scheme is good and we should review the five-day-week idea. Bosses can also give leave to men to look after their sick children and leave for both men and women to look after sick parents.
>
> The stress levels for dual-income families will go up and families will find it more difficult to transmit values to the next generation.[93]

Responding to Professor Quah's assessment, some participants at feedback dialogues regarded her view of the Singapore family as 'too optimistic.' For one thing, her positive

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[92] Her study with a sample of 1 652 adults did not include single-parent families.
[93] *The Straits Times* 23 July 1999. The family is well, but it will face more stress in future, p54.

picture contradicted the increase in divorces. Perhaps, what was expressed by married people

on questionnaires was not exactly what was experienced by them in reality.[94] Also, her study

excluded children, thereby depriving her data of some very important input.[95]

An outsider's perspective from expatriate Dwight Hill is worth noting too. He was

residing for a while in Singapore when he was stationed here as a staff of Navigators USA, a

parachurch organisation. Hill warned:

> I worry about Singapore, because I believe I see some of the same materialistic
> patterns here that mirror our experiences in America. The current generation of
> Singaporean youth could well be saying, 'We would rather have had our
> mother home than being raised by the maid. We could have gotten along
> without that extra car. We could have ridden the MRT more often. Where were
> our parents when we needed them most?' Just like America, Singapore's
> pursuit of wealth could be at the price of her children. Divorce, crime, and
> delinquency rates could go up as kids receive less and less affectionate
> attention from their parents. It is a worthless prize.[96]

These are words that sound out a challenge to the family man in Singapore today - to

keep his family strong in the face of powerful, destabilising forces. Firstly, as the labour force

improves in skills, competence and professionalism, he has to face stiffer competition in the

workplace. Secondly, as people-scarce Singapore continues to emphasise economic growth

and meritocracy, married women who are generally well educated today are encouraged to

continue working, with lots of opportunities for advancement. The family man in Singapore

must then come to terms with this emerging force of feminism. And thirdly, as dual-income

families increase in Singapore, working parents will have to leave their children more and

more to the influences of maids, grandparents, peers and even, the television. Hence, the

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[94] It is possible that the respondents might indicate things which they would like to see happen instead of stating what was really happening in their family life. Also, the Asian tendency of not wanting to be open with private matters like family problems may be another possible reason why the responses were more positive than expected.

[95] *The Straits Times* 26 July 1999. MCD study on families 'too rosy,' p27.

[96] Hill, Dwight 1998. Prosperity At What Cost? *Impact* (August/September), p17.

family man in Singapore today will do well to guard his young against the influence of potentially undesirable values.

Current signs are indicating that the Singapore family today is stressed and strained. To keep the family in a reasonably healthy state in the days to come, every family member needs to play a part. Especially for the man, much will depend on how he handles the three destabilising forces that have been mentioned.

2.6 Success and Values of the Young

2.6.1 Individualistic pursuits. The young people of Singapore today have never faced hardship like their parents or grandparents. With youthful impatience, they want quick success rather than to persevere for results in their endeavours. Lee Kuan Yew sounded this warning with great foresight in his 1989 National Day message:[97]

> Our forefathers had left their homelands to make good in a strange land and were determined to succeed, keen to achieve their best. The determination to work hard and to achieve became a habit which they passed on to their children. But after the second generation, and more often, many years of comfortable growth and prosperity, we have tended to take things for granted (Jon Quah 1990:82).

Indeed, the two dominant life goals of the young today are individual freedom and material wealth, as revealed in a study by the Singapore National Youth Council (SNYC) on youth between the ages of 15 to 29 (see Table 8).

TABLE 8: Life Goal of Singapore Youth (Yeo & Chow 1997:9)

To acquire social position	12 %
To improve society and the world	8 %
To live as I like	44 %
To get rich	32 %
Others	4 %

In another recent study on the lifestyles of 18-year old junior college students, majority of the respondents indicated that they were only fairly satisfied with the material aspects of

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[97] Lee was still Prime Minister of Singapore then.

their life - money (52.2 %); housing (42.4 %); transportation (44.8 %).[98] Though public housing and transportation in Singapore are affordable and of a high standard, many young people still aspire to live in private houses and have their own cars. These private possessions are attractive not only because they are viewed as status symbols, but also as means to have a private and exclusive lifestyle. In a subtle sense, this is one way in which young people exert their individualism - their desire to be left alone in their own private world far from the crowd. This trend has led Jon Quah (1990:87) to conclude that society before self does not seem to be attractive as a worldview to the pragmatic young because they believe that 'self-interest that is enlightened and legitimate should be given free play.'

2.6.2 Relationship with parents. According to the Fifth World Youth Survey, when youths need to seek advice, the mother is often ranked as the top adviser while the father is constantly within the top five positions. However, this is not the case for Singapore. Findings of the SNYC study (Yeo & Chow 1997:15) have shown that youths here prefer to be advised by friends than by parents.[99] As far as parental advice is concerned, 24 % indicated that they would go to their mothers while only 9 % would turn to their fathers. Another 10 % would rather depend on their own good sense than to seek advice from anyone. It is significant to note that slightly more Singapore youths prefer not to go to anyone for advice than to seek it from their fathers.

This rather uneasy father-child relationship was further underscored in the doctoral research of Ong Ai Choo, a National Institute of Education lecturer. She surveyed 748 teens aged 16 to 19. According to her findings, these Singapore teens wanted their fathers to show warmth, listen to their problems and explain reasons for punishment. This implies that too many fathers were seen by their teenage children to be cold, aloof and authoritarian. Ong's

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[98] Chew, Len & Tan 1998:70.
[99] These friends include clubmates, girlfriends/boyfriends, neighbours/schoolmates and older peers.

research also revealed that teens regarded their mothers as more caring and nurturing, and more willing to include them in decision making. Interestingly, those who scored better grades in their studies indicated that they were largely encouraged by their fathers' affection and willingness to communicate with them.[100]

In view of this rather 'odd' behaviour of Singapore youths, how do they really regard their relationship with their parents? Some answers can be drawn from Table 9 below:

TABLE 9: How the Young Relate to Parents (Chew et al 1998:13)

	Strongly Disagree %	No Strong Opinion %	Strongly Agree %
Be filial to parents	1.7	6.6	91.8
Respect elders	1.4	12.7	85.8
Listen to the advice of elders	1.9	41.4	56.7
Support aged parents	1.4	6.2	92.4
Live with parents after marriage	19.7	59.7	20.7

Two points can be made from the information provided in the table. Firstly, while the young may respect and listen to their parents, this does not amount to accepting their views. In fact, the young are very much independent thinkers today as a result of better education and media exposure. Secondly, as young couples set up their own families, many prefer to live apart from their parents.[101] This implies that support for parents is likely to be financial rather than physical. In this regard, Jon Quah (1990:86) points out a dilemma facing young couples today - though their Asian values teach them the need to preserve strong family ties, they also value their own lifestyles and privacy, and do not want to be tied down by the needs and demands of parents at home.[102]

Undoubtedly, success has challenged some of the Asian values which Singaporeans have inherited from their forebears. This is partly because Singapore has achieved success not

[100] *The Straits Times* 15 November 1999. Teens want fathers to be more caring, p39.
[101] In the past, the mature family was usually a large entity because sons who were married would continue to stay with their parents and siblings in the same village house.
[102] A contemporary practice today is to send elderly parents to aged homes, visiting them periodically and providing them materially through the services of these institutions. In the past, such a practice was contemptuous as it was viewed to be an act of abandoning one's parents.

in isolation, but in contact with the outside world, particularly the English-speaking West. In fact, with better education, media technology, free flow of information, overseas work and foreign talent in the new millennium, Singapore will be even more influenced and exposed to ideas that may not necessarily correspond with traditional Asian perceptions and practices in the country. As it is now, Confucianism is not deeply entrenched in Singapore in spite of the island's predominantly ethnic Chinese population simply because of her openness to accept any 'foreign' ideas that will work well.

How then have some of these outside ideas influenced the perspectives of Singaporeans toward success, family and masculinity today? The following sections will capture some of the essential assertions of certain personalities pertaining to these three issues in question.[103] All these individuals are respected as authorities in their respective fields on the strength of their academic credentials or life achievements. They are 'popular' in that their works are easily obtainable from the marketplace of ideas, and designed to help the 'man in the street' to understand and apply. They are also secular in that they speak with a socio-psychological emphasis. Some of these personalities have even visited Singapore to give talks or lead seminars. Though their views may not necessarily be unique, they do represent prevailing ideas that are greatly influencing the minds and lives of many Singaporeans today.

2.7 Secular Perspectives on Success

2.7.1 Denis Waitley.[104] In his book, *The Psychology Of Winning*, Waitley does not claim to have unique insights into the achievement of success. However, he (Waitley 1979:6) stresses one point as of singular importance: it makes little difference what is actually happening, it's how you personally take it that really counts.

