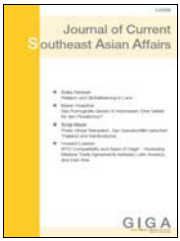

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Multiplicity within Singularity: Racial Categorization and Recognizing "Mixed Race" in Singapore

Zarine L. Rocha

Abstract: "Race" and racial categories play a significant role in everyday life and state organization in Singapore. While multiplicity and diversity are important characteristics of Singaporean society, Singapore's multiracial ideology is firmly based on separate, racialized groups, leaving little room for racial projects reflecting more complex identifications. This article explores national narratives of race, culture and belonging as they have developed over time, used as a tool for the state, and re-emerging in discourses of hybridity and "double-barrelled" racial identifications. Multiracialism, as a maintained structural feature of Singaporean society, is both challenged and reinforced by new understandings of hybridity and older conceptions of what it means to be "mixed race" in a (post-)colonial society. Tracing the temporal thread of racial categorization through a lens of mixedness, this article places the Singaporean case within emerging work on hybridity and recognition of "mixed race". It illustrates how state-led understandings of race and "mixed race" describe processes of both continuity and change, with far-reaching practical and ideological impacts.

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Introduction

"Race"[1] and racial categories have long played a significant role in everyday life and state organization in Singapore. From colonization to independent statehood, narratives of racial distinctiveness and classification underpinned Singapore's development at macro and micro levels. While multiplicity and diversity are important characteristics of contemporary Singaporean society, Singapore's multiracial ideology is firmly based on separated, racialized groups, leaving little room for more complex individual and institutional racial projects. However, hybridity and "mixed race" are increasingly important characteristics and identifications in Singaporean society, and in fact have historically provided an important thread linking colonial and post-colonial national identifications. This article traces the emergence of mixed identities against a background of racial structuring in Singapore, moving from colonial understandings of race towards the recent state-led efforts at recognizing hybridity: acknowledging ancestral and personal complexity within a singular racial framework.

The concept of hybridity is in itself complex and variable. Historically utilized to refer to the mingling of biologically separate races, the term has been co-opted to refer to cultural and ethnic "recombination", whether based in ancestry or in interaction (Bolatagici 2004: 75; Ifekwunigwe 1999: 188; Parker and Song 2001a: 4). Such hybridity emphasises the fluidity and multiplicity of ethnic, racial and cultural identities, as constructed through feelings of belonging, heritage, memory and experience. Bhabha's concept of a third space of hybridity highlights this complexity, as "the process of cultural hybridity gives rise to something different, something new and unrecognizable, a new area of negotiation of meaning and representation" (Bhabha 1990: 211). Hybridity provides a conception of everyday fluidity and change, where cultures collide and collude, in contrast to historical understandings of biological race and essentialized culture (Ang 1999: 558; Bhabha 1994).

Conversely, conceptions of hybridity can both destabilize and essentialize racial categories. In theorizing "mixed race" as hybrid, races and cultures could be seen as essentially distinct enough to be mixed together, while hybridity also emphasizes the multiple and fluid natures of the very conceptions of culture and race (Gilroy 1998; Wade 2005). Hybridity is frequently explored as transgressive, as in the case of the Singaporean state framework, yet, as this article will show, hybrid "mixed" identities are equally everyday

1 "Race" is used throughout this article without double quotes, but is understood as being socially constructed, situational and fluid, not as biological fact.

and commonplace, as lived reality develops around strict categorizations of race (see Werbner 1997).

Research highlighting the complexity and ubiquity of hybrid identities thus provides an important conceptual base for research on "mixed race" across national and individual levels, and a growing literature on "mixed race" identities and mixedness draws on these theories (see, for example, Ali 2003; Ifekwunigwe 2004; Parker and Song 2001b; Phoenix and Owen 2000; Root 1996). Hybridity then serves to emphasize the "in-between" position of individuals of mixed heritage and the overlap between race and culture (see Song and Hashem 2010). While hybridity works to theorize the micro-macro connections of complex identities and the ways in which all identities and cultures can, to some extent, be described as hybrid and multiple (Kymlicka 2003; Nava 2007; Parekh 2007), mixedness describes the individual experiences of being "mixed": the messiness of everyday lived ethnic, racial and cultural identities (Ali 2007; Sims 2007).

Essentialized racial categories have a long legacy in Singapore, and "multiracialism" has been described as "one of the nation's founding myths" (Benjamin 1976: 116). In everyday life, the importance of race is simultaneously emphasized and downplayed, pursuing a meritocratic society in which no race is privileged (Pereira 2006), while at the same time maintaining the population in distinct racial groups. State racial projects of categorization are translated to societal practices and understandings, through inscription on official forms and identity cards, representation in national and local events, and implementation of socio-economic policy (PuruShotam 1998). Narratives of race in Singapore are thus highly visible, from the state to the everyday lives of individuals, reinforcing boundaries, and, until recently, limiting options for multiple racial identifications. While racial mixing has been a feature of pre-colonial, colonial and post-colonial Singaporean societies, mixed identities have historically been marginalized, ignored or re-racialized, as for the Eurasian population.

1819–1940: Colonial Management of Race

Singapore was established as a trading post for the British East India Company in 1819 and became a part of British Malaya in 1867 (Chua and Kuo 1990: 2; Goh 2007: 122). The colony was made up of a diverse population of Chinese and Indian settlers, encompassing a wide range of ethnic and dialect groups and migratory trajectories: arriving from China and India, as well as from Malacca, Malaya and Thailand (Liu et al. 2002; Tremewan 1994: 7; Wang 1989: 553). These groups settled alongside regionally indigenous Malays, creating a predominantly Chinese island in an otherwise Malay-

dominated region (Chua 1995a: 102). As in other colonial societies, this diverse population was subject to organization informed by European racial theory, defining a racialized socio-economic framework (Benjamin 1976; Goh 2007; Hirschman 1986). In his study of British Malaya, Hirschman (1986) argues that although divisions existed between and within Chinese, Indian and Malay populations prior to colonization, it was this operationalization of racial ideology that crystallized intergroup boundaries, emphasizing difference and explaining inequality with notions of inherent racial characteristics. This ideology proved pervasive and persuasive: "Once established, ideas have a life of their own […] More than rubber and tin, the legacy of colonialism was racial ideology" (Hirschman 1986: 357).

Such ideology, justifying key economic and political imperatives, was put into practice in several ways. Racially defined groups were separated occupationally, based on the stereotypes regarding "inherent" predispositions of each race (Rahim 1998: 239). The Europeans, naturally, remained the governing elite. The numerically dominant Chinese population clustered in trade and entrepreneurship, the Malays worked primarily as fisherman, policemen, in the rural economy, or in local service, and the Indians in low-paid plantation and physical labour (Goh 2008a: 238; Kong and Yeoh 2003: 195-196). The colony was also spatially divided by race, segregating Asian and European populations, as well as provisioning for enclaves for Chinese, Malay and Indian populations (Kong and Yeoh 2003). Thus, a plural society of sorts was institutionalized, illustrating Furnivall's "medley of peoples – European, Chinese, Indian and native. It is in the strictest sense a medley, for they mix, but do not combine" (Furnivall 1948: 304). Such pluralism highlighted the belief in the organizing power of the colonizer, as "natural" racial differences could only be managed and stabilized through colonial institutions (Goh 2008a: 237).

