FACTORS OF ENGAGEMENT FOR AN IMPROVED RELATIONSHIP TOWARDS PROACTIVE GOVERNANCE
A GROUNDED THEORY STUDY OF SINGAPORE'S BLOGOSPHERE

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A THESIS SUBMITTED FOR THE DEGREE OF DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY
DEPARTMENT OF ARCHITECTURE
NATIONAL UNIVERSITY OF SINGAPORE
2014

DECLARATION

I hereby declare that this thesis is my original work and it has been written by me in its entirety. I have duly acknowledged all the sources of information which have been used in the thesis.

This thesis has also not been submitted for any degree in any university previously.

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Chamari Edirisinghe

2014

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

Just 'cause you got the monkey off your back doesn't mean the circus has left town- George Carlin

I have always wondered how a person would vocalize the inconceivable gratitude one feels towards parents without it sounding wretchedly inadequate. Being sharply aware of this fact, I would like to extend my eternal debt to my dear parents who have given me the freedom to dream differently even though I may have disappointed them in many ways. In retrospect, mere words will not suffice to express how truly I value & appreciate that gift they have given me. I am equally grateful to my brothers & sister and their spouses, for their unwavering support. And my nephews and nieces, whose innocent enjoyments and beautiful dreams gladden my heart.

I would like to acknowledge Kieo-NUS Cute Center of Interactive Digital Media Institute for opening up my horizons to a new era of knowledge and providing me with financial support and the Department of Architecture for granting me the opportunity for a multi-disciplinary research.

I am deeply thankful to my supervisors Prof Johannes Widodo and Prof Ryohei Nakatsu, for their support, encouragements and advices. Prof Mathias Rautherburg, my thesis advisory committee member is recollected with great thankfulness for his immense support at all times. Prof Adrian David Cheok is reminisced with profound gratitude for his faith in my ability to peruse doctoral qualifications and providing me financial assistance. Dr Newton Fernando is recognized with genuine thankfulness for encouraging me to study for a PhD and Prof Michael Cohen is acknowledged with respect. I am also thankful to Prof Wong Yunn Chii & Dr Jiat Hwee Chang.

I am humbled by the bloggers who do an admirable job of keeping the nation informed & readers who desired to be informed. I am very grateful for their voluntary contribution to my insight into the Singapore's' blogosphere. Alex, Daniel, Visa, Kirsten, Jeraldine, Yuen, Bufeng, Goorts, Molly Meek (pseudonym) Han, and Jin. These individuals have inspired me and I immensely admire their courage & tenacity. Winston Churchill once said "*Courage is what it takes to stand up and speak; courage is also what it takes to sit down and listen.*"

There are numerous people I would not overlook to acknowledge with warmth and thankfulness. Han Jie, my 'person', I am simply happy I get to know you. Bamboo, my 'neighbour', for listening to all my ravings I am thankful. And thank you Liangliang, Yenny and Doina of the

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ABSTRACT

The bottom-up governing as opposed to the top-down is a highly deliberated democratic approach although the intended use and the actual use are remarkably conflicting. Citizen engagement in the political and governing processes is still contemplated more in philosophy and less in practice due to . The availability of information and high connectivity provide plentiful opportunities to orchestrate a robust civic participation that would see substantial innovation in the relationship between government and citizenry. E-governance is one of those enterprises that enhances the accessibility to civil services. However, the question still remains whether we have, both philosophically and practically, explored all conceivable avenues open before us, with the scientific progress of this era, for a mutually favorable and proactive social contract.

Plenty of scholarly literature has examined the impact of technological advancement on citizen engagement and governance, debating the empowerment provided by technology, especially the social media. There are numerous researches on benefits and limitations in e-governance, discussing the nuances of transparency and responsiveness of the governing institutions. Public sphere is a highly conversed topic of discussion, emphasizing the new ecologies developed in the course of citizen engagement through social media. The paradigm change in collective action using new media space is discussing another perspective of the shift in empowerment and engagement. The new

media space is reconstructing the realities and parameters of citizen engagement and governance, expanding the horizons for robust developments.