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[103] Attempts to dialogue with these ideas from a biblical-theological perspective will be made in Chapter IV.
[104] Denis Waitley holds a doctorate in human behaviour. He is a university professor as well as consultant to corporations, government and private organisations. He has also appeared regularly as a speaker and panelist.

Waitley (1979:7-9) identifies three types of people based on how they react or respond to what is happening in their lives. He calls the first type *spectators*. These are people who watch life happen as bystanders. They fear taking up responsibility and setting example for others to follow. Because of this, Waitley brands them as people who fear to win.

A second type of people is what Waitley calls *losers*. These tend to envy others. They express this tendency in a number of ways - criticising others; trying to be like someone else; putting oneself down.

Thirdly, there are people whom Waitley hails as *winners*. These are people who always put themselves together in spite of the odds. They set and achieve goals that not only benefit themselves, but others as well. Hence, Waitley believes that the act of winning in life includes giving freely to others and being glad that you are you. To win in an endeavour is to know that you have done better than what you did the last time.

To become a total winner in life, a person should develop some essential qualities. First, Waitley (1979:21-22) advocates a *positive self awareness*. By this, he implies that every person has equal rights to fulfil his/her potential in life, but each also has his/her own unique potential. What this awareness means as people relate with one another is that they need to try and understand another person's point of view, that is, to feel with (empathise) and feel for (sympathise) others. This calls for an open-mindedness that enables people to look at things as relative rather than as absolute. Waitley (1979:24-25) further adds that this attitude will give people a mental toughness to adapt, relax and cope with adversities and failures in life. They begin to normalise adversities and failures, and see these as feedback to correct and get back on track.

Second, Waitley (1979:38-39) speaks of the quality of *positive self esteem*. He lists three reasons for low self esteem: allowing the unrealistic standards of others to control

oneself; being aware of the need to change but refusing to do so; letting self doubt make one jealous of others and pressurising one to always want to prove himself/herself. Instead of comparing with others and becoming depressed, Waitley pictures a winner as one who views himself/herself in terms of his/her own abilities, interests and goals. In other words, a winner is one who is always trying to better his/her past performances rather than comparing with others.

Waitley (1979:40-43) gives some practical suggestions as to how self esteem can be improved:

- base actions and decisions more on rational thinking than on emotions as these negate the wisdom and power of the mind

- take pride, passion and pleasure in what you are doing now rather than looking for greener fields

- accept yourself just as you are at this moment yet always seeking to improve

- do positive self talk so as to instil in you positive thoughts about yourself and your performances; accept compliments boldly without putting yourself down in actions or words.

Third, *positive self control* is another quality essential in winning. Waitley (1979:50) views life as a 'do-it-to-yourself' kind of programming in which you take full responsibility for determining all your actions. You are to 'choose from alternatives and shape your own destinies.' You make the best use of what you have when you say 'I decide to do' rather than 'I have to do' (Waitley 1979:54). In this way, you assume self control by sitting in the driver's seat of your own life.

Fourth, Waitley dwells on the quality of *positive self motivation*. If there is to be any motivation at all, it must come from within the person. Motivation is an internalised state and dependent on the interplay of two key emotions in a person - the negative emotion of fear and

the positive emotion of desire (Waitley 1979:65).[105] To be motivated to achieve success, drive, focus and persistence are necessary to help you concentrate on the desired outcome; you are to challenge yourself to finish what you have started by using words like 'can' and 'will' (Waitley 1979:71-74).

Fifth, Waitley (1979:95) describes how your subconscious ('Robot') controls the conscious level of your thinking ('Judge') to give you a *positive self image*. The memory bank in your 'Robot' contains data which cannot be wilfully erased. Hence, no action can ever take place without reference to the 'Robot' in you. At the same time, an action often takes place without consulting the "Judge' in you. That being the case, Waitley (1979:97) claims that everyday decisions are based on information about yourself which has been stored as 'truth' in the memory bank of the 'Robot' in you. This 'truth' is your self image but is often a figment of your imagination because it is distorted by your own life environment. In order to make any permanent change in your personality or behaviour, Waitley (1979:98) suggests that you should first go for a change in self image, and reinforcing that by a change in lifestyle.[106]

Sixth, Waitley (1979:123) argues passionately that winning has much to do with a *positive self discipline* which he describes in the following manner:

> Self discipline is mental practice - the commitment to memory of those thoughts and emotions that will override current information stored in the subconscious memory bank. And through relentless repetition, the penetration of these new inputs into our 'Robot achievement mechanism' resulting in the creation of a new self image.

Winning is very much a mind game. A person can simulate winning by imagining success in his/her mind. Such a mental 'suggestology' is powerful as it allows actual pursuits of success to be reinforced by simulated winning in the mind (Waitley 1979:128).

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[105] Somewhat contradictingly, Waitley has earlier maintained that one should base his/her actions and decisions more on rational thinking than on emotions.

[106] But if the self image is only a figment of your imagination and not the real self (as asserted by Waitley), changing it from a negative to a positive one will still result in you living in self deception rather than reality.

Waitley views success as winning in life. And winning has much to do with having a positive concept of self. As long as the self concept is positive, man can exercise the enormous potential in him. There is nothing wrong with the self; what is wrong is your image or perception of it. You are not to fix the self by correcting it from bad to good. Rather, you are to bring out the best in one's self by having a positive self image; by challenging the self to perform from good to better. To be a winner in life is to allow the self to work out its fullest potential by aiming high, and determining to go all the way through positive self talk, mental visualisation and emotional internalisation. Though Waitley also considers giving to others as important, the preoccupation with self as advocated in his approach leaves very little room for one to be passionate for others. Simply put, what is likely to come out of his psychology is a lopsided infatuation for oneself, with little interest for others.

2.7.2 <u>Harry Alder</u>.[107] In his very readable book, *NLP*, Alder describes various mental techniques to help change behaviour. NLP stands for Neuro-Linguistic Programming and is propagated today as an 'art and science of personal excellence.'[108] NLP is an art in that it helps us to think and act; it is a science in that it uses well-researched methods to bring about successful behaviour.[109] In fact, the NLP way to behavioural changes is so refreshing that it claims to challenge orthodox psychology, and to render prevailing self-development and positive thinking ideas incomplete and outdated (Alder 1994:2-4).

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[107] Dr Harry Alder works with major companies in the United Kingdom, helping their staff to reach their maximum potential.

[108] Neuro refers to the neurological processes of seeing, hearing, feeling, tasting and smelling. Linguistics recognises the role of language in our thinking and communicating. Programming implies that we programme our thoughts and actions like a computer programmed to do a specific task.

[109] NLP techniques were first practised in the 1970s by two men - John Grinder (a linguist) and Richard Bandler (a mathematician, psychotherapist and computer expert). They studied the methods of three leading experts who had brought outstanding changes in human behaviour - Milton Erickson (a hypnotherapist), Virginia Satir (a family therapist) and Gregory Bateson (an anthropologist). Out of their studies, Grinder and Bandler formulated the first NLP exercises.

Alder (1994:7-8) asserts that the human brain has the god-like ability to understand ourselves, others and the environment; it gives each person an enormous potential for getting what he/she wants in life.

The book (Alder 1994:13-18) outlines five key NLP principles. First, you need to note that *the map is not the territory*. This means that your own interpretation of things around you builds itself into a mental map which represents your understanding of reality. Since such a mental map is only a personal and subjective interpretation, no two mental maps are the same. In other words, different people have different mental maps of the same territory. Hence, the map is not the territory but only your subjective perception of the territory. In order to enhance your communication and relationship with another person, you need to try and undertand that person's mental map.

Second, you need to note that *underlying all behaviour is a positive intention*. This helps you to see the best in every human action. Know that even in a negative action, the intention behind it is always positive. In NLP, the way to correct that wrong behaviour is to identify the positive intention behind it and explore other ways to achieve that desired intention/outcome.

Third, you need to note that *choice is better than no choice*. This encourages the creation of as many options as possible. With choices, there is greater freedom to act and greater chance to get what you want in life.

Fourth, NLP believes that *the meaning of your communication is the response it produces*. In any communication, you are to treat the response from the other person as simply a piece of information. The ensuing response/effect informs you to change your behaviour until the response/effect you desire to see in the other person is forthcoming. People may not first respond in the way you want because they respond to you with their own mental map of

the situation. Bearing this in mind will take much emotion out of the situation as you focus on achieving a desired response/outcome. You do this by first understanding the mental map of the other person and then changing your own behaviour in order to reach the outcome you desire. Moreover, it is definitely easier to change yourself than others.

Fifth, you need to note that *there is no failure, only feedback*. Whatever happens is not to be judged as either good or bad, but to be seen as merely information for further action. This informational feedback is used by you to change your behaviour so that the desired outcome is achieved. This 'no failure' attitude empowers you to learn from every so-called mistake and to turn every outcome to your advantage. Not getting what you want initially is only a feedback for you to adjust your behaviour and priorities so that you can eventually get what you want.

