"No One Icon": Secondary Students' Judgments of Significant Representations of Singapore

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Introduction

This study was designed to explore how students in a secondary school make sense about the significance of different representations of Singapore, and to examine their ideas on what they conceived as icons of Singapore. The research was conducted in a premier all-girls' school in Singapore. The data used in this study was derived from semi-structured interviews that included both a task requiring students to choose from among a set of thirty captioned images, and a set of questions designed to elicit their understanding of significant representations of Singapore. Twelve students, aged 14 to 15 years old, were interviewed in groups of either three or four per group.

The key question guiding this study was "What is the icon of Singapore today?" In order to address this question, students were expected to work with the concept of significance in history. Although the question did not specifically require students to refer to their knowledge of Singapore's history or to have them make connections with representations of Singapore's past, student responses may shed light on the way they think about the country's past, and enable us to build a picture about how they perceive their identity and the country's heritage. By identifying items they believed were iconic representations of Singapore, students' responses appeared to reveal the kind of values they held about the country and the means by which they identified themselves as Singaporeans. The findings from this study will be useful for educators in planning programmes that would enhance our students'

understanding of specific icons and cultivate in them a deeper appreciation for Singapore.

Research Methods

Setting and Participants

This study involved interviews with twelve students from three different Year Three classes, with the age of participants ranging from 14 to 15 years old. These students were selected to participate in this study as they had all completed one year of studying Singapore's history in Year Two. The decision to select Year Three students also was made with the assumption that participants would have a basic knowledge of Singapore's history as their understanding of the milestones in Singapore's history may affect their perception of what they conceived as iconic of Singapore. All the students involved in the study were Singapore citizens except for two who were Singapore Permanent Residents (PR). The students selected consisted of both high and average achievers within their history classes, and the selection also took into consideration the ethnic backgrounds of the participants. Students were interviewed in fours largely due to convenience as these interviews were conducted during breaks in their curriculum time. The first group of students consisted of two ethnic Chinese Singaporeans and two ethnic Indians (one of whom was a PR from India); the second group of students consisted of 4 ethnic Chinese Singaporeans; and the last group consisted of one ethnic Chinese Singaporean student and three ethnic Malay students (one of whom was a PR from Indonesia). For more information of the participants, refer to Appendix A.

Instruments and Procedures

The procedures utilised in this research were designed to parallel the methods used by Barton (2005). This research involved the collection of data through semi-structured interviews in which teams of students were asked to choose, from a set of 30 captioned images typically used to represent Singapore, the ten that they considered most significant as icons of Singapore today.

The images were developed by the researcher to represent a wide range of possible current representations of Singapore, including a mixture of political and entertainment personalities, recent occurrences, buildings with historical importance to each ethnic community in Singapore, buildings or events that have been put forth by the Singapore Tourism Board (STB) as iconic of the country, and developments that formed an integral aspect of the lives of many Singaporeans. After explaining the task, each team of students looked through the set of pictures and were instructed to decide on their selection as a group. They were then asked to explain their reasons for selecting each picture and were asked a series of questions related to significance. In addition, where relevant, students were asked to elaborate on their responses to allow the researcher to clarify what was said and also for her to acquire a deeper understanding of the students' thinking. The interview protocol is included in Appendix B.

Data Analysis

Data was compiled through three principal sources: the pictures selected by the students, their explanations for their selection, and their responses to questions during the interview. The students' choices were tabulated and subsequently recorded in a table (see Appendix C). Regarding students' explanations for their selections and other related responses that arose during the interviews, these were analysed to identify common themes. These themes were then used as the overall framework for the findings reported here.

Limitations

This study was limited in several ways. First, the data collected was from a small sample population of twelve students, with the majority living in public housing estates (HDB) and from neighbourhood-based primary schools. Those living on private property or who came from more prestigious primary schools may presumably provide different responses than students who were involved in the study. Second, the study was conducted during the week of racial harmony celebrations. This may have had the effect of emphasising certain aspects of Singapore more than others, thereby possibly influencing the students' perceptions of the issue being explored. Third, the selection of pictures used for this study may not provide a safe and secure set of responses that may be representative of students' ideas; a different set of pictures and perhaps a different set of partners may elicit different responses. Nevertheless, an important observation to note was that the responses of these twelve students proved useful in helping the researcher uncover interesting similarities in student responses, even if the study cannot purport to provide a comprehensive analysis of students' understanding of Singapore's icons.