In addition to these practical racial projects, the population was also administratively racialized. The census was a primary site of racialization, as a powerful state project shaped by the colonizer's racial ideology (Goh 2008a; PuruShotam 1998). The first census in Singapore was taken in 1871, and then at ten-year intervals until 1931, recording Singapore as part of the Straits Settlements, and later, as part of British Malaya (Singapore Department of Statistics 2010b: 37). While seemingly innocuous, the very practice of classifying racial groups had far-reaching impacts for inter- and intra-group relations in Singapore. The 1871 census had 33 vaguely defined categories which represented a mix of racial, ethnic, national, cultural, religious, political and socio-economic classifications:

> Europeans and Americans, Armenians, Jews, Eurasians, Abyssians, Achinese, Africans, Andamanese, Arabs, Bengalis and other natives of

> India not particularized, Boyanese, Bugis, Burmese, Chinese, Cochin Chinese, Dyaks, Hindoos, Japanese, Javanese, Jaweepekans, Klings, Malays, Manilamen, Mantras, Parsees, Persians, Siamese, Singhalese, Military – British, Military – Indian, Prisoners – Local, Prisoners – Transmarine (PuruShotam 1998: 61).

Categories in later censuses then became both more particular and more generalized, and importantly, more exclusively racialized (see Anderson 1991; Hirschman 1986). In 1881, 47 sub-categories were reclassified under six main categories: *European and American, Eurasian, Chinese, Malays and other natives of the Archipelago, Tamils and other Natives of India,* and *Other nationalities*, which remained as the six basic classes for the next three census rounds. This schema was further abbreviated in 1921 to *Europeans, Eurasians, Malays, Chinese, Indians* and *Others*, drawing together and conflating racial, religious and national identifications. At the time, 56 sub-groups were classified under these broad categories, increasing to 70 in 1931 (PuruShotam 1998: 61-64).

By the 1930s, race was well-entrenched as a form of measurement and population management, encompassing aspects of ancestry, phenotype, religious beliefs and civic identity. The 1931 census report stresses that the category of "race" was utilized in a political sense, for practical ends, as a way to answer the question "'*What* is that man?' – assuming that the context makes it clear that we are not enquiring as to his occupation" (Vlieland 1932: 74, emphasis added). This eurocentric classificatory grid thus simplified complex identities, fitting neatly with colonial aims of disciplining and managing the population. Census counting intersected with the racial and spatial organization of the territory by drawing symbolic boundaries around groups, to delimit where they did and did not belong: "by a sort of demographic triangulation, the census filled in politically the formal topography of the map" (Anderson 1991: 174).

In delimiting and managing race, the colonial government also attempted to control "mixed race". Individuals identified with multiple groups were re-classified within a single racial category – based on style of dress, religious belief or simply the least complicated option (see Braga-Blake 1992). This framework was not able to deal with complications or fluidity, with categories ranging from religious to cultural to occupational, seemingly arbitrarily, and with little sense of order (Goh and Holden 2009; Hirschman 1987). The "Eurasian" category was an attempt to describe and categorize mixedness, providing a label under which European/ Asian mixes could be bundled without further discussion (PuruShotam 1998), while the final category of *Others* sufficed to impose order on the messiness of other mixes, minority groups or unclassifiable complications: "The comic classificatory and sub-

classificatory census box entitled 'other' concealed all real life anomalies by a splendid bureaucratic *trompe d'oeil*" (Anderson 1991: 184).

Mixedness, Diversity and Identity

In contrast to the neat delimitations of the census, colonial Singaporean society was diverse and complicated, made up of interacting groups that blurred at the edges. The Peranakans, otherwise known as Babas and Nonyas, or Straits Chinese, provide a good example of this complexity, as an ethnic group which traced its descent to seventeenth century Chinese migrants who married local women in Southeast Asia (Beng 1993; Stokes-Rees 2007). Characterized by Chinese and Malay influences and inflected by European and Indonesian customs, Peranakan (meaning "descendent" in Malay) culture illustrated the fusion and intermingling of cultures in everyday life (Goh 2008a: 237).

In keeping with the eurocentric understanding of racial hierarchy, much intermixing (particularly inter-Asian intermixing, as in this case) was left unrecorded and unremarked. It was the intermixing between Europeans and Asians that was of greater concern to the colonial authorities (Stoler 1992), reflecting the gendered and racialized bases for colonialism. Of concern was the fact that despite practical and prejudicial limitations, as in all of Europe's colonies, relationships between the colonizers and the colonized produced offspring: children of "mixed race", who transgressed the ostensibly fixed racial lines demarcated by the administration (Pomfret 2009).

Individuals of mixed European and Asian descent in Singapore were known as Eurasians. Interestingly, Eurasians were among the earliest migrants to Singapore after 1819, coming from regions with an established European presence, such as Goa, Malacca, Macau and Timor (Braga-Blake 1992; Pereira 2006). Eurasians were frequently classified as European due to similarities in style of dress, custom and religion, and as such were accorded higher socio-economic status, often working in the civil service and in higher ranking jobs (Braga-Blake 1992; Pereira 1997). As greater numbers of Europeans arrived after 1869, this privileged position became more precarious (Pereira 2006). Eurasians continued to occupy an intermediate position, between the "local" population and the British colonizers in terms of employment, education and socio-economic status, but a firmer line was drawn between European and Eurasian – effectively limiting social interaction and employment prospects, but maintaining a certain privilege (Braga-Blake 1992).

In response to this shifting racial hierarchy and exclusion from European circles, Eurasians in Singapore formed a community around the idea of hybridity – but as personal mixedness only of a particular type. Eurasian

identity was consolidated around what was seen as unique: mixed European/ Asian descent (along patrilineal European lines), class, Christianity, and linguistic ability in English, effectively essentializing hybridity (Braga-Blake 1992; Pereira 1997). As the sense of community strengthened, the Eurasian Association (EA) was formed in 1919, and as with other groups in Singapore, Eurasian enclaves developed (Braga-Blake 1992; Clarke 1992).

As well as holding an ambiguous position administratively, Eurasians were viewed with mixed fascination and disdain by the European and Chinese communities. In the context of European theories of race, Eurasian "mixed race" was seen as a degeneration of the "pure" European race, embodied evidence of a racial transgression (Lee 2004: 4). In British colonial discourse, Eurasians were commonly seen as having inherited the worst of both worlds, as perpetually divided figures, belonging to neither culture. Eurasian women were particularly subject to stereotype and condemnation, viewed through a lens of orientalist fantasy, and seen as partly virtuous and European, partly dusky and exotic, and equally attractive and contemptible (Jayawardena 2007: 186).

For the Chinese community, Eurasians were seen less in racial terms, and more in terms of lineage and loyalty. A Eurasian individual was frequently seen as a living betrayal of lineage, physical evidence of abandoning the family line and name. This focus on lineage deviated from the racial focus of the Europeans, but maintained the emphasis on blood and purity, as well as the gendered undertones of the importance of the family name and the honor of women. Lee suggests that Chinese terms used to describe Eurasians illustrate this disdain: "*tsap chung* (half caste), *da luen chung, tsap ba lang* (mixed/ messed up breed)" (Lee 2004: 18).

Eurasians were thus perceived as subverting the purity/ authenticity of both groups, accepted by neither the Chinese nor the European communities on the grounds of difference by blood. The community was often viewed with distrust, seen as having a less stable form of identity, or no real identity at all. Eurasians both subverted and reinforced essentialized notions of racial groups, as they crossed both state-imposed and socially-maintained boundaries, and asserted a distinctive form of racialized identity for themselves (Lee 2004).

1965–1980: Independence, National Identity and the People's Action Party (PAP)

The Second World War and the Japanese occupation had significant effects on the strength of racial identities in Singapore, marking the end of British imperial legitimacy (Tremewan 1994: 10). Anti-colonial movements devel-

oped in the region, including the Malayan Communist Party (MCP), which increasingly challenged British dominance, and national identities were more aggressively asserted as the colonial racial-administrative divisions were brought to the fore. Racial groups became increasingly defined by association with a "home" country, further solidifying racialized and nationalized boundaries (Benjamin 1976; Hill and Lian 1995; Wong 2000).