Alder asserts that if you are to get what you want in life, you must adopt a thinking strategy that helps you replace disempowering/negative self beliefs with empowering/positive ones.[110] His book (Alder 1994:96-100) describes a simple method of creating a desirable self belief in 'do-it-yourself' fashion:

- First, state that desirable self belief in positive terms - for example, 'I am outgoing'.

- Second, ensure that belief is truly yours and not that of others - for example, say 'I am a likeable person' instead of 'other people like me'. It is also important that the belief is within your control, that is, you can act in a likeable way.

- Third, restate the desirable self belief in dynamic, not static terms - for example, say 'I am becoming confident' instead of 'I am confident'. Such a dynamic affirmation allows you to have your 'off' days without undermining the truth of that statement as it points to a direction rather than a destination. Even

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[110] This involves basically changing one's state of mind this way: Think of a scene when you feel very defeated. Then, think of another scene when you feel very masterful and victorious. Replace those modalities (sights, sounds, feelings, tastes and smells) in the defeated situation with those in the victorious one. These senses are actually representation systems that create the state in your mind. This switching of representation systems is to be done at the alpha state, that is, the period just before going to sleep when the mind is very receptive to remembering, imagining and suggestive thoughts. When this switching is done deliberately and repetitively, the undesired state of mind in the defeated scenario can be altered (Alder 1994:67-70).

when you do wrong and have not yet arrived, you are still progressing and getting better.

- Fourth, select an action that supports the desirable belief. Run through that action in your mind. If you have no personal experience, you may draw on that of others - for example, you may imagine a famous speaker talking confidently before a huge crowd.[111] As soon as you are ready, put yourself in the scene and imagine yourself as the key character. Work through the sights, sounds and feelings associated with that scene. While this is going on, state your belief out loud in an affirming tone; let the picture in your mind provide all the evidence of your desired self belief with you as the main actor. This will empower a belief you choose to have about yourself.

- Fifth, decide where and when you are going to put your visualised actions into actual practice. Make a commitment to start because appropriate behaviour will enhance the desired self belief and fuel confidence in you.

Success to Harry Alder is getting what you want in life; whether you really need it or not is not his interest here. To succeed in getting what you want, he advocates stretching the human mind with positive visualisation and imaging exercises in order to develop empowering self beliefs. The kind of mental gymnastics he teaches may sound novel, yet it still rests on the same old optimism that when the indomitable spirit of self belief is stirred up, a person can achieve anything, for nothing is impossible then.

2.7.3 Anthony Robbins.[112] In his book, *Unlimited Power*, Robbins (1986:25) asserts that it is 'not what happens that separates failures from successes, but how we perceive and what we do about what happens that makes the difference.' In a sense, how you communicate with yourself regarding what happens to you defines for you what is success and what is failure.

Robbins (1986:70-81) has formulated a belief system for success with these statements:

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[111] This sounds like a kind of mental cloning which tries to make you into a particular person in certain behaviours.

[112] Anthony Robbins is considered as USA's foremost leader in the science of peak performance. He is both founder and chairman of the Anthony Robbins Companies which are committed to assisting people achieve personal and professional mastery. Robbins is also a firm believer in NLP techniques.

- *Everything happens for a reason or purpose.* You are not to allow what happens to limit you. Rather, you are to learn from it and continue to think big. Belief in limits only creates limited people. In other words, you can if you believe you can.

- *There is no such thing as failure.* You always succeed in getting some kind of results. The important thing is to do, learn and try again.

- *Whatever happens, take responsibility.* You create your own world by your action and thought. To achieve the outcome you want depends very much on yourself. Hence, you have everything to gain by taking responsibility. When you retain responsibility of what happens to yourself, you retain the power to change and to produce the outcome you want.

- *It is not necessary to understand everything to be able to use everything.* You need not have to know all things before you can benefit from a learning sitiuation. What you do need is to know what is essential and what is not. The emphasis is to extract the essence from a learning situation and not to 'dwell or sweat on the rest.'

- *People are your greatest resource.* This implies that you are to respect rather than to manipulate others. It recognises the importance of teamwork and the need to appreciate collaborative talents in a successful team.

- *Work is play.* This is not to encourage workaholicism which is merely an obsession. The workaholic is one who gets no pleasure from work, but cannot seem to do anything else in place of work. However, to love work as play is to allow oneself to be stretched and to learn new things through work. When we work at exploring new possibilities, we prevent our work from becoming a dead-end job.

- *There is no abiding success without commitment.* You owe it to yourself to be successful. As long as you are personally willing to do whatever it takes, you can make it and succeed in life.

In order to put his belief system for success into practice in real life, Robbins describes a number of behaviour-changing techniques. One of which is called *metaprogramming.* Metaprogrammes are the internal programmes which a person uses to decide what to pay attention to. This will include how that person deletes, distorts and generalises information. In other words, mataprogrammes are the keys to understand how a person mentally processes information received. These internal representations in turn direct the person's behaviour in response to the information received. Hence, in order to communicate effectively to a person,

you have to understand his/her metaprogrammes in order to get your messages across (Robbins 1986:254).

To use metaprogramming as a tool for communication with others and personal change, Robbins (1986:255-68) suggests the following guiding questions:

- *How is the other person motivated?* Determine if the person is a seeing, feeling or hearing person and use words that best appeal to his/her personality.

- *Which frame of reference does the other person prefer - external or internal?* For example, if the person needs applauses to know that he/she has done well, then that person prefers an external frame of reference. On the other hand, an inner sense of satisfaction is all a person of internal frame needs to reassure himself/herself of a job well done.

- *Does the other person sort by self or by others?* The one who sorts by self will tend to do things very much for his/her own benefit; the one who sorts by others will tend to ask what he/she can do for others. The former is said to have an egotist spirit while the latter has the spirit of a martyr.

- *Is the other person a matcher or a mismatcher?* A matcher is one who responds by finding similarities while a mismatcher will tend to look for differences. The former goes for consistency and rigidity, while the latter prefers change and flexibility.

- *Is the other person interested in possibility or necessity?* A person of possibility is often stimulated by what he/she wants to do, and creates new alternatives and opportunities for himself/herself. Conversely, a person of necessity is often engaged in what he/she has to do, and sticks to what is already available.

- *What is the other person's working style - independent, cooperative or proximity?* An independent worker prefers to work all by himself/herself; a cooperative worker prefers to work with others in a team; a proximity worker prefers to work with others while maintaining sole responsibility for a task. Understanding a person's working style will help to best utilise his/her strengths so that the person can operate at his/her highest level of competence.

A second behaviour-changing technique taught by Anthony Robbins is *reframing*. To reframe is to change something negative into something positive by changing the frame of reference used to perceive the experience concerned. There are two ways to do reframing - reframe the context or reframe the content. To reframe the context, you take a negative

behaviour and consider how that same behaviour can be advantageous in another context. For example, if a sudden outburst of anger has destroyed a treasured relationship, you can reframe that behaviour in the context of a robbery and affirm how it can be a helpful reaction. To reframe the content does not require you to change the situation but to change the meaning/interpretation of the same situation. For example, some people change the meaning/interpretation of death from that of loss to that of glory, finding comfort instead of grief as a result (Robbins 1986:293-94).[113]

Anchoring is another technique in Robbin's book. He teaches it to sportsmen to help them reach their peak performance in a competition. Robbins (1986:316) gives a neuro-scientific explanation to the creation of anchors this way:

> Whenever a person is in an intense state where the mind and body are strongly involved together and a specific stimulus is consistently and simultaneously provided at the peak of the state, the stimulus and the state become neurologically linked.[114]

The practical outworking of this explanation goes like this:

> - First, put the person (or yourself) into the specific state of mind and body you wish to anchor.

> - Second, provide a specific, unique stimulus as the person experiences the peak of that state. For example, when someone is laughing, squeeze his/her ear with a specific and unique pressure. Do this several times and ensure that this stimulus of squeezing is always applied exactly. If the anchor is successfully created, the person will go into laughter whenever that stimulus is applied or provided.[115]

Anthony Robbins believes that a person has unlimited power because he/she can mentally condition self belief in oneself or others. You can do all things if you believe enough in yourself. His belief system asserts that there are no failures in all that you do, but only

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[113] Robbins even suggests that you weaken the power of some negative remarks by reframing the person saying those words in the voice of your favourite singer!

[114] An example of this is how the singing of the national anthem (the stimulus) can stir up a sense of patriotism (the anchor response) in a person.

[115] A comedian can put on a 'trademark' facial expression (the consistent stimulus) and this will invariably churn his audience into spontaneous laughter (the consistent anchor response).

outcomes. While this does well to encourage you to try again, it also seems to put you in a state of denial whenever you experience failure.