Main Findings

The table in Appendix C presents the results of students' selection (by ethnicity) of significant representations of Singapore that they deemed worthy to be viewed as icons of the country. Despite the varied ways in which the students expressed the reasons for their choices, there were some similarities in the way they generally explained their selections. Based on their responses, four themes were evident:

1. Importance to Singapore

2. Popularity amongst people (locals & foreigners)

3. Uniqueness to Singapore

4. Reflects Singaporeans' Way of Life

The following sections explore the themes that emerged from the students' explanations and discuss the similarities and differences that each team of students used to justify their choices. All student names are pseudonyms.

Importance to Singapore

All twelve students' responses indicated a preference to select this criterion in justifying the choice of former Prime Minister Lee Kuan Yew as an icon of Singapore. Saachi from Team 1, for example, regarded former PM Lee as an icon as "he was the one who built Singapore up." Similarly, Helen from Team 3 explained her choice of Lee Kuan Yew as he "was the first to help develop Singapore as an independent nation." Both these responses showed that these students viewed former PM Lee as important to Singapore, especially in terms of how he was personally responsible in developing the country. Xiang from Team 2 expressed this sentiment aptly, when she mentioned with some degree of conviction that "Without Lee Kuan Yew, Singapore would have died!"

Another personality students selected and justified through this criterion was Sir Stamford Raffles. Jane, for example, felt that "Raffles is sort of important, " and her view was supported by Melanie who believed that "yes, although there is the controversy with the 'Who's the Founder of Singapore' issue with Raffles versus Farquhar and Crawfurd, Raffles is the one who started everything." While some of her classmates' responses pointed to the idea of Raffles as being an important icon of Singapore, Feng's response showed a slight variation in terms of how people may view Raffles' contributions when she remarked that Raffles is more of an "internal icon, as only the people in Singapore would remember his recognition as the Founder of Singapore; but externally, people may not recognise him for his Singapore's role."

Besides personalities, all twelve students also agreed that Changi Airport remains an icon of Singapore as it is important for Singapore's international standing. Madiha from Team 3 explained that "Changi Airport is the place we go to if we need to fly off" and Noor added that "Changi Airport has always been the top airport in the world." Melanie from Team 1 also shared that "I think Changi Airport was not the top last year, but it is the top again and this is important for tourism as it catches people's attention worldwide." In addition, four students also justified their choice of the SIA girl as an icon for Singapore due to her importance to the country, especially in terms of the role she unofficially plays as an "ambassador" for the country. As Helen noted, the "SIA stewardesses are the first point of contact foreigners have with Singapore" and Noor expanded the importance of first impressions when she remarked, "People always know that SIA gives first class service and this is important for Singapore so people knows us."

The criterion of "Importance" appeared to also influence students' selection, and this was especially evident in the way they reasoned about the images they rejected. This was particularly the case for three personalities, namely, First President Mr Yusof Ishak, Former President Mr S R Nathan and Speaker of Parliament Mdm Halimah Yacob. Saachi quipped, "Sorry Mr Nathan, yes you are the President but Lee Kuan Yew did so much more for Singapore!" Likewise, Jacklyn from Team 2 did not think that the First President Mr Yusof Ishak can be viewed as an icon of Singapore as she did not think that "he has done a lot for Singapore" even if "he is on our money." Similarly, Zaara from Team 3 pointed out that "although Mdm Halimah Yacob is the first female Speaker, she is not doing anything so important than the role of the Prime Minister." These responses suggested that the students were likely to regard someone (or something) as an icon of Singapore if the personality had brought about major changes that were long lasting and ones that had benefited the country. In this regard, former PM Lee Kuan Yew, who led Singapore in her independent years from 1965 to 1990, and Changi Airport, which remained the lifeline of Singapore's aviation industry, were clear choices for these students.

Popularity amongst people (locals & foreigners)

In establishing their selection of Singapore's icons, students also consistently used the criterion of popularity. All twelve students chose Marina Bay Sands (MBS) as an icon of Singapore. In each case, students explained their selection by noting how the integrated resort is the current popular place in Singapore. As Feng noted, "Nowadays, photos all focus on MBS and the skyline", and Saachi ventured to say further that "MBS is attracting tourists." Students like Kiew believed that the popularity of the place was because "they got all the buildings around MBS to switch on lights every night for the lights show," making MBS, as Helen pointed out, "the newest attraction in town." Not only do students' responses point to the popularity of MBS amongst foreigners, but also amongst locals as well. According to Xiang, "the National Day Parade and all other concerts like the Countdown Concert featured MBS as the backdrop" and this "will only make people want to go MBS more."