This research is an attempt at exploring the parameters of new media spaces, citizen engagement and governing challenges. The research focused on the relationship between civil society and the government, with the social contract theory in mind, and examines the factors of engagement that could improve the relationship by analysing the blogosphere discussions. The thesis deviates from the existing research which examined the impact of social media as collective communication on citizen participation and governance, instead examines the citizen deliberations for answers towards an improved relationship. Thus, the research finds an unexplored niche in the existing scholarship.

Further experimenting into the omitted areas, this research adopts the grounded theory as research methodology, which has been scarcely used to research social media. Aside from several studies, grounded theory has not been utilized to examine informal public discussions on blogosphere on the context of civic participation. Consequently, this study confront the challenge of analysing blogosphere using grounded theory to divulge the factors of engagement. Adhering to the GT methodology, the research questions are continuously examined in constant comparison with data. Since the data is 'virtual', in an effort attempt to ground the data to real time, interviews are conducted with voluntary bloggers and blog readers/commenters. The emerging categories are conceptualized and narrated using interview answers to strengthen the positioning of the trajectories.

The qualitative study puts forward several factors of engagement from the perspective of the citizenry. Those factors are the determining elements of the engagement between government and citizens and the expected qualities of the relationship. Considering that a qualitative research does not produce firm results, and considering this research is addressing a single facet of a vast premise, the research establishes several factors of engagement; trust, reciprocity, responsiveness and accountability, which are discussed during the course of narrative of GT analysis.

The outcome of the research i.e. the factors of engagement, presented several trajectories in the existing relationship between citizenry and government. The research introduces the 'soft rationality' as an implication which encourages the strategizing 'empathy' as a conceivable scheme for an improved relationship towards mutually favorable governing process.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1   Background

Although the world is remarkably articulate about bottom-up governance and broader democratic approaches, the intended use and the actual use are, in reality, two different spectrums. Governance still regards civic participation more in philosophy and less in practice. With the easy accessibility of information and highly connected society through online social media, the governance process has the ability to evolve with a robust civic involvement that would see significant changes in the relationship between government and citizenry. E-governance is one of those initiatives where civil services are easily accessible to various sections of society. The question here is has the paradigm change that ensued with ICT in governance changed the engagement & interaction to the advancement of the relationship? Have we explored all the possibilities of building a mutually beneficial and enriched social contract through the inclusion of new ecologies in civic participation?

Governing and government has become complex, though what it entails in simpler terms is determining and enforcing policy. For centuries, government as an institution has grown more authoritative, amassing vast amount of power. This overreach of government as an institution is a subject matter that has being

debated constantly throughout history in diverse theoretical arguments (Dean, 2013; Foucault, 2010; Locke, 1965). With the vast and rapid advances in science and technology, government became intricate web of unimaginable power that is dispersed to fulfil the needs of certain section of the society, thus marginalizing the majority of the population. Foucault's governmentality became part of everyday for the citizenry.

Recent revelations of whistle-blowers like Julian Asange and Edward Snowden about tremendous misuse of power by the US government, and the possibilities it revealed of future power structuring in governing institutions all over the world led to the re-examination of the role of governing intuitions and civil liberties. This breach of the finer point of democracy brought forward not just the question about civil liberties, transparency and freedom of expression, but also the breach in the relationship between the government and citizenry.

Democracy is a form of government and a political system that is widely understood as a majority rule and equal civic participation in the matter of governance. The history of western political discourse has been passionate about observing numerous aspects of the democratic process. The enlightenment era of political philosophy became particularly important in Europe during the 18th century. Utilitarianisms, Marxism and social contract are some of the political theories that came out of this era. In particular, social contract theory (Button, 2008; Locke, 1947; Rawls, 1971, 1999) is important because it outlines the basic

relationship that had developed between government and citizens. Although it could never be acknowledged as a contract since there was no tangible arrangement or definite agreement or a bond that could attest the authenticity and the citizenry's participation in forming contract is fictional, yet there exists a relationship. That relationship has been constantly contested, democratically and through alternative measures, constantly rejuvenated for an enhanced outcome, and frequently studied for mutually advantageous results.

E-governance is one of the key initiatives of recent times that have been implemented to improve the relationship between government and citizenry. The objective of these enterprise is to provide a citizen centric government and reduce the operational cost of government. Saxena (2005) has claimed that this approach has failed due to absence of governance-centric approach. Torres et al. (2006) maintained that the challenge that e-governance was concentrating on was winning the trust of the citizenry by improving transparency customer oriented service delivery.