2.8 Secular Perspectives on Successful Marriage-Family Life

2.8.1 John Gottman.[116] As opposed to many remarks made relating to staying married, Gottman (1994:24) comments:

> My research shows that much more important than having compatible views is how couples work out their differences. In fact, occasional discontent, especially during a marriage's early years, seems to be good for the union in the long run.

There are three types of stable marriages according to Gottman's research. The first of which is the *validating* type. In this kind of relationship, the couple still respect each other's opinions and emotions as valid even in the midst of disagreement. They pick their battles carefully, and flare-ups often end up sounding like problem-solving discussion than hostile war cry. Their relationship stability rests in their willingness to communicate and share with each other. In a conflict situation, they air their opinions, try to convince the other, and then negotiate for a compromise (Gottman 1994:35-38).

The second kind of stable marriage is the *volatile* type. Such couples are extreme in their hate and love - they not only fight on a grand scale, but also have a grander time making up. When they fight, volatile couples do not care to listen, but these arguments can add more flavour in that they serve to spice up their relationship. For a volatile couple, the fight may be intense, but the peace after it is even better. They can be very good at resolving differences in that they are very open with both their negative and positive feelings. They may explode yet they are often willing to explore reconciliatory measures (Gottman 1994:39-42).

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[116] John Gottman is a professor in psychology at the University of Washington in Seattle, USA. He has done a breakthrough study of 2 000 married couples over many years, and was noted for his ability to predict with great accuracy which people will stay married and which will divorce.

The third type of stable marriage categorised by Gottman (1994:44-46) is the *avoidant* type. Such couples often try to minimise their conflict by making light their differences rather than to work at resolving them. Issues that will lead to an impasse are often avoided. Though they may air their unhappiness, they do not see it as big enough to fight over it. Hence, avoidant couples usually do not see the need to persuade or to compromise. They prefer to let time take its natural course. Though the conflict may not be resolved, the avoidant couple still feels good about each other. They also value separateness, and this can cause one partner to feel very lonely as the other does not seem to really know or understand him/her.

Gottman (1994:57) maintains that a stable marriage must strike a healthy balance between positive and negative feelings and actions in the relationship. To achieve such a balance in the marriage ecology, his research findings point to a 5:1 ratio, that is, create five times as much positive feelings and interactions in the relationship as there are negative. Some recommendations by Gottman (1994:59-61) for increasing the level of positive feelings and interactions are:

- Be interested in what your partner is saying in any conversation.

- Be affectionate through physical touches of tenderness, like holding hands.

- Be appreciative by affirming your partner.

- Be empathetic by showing understanding.

- Be accepting by respecting your partner's opinion even if you do not agree with it.

- Be caring by showing little acts of thoughtfulness, like helping in kitchen work.

- Be supportive by not being defensive and even apologising when appropriate.

- Be humourous with your mate with jokes, teases and silliness.

- Be open to share your joy with your mate.

Gottman observes in his research that there are four forces that greatly undermine the stability of a marriage if they are allowed to become habitual patterns in the relationship. He calls these four destructive forces as the 'Four Horsemen of Apocalypse'.

The first 'horseman' is *criticism*. This is not just a complaint which is usually about a specific action/behaviour, but an act of attacking someone's character and personality. While a complaint is often specific in nature, a criticism is one of sweeping generalisation in a negative manner (Gottman 1994:72-73).[117]

The second 'horseman' is *contempt*. This is the intention to insult and abuse psychologically. Such a pattern of negativity causes one partner to rarely compliment the other. In fact, the person hardly remembers the positive qualities of his/her partner. Instead of words of admiration, what is verbally forthcoming are name-calling, sarcasm and hostile humour (Gottman 1994:79-80).

Defensiveness is the third 'horseman'. It is a mental state in which both partners feel victimised by the other in the marriage relationship. Both are not willing to take the responsibility to set things right; both plead innocent. Such a reaction is only natural because of the feeling of being cornered and attacked; it is the natural act of protecting oneself of further harm. Some tell-tale signs of being trapped in a state of defensiveness include:

- denying responsibility to blame

- making excuses

- repeating own position without trying to understand the other's view

- cross-complaining by reacting to partner's complaint with one of your own (Gottman 1994:84-88).

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[117] Example of a complaint (often directed at an action): 'I don't like being neglected!'
Example of a criticism (often directed at a person): 'You are so selfish!'

The fourth and last 'horseman' in Gottman's research is *stonewalling*. The man is the main culprit here because of his physiological and psychological make-up. To stonewall is to react with stony silence; to withdraw or disengage from any meaningful interaction with the other person, leaving him/her with a desperate sense of being rejected and abandoned (Gottman 1994:94-95).

To stabilise a marriage, Gottman (1994:175) believes that the couple must work at nullifying these four 'horsemen' and their associated emotions. He advises couples '... not to worry so much about solving your marital problems as in dealing with the emotions they stir.' To allow the 'horsemen' to become residential in a marriage relationship is to let it deteriorate into a cycle of negativity. Gottman suggests some strategies to break this destructive cycle.

Strategy 1: Be calm. Gottman calls this the antidote to 'flooding'.[118] It helps to ease the need to be defensive and to stonewall. Gottman's research has shown that men are usually overwhelmed physiologically sooner than women in a heated argument. Also, men are more likely to have distress-maintaining thoughts when they become flooded.[119] When feeling flooded, the person should call for a break in order to cool off before resuming to talk. During this 'time-out' period, the person can change their distress-maintaining thoughts to soothing, validating ones.[120] Rhythmic breathing is also a good way to relax and normalise one's pulse rate (Gottman 1994:176-80).[121]

Strategy 2: Speak non-defensively. One way to do this is to use praise and admiration sincerely. Also, make the other person feel accepted through non-defensive listening which

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[118] 'Flooding' is the feeling of being overwhelmed by your partner's negativity and your own reactions that you are swamped by distress and upset. As a result, you become very hostile, defensive and withdrawn.

[119] Distress-maintaining thoughts include that of righteous indignation and innocent victimisation. Gottman advises men to watch their pulse rate in order to avoid flooding, which will arouse in them a fight-or-flight instinct, making it difficult for them to listen attentively to the other person.

[120] Example of distress-maintaining thinking: 'That really hurt me.'
Example of soothing, validating thinking: 'No need to take it so hard; that's as best as she can see.'

[121] One can think 'in' when inhaling and 'out' when exhaling.

includes empathising with his/her views and emotions. Another way to speak non-defensively is to use a complaint rather than a criticism or contempt (Gottman 1994:181-86).[122]

Strategy 3: Validate your partner. This is especially helpful to men when they become hyper-rational toward their partner's feelings and emotions. The purpose of validation is to consider the other person's feelings and views as valid even if you do not share them. Learn to acknowledge that your actions may have provoked the responses from your partner.[123] In any case, the least one can do in validation is to tell the other person that his/her feelings are understood (Gottman 1994:195-96).

John Gottman is right to say that a healthy marriage is not one without conflict, but one that deals with conflict constructively whenever it arises. However, for him to advise married couples to worry about the emotions that have been stirred up rather than the marital problem itself seems problematic. It seems that Gottman is teaching couples to deal with the surface rather than the root difficulties in their marriage. Apparently, as far as Gottman is concerned, success in marriage is simply to keep it enduring, never mind if it is hardly endearing. If couples are to accept his ideas uncritically, they may end up staying married but not enjoying their relationship in its fullest potential.

2.8.2 <u>Lawrence Shapiro</u>.[124] Generally, people today understand EQ (Emotional Quotient) as an abbreviated synonym for emotional intelligence. This is much like people taking IQ (Intelligent Quotient) as an abbreviated synonym for cognitive intelligence (Shapiro 1997:8-9).[125] According to Shapiro (1997:9-10), the most important distinction between EQ

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[122] Gottman calls it the XYZ statement: 'When you did (or didn't do) X in situation Y, I felt Z.'

[123] You can do this by admitting that you are sorry or that you are wrong.

[124] Lawrence Shapiro is the President and founder of the Center for Applied Psychology in the USA. He is also a frequent lecturer on using games to develop emotional intelligence in children.

[125] However, psychologists Peter Salovey of Harvard University and John Mayer of the University of New Hampshire have refused to use EQ as a synonym for emotional intelligence. To them, emotional intelligence is used only to describe some emotional qualities that appear important to success in life. Daniel Goleman created great public awareness of this concept through his 1995 best-seller *Emotional Intelligence*. Both Salovey and

and IQ lies in the fact that EQ is much less 'genetically loaded.' This means that in training a child to grow up well and live successfully, parents can depend more on nurture rather than nature.