In the 1950s, faced with declining power and the rise of new influences in the region, the British attempted to address the problems of governing multiracial Singapore (Vasil 1995). Racial and religious divisions within the population were increasingly pronounced, as the society attempted to recover from occupation, and differential treatment and hierarchy continued. Communism, Chinese chauvinism and religious tensions were seen as key threats to governance, and the complicated position of Islam and the Malay population was highlighted in the 1950 "Maria Hertogh" riots, centering around the custody and affiliations of a young Dutch girl, her Muslim adopted mother and Catholic parents (Hussin 2005; Vasil 1995).

Against this background, a theory of multiracialism was developed, built on the racialized framework of colonial hierarchy, and initially proposed by English-educated intellectuals in the decade prior to independence (Hill and Lian 1995: 92). Introduced by Chief Minister David Marshall, multiracialism sought to create an inclusive and egalitarian society, by integrating Singapore's composite racialized groups into a single Singaporean culture (Barr and Skrbis 2008: 88). To this end, the All-Party Committee on Chinese Education was established, highlighting the state's intertwined conceptions of race, culture and language. The Committee's 1956 report was thus the first illustration of the multiracial philosophy, proposing four streams of education in the four national languages – multiracialism as a way to manage and organize diversity and difference (Barr and Skrbis 2008; Hill and Lian 1995; Vasil 1995: 19).

The British granted internal self-government to Singapore in 1959, and in 1963, Malaya and Singapore became fully independent as a new nation: Malaysia (Chan 2009; Chua 1998). However, the national partnership between Singapore and Malaysia was brief and strained. The two year merger period was characterized by significant clashes between the central government and the Singaporean authorities, on economic, political and social issues (Wee 2001: 537). While a number of issues contributed to the eventual separation in 1965, a key disagreement involved the role of race in politics, and the historical conceptions of Malay identity as linked to Malaya itself (Lau 1998: 280; Rahim 1998). As stated by Goh:

> In decolonizing Malaya, the chief disagreement was whether the political primacy of the Malays maintained by the colonial state should

> continue, making Malaya a 'Malay Malaya' where the non-Malays would recognize Malay primacy in exchange for equal citizenship rights, or that formal racial equality should define the nation, making Malaya a 'Malayan Malaya' where a new hybrid national culture would be cultivated (Goh 2008a: 240).

Closely linked to the framework of multiracialism, the primacy of race in the nature of Singapore's position in Malaysia highlighted the continuing influence of colonial structures, as strategies for independence and power were negotiated. The political discourse and heightened sensitivities of this period further promoted racialized identities, whether as dominant identities or building blocks of a multiracial society, leading to instances of ethnic/ racial violence within Singapore prior to the separation (Goh 2008a; Hill and Lian 1995; Lai 1995; Vasil 1995). The 1964 "Prophet Mohammed birthday riots" occurred as a result of the dissonance between treatment of Malays in Singapore and Malaya and the associated political ambitions, which led to numerous clashes between Chinese and Malay groups (Lau 1998; Liu et al. 2002; Narayanan 2004). Overall, 23 people died in the rioting, providing further impetus for the multiracial framework as a means to maintain harmony between racial groups, and reinforcing the divisions between Singapore and the central government (Lau 1998: 175).

After separation in 1965, as a newly and unexpectedly independent state, Singapore found itself the only Chinese-majority population in the region, with many social, economic and political issues to address (Chua 2003; Chua and Kuo 1990). To do this, the governing PAP took a survivalist approach to statehood, developing a narrative of legitimacy and struggle which encompassed the recent social unrest, and wider geopolitical considerations of national allegiance and political alignment (Lai 1995: 17). The government sought to tackle the legacies of colonialism: high unemployment, housing shortages, high birth rates, precarious economic viability, and a racialized, separated population without a unifying sense of national identity (Chua and Kuo 1990: 12, 21; Wong 2000).

Multiracialism was therefore a key aspect of self-definition in Singapore's new national narrative and an important tool for governance. Singapore became a constitutionally multiracial state with an overarching Singaporean identity, in an attempt to manage and bring together the multiple racial groups and translating the principles behind *Malaysian Malaya* into the Singaporean process of nation building (Chua 2003; Kong and Yeoh 2003). Carrying over inherited colonial categories, new Prime Minister Lee Kuan Yew and his cabinet of ministers developed the multiracial framework into a rational and managed form of population organization, subsuming racial identities within the multiracial nation (Barr and Skrbis 2008: 91). The ideals

of multiracialism, multilingualism, multiculturalism and multireligiosity crystallized into the racialized framework of Chinese, Malay, Indian and Other (CMIO): separate, but equal, races making up a unique and compelling Singaporean identity (Chan 2009; Hill and Lian 1995; Siddique 1989).

Without a shared history upon which to "imagine" a community, the state sought to create a nation through universal concepts which would transcend ethnic groupings, grounded in capitalist development and framed by a multiracial scaffolding (Chua 1998). Each major racial grouping was conceived as a distinct and equal part of the new nation, in an attempt to operationalize meritocracy in tandem with multiracialism: ensuring that success was the result of merit, not favouritism (Moore 2000: 344). This reworking of diversity essentialized race as an integral feature of the population, irrevocably linking the individual, society and the nation through a framework of racial singularity and belonging – belonging to the nation by identifying with one of the founding races (Chua 1998: 34; Hill and Lian 1995).

In practice, multiracialism also meant that instances of "special" treatment or distinctiveness that could threaten the new framework were dealt with by the state. This included Nanyang University (or Nantah), a private Chinese college which was transformed into a state institution, and its transmission of Chinese-centered values significantly curtailed (Wong 2000). Thus, as seen in the transfer of racial categories, this framework to shape national belonging came directly from colonial understandings of race, providing a key thread of racialization across processes of decolonization. By continuing to classify in colonial categories, the boundaries, meanings and power dynamics of these racial categories were translated into the new state, with far-reaching consequences in terms of identity and practice (Goh 2008a; Hill and Lian 1995).

Chinese, Malay, Indian, Other

Under the CMIO system, all Singaporeans were categorized along patrilineal lines, assuming that each individual was embedded in a racial group, and leaving little room for more complex identifications (Chua 2003). Each group seamlessly linked descent, language, religion and custom to create essentialized, idealized versions of "separate but equal" races (Chua 1998; Siddique 1989). Multiracial categories served to simplify and homogenize, using race as shorthand for more complex identities, and glossing over linguistic, religious and cultural differences within each broad category (Barr and Skrbis 2008: 50; Chua 1998, 2005; Hill and Lian 1995). With each group viewed as a component race of Singapore's multiracial society, the distinctiveness of each was heightened to better fit within the framework: "Singa-

pore's multiracialism puts pressure on Chinese to become more Chinese, Indians to become more Indian and Malays to become more Malay" (Benjamin 1976: 124).

The CMIO framework was promoted by the state in a number of ways, from listing race on identity cards, to active promotion of racial practices, ethnic and religious festivals and "cultural shows", reinforcing race as a visible and grounded form of identity (Chua 1998, 2003; Siddique 1989). The population was also mapped along racial lines through the national census. The first post-independence census was taken in 1970, and thereafter at 10-year intervals (Sing and Lin 2009; Singapore Department of Statistics 2010b). Race was not utilized as a category on the census form itself, but responses to the question on ethnic/ dialect group were reclassified according to the three main CMI groups, or as Others (Arumainathan 1973). As further specified in the census report:

> The concept of ethnic group used in the 1970 census is basically the same as that used in preceding censuses and connotes groups or communities *belonging to the same stock* or ethnological origin […] it was observed in the 1931 census that this grouping is 'in reality, a judicious blend for practical ends of the ideas of geographical and ethnological origin, political allegiance and racial and social affinities and sympathies (Arumainathan 1973: 247, emphasis added).[2]

The CMIO structure is clearly evident in this practical definition, reflecting the colonial practice of conflating race, ethnicity, religion, culture and nationality, and relying on overarching racial categories under which lesser categories could be subsumed. Interestingly, the census report goes on to say:

> In recent years, the differences among communities have become even less pronounced due to intermingling and assimilation and the dialect or community subdivision no longer represents any distinct category or group (Arumainathan 1973: 247).