We live in a society, a community where we create relations, form connections, care, share and develop roots. That is the human nature. That is how human began their journey. Today we are globalized, have the opportunity to be highly connected through technology which offers unimaginable vistas. Everyone was

not offered or uses those vistas in the same manner but the opportunities are available which hitherto unavailable.

However, people are highly disconnected than before. Most knows a certain feline in YouTube[1] living halfway across the world and whose antics make it significantly adorable, but hardly know the neighbor who might be living next door for sometime. Most often it is hard to remember the name of the representative to government, and do not even care to remeber, even though that person is making decisions about the future of all. Even the highly valuable liberty of voting to choose a government, the fundamental way people engage in the decision making process, is neglected. Alexis de Tockville has said that "the health of a democratic society may be measured by the quality of functions performed by private citizens"[2]

Citizen engagement, with all the opportunities available, has become disconnected, not just due to the prevailing common apathy about the political and governing process, but also because we are immersed in so many discouraging elements that actively deter the engagement. In the old days people engage in decision making by fighting wars, staging revolutions, democratically electing governments, protest marches, public debates/speeches etc. Today, apart from all those, society has the e-governance, and social media.

[1] https://www.youtube.com/
[2] *De Tocqueville, A. (2003). Democracy in america (Vol. 10): Regnery Publishing*

Social media has changed the interaction dynamics. It did not particularly change the citizen engagement per se in the governing process, but it changed dynamics of the opportunity to interact. The opportunities that become available through the mobility is tremendous, which was evident during the Arab Spring uprisings. Opportunities available through the fast accessibility to information is another plus point in changing the interaction dynamics. Julian Assange, who has recently came to fame by leaking information of corruption and misuse of power has wrote

"To radically shift regime behavior we must think clearly and boldly for if we have learned anything, it is that regimes do not want to be changed. We must think beyond those who have gone before us, and discover technological changes that embolden us with ways to act in which our forebears could not" (Assange, 2006, p. 1)

Thus, this complex tapestry of big government, lagging civic engagement, democratic expectations and changing interaction dynamics, where does a researcher find positive and sustainable answers from this tapestry to embolden the civic engagement, the participatory democracy? Where exactly the path that could be explored to improve the citizen engagement that would affect the relationship between government and civil society, using the new interaction dynamics? There are several continuums that can be detected in improving the

relationship between citizenry and governing bodies. There is the e-governance initiative which uses networked media to create a user-centric participation in governance which can improve mutual relations. Then the uprisings which use networked media to create new relations by overthrowing the existing government. Between these spectrums, this research will search for a middle path, where social media can provide the aspects that would advance the essential requirement for an improved mutual relationship between governing bodies and citizenry; the engagement. Figure 1 illustrates the outline of this research. The study will examine blogosphere (blog posts & reader comments) as the case study to investigate the factors of engagement from the perspective of the citizenry that would serve in improving the relationship between the authority (government) and the public towards an enhanced mutually beneficial juncture.

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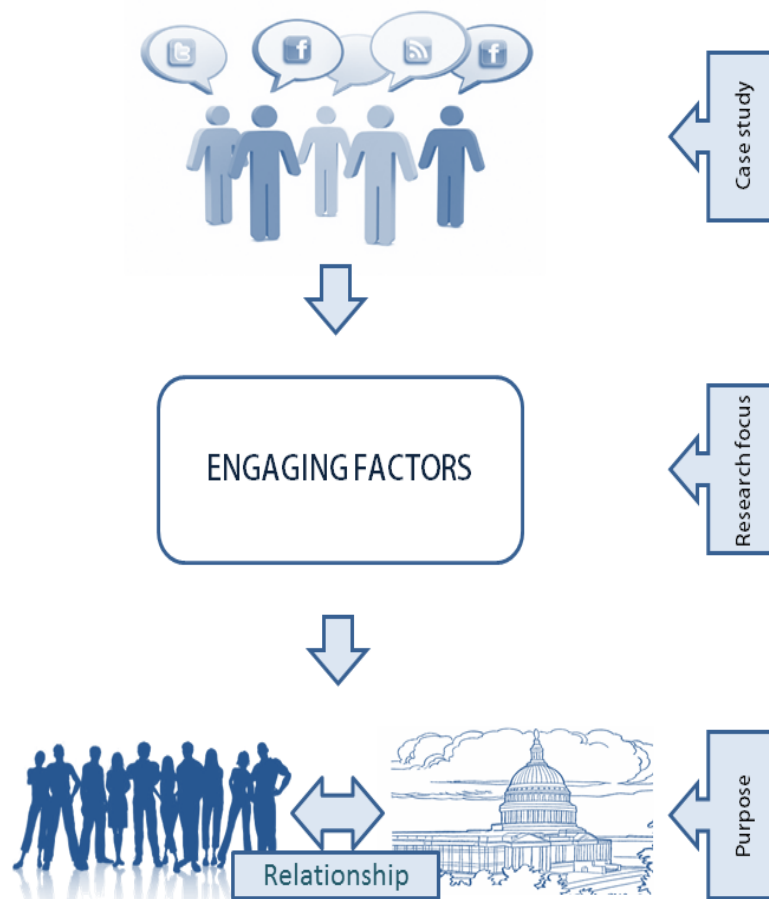
Figure 1- Research Outline