Shapiro asserts that shame and guilt, when used in appropriate measures, can achieve positive results in moral teaching. He claims, 'Shame and guilt are not emotional villians. When used appropriately, they are important ways that parents can teach children moral values' (Shapiro 1997:80). Some recommendations given by Shapiro (1997:78-79) to show how shame and guilt can be used to train children into honest, ethical and caring adults are:

- Mete out consistent punishments when rules are broken. This includes ensuring that punishments are fair, immediate and effective.

- For a child over 10, get him/her to name the punishment he/she considers appropriate to the rule that has been broken. This will challenge the child to have high self expectations and to live up to them.

- Punish the child more heavily when someone else is hurt by his/her misdoing. Also, let the child feel the shame and guilt in appropriate measure in order to change his/her behaviour. The key here is not to be too quick to comfort.[126]

- Ensure that the child sees the need to apologise for what he/she has done wrong. If need be, there should be both oral and written apologies so that the child can respond emotionally and sincerely.

As your actions are often guided by your thoughts, Shapiro believes that when a child is trained to change the way he/she thinks, what results is a change in the way he/she acts. This is called cognitive-behaviour modification, and there are some practical steps to take:

- Help the child to see the problem behaviour as the 'enemy'; as something outside of himself/herself. Give this 'enemy' a name that the child hates and challenge him/her to fight it. You can make the child be fully responsible for the fight by asking him/her to write out a 'battle plan' (Shapiro 1997:114-15).

Mayer are against equating EQ with emotional intelligence because they fear that this may lead to the misconception that there is some reliable test to measure how intelligent one is emotionally.

[126] Shapiro also suggests this key in helping a child develop social skills. He asserts that a parent should refrain from joining the child in complaining about his/her friends as this will only reinforce social isolation. The child should learn to endure the hurt and make decisions about how to handle relationship problems. This is especially so for children who are between 6 to 12 years old (the reciprocal and intimate stages). The parent should learn to be a good listener, to guide by setting appropriate limits and acceptable values, and to share own knowledge and experience at the right time (Shapiro 1997:195-97).

- Get the child to do self-talk, that is, to repeat his/her action statement against the 'enemy' several times until he/she begins to believe it (Shapiro 1997:121).[127]

- Guide the child to run an appropriate imagery in the mind. Such an imagery will distract the thinking part of the brain, thereby weakening the nerve impulses that have been generated by distressing thoughts. Intense concentration used to form an image can produce an internal pain-suppressing effect (Shapiro 1997:125-28).[128]

Shapiro considers it crucial to train a child to have an internal sense of control over his/her environment if the child is to succeed in life. He calls this control 'mastery' and regards it as important in self-motivation. Shapiro (1997:225) has this to say, especially to the *kiasu* Singapore parent:

> Many parents wrongly conclude that establishing a sense of mastery is the same as mastering new skills. With this in mind, they may lead their children on a frenetic chase of extracurricular activities - rushing from piano lessons to soccer practice to karate class - often creating a sense of being controlled by the schedule of activities. But paradoxically, this hectic pace can work against children learning achievement skills: The feeling of being controlled by external forces often leads to a lack of motivation.

To increase the level of self-motivation, Shapiro (1997:225-32) suggests the following so that the child can have a good sense of control:

- Give child the opportunities to set own goals.

- Expect child to do more on his/her own. Use rewards or reinforcement sparingly and only when absolutely needed.

- Allow child to self-grade. This will make him/her more conscientious in work.[129]

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[127] By repeating one's thoughts aloud, the neocortex (the higher brain centre of logic) becomes activated, and this in turn inhibits the emotional part of the brain (the limbic system) from releasing hormones and other chemicals that would have increased the heart rate of the person. This physiological change implies that repeated self-talk is beneficial psychologically because it makes the person more calm, composed and confident.

[128] An example of using imagery to remove a young boy's fear of dogs (the undesirable behaviour): Guide the child to picture himself watching a barking dog with Superman beside him. Instruct him to imagine approaching the dog slowly under the watchful eyes of the superhero, and see how it turns friendly as it is being gently caressed.

[129] Shapiro stresses that the child needs to find gratification both in individual and cooperative achievements.

- Help child break up the task into smaller steps. This makes it easier for the child to complete the work.

- Let child see how the task is relevant to his/her life. This perspective adds meaningfulness to what is to be learnt.

- Become involved in child's learning. This participation keeps the parent from always pointing the finger of blame at school or teachers.

In a society like Singapore where parents are generally protective over their children, Lawrence Shapiro offers an interesting alternative to successfully develop a child. He advocates tempering and strengthening the child emotionally so that he/she can better survive the hard knocks in life. Such a mindset is deemed essential as success in life does not mean no failures, but no faint heartedness in spite of failures. The power of self belief that propels a person to press on is again glorified, but this time, it starts with the young! But what is especially problematic with Shapiro's approach is that he teaches the child to view every problem he/she faces as the 'enemy'; as something outside of himself/herself. Though this suggestion is aimed at provoking the child to fight his/her problem, it may unwittingly delude him/her into faulting other people or things all the time instead of himself/herself.

2.8.3 <u>Stephen Covey</u>.[130] Drawing from his own family experience, Covey believes that families that are strong are off-track most of the time, but the crucial factor is that they have a clear family vision. It is this sense of direction that brings them back on course (Covey 1997:9). Borrowing terms used in aviation, Covey (1997:10) sees the family vision in relation to the destination, flight plan and compass.[131]

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[130] Stephen Covey is an internationally respected leadership authority, family expert and organisational consultant. He founded the former Covey Leadership Centre in the USA and is now co-chairman of Franklin Covey Company. Academically, he holds an MBA from Harvard University and a PhD from Brigham Young University. Covey also authored the highly acclaimed best-seller *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People.*
[131] The destination is the family mission statement shared by all in the family; the flight plan is the will to raise the family from 'inside out' because of the ill influences of society; the compass is you yourself since you know your family best, and thus, should act as an agent of change.

To nurture a strong family culture is to develop a pulsable 'we' experience in the family. This implies that family members must look beyond their individual selves, and recognise the need for interdependence and draw happiness from the happiness of others in the family (Covey 1997:20). Employing insights from his now famous *7 Habits,* Covey shares how a strong 'we' culture can be cultivated in the family.

Habit 1: Be proactive. Covey (1997:28) exhorts that you should condition yourself to act according to principles rather than to negative emotions in family situations. He talks of two circles of thinking - the Circle of Concern and the Circle of Influence. The Circle of Concern causes you to blame, accuse and judge others in your thoughts; the Circle of Influence arouses kindness, forgiveness, loyalty, commitment and humility in your thinking (Covey 1997:64).[132] You are to be proactive not in changing others first, but in conditioning yourself to first think in the Circle of Influence so as to impact others positively.

Habit 2: Begin with the end in mind. The end that Covey has in mind is the purpose as to why one's family exists. This purpose can be expressed as a family mission statement which Covey (1997:72) describes as a 'combined, unified expression from all family members of what your family is all about and the principles you choose to govern your family life.' This statement is important because it embodies shared values and expectations that will bond family members together in spite of all their differences (Covey 1997:81). It gives them the basis to talk in terms of 'we' rather than in terms of 'your' and 'my'. When you learn to begin with the end (that is the family mission statement) in every situation, you get back on track because the purpose as spelt out in the statement becomes bigger than any problem in the family.

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[132] Example of Circle of Concern thinking: 'My wife is so self-centred!'
Example of Circle of Influence thinking: 'I can be other-centred and model the kind of loving interaction I desire in my marriage.'

Habit 3: Put first things first. Covey is convinced that the family is a priority that deserves your committed effort to guard. He views the family as one of the few arenas in which you can play out some permanent roles in life. Lamenting at the preference of financial rewards over family relationships, Covey (1997:116) says:

> So if you're living around a temporary role and allowing your tresure chest to remain barren in terms of your only real permanent role, then you're letting yourself be seduced by the culture and robbed off the true richness of your life - the deep and lasting satisfaction that only comes through family relationships.

Covey (1997:119-25) also goes on to identify some causes that have undermined one's resolve to put the family as a 'first thing' in today's culture:

> - Parenthood is not seen as a unique role and a sacred stewardship in life. There is no sense of pride and honour in being a parent.
>
> - Marriage is more like a contract of convenience rather than a covenant of commitment. This means that it can be readily and easily broken once the relationship is considered to be cumbersome in any way.
>
> - The material comfort and affluence today promotes a lifestyle of high financial obligation together with a preference for personal freedom and independence. This is certainly harmful to the 'we' spirit in family life.
>
> - The advanced technology in computer and television has impersonalised relationships. Moreover, the young child may innocently accept the questionable values propagated through these channels as normal. Indeed, no matter how convenient learning has become through technology, the child learns best when a parent takes time to interact with him/her in actual (not virtual) person.

In helping you to put family first in today's culture, Covey (1997:139) first suggests that you create a regular family time. This will provide opportunities for planning, teaching and problem-solving in the family. The solemn warning from Covey (1997:146) is that if you choose not to teach your children, society will, and both they and you will have to live with the consequences.