This assertion of the hybridity of the population then stands in sharp contrast to the insistence on these delimited groups for analysis, and the fact that individuals of mixed parentage were categorized according to the ethnic group of the father. Eurasians were the exception, classified under "Other", as:

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2 Although this definition was used for "race" in the 1931 report, rather than "ethnic/ dialect group", showing both the pre-/ post-colonial continuities and linguistic shifts.

> persons primarily of mixed European and Asian descent […] *do not belong to any specific ethnic grouping*. However, it has been the practice […] to treat them as a specific community and this practice has also been continued in the current census (Arumainathan 1973: 247, emphasis added).

The category of "Other" thus served to cover all those who did not fit into Chinese, Malay or Indian, encompassing significant complexity and, in an interesting shift, including all European ethnicities and nationalities as minority groups (Hill and Lian 1995: 94).

This form of racialization had significant consequences for Singaporean society. While multiracialism was ideal for administrative and organizational purposes, it both constrained and concealed the complexity of everyday life identities for Singaporeans (Barr and Skrbis 2008: 52). The blurring of boundaries between groups was deliberately ignored, as was the myriad of hybrid cultural practices of everyday life in Singapore (Benjamin 1976). In addition, those who did not fit comfortably within the framework were marginalized as "Others", re-labelled or excluded from dominant narratives of nation-building. Theoretical equality also masked the power dynamics of everyday life, as multiracial egalitarianism obscured the continued hierarchies along intersecting racial, religious and socio-economic lines. This contradiction can be seen particularly in the example of the Malay community, as a marginalized group which remained on the periphery despite theories of equal opportunity and meritocracy (Barr and Skrbis 2008; Rahim 1998).

By managing the population within separate groups, the state positioned itself above the racial framework, as a neutral party which maintains harmony between groups. This made race not merely about personal identity, but about a justification for and a mechanism of rule (Chun 1996). In keeping with the initial survivalist approach to statehood, multiracialism was portrayed as a means to keep a fragile peace between groups, needing careful management by the state. The pre-independence instances of violence could then be re-remembered in this light, as a way to justify continued multiracial policies (Lai 1995: 125; Lai 2004). Racial groups were therefore depoliticized and relegated to the private sphere, while at the same time being promoted very publically (Chan 2009; Lian 2006). Multiracialism both made race highly visible in everyday life, and removed race as a primary form of politicized identity (Chua 1995a: 107).

Multiracialism and Public Policy

The CMIO framework was utilized to address numerous issues, including education, housing and welfare, by an openly interventionist government

(Hill and Lian 1995: 112; Narayanan 2004; Tan 2004). While multiracialism and meritocracy continued to be key values for the new government, multiracialism did more than discourage separatism and promote a form of national unity, working also to further divide groups along racial lines through policy implementation (Barr and Skrbis 2008; Moore 2000). Practically, the operationalization of multiracial ideology was highly successful, carrying over already instituted colonial categories into government policy and the everyday lives of citizens from the early 1960s onwards.

Language was a central issue from the outset, closely tied to ethnic identification, regional history and to the path of economic progress envisaged by the government. Four official languages were established, providing a form of acknowledgement for each of the CMIO racial categories (Chua 1995a; Wee 2002). The promotion of English had a different rationale. Although English had been the language of the colonial power, the PAP reconceived it as the language of government and of commerce, as well as a language which could cut across the multiracial framework (Tremewan 1994: 88). English was then portrayed as essential to Singapore's economic development and global position, providing a further echo of colonial classification and racial/ linguistic hierarchy.

The post-1966 bilingual policy reinforced this, instituting English in the education system as a common national language. Mandarin, Malay or Tamil became compulsory second languages for each student, depending on their race: the "mother tongues" and "cultural ballasts" which grounded individuals in their racial groupings (Chan 2009; Chua 1995a: 110). "Mother tongue" is defined very particularly in this case, with interesting gendered implications: it is not the language first spoken with the mother, but rather, the official language of the assigned racial group, as determined by the father (Chua 2003: 61; Wee 2002: 285). The education system was reformed with this in mind, standardizing curricula and bringing together previously separate streams into a mandatory bilingual system, ensuring the predominance of English (Chua and Kuo 1990; Siddique 1989; Tremewan 1994; Vasil 1995).

The spatial distribution of the population was also affected by multiracial policy. The resettlement of the population into public housing estates and the clearing of *kampongs* around Singapore played a significant role in the development of the new state. *Kampong* clearance was initiated by the British authorities, with the aim of exerting some measure of control over the semi-autonomous villages. The PAP took over this role post-independence, and in 1960, the Housing Development Board (HDB) was established, with the aim of providing affordable public housing in the face of housing shortages, poverty and population growth. These new estates and

the accompanying demolition of villages were widely contested, as the new government sought to mold a diverse and disparate population into a manageable and measurable modern Singaporean nation (Loh 2009a, 2009b; Moore 2000). Public, multiracial housing became an important mechanism of control (Tremewan 1994). As described by Loh:

> Public housing, the quintessential architectural form of mid twentieth-century modernism, became the chief instrument of social change after the war. Both the British colonial regime and the PAP sought, over and above the politics of decolonisation, to transform the urban landscape by replacing kampongs and shophouses in the City with planned, self-contained public housing estates. The aim was not, as frequently avowed, merely to raise the people's living standards, but to mould the semi-autonomous residents into model citizens of the high modernist nation-state (Loh 2009a: 140).

These new public housing estates were deliberately multiracial, breaking up racially-based enclaves around the country as the population were resettled (Chan 2009). The dismantling of these fairly homogenous semi-rural villages ensured that such enclaves could not reform as the population dispersed, particularly because of "the first-come-first-served rule in the allocation of public housing flats; a rule which literally prevents individuals from electing to live in close proximity" (Chua 1995a: 114). Communities were relocated and separated, and accordingly, the cultural practices and lifestyle they had developed were destroyed (Chua and Kuo 1990: 20). In addition, the enforced diversity served as a safeguard to prevent large pockets of dissent and dissatisfaction from forming along racial and religious lines (Moore 2000: 352).

Over the next two decades, 230,000 households were resettled into public housing estates, significantly altering the shape of Singaporean society and the communities and networks which had formed within it (Goh 2008b: 316). Living standards did improve dramatically, as more of the population was relocated. Home ownership was increasingly promoted by the government, to give individuals a sense of belonging through having a stake in the nation, and to tie individuals to regular paid work to finance this stake (Chua and Kuo 1990). The new housing estates thus became integral parts of nation-building and the consolidation of multiracial policy, as the government utilized inherited practices of control to manage the population (Loh 2009a: 140).

"Mixed Race" in Independent Singapore

Multiracialism as a tool for policy and organization also had a significant impact on how "mixed race" was understood in Singapore. The multiracial framework left little space for racial boundary crossing and cultural hybridity, and boundary crossing was seen as transgressive and undesirable (Barr and Skrbis 2008: 52). In fact, such space was not seen as necessary, as in the words of Prime Minister Lee Kuan Yew:

> My expectation is that there will always be a small group of the adventurous in all the ethnic groups, perhaps those who are less egotistical, who marry across ethnic lines. But they will probably be in the minority. Therefore the chances are that if you come back to Singapore in a century from now, you would find people more or less the same (cited in Siddique 1989: 574).