This dissertation will continue the introductory chapter by presenting the research framework, discussing the stages of this study, followed by the evolution of each phase, concluding with the scope and purpose of this research. Then the chapter will move on to articulate the knowledge gap in the existing scholarship, leading to research statements of this research. Finally, the indicatory chapter will end with a clarification of terminologies in use.

The second chapter will introduce the literature, literature related case study, citizen-government relationship theories, and writings on fairness and engagement. Chapter Three will discuss the research methodology of this study. It will introduce grounded theory as a qualitative methodology and justify the adoption of this method in this study. It will then move on to illustrate the data collection methods, analysis techniques and conclude with ethical considerations.

Chapter Four will concentrate on explaining the data analysis process and emerging patterns from the grounded theory study, and conclude with a discussion of research limitations. Chapters Five and Six will begin the narrative of emerging patterns regarding the dynamics of citizens and developing crescendos of relationship and engagement. Chapter Seven will concentrate on furthering the narrative of relationship and engagement applying the factors of engagement. Chapter Eight will conclude the story line of the grounded theory

study of blogosphere commenced on in Chapter Five, with concluding remarks as a discussion.

1.2 Research Framework

The framework of this research is developed in three significant stages. Stage One (Figure 2) is where the issues were recognized, hashed and re-hashed to recognize a decipherable and doable issue. Then research ideals were developed, thus providing a clear first stage to work on. Initial literature survey consisted of gaining a contextual understanding of the premises. A tentative case study was developed and at the end of Stage One, the research gap was identified, research questions were formed and research objectives realized.
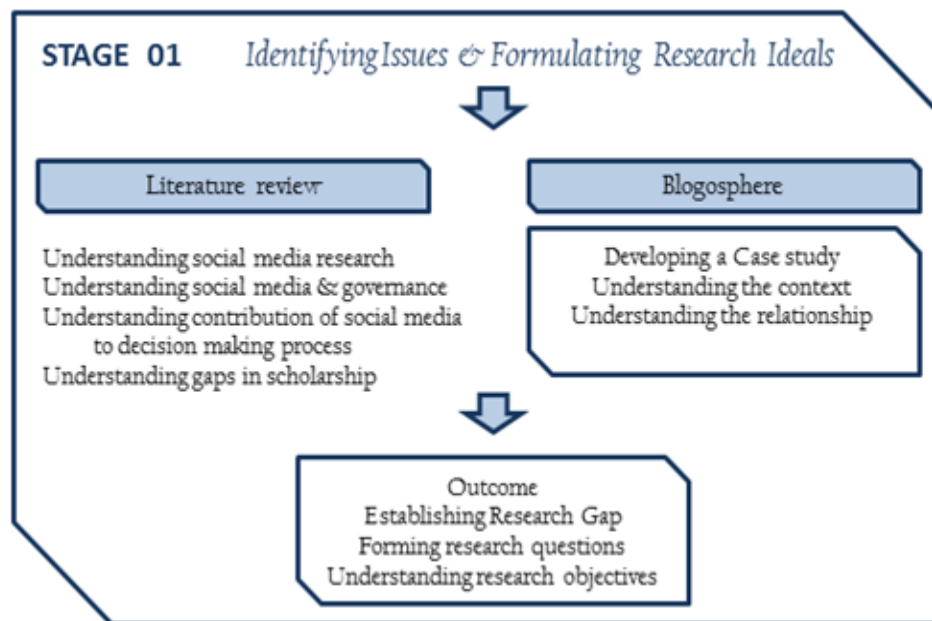
Figure 2 - Stage One-Research Framework