A second suggestion by Covey (1997:151-53) is to establish one-on-one bonding in the family which ensures that there is nurturing of heart and soul at the deepest level. Such

bonding times allow family members not only to work for the present, but also to create for the future. As to how such bonding between spouses can impact their children, Covey (1997:154) has this to comment:

> Children get much of their sense of security from the way their mother and father treat each other. So building the marriage relationship will have a powerful effect on the entire family culture.

Habit 4: Think win-win. As no one likes to lose, the way to build trust and love into family relationships is to let the other person know that his/her best interest is at heart. Covey (1997:179) believes that this principle is best stated this way: 'What is important to another person must be as important to you as the other person is to you.' In creating a 'we' culture in the family, the worst thing to do is to have one person winning all the time. Hence, Covey (1997:181) encourages an 'abundance mentality' in family problem-solving whereby there is an openness to look at all alternative solutions in order to achieve a 'win' for everybody.[133]

Habit 5: Seek first to understand, then to be understood. Covey (1997:206) asserts that family relationships languish at the 'superficial, functional and transactional' level instead of rising to the height of being 'transformational' mainly because there is no genuine understanding. In fact, at the heart of family pain is the problem of misunderstanding or a lack of understanding. This problem is common because you often condition your interpretations of others, situations and messages with your own past and present experiences. In other words, you view what is outside you with your own 'tainted glasses' and thereby become distorted in your perceptions (Covey 1997:204). Covey calls a person to first seek to understand so that he/she can adjust his/her expectations. Since these expectations often form the basis of one's judgments, he argues that better understanding on one's part will make one less judgmental of

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[133] In bringing the child into the 'we' experience, Covey (1997:184-85) suggests three things: let him/her win in little things; interact with him/her around the big issues; offset the competition focus from time to time (that is, to distract the child from constantly thinking in terms of winning).

others (Covey 1997:208). Covey (1997:213) likens understanding someone as giving 'psychological air' to that person because it 'affirms, validates, recognises and appreciates the intrinsic worth of a person.' According to him, empathetic listening is the key to better understanding (Covey 1997:224).[134]

In seeking to be understood, Covey (1997:233) considers feedback as the key, and instructs people to do the following in order to help themselves better understand one another:

- Check your motive. Do you want to give feedback to help the other person, or do you want to do it in order to get back at him/her? A rule of thumb is to refrain from giving any feedback when angry.

- Seek first to understand the other person. This is to allow you to speak in that person's language of love when you feedback to him/her.

- Separate the person from the behaviour. You use feedback to deal with the problematic action, not the person.

- Be sensitive to and patient with the other person's blind spots. You need to first ensure that the person is ready to improve on what is already known before you feedback these blind spots to him/her.

- Use 'I' messages in feedback in order to imply a communication between equals. The key here is to avoid making people feel that you are talking down to them.

Habit 6: Synergise. There is synergy when the individual relationships in the family all add up to give a 'we' culture. Covey (1997:250) calls this the culture of mutual openness, vulnerability and accountability. Differences in the family are not to be merely tolerated and accepted, but to be celebrated as strengths that make living together that much more enriching (Covey 1997:255). A synergistic family is one where all members are involved together in working out a solution when a problem arises. Hence, Covey (1997:261) suggests that you see

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[134] This requires that you try to see in the other person's frame of reference. For example, when you hear a message, you are to be a 'faithful translator' of what is said to you so that you understand what the other person is saying in its purest form.

problems as 'vaccinations to trigger an immune response,' and not as illnesses that threaten the family health.

To underscore his belief in strong family synergy, Covey (1997:273) emphasises:

> Never fall into the trap of allowing money, possessions or personal hobbies to take the place of a rich, synergistic relationship ... While these things may temporarily soothe, they will never deeply satisfy. Always be aware that happiness does not come from money, possessions, or fame; it comes from the quality of relationships with the people you love and respect.

Habit 7: Sharpen the saw. This refers to the act of renewing your family life. Covey (1997:280) encourages that various family traditions be created to renew the four areas of family life - physical, social/emotional, mental and spiritual. Whatever forms these traditions take, the purpose is to enhance and enrich the 'we' experience in the family; to make time for the family to do things together in the midst of many competing demands.

Stephen Covey must be commended for stressing the importance of strong relationships in the family. Though he is addressing problems in the North American context, many Singaporeans are familiar with what he is talking about - the weakening and impersonalising of family relationships in modern living today. The need for group time and one-on-one bonding is often minimised as family members demand their right to personal space, freedom and independence. Also, as rightly pointed out by Covey, the family tries to lessen the pain of emotional distance with material abundance. This is only a poor substitute as many emotional needs continue to be unfulfilled. Without emotional intimacy through meaningful relationships, family members continue to misunderstand or exhibit lack of understanding of one another. As Covey is here employing his principles for business management in the context of home management, his readers will feel at ease with a set of familiar ideas. In fact, many should be well exposed to these relational strategies or skills in their own workplace. However, if there is to be one problem with Covey's approach, it must

be the call for a win-win result in every family situation. Being essentially Asian in culture, many Singapore families still hold on to maxims like 'the child is to be seen and not heard' and 'man is the head of the house'. Such beliefs automatically create some psychological distance between the man and the others in his family. But again, in view of the evolving sociological patterns in Singapore, the challenge is for the family man to adjust his role so that he can be true to unchanging principles, yet be relevant to changing times.

2.9 Secular Perspectives on Successful Masculinity

2.9.1 <u>Warren Farrel</u>.[135] In answering why man is generally so preoccupied with material success, Farrell (1986:135) comments:

> ... The difference between the desperation felt by men as they pursue external reward power lies in men's having to prove themselves worthy recipients not only of women's attention and sexuality but also of the approval of parents and peers ....

Thus, Farrell sees man's preoccupation with success as his search for approval, especially by the female. In fact, he considers success as man's most respected defence against any possible rejection by the female. Success for the man is good not only because of its power to draw female attention, but also to ease the pain of female rejection since success has its own inherent and external rewards (Farrell 1986:136).[136]

Farrell (1986:138) further suggests that men tend to think of women as more interested in their material success than their emotional sensitivity; that men strive to achieve success so that they can gain women's attention; that success in a sense is men's way of earning equality with women.[137] To him, success is the 'male form of power, designed to

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[135] Warren Farrell has conducted numerous workshops with thousands of men and women in the USA for more than twenty years. He has also authored two other best-sellers - *The Myth of Male Power* and *The Liberated Man*.

[136] Farrell (1986:137) presupposes that man's preoccupation with success is because 'women choose the most performing man.'

[137] The inequality implied here has to do with man's responsibility to actively woo the woman even at the risk of being rejected.

compensate for the male form of powerlessness; it is the most respected defence against vulnerability.'

Another question which Farrell attempts to answer is why men are generally successful at work, but not at home. He points to man's tendency to self-listen - that is, the tendency to do problem-solving and fault-finding as he listens to himself while another is talking - as the main cause for this (Farrell 1986:142). Man develops and sharpens his ability to self-listen in the workplace as a skill to gain success in a dog-eat-dog world. An example of self-listening is to mentally rehearse and hear what you will say in order to make yourself look good and your colleague look bad in the eyes of your boss while your colleague is presenting his case. Thus, self-listening is an art that can bring the one who masters it well closer to success. However, it can also create distance between two persons because of its tendency to exalt one and bring down the other. And man often brings this self-listen tendency from his workplace back to his home. This proves to be his own misdoing because the woman at home wants to be listened to empathetically and noticed with positive feelings, not to be put down by the self-listening man. But unfortunately, it does seem that the more successful a man is, the more he tends to self-listen at home, thereby creating distances between him and other family members (Farrell 1986:140).

Warren Farrell sees man's motivation for success as largely coming from his desire to enhance his sexuality and fulfil his sexual needs. Success is men's way of conquering women and showing who the stronger sex is. Even if rejected, the man can still take comfort in the inherent and external benefits of success. Hence, a man works hard at being successful as it promises him a somewhat sure-win situation. Such a portrayal of manhood by Farrell generally fits men in Singapore today as many of them still value machismo highly. And therein lies this tension in the contemporary Singapore society - male chauvinism clashing with emergent

feminism. In the context of the family where both spouses are working and contributing significantly to the total income, the man is increasingly pressured to modify the traditional perception of a wife's role; to see his wife not as a passive consumer of but as an active contributor to the family's material success.

2.9.2 <u>John Gray</u>.[138] From a psychological standpoint, Gray (1993:56) maintains that men and women are like reflections of each other in many ways - different but complementary.