Despite the strict divisions of multiracialism, intermarriage did occur in the 1960s and 1970s. Studies found that, contrary to expectations, around 4.4 per cent of all marriages in the 1970s occurred across ethnic/ racial lines (Hassan and Benjamin 1973, 1976; Kuo and Hassan 1979). Racial and religious intersections proved particularly important in the case of intermarriage, with the most frequent intermarriages occurring between Malays and Indians, many of whom shared religious affiliations as Muslims. Both intermarriages and intramarriages could also be across religious lines, as well as across levels of socio-economic status, as each racial group encompassed a diversity of religious beliefs and ethnic and linguistic origins (Kuo and Hassan 1979). Hassan (1971) found that Muslims and Christians were most likely to marry across racial lines, as religious identity served as a more powerful point of commonality (cited in Hassan and Benjamin 1973: 734). Lines between religion, race and culture became blurred, as while Malay-Indian marriages were most common, this included Indians of Hindu origin, who would also frequently marry Malays when intermarriage occurred (Hassan and Benjamin 1973).

Interracial relationships were equally gendered in post-independence Singapore, with five times as many European men marrying across racial lines as women, and five times as many Chinese women marrying outside their categorized group (Hassan and Benjamin 1973: 735; 1976). The gender discrepancy within the Chinese and European populations can be partly explained by the numbers of European men residing in Singapore, but also by the highly gendered notions of race for both groups. For the Europeans, women were viewed as the carriers of the race and signifiers of racial purity, leaving little space for intermixing with other groups. Men had significantly more freedom, and were additionally influenced by discourses of Asian

women as sexual partners and companions. For the Chinese, notions of lineage and patrilineage meant that men carried on the family line, and were thus less able to marry outside of approved groups. Women instead were more able to intermarry, crossing racial lines in much higher numbers (Hassan and Benjamin 1976: 215; Lee 1988: 257).

The children of these crossings were constrained by the existing system of categorization. As race was determined along patrilineal lines, the children of interracial relationships were automatically assigned the race of the father. This quietly passed over complex backgrounds, and rendered "mixed race" uncountable, reinforcing boundaries and the inviolability of racial groups (Benjamin 1976; Chua 2003; Poon 2009). Hybrid groups, such as the Eurasians and the Peranakans also lacked a defined space in the multiracial framework, being relegated to "Other" or subsumed under the broader category of "Chinese" (Narayanan 2004; Siddique 1989).

Post-1965, identification as Eurasian no longer brought particular privileges or higher status. This meant a significant shift for the Eurasian community, which did not make up one of the "founding races" or fit easily into the multiracial model. Being (literally) "othered" by the state had important consequences for the community, which was already culturally ambiguous and built on a history of hybridity (Braga-Blake 1992). The CMIO model meant that Eurasian culture was not officially recognized by the government, not being symbolically linked to a language, a homeland, or a distinct set of cultural practices (Pereira 1997).

Defining "Eurasian" thus became increasingly difficult. Classification along partrilineal lines shifted the definition of Eurasian from mixed European and Asian, instead classifying as Eurasian those who had two Eurasian parents or a Eurasian father (Pereira 1997: 19). "Eurasian" was seen less as mixed group in and of itself, but rather a minority ethnic group which could be classified as such (see Hassan and Benjamin 1973). The Eurasian community was thus further marginalized, lacking both a distinctive identity and a claim to mixedness, adrift within a new national narrative which had little room for hybridity.

Returning to Roots and Asian Values: 1980 Onwards

Multiracialism remained central to the national narrative post-1980, but with a shift in emphasis. While still maintaining the racialized basis of national unity, state rhetoric focused more on the *multi-*, changing the direction of hyphenation from Singaporean-Chinese to Chinese-Singaporean (Stokes-Rees 2007). This shift was Singapore's response to balancing Western influ-

ences and Asian heritage, combining economic modernization with stronger cultural links. This led to a re-focusing of multiracialism, seen in both policy and ideology (Barr and Skrbis 2008: 92). Multiracialism was implemented further in a number of policies affecting housing, education and social welfare (Goh and Holden 2009; Tan 2004). HBD estates, already organized to prevent the formation of ethnic enclaves, were reorganized as a result of the 1989 ethnic integration policy (Lai 1995: 121; Pereira 1997: 13). Inter-racial mixing was enforced more firmly, through monitoring of quotas. This new policy ensured that no racial group was over-represented, from the level of the entire estate, down to the building block itself, micro-managing multiracialism and extending the reach of the government's control (Chua 1995a: 114; Chua and Kuo 1990; Lai 1995: 122).

In the sphere of social welfare, racial divisions became particularly important. In the absence of a universal state-provided welfare system, "self-help" groups were organized along racial and religious lines for the Malays, Chinese and Indians, based on the premise that each group would have issues and priorities best addressed by the group themselves (Kong and Yeoh 2003). This illustrates a belief in the inherent differences and deficits between cultures and racial groups, fitting neatly within the multiracial model of distinct and bounded races, but at the same time contradicting the separate but equal ideology of multiracial Singapore (Moore 2000; Rahim 1998)

MENDAKI was set up in 1981 for the Muslim population and provided with inaugural funding from the state. Originally *Majlis Pendidikan Anak-Anak Islam* (The Council of Education of Muslim Children), the group broadened its mandate to address poverty in the wider Malay community, reflecting the close associations between Malay categorization and Islamic identity (Chua 1998: 37; Pereira 2006: 22). Following this, SINDA (the Singapore Indian Development Agency) and CDAC (the Chinese Development Assistance Council) were established in 1989 and 1992 respectively, providing a form of welfare for each major "racial" group (Chua 1998: 37; Lai 1995; Moore 2000; Pereira 2006).

The groups are funded primarily by member contributions – opt-out salary deductions for all designated members of a racial group – with some government assistance (Chua 1998; Kong and Yeoh 2003; Pereira 2006; Poon 2009). This organizational structure serves to crystallize racial boundaries, and binds citizens into racial/ religious groupings, while overlooking those who may not fit within the framework, such as Indian Muslims (Rahim 1998: 236). While self-help groups are promoted as recognizing the importance of race for individuals and communities, they in fact reinscribe racial identities – and the accompanying assumptions of religion, custom,

language and culture – onto the communities themselves (Hill and Lian 1995: 110; Poon 2009: 73). This illustrates the sometimes uncomfortable and potentially uneven outcomes of multiracial policy, which seeks to both emphasize racial differences and downplay national divisions (Moore 2000).

The bilingual education system, as previously mentioned, was also shaped by the CMIO framework. The 1979 Goh Report both introduced educational streaming and intensified bilingual policy, and thus had significant impacts on the meaning of race for the population (Barr and Skrbis 2008: 121). In particular, the second language policy, which mandates the learning of an official "mother tongue", redefined linguistic ownership for individuals. A "natural" second language was ascribed based on patrilineal racial lines, whether or not the language was spoken within the family in question. Thus, racial groups were understood as having a "true" racial essence, reflected in language, and carried within each individual (Poon 2009: 79; Wee 2002: 285).

This bilingual framework served to further essentialize racial groups, and to mask significant complexities in the population. For a start, the official language for the race was frequently not the home language for families from the majority groups, who often spoke different languages or regional dialects. This effectively marginalized their actual "mother tongues", and created a linguistic hierarchy, as second language learning remained compulsory, regardless of prior knowledge. For individuals of mixed parentage, this problem also existed, as the "mother tongue" policy (like many others) generally assumed that both parents come from the same group. Thus, the language of the race of the father may not have had any resonance with their daily lives or their heritage (Chua 2003: 61; Wee 2002: 288).