Stage Two (Figure 3) of the research concentrated fully on defining methodology, reviewing case study, and data collection. At the end of the Stage One, research methodology was determined as grounded theory. During Stage Two, grounded theory method was examined thoroughly to understand the different versions and to establish the adoption of a combination of the Glaser and Strauss methods. Data collection and analysis started simultaneously, as is the custom of grounded theory studies. Case study limitations were recognized and the process of going back and forth between data and coding continued until theoretical models emerged.
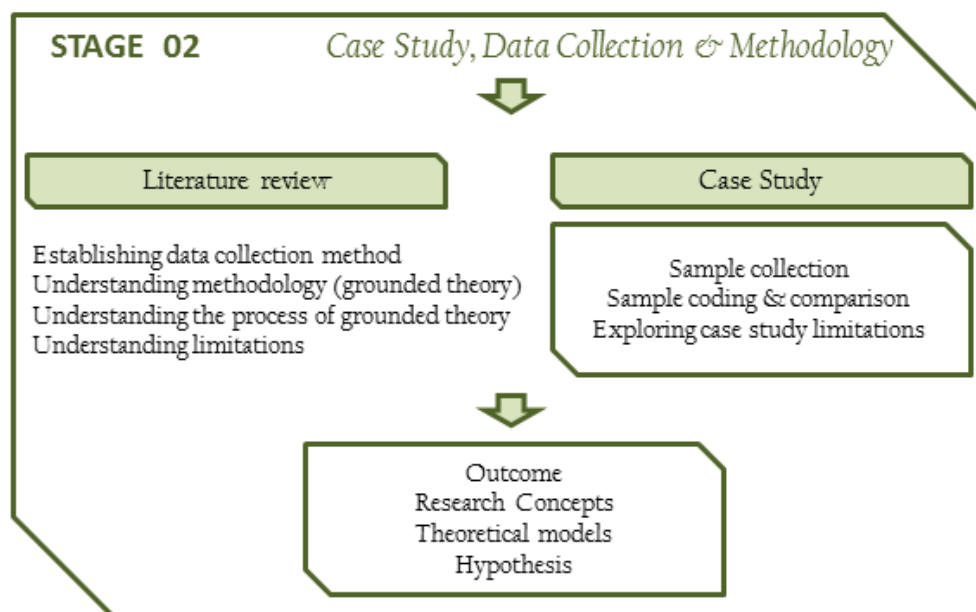
Figure 3 - Stage Two-Research Framework

Stage Three (Figure 4) saw the researcher returning back to literature to form the literature study for the theoretical models. As customary in grounded theory

studies, concluding the data analysis will bring the researcher back to the literature to examine the previous scholarship and also to rationalize the claims. At this stage, a hypothetical position was constructed out of the concepts that emerged. The arguments and rationalizing to construct engaging factors for a mutually beneficial governing process was established.
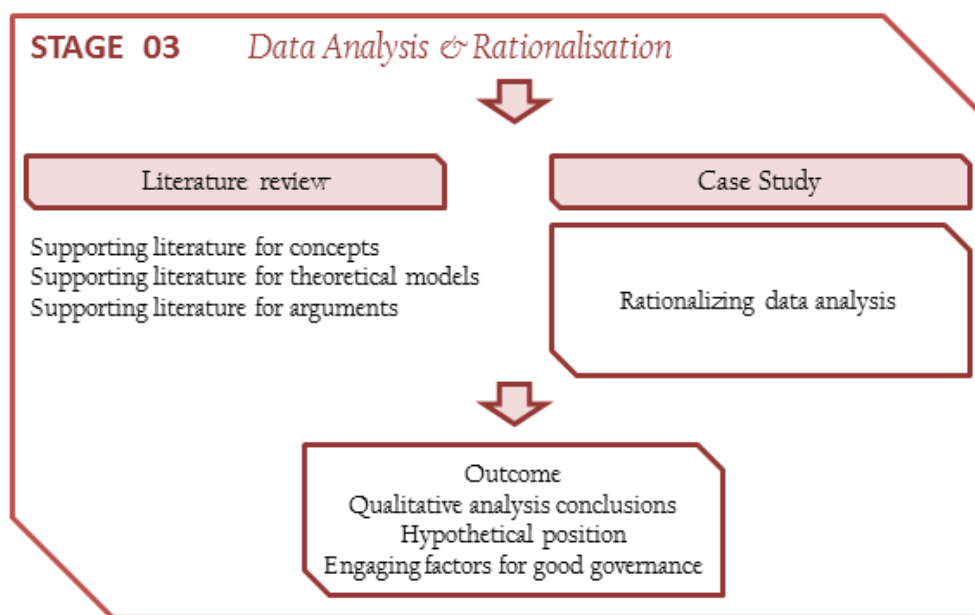
Figure 4 - Stage Three - Research Framework