One complementary difference between the sexes is that women expand and men contract. A woman expands in that she tends to forget her own needs and embrace those of others in relationship building. Hence, there is a need to keep her sense and value of self because of her tendency to expand. On the other hand, a man contracts in that he tends to be self-absorbed or self-centred in his relationships. This difference is often evident in how a man and a woman communicate. When a man talks, he has already rehearsed in his mind what he is going to say; he speaks to make a point. This is often not true for a woman. When she talks, she often does not speak to make a point, but to share her thoughts and feelings. Such sharing helps her explore and discover the point that she wants to make. The man who fails to understand this difference between the sexes is often frustrated by the 'time-wasting' woman. But understanding it will certainly help him support her by listening non-judgmentally (Gray 1993:58-59).

Another example of how a man contracts and a woman expands is found in their different reactions to stress. When a man is distressed at work, he contracts and becomes very focused in solving the problem. This may make him look very self-absorbed, distant, detached and uncaring toward his loved ones. But in reality, he does care much about them and that may be the very reason why he is so concerned about solving the problem at hand. Conversely,

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[138] John Gray is reputed to be America's foremost bestselling author. He has written much on man-woman relationships, drawing on his many years of experience in couples therapy.

when a woman is distressed at work, she expands her anxieties to include her loved ones because she feels bad neglecting them as a result of the problem at hand. Understanding this will help the woman better support her work-stressed husband when he appears to be present in body but absent in spirit (Gray 1993:64).

Gray (1993:68) argues that the man-woman attraction will be weakened if you try to repress yourself or to change your partner. This implies that you should accept yourself and your partner in spite of your differences. To force yourself to be like your partner or your partner to be like yourself is a denial of differences that will sabotage the relationship. For a man to better understand and support his partner, the key is for him to balance the masculine and feminine sides of his psychological self. For example, if a sensitive man finds his aggressive partner repulsive, what he needs to do is to develop his masculine side. He may think that he needs a more gentle woman, but in reality, what he needs is not a more gentle woman to make him feel manly, but to develop his masculine side which his partner has helped arouse in him (Gray 1993:72-73).[139]

A second complementary difference between the sexes pointed out by Gray concerns awareness. The man has focused awareness in that he views things sequentially and builds them up into a complete picture. Such a tendency causes the man to be more interested in results, goals, power, competition, work, logic and efficiency. In contrast, the woman possesses open awareness; she intuitively pieces the full scene together and then explores the

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[139] The sensitive-type man usually has some repressed masculine traits in his psychological self. For example, his childhood experience of being abused by an aggressive and assertive father may cause him to repress these traits because he sees them as destructive and selfish. But as opposites attract, he becomes attracted to a woman who possesses these traits. However, negative conditioning moves him to resist these traits in his inner self whenever they are aroused in him. He then projects this resistance onto his partner and becomes disapproving of her. To have a balanced self and healthy relationship with his partner, what this man needs to do is to accept and develop these traits as part of his masculinity. He can do this by establishing meaningful interactions with other men, by taking up some competitive sports, and even by forgiving his father (Gray 1993:77-78).

various parts. This makes her more interested in relationships, sharing, cooperation and harmony (Gray 1993:83-84).[140]

Gray cautions that the open awareness of women can lead them to share all their problems at one go, giving the impression that they are overwhelmed. At such a time, what she needs is to be allowed to share her feelings freely; to be heard and not to receive advices or suggestions. The man should be aware of this so that he will not misunderstand that he is being blamed, or interrupt with some well-intentioned but ill-timed solutions (Gray 1993:95).

Also, the man needs to realise that when he shares a problem with his wife, she may not sense that he is asking for a specific solution. Being a person of open awareness, she may go into describing how she feels. This often frustrates the man who accuses the woman of not being focused and going off tangent (Gray 1993:105).[141]

A third complementary difference highlighted by Gray has to do with how men and women reduce the pain of hurt in their lives. Being largely objective in his psychological self, the man often tries to inflict pain on others as his way of objectively experiencing and easing the pain. Thus, it is generally true that a hurting man is more likely to use physical violence than a woman.[142] To check this masculine tendency, Gray advises that a hurting man learns to use the feminine side of his psychological self to get in touch with his feelings and share them with others. This will bring a relieving effect to his pain without resorting to any violence, physical or otherwise (Gray 1993:164-65).

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[140] This difference in awareness can be demonstrated in the activity of shopping. The varieties excite the woman because her open awareness makes her enjoy the opportunity to look at all that's on show and explore the bargains. On the other hand, such varieties often drain the man because of his focused awareness. He prefers to know first what he wants to buy instead of shopping with an 'open mind'. Hence, man usually enjoys shopping less than woman.

[141] Gray (1993:159-60) asserts that when a man has a problem with failure, he needs time to mull over and gradually assume responsibility. Unfortunately, this is also a time when an insensitive wife can do the most damage by making an offensive comment unintentionally. She needs to realise that a man accepts his mistakes most readily when he is not corrected or rejected for them.

[142] In contrast, a woman often relieves her pain by hurting herself; by playing the victim in order to make others feel guilty or responsible (Gray 1993:171).

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In view of their complementary differences, Gray (1993:261) lists out seven attitudes which he believes will create an emotionally supportive relationship between a man and a woman:

- *Love:* This is a primary emotional need of both man and woman. It can be expressed by touch or empathy.

- *Appreciation:* This is a primary emotional need of man. It acknowledges the value of his efforts and actions.

- *Acceptance:* This is another primary emotional need of man. It affirms and forgives the man in spite of his shortcomings.[143]

- *Trust:* This is also a man's primary emotional need. It gives the benefit of doubt to the man.

- *Caring:* This is a primary emotional need of woman. It reassures her that there is interest and concern for her well-being.[144]

- *Understanding:* Again, this ranks as a primary emotional need of woman. It validates her feelings and thoughts even though the man may not necessarily feel and think the same way.

- *Respect:* This is yet another primary emotional need of woman. It acknowledges her importance and needs.

John Gray (1993:266) is right to point out that a major cause of frustration in man-woman relationship is that man gives to woman what he needs, and woman gives to man what she needs. No wonder many men and women are puzzled by their difficult relationships in spite of their honest efforts to put things right. On the part of the man, he needs to know that there are sexuality differences, and that they are complementary rather than contradictory in nature. This will enable him to better appreciate and relate to the female sex. He also needs to know himself psycho-emotionally as a male in order to better handle his own manhood. For

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[143] Man is willing to change when he feels accepted. Acceptance makes him more positive in receiving feedback. A woman does much damage in trying to change a man by nagging at him. It shows her unacceptance of him and this causes him to resist any change (Gray 1993:283).

[144] Gray (1993:242) comments that while man does not need to be reassured as long as he is still in a relationship, the woman needs to be constantly reassured verbally, and with signs and symbols of love. Thus, in showing care, a man will do well by saying 'I love you' or 'I understand you' frequently to a woman.

example, he needs to know that his response in a certain situation is just one way (the masculine way) of handling a matter, and not the only valid way. Also, Gray must be commended for reminding the man that he has a feminine side to his psycho-emotional self, and he needs to express it whenever appropriate if he is to have emotionally supportive relationships. Indeed, this is essentially Gray's depiction of successful manhood - a man expressing in a balanced manner the masculine and feminine sides of his psycho-emotional self in order to relate meaningfully with others, especially with the female sex.

2.9.3 Ronald Levant.[145] Some problem areas for men as identified by Levant (1995:18-22) are:

- *Difficulty sensing and responding to emotions:* Men do well in competing, strategising and taking action. But in being sensitive to emotions, they are often found lacking. They are strong in action empathy but weak in emotional empathy.

- *Inability to feel, identify and express feelings:* Men have been conditioned from young to suppress their feelings. This leads them to suffer from emotional numbness in later life (alexithymia). In fact, they can be so emotionally numb that they are not even aware of their own emotional reactions.

- *Overindulgence in anger:* Perhaps, men are conditioned to express one emotion freely - anger. It does seem that all the other emotions seeking expression would then turn themselves into anger, resulting in men being more prone to rage and violence.

- *Tendency to demonstrate dependency and distance both at the same time:* As a result of childhood conditioning, men learn dependency from the mother and distance from the father. In adult life, this can be seen in how a man wants to be pampered by his wife (dependency), yet feels uncomfortable in showing intimacy to her (distance).

- *Over-investment in work:* Men have traditionally been conditioned to seek validation and fulfilment from work. This has in turn led them to play a much reduced role in family life.

- *Distortion of sexual intimacy:* There is a tendency for men to view sex as a means of proving their manhood in terms of how well they perform sexually. A

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[145] Ronald Levant is a practising psychologist in the USA and specialises in counselling men. He also researches into and writes on issues related to masculinity.

greater harm is that the female partner is not seen as a person, but as an object for sexual arousal and gratification.