A further dissonance between policy and reality was highlighted in the use of English. An increasing number of households spoke English as their primary language by the 1980s, including ethnically and linguistically mixed families and Eurasians. As the main medium of education since 1984 (Vasil 1995: 64), and the neutral language for international, governmental and inter-group communication, English could not be officially recognized as a "mother tongue". To tie it to a particular community would undermine the state narrative of neutrality, and disrupt the bilingual framework of the education system, potentially creating an advantage if certain pupils were not required to learn a second language (Wee 2002). To combat the increasing everyday importance of English, the state chose to promote its bilingual framework still further, funding annual month-long campaigns to encourage the use of the three "mother tongue" languages (Chua 2005).

The importance of the "mother tongue" system was emphasized by the "Speak Mandarin" Campaign, inaugurated in 1979. This campaign, in a

dramatic shift from the initial principles of statehood, highlighted the importance of Chinese cultural heritage, positioned in opposition to the increasing "Westernization" of Singapore. It urged the majority Chinese population to speak in Mandarin, to unify all the dialect-speaking Chinese communities in Singapore and reinforce their "Chineseness" (Chan 2009; Vasil 1995: 64). This campaign had a significant impact, changing the main language for Chinese media, and (ironically, in a quest to strengthen Chinese cultural identity) reducing the use of dialects in home life (Chan 2009). As up to 85 per cent of Chinese households prior to this had come from dialect speaking homes, this represented a major shift (Kong and Yeoh 2003: 202). Mandarin thus became a mainstream nation-building project. The language was co-opted by the state to reduce the threat of "Chinese chauvinism" (political dominance through cultural dominance), and to redefine and solidify what it meant to be Singaporean Chinese (Barr and Skrbis 2008; Tremewan 1994). Impacts were felt outside the Chinese community as well, as the emphasis on Mandarin and the Chinese community as central to Singapore's cultural heritage marginalized the smaller Malay and Indian communities (Chan 2009; Vasil 1995).

Promoting Asian Values and National Identity

In the late 1980s and early 1990s, the emphasis on cultural heritage grew stronger, reflecting the shifting focus of multiracialism. Singaporean multiracialism now focused on commonalities: using communal "Asian values" and "Shared Values" as a counterweight to the individualistic and material outcomes (and perceived Westernized excesses) of economic development and meritocratic policies (Hill and Lian 1995: 102). With the PAP remaining in power, the leadership sought to reassure the population (particularly the Malay and Indian populations) that multiracial equality remained a founding principle of the nation. At the same time, racialized identities were increasingly promoted, as the population was encouraged to (re)discover their cultural heritage, and the traditional values which supposedly accompanied this (Vasil 1995). In reality, these shared values drew more heavily from conceptions of Chinese history and culture than from the traditions of the remaining racial groups. This emphasis on Chinese values and Confucianism implicitly excluded minority groups, and cast the ideal Singaporean as "Chinese Singaporean", subverting the initial understandings of a multiracial framework (Barr and Skrbis 2008).

As the majority group, the Chinese population was a particular target for the new ideology, with the government seeking to prevent the erosion of traditional Chinese values and cultural characteristics, while also curtailing political affiliations with the Chinese state (Ang 2001; Kong and Yeoh 2003:

205). Certain policies had significant benefits for the majority, such as the fostering of elite Chinese schools under the Special Assistance Plan (Barr and Skrbis 2008: 92-93). Yet, as reflected in the "Speak Mandarin" Campaign, the ideology also masked the complexity of everyday lives and identities:

> Chineseness becomes a prescription, a project, an artificially imposed cultural identity rather than a lived, uncontrived one. But this desire to manage Chineseness […] runs up against the actual processes of hybridization which proliferate in a global city (Ang 2001: 90).

Moreover, despite the constraints and confines of the multiracial framework, intimate racial boundaries were crossed with increasing frequency in the last two decades of the twentieth century. In 1988, only 4.3 per cent of marriages under the Women's Charter and 16.4 per cent under the Muslim Law Act[3] were registered as interethnic, potentially due to the practice of masking complexity by classifying children as the race of their father – making it impossible to know how many marriages involved individuals of mixed descent (Siddique 1990). By 1998, rates had climbed to 8.7 per cent and 20.0 per cent respectively, and in 2008, 13.8 per cent and 30.9 per cent (Singapore Department of Statistics 2008: 7). In 2009, the numbers continued to increase, with 15.7 per cent Women's Charter and 32.8 per cent Muslim Law Act marriages classified as interethnic, or 18.4 per cent of all marriages in Singapore – almost one in five (Singapore Department of Statistics 2010b: 54).

Revitalizing Eurasian Identity

Throughout the 1980s and 1990s, the CMIO framework, complemented by the discourse of "Shared Values", ensured the stability and pervasiveness of racialized structures, both symbolically and in everyday life. Against this divided backdrop, mixedness remained difficult to assert, particularly for individuals of mixed descent and for individuals who identified with the hybridity of the Eurasian community. By 1980, the Eurasian community was largely excluded from dominant narratives of nation building and belonging, as the hybrid Eurasian culture could not fit easily into the multiracial model and was not seen as Asian enough to possess traditional Asian values (Pereira 1997, 2006).

To combat this marginalization, the Eurasian community began a process of revitalization in the 1990s as a way of accessing the benefits of for-

3 Marriages in Singapore can be formalized either under the 1961 Women's Charter, or the Muslim Law Act of 1966.

mal group membership. To fit within the CMIO framework, the community attempted to assert its distinctiveness, allowing it to be officially identified as a legitimate group, and not an undefined "Other". This was done by recalling, consolidating, borrowing and even inventing unique aspects of Eurasian culture which could then be labelled as typically and traditionally Eurasian: Eurasian cuisine such as devil's curry, the language of Kristang (a patois of Portuguese and Malay originating in Malacca), and the *branyo* (a traditional dance). The definition of Eurasian was also officially broadened by the EA, moving away from a paternal European line, and allowing for anyone of mixed European and Asian descent (Pereira 1997, 2006). By creating distinct markers, the community worked to essentialize and distill aspects of Eurasian culture from the wider region, diluting hybridity to fit within a simplified grid of racial groups.

As a result, the government began to support the Eurasian community's efforts at self-definition and revitalization. It co-opted the EA to act as the "self-help" group for the Eurasian community, and acknowledged the Eurasians as a distinct cultural group with official representation, both politically and symbolically (Pereira 1997, 2006). While Eurasian culture has been promoted and solidified in order to fit within the CMI(E)O framework, much like other racialized groups, the social reality of Eurasians remains much more complicated. This complexity is particularly important for a community which developed as a hybrid composition of heritages and practices, and now finds itself with ascribed behaviours and identities (Pereira 1997).

Identity Versus Categorization

The relationship between ethnic/ racial identity and categorization thus remains complex in modern day Singapore. The CMIO framework is well entrenched in public and private life: almost all official forms have a section for "race", and "what are you?" remains a common question in everyday interaction (PuruShotam 1998: 53-54). Identities and interaction are closely linked to race and ethnic categorization, with the multiracial framework colouring all publication institutions, from educational institutions to the press (Goh 2008a: 244).

The continued essentialization of racial categories is also evident in the changing explanations for census categories. In the 2000 and 2010 censuses, as previously, race was not directly queried, asking instead for "ethnic/ dialect group", but explaining:

> *Ethnic group refers to a person's race*. Those of mixed parentage are classified under the ethnic group of their fathers. The population is classified into the following four categories:
>
> Chinese: This refers to persons of Chinese origin […]; Malays: This refers to persons of Malay or Indonesian origin […]; Indians: This refers to persons of Indian, Pakistani, Bangladeshi or Sri Lankan origin […]; Other Ethnic Groups: This comprises all persons other than Chinese, Malays and Indians. They include Eurasians, Caucasians, Arabs, Japanese, etc (Leow 2000: 19, emphasis added).

In contrast to the longer explanation and disclaimers about blurring boundaries in the 1970 census, the 2000 and 2010 censuses officially equated race and ethnicity, mirroring the colonial descriptions of race, and reinforcing the reduction of complexity.