Another building chosen by students as an icon by virtue of its popularity was the Esplanade Theatres by the Bay. Eight students chose the concert hall as an icon, with Melanie highlighting the fact that "Singapore postcards always feature the Esplanade." Saachi, however, commented that "it's popular not because of the place people go for the arts, but because of the *durians*" indicating the attraction the place held in terms of its architectural façade, as well as its familiarity with a popular local fruit. This sentiment was echoed by Jacklyn who playfully explained that "Esplanade is popular because it is like the fruits that Singaporeans like a lot!" Another iconic image that students selected due to its popularity was the card "Singapore - Garden in a City." Helen explained that her overseas pen pals were more likely to recognise Singapore in terms of its portrayal as a Garden City. She shared that whenever she introduced herself as a student from Singapore, some responses from her pen pals included, "Oh, Singapore! Garden in the City!" As such, she believed that the portrayal of the country in this manner had worldwide popularity and, hence, made it iconic of Singapore.

Several students also used this criterion of

"Popularity" to justify their choice of former PM Lee Kuan Yew as an icon. As Noor noted, "People know who he is." Similarly, Saachi emphasised how "a lot of people worldwide know Lee Kuan Yew." Kiew also shared how she did not think current PM Lee Hsien Loong could be considered an icon of Singapore as "comparing him to his father, his father is definitely more famous!" Clearly, for something or someone to be an icon, he/she (or it) must also have worldwide appeal. This notion that something had to be popular at an international level to be regarded as an icon was illustrated further in the way the students explained their rejection of First Singapore Idol, Taufik Batisah. Barb explained that she did not think Taufik Batisah could be considered as a Singapore icon as "he is not famous like all the Hollywood singers." The rest of her teammates agreed, with Feng underscoring the point by pointing out that "she did not even know any of his songs."

Uniqueness to Singapore

Another theme which emerged that students agreed should constitute a criterion was the uniqueness of the item/subject to Singapore. This criterion was mentioned in the responses of all twelve students who justified their choice of the Merlion as an icon of Singapore. Helen explained how the Merlion was unique to Singapore as "there is no association with other countries," with Xiang agreeing that the Merlion is "like a landmark of Singapore." Interestingly, this uniqueness was also explained in terms of its appeal and popularity amongst tourists. As Melanie noted, "the Merlion is a tourist destination and it is popular, but it is because it is unique that's why we see so many Merlion key chains, t-shirts etc. sold at souvenir shops."

The idea of "Uniqueness to Singapore" was repeated again in the responses of some students who chose Changi Airport as an icon of Singapore. Jacklyn, for example, explained that Changi Airport and its control tower is an icon of the country as "no other airports in the world is called 'Changi' or has a control tower that looks like this (pointing to the image fervently)." Likewise, Zaara highlighted how

the SIA girl may also be seen as an icon because "the baju kebaya is unique. No other airline has that design." At the same time, however, the criterion of uniqueness also was used to reject pictures where religious buildings were depicted. When considering the images of Thian Hock Keng Temple, Sri Mariamman Temple, the Sultan Mosque and the Armenian Church, the reason often mentioned by students to justify their rejection of these images as icons, was that these buildings were not unique to Singapore. As Xiang noted, "Malaysia also has all these temples, mosques and churches." Her sentiment was echoed by Zaara who felt that "these cannot be considered as icons as not only Singapore has them." Rather than focusing on religious buildings, "multiracial Singapore" should instead be regarded as an icon of Singapore. When explaining their reasons, the students were astute in highlighting how, despite this aspect being a part of other countries, there is a certain uniqueness about Singapore's multiracial society. Feng explained, "What is unique about Singapore's multiracial society is that Singapore is successful in getting the different races to cohabit together peacefully, some other countries may have many different races together but they have not gotten them to cohabit peacefully whilst Singapore has managed to successfully achieve that."