Levant notes that man needs to balance action empathy with emotional empathy. He calls it learning to be emotionally intelligent. Being action-empathetic, man is good at doing things that will encourage the predicted response to reach a desired goal. He is good at reading the mind and then acting out his plans. But being not emotional-empathetic, he is weak in identifying with feelings; he is not good at reading the heart. The challenge today for men is to turn their action-empathy skills into emotional-empathy ones - to read the heart, not the mind; to understand someone's feelings, not counter that person's next move; to lift up another, not exalt oneself (Levant 1995:28-30).[146]

As to why men have traditionally buried themselves in work, Levant (1995:176) has this to say:

> ... Men are still very much committed to fulfilling the traditional male-norm requirement of being the good provider - in part because so much of their sense of masculine purpose depends upon it, in part because it's one of the few ways they traditionally have beeen allowed to demonstrate their love, and in part because that's what they do best. That's when a man feels most in his element - when he's working. He's much less confident of his skills as a family man, because he never really learned how to 'do' relationships and family life ....

But this domination of men as good providers for the home is now being challenged by many women who are economically active and competent in today's society. However, Levant points out that these women are not out to overthrow their men as breadwinners or providers. In fact, between family and career, these women would prefer to be both even though it is never easy. The reason is that having experienced the gratification that comes from working and homemaking, they realise that to have one without the other is to shortchange oneself.

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[146] Levant (1995:44) describes how emotional empathy can be learnt: 1) Develop a vocabulary of emotions ('hurt', 'sad' and 'loving' are some examples). Then practise using these words to describe the emotional states of people. 2) Study how actors or actresses communicate emotions. From their tone of voice, gestures, postures, facial expressions and words, determine the feelings that they are expressing. 3) Apply this skill to real-life situations. Determine the feelings of people when you are talking, listening and watching them.

Hence, these women want their men to be more active in family life partly because they need the help, and partly because they want their spouses to be happier and richer in life (Levant 1995:182).

Ronald Levant argues that the traditional masculine code - which conditions man to find his worth in work, and to suppress his feelings and emotions - needs to be reconstructed in today's society. He believes that it can be done because such a code is not only determined by differences in male-female biology, but also by the influences of gender-role socialisation. As society changes, men must allow themselves to be socialised differently so that their masculinity continues to be real yet relevant. In Singapore, with so many economically active and competent women in the workforce, men are no longer sole breadwinners. Instead, a working woman today is more likely to want her husband to be a partner rather than a breadwinner. Though men know that they are working ridiculous hours and neglecting the home, their common defence is: 'I don't make the rules. I just play by them.' With many women contributing significantly as co-breadwinners today, this response is beginning to sound very hollow since most men don't have to work themselves crazy to lay food on the table. As stressed by Levant, man today must be willing to reconstruct his masculinity, and find his worth and rewards not only in work, but also in homemaking and relationship building.

2.10 Chapter Summary

2.10.1 Singapore's past. Understanding Singapore's past helps one to appreciate that her success culture does not come about overnight. In fact, the birth of colonialism was really the beginning of economic profiteering in Singapore. The British came because they foresaw Singapore's great commercial potential, and the locals were willing to release control because of handsome compensations. Singapore's early economic development was founded on such

pragmatism. This in turn lured immigrants from China and India to settle and work in Singapore. They came with making money uppermost in their minds, hoping to give a better life to themselves and loved ones back in their lands of origin. Such an attitude planted the first seed of a money-making culture among the populace.

When the Japanese invaded Singapore in World War II, the people realised that they could not protect what they had worked so hard to acquire, materially or otherwise. The British could not, or would not, defend the interests of Singapore because they were fighting for their own interests against Nazi Germany. The people of Singapore felt betrayed by their colonial masters when the British surrendered to the Japanese. But the Asian invaders fared no better as they bullied and exploited the people to advance the building of the Great Japanese Empire. The ravages of war had taught the people of Singapore to recognise that the best persons to protect their interests and resources were none other than they themselves.

This realisation stimulated a new political consciousness among the populace after the war. The British were aware of this and they returned to Singapore with the intention of granting her self-government eventually. Many political activists emerged during this time. The most prominent of them was Lee Kuan Yew who came into power in 1959 as Singapore's first Prime Minister. But all the unrests during this period of political turbulence alerted Lee that he must first cultivate social cohesion in a heterogeneous Singapore.

Joining Malaya to become part of Malaysia was Lee's plan to help Singapore survive economically because of her lack of size and natural resources. But the merger in 1963 was only shortlived. With little political and economic authority given to them, Lee and his PAP colleagues found that they had placed Singapore at the losing end of the bargain. They clashed with their mainland counterparts. This led to bloody racial riots which eventually convinced the Tunku, leader of the Federal Government, to oust Singapore from Malaysia. On 9 August

1965, Singapore became independent and was left to determine her own fortunes in the face of much uncertainties. It was against such odds that Lee rallied all Singaporeans to believe in themselves and to carve out a future together.

In the early years of independence, Singapore did not merely survive. In fact, she succeeded in flourishing economically. Emphasising belief, unity and diligence, the government succeeded in firing up in the people the will to persevere, excel and compete.

2.10.2 <u>Singapore's present</u>. Understanding Singapore's present helps one to appreciate some of the tensions experienced by the people today. The emphasis on economic success by the government has unwittingly nurtured a materialistic mindset in people.[147] But nation building today has become more than just being economically successful. The government is now pushing for greater efforts in social involvement and family enrichment. The unfortunate thing is that while most Singaporeans respect the social and family values enunciated by the government, they lack the personal conviction to practise them in life.

Recent studies have shown that Singaporeans, including the younger generation, are generally materialistic and individualistic. *Kiasuism* is a term coined to express their fear of losing out in anything that promises monetary benefits or individual gains. It is this *kiasu* mindset that makes most Singaporeans shun involvement in social work because it promises much for others but little for oneself.

On the home front, current trends are pointing to an increasing number of dual-income families in Singapore. That women today are generally well educated, professionally competent and much needed in the workforce is a sign of an emergent feminism in Singapore. Though dual-income families enjoy greater material comfort, the sad part is that most of them

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[147] A survey by the Institute of Policy Studies has revealed that two-thirds of the respondents are willing to die for the country in war, and half say 'no' to huge pay cuts and heavy taxes. This has led Dr Tan Ern Ser, the survey consultant, to quip: 'Money seems more important than their lives' (*The Straits Times* 19 February 2000. Here, take my life ... but not my pay, pp58-59).

are showing signs of being stressed. Spouses are spending less time with each other and their children because of work. This is compounded by the fact that men in Singapore are generally still traditional in their family role - they still leave homemaking and child nurturing very much to their wives. Little wonder young people generally find their fathers aloof and hard to relate to. Also, the steady climb in the number of divorces involving working women should alert the Singapore male to review his traditional position on work and family.

Societal trends today indicate that the preoccupation with economic success has made many Singaporeans adopt a narrow, materialistic and individualistic perspective of life. As a result, social awareness is weak and families are increasingly stressed, especially those where both spouses are working and the children are young.

2.10.3 <u>Influence of secular ideas</u>. Understanding the influence of secular ideas in Singapore helps one to appreciate that she succeeds not in isolation, but in interacting with the outside world. Many of these ideas have either reinforced the psyche of Singaporeans or challenged them to rethink certain perspectives.

For example, some of these secular ideas on success reinforce what many Singaporeans are already doing - using self belief and positive thinking to get what they want in life. Indeed, success is seen as primarily enriching and enhancing oneself. This reinforces the narrow and self-centred approach of many Singaporeans to life. The emphasis on not accepting failure but persevering until the desired outcome is attained is also no strange advice in Singapore's driven and goal-oriented society.

In the area of marriage-family life, some of these ideas have done well in encouraging Singaporeans to deal constructively with their emotions in marital conflict. However, such an approach can also backfire when couples deal only with the emotions but not the root problem

that arouses them. Singaporeans do well to note that enduring, but not endearing, marriages are really no better than empty relationships regardless of how longlasting these may be.

In the area of child nurturing, most Singapore parents desire that their children develop well so that they will not lose out in life, especially in the aspect of education. Hence, ideas on tempering and strengthening the child emotionally against the hard knocks in life offer an interesting alternative to cognitive development. But the danger is that parents may unintentionally use these to push their children to perform at a level higher than what the child is ready for. As it is, the educational system is already creating so much competition and comparison in academic performance, and many parents are treating their young ones more like performers rather than persons.

What is perhaps most helpful about some of these ideas is the challenge they pose to the Singapore man to reconsider his traditional view of manhood - to find his worth not only in work, but also in family life and relationship building. This is an increasingly crucial issue in Singapore because too many successful men with sunken families is becoming more and more of a reality. Indeed, Singapore's economic success has not only improved the lives of the people, but also brought with it an unwelcomed price.

This chapter has dealt with the emergence of Singapore's success culture, and how it has impacted people's aspirations in life, family roles and relationships.

In the next chapter, an attempt will be made to understand issues pertaining to success, family and manhood from the normative Christian traditions.