Within this framework, individuals must therefore navigate being "raced" by a bureaucratic system, and align this administrative process to their personal experience and construction of identity. Individuals of mixed descent are particularly affected by this tension, often unable to identify with their allocated label, or being arbitrarily defined by phenotype. One study in 1990 suggested that some individuals resolved this tension by allowing for public and private differences, and instead creating their own category of "mixed", which they used in informal settings (Siddique 1990). More public versions of CMIO subversion were noted in 1998, with individuals listing "homo sapiens", "human", or simply "Singaporean" under the category of race (PuruShotam 1998).

Multicultural Practices and Prejudices

In contrast to the rigidity of racial categories, everyday life and practices in Singapore are frequently multicultural, blurring official boundaries. While uniquely Singaporean practices may not be officially acknowledged, Singaporean society has developed a *rojak*[4] everyday life culture (Chua 1995b; Velayutham 2007: 3). Food, a particular preoccupation of the nation, is a good example of this lived hybridity (Chua 1995b). While Chinese, Indian and Malay cuisines are often essentialized and dishes attributed to distinct ethnic groups, in reality "the three types of cuisines appropriate from each other, creating far greater culinary variety through hybridization" (Chua and Rajah 1997: 2).

4 Malay for "mixture", and a popular mixed fruit and vegetable dish in Malaysia and Singapore.

Hybridity is equally reflected in language, with *Singlish* used by much of the population: mixing English with parts of Chinese grammar and including vocabulary from Chinese, Malay, and Tamil. To the chagrin of the government, the language is often seen a distinctive marker of Singaporean identity (Chua 2003; Ortmann 2009). Tong suggests that certain forms of religion have also become hybridized. The close interactions between various religious communities have caused some religions, particularly Chinese religions, to appropriate beliefs from other groups and invent new rituals which fit better in a modern, urban society (Tong 2007: 265).

Furthermore, certain lived experiences – those which are excluded from the national narratives of belonging – can be seen to form the commonality of what it means to be Singaporean. Chua suggests that shared experiences and traits are predominantly related to Singapore's economic development and political regime, including anxiety and pride, coming from a market-driven and interventionist form of capitalism and the country's economic success (Chua 1998: 42; Chua and Kuo 1990). Materialism is also seen as a strongly Singaporean trait by much of the population, manifested in the idea of *kiasu* – the fear of losing out to others (Ortmann 2009: 35). These processes of cultural hybridization highlight both the power of the multiracial framework in Singaporean society, and its limitations in the face of growing hybridity and diversity.

The Future of Multiracialism: Hyphenation, Hybridity and National Identity

The nation narrative of multiracialism remains central in Singapore, maintaining the visibility of race as both an essential part of cultural identity, and a potential source of conflict and division (Tan 2004). By elevating race within the private sphere, and downplaying racial claims in the public sphere, the state has been able to portray itself as neutral, while maintaining the multiracial framework as a means of control, to promote "racial harmony" and avoid "racial chauvinism" (Chua 2003, 2005: 187). Multiracialism thus justifies a range of economic and social policies to promote such harmony, yet potentially leads to a constrained "racial harmony" based around simplification and stereotype (Chua 2003: 74). As expressed by Rahim, "a society that is organized and mobilized on the basis of race can thus be easily divided on the basis of race" (1998: 234).

Singapore's model of cultural pluralism has resulted in a hyphenated national narrative of sorts, through the promotion of hyphenated identities as essentially Singaporean: "Singaporeans are enjoined not only to learn two languages, but also to inhabit two cultural worlds, the non-political ethnic

and the non-ethnic political" (Hill and Lian 1995: 104). While the promotion of a unified national identity remains uppermost in the political considerations of the state, racial groups are not promoted equally and the benefits of development are not distributed equally, leaving Singaporean society highly racialized and divided (Barr and Skrbis 2008). Thus, many individual Singaporeans remain uncomfortably situated in the dissonance between public and private identities.

Addressing "Mixed Race" in a Raced Framework

In the face of this dissonance and increasingly diversity, hybridity has become a pressing issue to address. While the CMIO categories remain bureaucratically intact, the framework is showing signs of strain as boundaries shift and blur, and the category of "Other" encompasses more and more. Currently, the population is identified as 74.1 per cent Chinese, 13.4 per cent Malay, 9.2 per cent Indian and 3.3 per cent Others, and then divided into 95 ethnic and national sub-categories listed on individual identity cards (Neo 2010; Singapore Department of Statistics 2010a: 10). For individuals of mixed descent, this framework creates a tension between personal, situational and externally imposed identities (Lai 1995; Siddique 1990).

In an attempt to make classification more flexible, a number of changes have occurred over the past years under Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong. In early 2010, a new policy required parents to register the race of their child at birth, but allowed "mixed" couples to register their children as the race of either parent (ending the patrilineal bias), or as Eurasian – a mix between races (Kok 2010b; Neo 2010). Shortly following this announcement, the government proposed that children of mixed descent could be registered as having "double-barrelled races", without having to select a single race (Henson 2010; Neo 2010). This move caused significant debate, and it was further clarified that to fit within the established multiracial framework, individuals could indeed select "double-barrelled" classifications, but they must also select a primary race – the race before the hyphen.

This seemingly drastic change was thus tempered with the proviso that it was to be largely symbolic – a way to recognize hybrid identities, without allowing them to significantly disrupt the established system. In a response to the discussion generated by the change, Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong downplayed the shift, reassuring the media that as the majority of the population remained within singular racial groups, the numbers of those with "double-barrelled" classifications would be small (Popatial 2010). He highlighted the importance of balancing personal identity recognition with social policy, saying, "I think it is a liberalisation; I don't think it is a revolution" (quoted in Ee 2010).

Despite this reassurance, the idea of multiple racial classifications raised a number of concerns. For the self-help groups, this flexibility raised the question of which racial group would be called on to assist: "If a child needs assistance, there can be no ambiguity as to which group should assist him or her" (MP de Souza, quoted in Chow 2009). Hence, the clarification that a primary race would still be mandated was welcomed, simplifying which self-help group would receive contributions and would assist if needed (Lee 2010; Yong 2010). Changing classifications also have the potential to disrupt HDB quotas and apartment allocations. Fears that individuals of mixed descent would be able to selectively utilize different races to achieve better outcomes[5] were put to rest with the clarification that a primary race would be selected (Hoe 2010). But the question still remained: how would a primary race be selected? Parents were exhorted to carefully consider options when selecting a primary race, given the practical implications for education, language and housing (Oon, Cai, and Kok 2010).

"New" Eurasians and Popular Mixedness

The growing public discussions of "mixed race", and the suggestion that "Eurasian" could be used as a synonym for "mixed" brought debates about Eurasian identity to the fore. The EA addressed the recent government moves, suggesting that the policy, combined with increasing immigration, could both increase the number of "new" Eurasians in the community and dilute the culture, or could deplete numbers, should individuals with a Eurasian parent choose to identify as non-Eurasian. The Association then suggested that this could be mitigated by drawing "new" Eurasians into the community, while at the same time working to reinforce the existing culture and retain existing members (Eurasian Association 2010). These concerns illustrate Pereira's point that although a highly distinctive Eurasian culture was created to fit within the multiracial framework, few Eurasians identify with this culture, as it lacks salience in everyday life (Pereira 2006: 29). And yet, despite this cultural construction, "Eurasian" continues to signify "mixed", both internally and externally: "Eurasians are natural born mixers. *It's in our blood*. We cross borders and transcend cultures naturally" (Eurasian Association 2010: 7, emphasis added).