Reflects Singaporeans' Way of Life

For this criterion, students chose six images and reasoned that their selection reflected the culture of Singapore. For example, in justifying hawker centres as an icon of Singapore, Jane explained that "other countries like Malaysia also have hawker centres but hawker centres are where many Singaporeans go to eat and it's like a common place to gather." Barb noted that "We always hear people say to go to so-and-so hawker centre to try this food". Saachi also explained that "at hawker centres, you get food from various cultures and these are the day-to-day food of the people." These three sentiments were shared by the rest of the students and Madiha pointedly queried that "if hawker centres are not icons of Singapore, why was there the recent food challenge between the

hawkers and the international chef Gordon Ramsay?"

The next item that eight students chose to be an icon of Singapore because of its capacity to reflect Singapore's culture was the HDB flat. As Feng highlighted, "HDB flats dominate Singapore's land area. Our houses are also majority HDBs." Kiew shared some differences between the public housing in Singapore and that of China. She noted, "In China, the public housing has very small windows, and the windows have metal bars, because if not, the houses will be robbed. But in Singapore, the public housing has many facilities and people are not paranoid of home robberies because the people here are law abiding." Both students' responses indicated that the pervasive influence an icon has in the lives of the local population should constitute a criterion for its iconic status. For instance, Feng's idea pointed to HDB flats as iconic of Singapore as majority of the people live in these flats and that these flats dominate so much of Singapore's landscape that it becomes part of the Singaporean way of life. Kiew's personal sharing gave further insight on how HDB flats not only are a part of the ordinary Singaporean's lifestyle, but also how public housing seemed safer in Singapore as the people are largely law-abiding citizens – which suggested the possible link between public housing and law and order as another reflection of the Singaporean way of life.

Another item that eight students selected as iconic of Singapore was National Service (NS). Jane explained that, "All guys go to NS, it is something that is close at heart. Even if you are a female, somebody you know - your brother, father, cousin, colleague, friend - would have gone or will have to go for NS." Xiang however, disagreed, arguing that "many other countries also have National Service. It is not just Singapore." Nevertheless, Saachi supported Jane's position and clarified that, "some countries like Korea also have NS, but over here, everyone in the family is somehow affected when someone in the family goes for NS, and after that there is also reservist - the families' lifestyles change."

Other icons of Singapore that were selected by a few other students included the Primary School Leaving Examinations (PSLE), meritocracy and Orchard Road and shopping. In explaining the reason for the PSLE as an icon of Singapore, Kiew shared how the examination was significant in the lives of young children. She remembered being "told from Day 1 that her life and future is going to be determined by this one exam in Primary 6." Jacklyn concurred, and shared that "it is like normal practice for parents to have a long speech with their primary 6 children about the dangers if they failed or did not do well at PSLE." Barb also added that she knew of people who "stopped work for one month or mothers even quitting their jobs when their children reached Primary 6 so that they can monitor their children's progress."

Meritocracy was also selected as an icon of Singapore by four students because, as explained by Xiang, "meritocracy is like the bedrock of Singapore. They even make it one of the things on our exercise books for us to know and remember." Jacklyn also highlighted how "in Singapore, people are selected for work or scholarships based on their merit and performance." Kiew agreed and further explained that "although other countries may have some sort of meritocracy policy, it was something that Lee Kuan Yew and PAP enforced and now, it has become the mindset of the people."

The last icon some students selected as representative of Singapore would be Orchard Road and shopping. Barb explained that "Although Singapore is known as the Shopping Paradise, I feel that Singaporeans live to shop! Every weekend Orchard Road is crowded with people - all going to Ion, 313@Somerset, etc." Similarly Jacklyn noted that "when the new shopping mall JEM at Jurong East was opened in June, it was very crowded and the car queue was so long." To this, Barb commented "See, shopping is part of Singapore's culture and even with all the many heartland malls or JEM with the many big chains, people still will not stop coming to Orchard Road."

For the remaining images of General Elections 2011, Pink Dot Rally 2013, Noor noted that "while these are developments in Singapore did receive quite big media sensation, not many people identify with the gay rights and there are still many who supported PAP." In response, Helen added that "PAP is not chosen as an icon because it is not so much the party, but actually Lee Kuan Yew that people identify with." Helen's comment is similar to Jacklyn's who mentioned that "even a 2-year-old kid knows Lee Kuan Yew. He is like a part of us." With regards to the Civilian War Memorial, Feng noted that "the common Singaporean will not think of this monument at all as it is more historical." The card on "National Day Parades" received mixed responses initially in which Xiang explained that it should be an icon because "every year, it is like the biggest thing in Singapore history. People queue for the tickets and they screen on television in all the channels." Xiang's comment gained her team members' support but when tasked to only choose ten icons, the team decided that the other icons were more significant.