1.3 Research Evolution

The researcher is trying to describe how this study evolves from one step to another by recognizing the key junctures, and defining them. The illustration in Figure 5 outlines this visually.

The researcher started this study by gaining familiarity with social media and political engagement. The social media engagement is increasingly perceptible and influential on political activities, and it saw another level of involvement with the Arab Spring uprisings. With the trajectories of political engagement and social media involvement in mind the researcher deliberated on the objectives of the study and research questions.

Deliberating

After, several modifications, adjustments and narrowing down, the researcher concentrated in forming a case study that would answer the research questions and accomplish the research objectives. This presents several problematic areas that merit rigorous contemplation, in the form of a) selecting a social media platform that is suitable for qualitative study b) selecting a particular aspect that would encompasses the research questions and provide results c) media restrictions in Singapore

Investigation

At this juncture of the study, the researcher reflected on the methodology to be used. Research methodology is the qualitative method using the inductive reasoning approach.

Thus, after referencing a number of grounded theory studies and acquiring a substantial knowledge of various grounded theory perspectives, a decision was made to use the grounded theory method for this study.

Contemplation started with the researcher engaging in data analysis. First stage of the data analysis caused problems with lack of focus and pre-occupation and was thus discarded. However, a second attempt was successfully executed to produce results. This stage saw to emergence of concepts and initial models.

Evaluation started with the emerging concepts and patterns, which revealed defining theories of the research questions. After constant comparisons of data and emerging concepts, a number of concepts were recognized.

Then, the researcher started to refine and re-assess concepts into theoretical models. Theoretical models are established and re-evaluated frequently to ascertain the inductive reasoning. At this stage, backtracking to literature was necessitated, to understand and familiarize the theoretical

models with existing literature and to refine the concluding

outcomes. The condensing began when the researcher started

to narrate the inductive reasoning of the study.
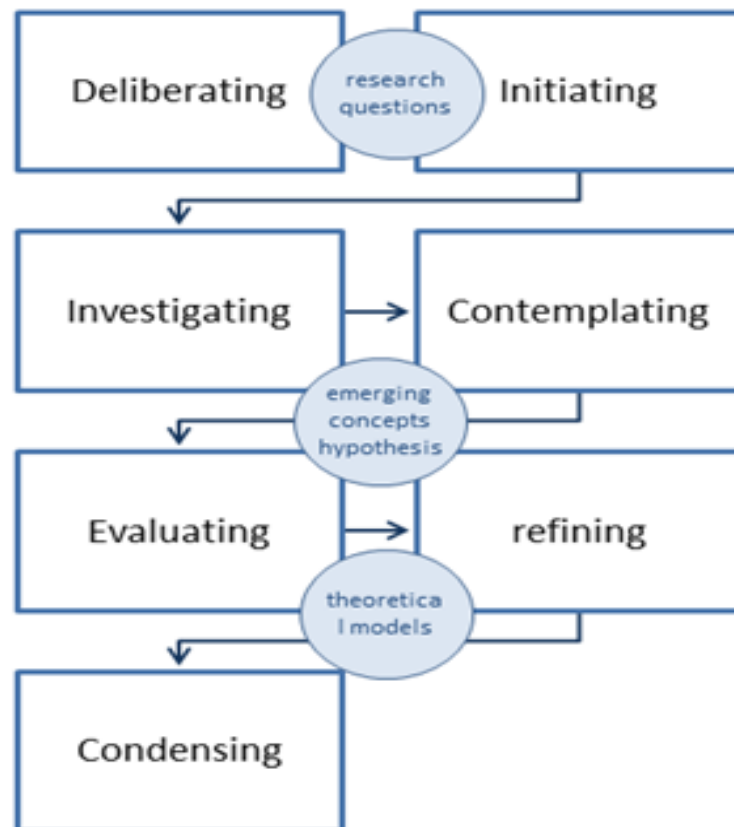
Figure 5 - Outline of the Research Journey