Mixedness and hybridity remained prominent in the national consciousness throughout 2010, thanks to increased media coverage discussing the proposed classification changes, and illustrating everyday mixedness in Singapore. Notably, a series of life stories were published in the main na-

5 An interesting reflection of the continued discomfort and fear about "mixed race" which exists in many communities.

tional newspaper just prior to National Day 2010, providing short personal narratives of individuals of mixed descent (see Ee 2010). These stories linked mixedness and hybridity with the national narratives of diversity and multiracialism, highlighting the importance of national identity above all else. The individuals came from diverse backgrounds, Chinese/ Indian, Japanese/ Chinese, Italian/ Chinese and British/ Chinese, and each story raised issues which framed multiracialism, national identity and "Shared Values". Presenting "mixed race" in a less threatening light, and showing the "mixed" nature of Singapore as a whole, the stories discussed language and appearance, the importance of family values, heritage and national identity. The possibility of transcending race was highlighted, as was the importance of being colour-blind in everyday life and policy, and reinforcing the meritocratic, multiracial framework of equality. As stated by two of the respondents: "I am proud to be Singaporean, so my nationality is more important than my race"; "I'm just as *rojak* as everyone else" (Ee 2010).

Symbolic Recognition, Practical Consistency

The official change in policy came into force on 1 January 2011. As a result, parents can classify their children as the race of either parent, as Eurasian, or as a hyphenated version of both races. As described by the Immigration and Checkpoints Authority (ICA):

> This added flexibility of registering a double-barrelled race is in line with the Government's continual review of its policies in recognition of evolving societal changes. In this instance, we recognise that with the increasing number of inter-ethnic marriages in Singapore; the diversity of Singapore's racial demographics has accordingly also increased (Immigration and Checkpoints Authority 2010).

The announcement stressed that there would not be any social or economic advantages in registering a "double-barrelled" race: Education and housing policy would use only the primary race, the race before the hyphen (Chang 2010; Jalleh 2010; Othman 2010). Reinforcing the multiracial framework, the presentation of national statistics would continue to be based around the CMIO groupings, and the census would continue with a register-based approach.[6] Population statistics will therefore be published in the same format, incorporating hyphenated identities by using the first component of the "double-barrelled" race (Immigration and Checkpoints Authority 2010).

6 Personal communication, Statistician in Income, Expenditure and Population Statistics Division, Department of Statistics, 2011.

Despite the largely symbolic nature of the change, the official announcement emphasized the practical considerations of a "double-barrelled" identification:

> Declaring or changing one's race is a serious matter that should not be taken lightly. If you are considering doing so, you will need to carefully deliberate the impact and implications of the change (Immigration and Checkpoints Authority 2010).

Further conditions were elaborated, highlighting the continued racial basis for organization, and reflecting a peculiar combination of biologically fixed and pragmatically fluid understandings of race:

1. "Double-barrelled" classification is based on ancestry, not simple social identification: individuals must have parents recorded as belonging to different races.
2. All siblings must have the same recorded race until the age of 21.
3. Children under the age of 21 must have consent of both parents to change races.
4. Singaporeans may change their race twice, by statutory declaration: once before the age of 21, and once after.
5. Changing the order of the hyphenated races counts as one change.
6. Only two races may be hyphenated – for parents of "mixed race", their children must be assigned a two-race combination of their four races (Immigration and Checkpoints Authority 2010).

Hyphenated, Mixed or Unclassified?

Recent debates around "mixed race" have also raised the question of the utility of racial classification in Singapore as a whole. An issue which has been raised in many census-taking countries, including the US, the UK, Australia and New Zealand, race (or ethnicity) can be seen as a legitimate marker of belonging and a way to obtain important information about the population, or an outdated method of measurement, based along divisive notions of blood. In Singapore, the practical consequences of racial classification are particularly far reaching. Certain commentators suggested that increasing intermarriage would make single race classifications largely irrelevant, and an overt focus on race could prove disruptive to a cohesive sense of national identity (Kok 2010a). Shifting the focus away from race, emphasis could instead be placed on the nationality after the hyphen: -Singaporean. This illustrates the point that growing numbers of Singaporeans, particularly younger generations, are seeing themselves as Singaporean first, racial second (Chua 2003: 75; Ortmann 2009: 34). This form of identification had

been particularly salient for individuals of mixed descent prior to the policy change, individuals who could not fit easily in the CMIO grid, and many of whom would describe themselves as simply Singaporean (Velayutham 2007: 165).

Despite this, official recognition of a solely Singaporean identity is not a realistic possibility in the current framework. This shift would sit outside of the CMIO categories, disrupting numerous social and economic systems. The multiracial framework and system of simplified race thinking is so ingrained that non-racial classification is seen as ignoring reality, rather than accounting for changing identities:

> Ethnic and cultural identities [...] are not going to disappear by doing away with it in our NRIC [National Registration Identity Card] or providing an option for people to avoid stating their ethnicity […] while race does not always equate to culture, it most often does. *Policy has to be based on the norm* and not the exceptions (Law Minister K. Shanmugam, quoted in Chang 2009: emphasis added).

Conclusion: Multiracialism, Symbolic Recognition and Everyday Hybridity

Race is ever-present in Singapore. From the level of the state, enacted through policy, to everyday life and interactions, identities in Singapore are bounded by a discourse of multiracialism which molds state organization and individual practices (Lee et al. 2004; Lian 2006). Drawn from a colonial past, Singapore's multiracial framework has

> institutionalized colonial racial identities and woven them into the fabric of political and social life to the extent that they constitute a common sense through which people conceive identities of themselves and others (Goh and Holden 2009: 2-3).

The emphasis of multiracialism has shifted significantly over time, in accordance with government priorities and the particular emphasis of control. From initial narratives of national unity to concerted promotion of "Asian values", multiracialism has developed and become increasingly focused on the "racial" aspect (Barr and Skrbis 2008). Thus, the management of race remains crucial in the story of Singapore, as the identities of the nation and of individuals are wound in conflated ideas of descent, ancestry, belonging and blood (Barr and Skrbis 2008; Goh and Holden 2009; Lian 2006).

While multiracialism as a racial project is based on the principle of enforcing racial equality, it has also had the practical effect of creating and reinforcing boundaries between groups through a reliance on racially-based

policies (Rahim 1998; Tan 2004). Racialized communities have been imagined and commodified, simplifying culture to a few attributes of language and custom, reducing complexity to manageable traits, and an inoffensive form of difference (Holden 2009: 20; Kymlicka 2003: 163). By focusing on such differences, and carrying over the colonial project of labeling and locating the "other", state multiracialism has de-politicized race on the one hand, and emphatically enforced its importance in the private sphere on the other (Chua 1995b; PuruShotam 1998). As opposed to Western versions of multiculturalism, in the multiracial model, groups are created, policed, and effectively disempowered politically, to maintain "racial harmony", equality, and state neutrality (Chua 1998: 36).

Despite this rigidity, hybridity and subversion exist in Singaporean society: "There are myriad ways of resisting the discipline – turning it on itself in ways that come back to crack the frames that try to tailor discourse to the state's formulation of it" (PuruShotam 1998: 93). Cultural hybridity and personal projects of mixedness are both institutionally subversive and individually commonplace. Everyday experiences of mixedness and hybridity in interaction, intermarriage and emerging cultural practices are growing, allowing for a degree of informal identification as "Singaporean", rather than as a racialized Singaporean (Chua 1995b). Increasing numbers of individuals of mixed descent create their own labels of "mixed", while "double-barrelled" race classifications illustrate a state attempt to re-adjust inherited colonial structures to match an evolving reality. Multiracialism as ideology remains powerful at macro and micro levels, and the dissonance between political motivations for simplicity and individual experiences of mixedness remains. While symbolic acknowledgement of "mixed race" brings hybridity back into the national narrative of belonging, Singapore continues to be structured as a hierarchical nation of distinctly racialized groups.

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