Discussion

The findings in this study illustrated students' thinking as they considered what aspects of national life may be regarded as iconic of Singapore. By analysing students' responses and interpreting the reasoning behind their selection of the images provided, the emerging impression was one of students (perhaps unknowingly) devising sets of criteria of their own when making certain evaluative choices. More importantly, some of these emerging themes reflected existing criteria that academics have purported as frameworks when analysing significance.

The criterion "Important to Singapore," for example, paralleled Robert Phillips' criterion of "Affected the future," and this was evident in the way the students justified their choices of Lee Kuan Yew, Raffles and Changi Airport in terms of the indispensable impact these iconic personalities and infrastructures have had on Singapore's past, present and future developments. Such ideas also may be shown

to be reasonable when applying Dawson's criteria where students' selection of personalities like Lee Kuan Yew and Raffles was made based on the historical significance of these individuals, as what they did at different points of Singapore's history changed events and had a long-lasting impact on the country or the world. Building on Counsell's criterion of "Resonant," the significance of the two personalities can also be viewed in terms of the connections they have with the lives of people today (Kitson & Husbands, 2011). In our attempt to align students' own criterion to the existing framework, we should note that such criteria-driven frameworks are not meant to be comprehensive, and as Kitson and Husbands cautioned: to quibble with the particular criterion is to miss the point. The "point" in this case would be the historical fact that both Lee and Raffles were significant in shaping the circumstances and events in their respective contexts, and that the impacts of their policies can still be seen and felt today. For instance, even if it was a simple notion such as Raffles' idea of the five-foot way for shophouses, or a much broader and wide-ranging period like Lee Kuan Yew's leadership of the PAP from 1959 to 1990, their contributions had, in one way or another, ensured that policies were put in place that helped develop Singapore into what she is today.

The second criterion "Popularity amongst people" and the third criterion "Uniqueness to Singapore" may be argued to find some similarities with Counsell's "Remarkable" criterion where the event or development was viewed as being outstanding or noteworthy by people at the time and/or since then (Counsell, 2004). For example, the Marina Bay Sands (MBS) can be considered a significant representation of Singapore as the decision to allow the building of integrated resorts and casinos was a controversial topic amongst Singaporeans in March 2004 and was debated in parliament up till March 2005. Since then, the MBS has continued to be a subject of interest, even though for the most part it has become a place where people (both locals and foreigners) choose as the backdrop for photo-taking opportunities if they are in the city. Likewise, the Merlion being a unique icon to Singapore is also significant as it is a "remarkable" subject. Designed in 1964 for the Singapore Tourist Promotion Board (STPB) by Fraser Brunner, curator of the Van Kleef Aquarium, it was named the Merlion and registered as a trademark of the STPB on 20 July 1966. The Merlion also had functioned as its corporate logo from 1966 to 1997 (Yong, 2013). Today, people (particularly tourists) still remark on the Merlion's uniqueness when they take photographs with the Merlion either at Merlion Park next to One Fullerton or the Merlion Tower on Sentosa. On some occasions, the Merlion would also feature in local plays or comedies, with the most recent being staged in January 2012 by a local theatre group, Chestnuts (The Muse, 2011), suggesting the significance of the figure as an identifiable icon of Singapore. Lastly, the fact that Superbrands, the world's leading brand promotional platform had made a montage of the superbrands in Singapore for 2011 in the shape of the Merlion (Song, 2011) further affirmed the perception of the Merlion as iconic of Singapore.

For the last criterion, identified as "Reflecting Singaporean's Way of Life," two criteria by Counsell - Resonant and Revealing - can be used to further illustrate the significance of the selected icons (even if they do not strictly conform to the "historical" reference point). The example of the PSLE may be seen to be significant as it resonated with the experience of a large majority of Singaporeans. The experience of preparing and sitting for this examination at the end of primary school education is something that people in Singapore can connect with across time and space since the PSLE was instituted in the early 1970s. The idea that the PSLE will determine a child's future through the secondary school option, and plays an important role in deciding if the child can continue to study in a junior college, polytechnic or institute of technical education is deeply ingrained in the minds of many Singaporeans. Meanwhile, the idea of viewing the HDB as a significant icon is also possible because of its capacity to reveal aspects of the country's past, especially how the country tackled the challenge of housing its people

since the 1960s. Studying the significance of the HDB can also reveal the reasons for the different forms of public housing that emerged throughout the years, and enable students to trace the various stages of Singapore's development through the course of history from the 1960s till today.