1.4 Purpose and Scope of Research

As will be discussed throughout this narration, the purpose of this research is not

to study social media as in blogosphere, or study the governance and public

engagement or democratic political process. Nor is it going to discuss empathy

(or trust, reciprocity, accountability & responsiveness) as an emotional and psychological sentimental soft culture.

This study is examining the blog contents (blog posts and reader feedback) to establish the factors of engagement that could improve the relationship between citizenry and the government from the perspective of citizenry (

Figure **6**). These research goals were assimilated and presented in the Research Statements segment of this thesis.
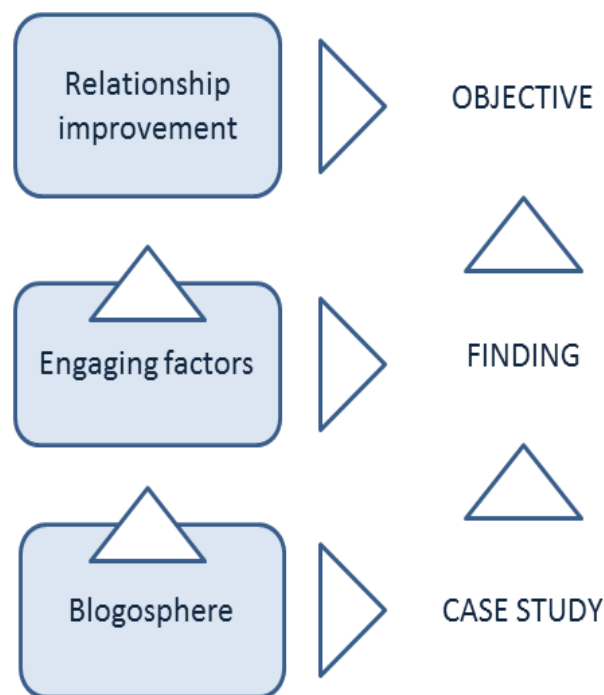
Figure 6 - Outline of the Purpose and Scope

To achieve the above goals, the researcher performed a grounded theory analysis of blogosphere (contents of blogs & readers' feedback comments) and

interviews of bloggers/blog readers. More than fifty samples were analysed and emerging themes were constantly compared with new data until the saturation point. Though a qualitative study, especially grounded theory studies does not require a large amount of data samples, the nature and contents of data required considerably higher samples. The nature and contents of the data were explained in the Research Methodology chapter.

The initial research questions which started this study underwent minor changes with the emerging theories of inductive reasoning. The hypothetical position was assumed after examining the developed theories. There are more than a few limitations to this study, starting from the lack of grounded theory studies of online data, restrictions on acquiring data and the challenge of multi-disciplinary research. These limitations were discussed comprehensively later in this dissertation.

1.5 Knowledge Gap

There are several perspectives on presenting the knowledge gap of this research. One standpoint is presenting the gap in the methodological adaptation, and the other is presenting the gap in the contextual approach, thus the theoretical vacuum.

1.5.1 Methodological Gap

There is a great deal of computer mediated communication (CMC) research during the past decade especially after the introduction of social networking platforms. That research has been vital in understanding the intersection of language, society and technology (Murray, 1995). Online interactions as a public sphere, as a public forum, as a contesting space and as a political movement are some of the debated premises. The political uprisings in Middle East and North African countries have triggered another rush of studies, analysing the political movement online and the role of the online social media. There are a large number of quantitative studies on mining the social web using computer algorithms.