Aside from establishing the relation between the students' sets of criteria and that of academics, another point worth highlighting would be the students' starting points as they engaged in the process of completing the task. Team 1, for example, immediately started selecting their cards without establishing their definitions of an icon, and it was only after a few minutes of attempting to categorise the cards, did they agree to look for items that represented Singapore. A similar approach was undertaken by students in Team 3. While Team 2 also started the task in the same way, they revised their strategy when Jacklyn suddenly posed this question, "Is it when we think of Singapore, then we think of this icon; or when we think of this icon, we think of Singapore?" As a result of this thoughtful question, the team members appeared stunned and had to engage in some re-thinking about the task. The matter was resolved when Barb suggested that they choose items that represented Singapore first as a criterion for selection. Jacklyn's question was important as it raised the possibility of approaching the task in a very different way. For example, the latter approach meant that the icon should remind a person of Singapore, and this could be possible, in a case where the Merlion might remind someone of Singapore. Yet, to purport that the "Merlion is Singapore" per se would be erroneous as Singapore had more to offer than just the icon. On the other hand, the former approach allowed more room for other interpretations. This rather 'complicated' situation can be illustrated better through the strategies Kitson and Husband (2011) proposed in order to develop students' understandings of significance. The first strategy was to ask pupils to decide why something or someone is deemed to be significant. This paralleled the procedure used in this study where students were asked to explain their reasons for selecting the images. Meanwhile, the approach raised by Jacklyn is similar to the second strategy Kitson and Husband proposed in which students were asked to decide whether an event or person was significant. The issue that Jacklyn's group experienced demonstrated how judgments about significance are highly personal and are also dependent on many factors such as knowledge to the questions being asked (Kitson & Husband, 2011).

Time is also another factor that can influence students' perceptions of Singapore's icons. For example, when asked which icons their parents and grandparents would choose, Saachi explained that "they will choose PAP, as back then the PAP was very domineering." Madiha suggested the "Singa" - previously the Courtesy Lion for over 30 years- because "the Singa is what our parents and of course their parents (aka our grandparents) would be familiar with as they grew up with this mascot." Again, the purely personal aspect of establishing significance of an issue was emphasised, and this idea is encapsulated through Robert Penn Warren's quote: "To be an American is not…a matter of blood; it is a matter of an idea - and history is the image of that idea" (cited in Barton & Levstik, 1998). In the case of students in this study, what is conceived as the icons of Singapore would vary amongst individuals as their ideas would be shaped through their experiences and interactions in their past about Singapore.

Conclusions

This study was designed to explore the kinds of reasoning students in Singapore were likely to make when judging items or people who are significant and who may be regarded as icons of Singapore. Despite the various ways the students used to communicate their ideas, similar patterns were noted in their responses. These were marked in terms of common themes that emerged, and later coded as students' sets of criteria. Of the various existing sets of criteria, some of Counsell's criteria for establishing significance appeared to reflect students' understanding and mental moves most. Notably, based on their selection of icons, students appeared to emphasise the need for something or someone to be

remarkable, resonant, revealing or resulting in change. Also, for many students it was possible for an item or person to be deemed as significant if more than one criterion was met. For example, in this study students reasoned that former PM Lee Kuan Yew was significant and an icon of Singapore as he was *both* important to Singapore *and* popular locally and internationally. Likewise, the Merlion was considered an icon due both to its popularity as well as its uniqueness to Singapore.

These findings have implications for teaching. From this study, it seemed apparent that students do take an interest in developments within Singapore, and that they do share a sense of belonging to the country. This served to debunk criticisms from some quarters suggesting that students in Singapore did not care or were apathetic to the country's history and its well-being. Rather, the study provided indications that students appeared to take pride in having significant items and people as icons of the country. This was seen in the way students felt about icons, and how icons were seen as important in helping citizens identify and bond with the country. A possible way in which the findings in this study could be translated into practice would be as an extension activity for the lower secondary history students after they have learnt the chapter on Nation Building: 1965 to 1975. Having students partake in this activity would help them understand that for whatever reasons they may have in choosing a particular item or person as an icon, an important consideration they would need to make should include the contributions of that icon in the past and the impact it continues to have on the present. Another way in which the findings from this study can be applied to history teaching would be to use this activity to highlight to students the multiple perspectives that exist when considering issues related to making choices about Singapore's icons. To further demonstrate this aspect, students could be guided to carry out their own investigations on similar topics, such as in determining the "Historical Icons of Singapore," as a way to get students to have hands-on experience in working with the concept of significance in history. Alternatively, students can also engage in this activity as part of the Upper

Secondary Social Studies curriculum, or as an activity for the entire school student population as part of the National Day Celebrations. Either way, having students engaged in the task of selecting iconic images of Singapore and subsequently making them develop justifications for their choices could provide students with an opportunity to sharpen their reasoning skills. It also would make learning about Singapore more engaging and personal, and help clarify students' own preconceptions as they make their thinking and perceptions about Singapore visible. Finally, by providing them with an opportunity to formulate their own conclusions, it would help deepen their understandings of the country and thus potentially increase their appreciation for Singapore's icons.

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Appendix A: Data of Participants (all names are pseudonyms)

No	Interview Team No	Name of Student	History Achievement	Ethnicity/Nationality
1.	1	Feng	High	Chinese/Singaporean
2.	1	Jane	Average	Chinese/Singaporean
3.	1	Melanie	High	Indian/ India PR
4.	1	Saachi	Average	Indian/ Singaporean
5.	2	Barb	High	Chinese/Singaporean
6.	2	Jacklyn	Average	Chinese/Singaporean
7.	2	Kiew	High	Chinese/Singaporean (parents from PRC)
8.	2	Xiang	Average	Chinese/Singaporean (parents from PRC)
9.	3	Helen	High	Chinese/Singaporean
10.	3	Madiha	Average	Malay/Singaporean
11.	3	Noor	Average	Malay/ Indonesian PR
12.	3	Zaara	High	Malay/ Singaporean

Appendix B: Interview Protocol

What is an icon of Singapore today? To help you reach your conclusion to this question, these are pictures of items that are often associated with Singapore. Each one has a caption that explains a little about it. You are going to work together as a group to decide which of these are significant enough to be considered an icon of Singapore. You can only pick 10, so you have to decide which are the most significant. After you have decided on the ten icons, I will ask you to explain each of your choices. Do you have any questions before you start? Do discuss with each other as you identify the ten icons of Singapore.

After students complete the task, ask them to explain why they chose each picture, and then ask:

1. Why did you not choose these pictures as icons of Singapore?

2. If older people like your parents' or grandparents' ages, were doing this, what do you think might be different about their choices?

3. Do you think having icons is important? Why? Do you think other people think it's important?

Appendix C: Table on Students' Choices of Significant Representations of Singapore

No	Image Presented	Number of Times Chosen by			
		Chinese	Malay	Indian	Total
1	PAP	0	0	0	0
2	National Service	3	3	2	8
3	Changi & Control Tower	7	3	2	12
4	Multiracial Society	7	3	2	12
5	PSLE	4	0	0	4
6	National Day Parades	0	0	0	0
7	Meritocracy	4	0	0	4
8	Hawker Centres	7	3	2	12
9	HDB	6	0	2	8
10	Esplanade Theatres by the Bay	6	0	2	8
11	Marina Bay Sands	7	3	2	12
12	Merlion	7	3	2	12
13	Garden in the City	1	3	0	4
14	Orchard Road & Shopping	1	3	0	4
15	SIA Girl	1	3	0	4
16	1st President Mr Yusof Ishak	0	0	0	0
17	PM Lee Hsien Loong	0	0	0	0
18	Former PM Lee Kuan Yew	7	3	2	12
19	Speaker Mdm Halimah Yacob	0	0	0	0
20	Former President S R Nathan	0	0	0	0
21	Statue of Sir Stamford Thomas Raffles	2	0	2	4
22	Sultan Mosque	0	0	0	0
23	Sri Mariamman Temple	0	0	0	0
24	Thian Hock Keng Temple	0	0	0	0
25	Armenian Church	0	0	0	0
26	Civilian War Memorial	0	0	0	0
27	Taufik Batisah	0	0	0	0
28	Pink Dot Rally 2013	0	0	0	0
29	General Elections 2011	0	0	0	0
30	Singa, Singapore Kindness Movement Mascot	0	0	0	0