Yet, there is a considerable lack of literature on qualitative analysis of online interactions in terms of readers' comments to an online discussion forum. Cho & Hong (2009) have researched the public opinion on corporate social responsibility (CSR) by analysing the readers' comments to the CSR news stories. They used both qualitative and quantitative methods of research to understand how the public interpret corporate activities. Chen & Moeller (2011) have analysed the online news comments on racial perception of children in the USA. It is a quantitative examination of the online comments received for a TV program produced by Cable News Network (CNN) on how the children perceive

racial profiling. Santana's (2011) research on the engagement of newspaper journalists with the online readers' comments is a quantitative study, focusing on the relationships journalists built with their readers through feedback comments. These studies examined the readers' comments as feedback that could stand as public opinion and the relationship between readers' comments and the actual actors and practices that originated those comments. Thus, inspecting these literatures, one can detect the certain angle of research which has studied the comments of the viewer/reader.

- Comments can be used to map negative/positive public opinion

- Comments can be used to measure the relationship of actors/practices

- Dependency on quantitative research

The majority of research on online interactions inclines towards quantitative research, due undoubtedly to the immensity of the sample. Nonetheless, online readers' comments are dialogues that are related to a specific topic or a discussion. For instance consider a blog post and readers' comments; the blog post is focusing on a certain issue or a matter to which the readers are responding by leaving their thoughts & arguments, which lead to more readers participating in the conversation to expand the scope of the interaction and the subject matter. This scenario could happen in any number of ways, such as the discussion developing to widen or narrow the discursive space or shifting

completely away from the original issue of the blog post. Thus, readers' comments require a content analysis method that would encompass all trajectories. The researcher understands the methodological gaps at this juncture as 1) the significant lack of research in online readers' comments 2) considerable lack of qualitative studies on online readers' comments.

On the other hand, this research is applying grounded theory (GT) as the qualitative inquiry method, which is rationalized in Chapter 3. There does not appear to be an adequate amount of research which uses GT as an analysis method in social media research (Diakopoulos, Naaman, & Kivran-Swaine, 2010; Quan-Haase & Young, 2010; Rubin, Burkell, & Quan-Haase, 2010), considering the generous amount of research on various aspects of social media. Moreover, research concentrating on studying readers' comments using GT method is virtually non-existent. That, the researcher recognizes as another gap in the methodological repertoire that this research is addressing.

1.5.2 Contextual Gap

Even though the online readers' comments are recognized as representing new opinion pipelines, there is a certain lack in literature on how these feedback comments could provide informative aspects on improving the relationship between government and citizenry. Since online comments are a rather informal method of interaction, which provides larger freedom for the responding public

to voice their opinion rather than the formal manner of feedback, it will provide wider latitude. Instead of investing in costly public forum software and its maintenance, could these online readers' comments provide the information that would result in mutually beneficial governing practices?

Evidently, there appears to be undeniable neglect in qualitative studies that examine the social media to understand the factors of engagement that could improve the relationship between government and citizenry. As stated in the literature review social media research tends towards exploring the public sphere perspective (Dahlberg, 2001; Keren, 2010; Mohamed, 2010; Pandi, 2011) where the advantages of Habermas's deliberative democracy was discussed. The rational-critical debate, the foundation of deliberative democracy according to Habermas, has been investigated in terms of how the social media provides the platform for those activities, and how those activities (and platform) have elicited the offline democratic actions.

Through these discussions, they contemplate the premise of participation in terms of its contribution to the process of governing or governance. However, these contemplations have not taken note of how these online participations can improve the relationship between two parties; government and citizenry.

This research is aiming to address this gap in the scholarship. How can the relationship between government and citizenry could be improved by using the social media data.

Thus, this study is combining both the methodological and contextual gap in the existing scholarship to form the parameters of the research. The combination of 1) online readers' commentary, 2) grounded theory as data analysis method and 3) how to improve the relationship between government and citizenry by uncovering engaging factors from readers' comments are the full spectrum of this inquiry. Consequently, the research uses grounded theory analysis method to analyse the blogosphere (blog posts and readers' comments) to examine the engaging factors that could be mutually beneficial to the relationship between the government and citizenry.

1.5.3   Domain Gap

More and more people are engaging in interactions online as a preferred mode of communication as opposed to the traditional approaches where interactions are slower, formal and in most cases face-to-face. Digital youth consisted of more than 1.2 billion of the world population and more than 80% of them living in developing countries and majority of them are living in vast sprawling urban space (Ben-Attar & Campbell, 2013). Young urban population embracing the modern media platforms for their interactions needed to be included in the urban

decision making process, not just because the urban is growing bigger, and dense, but also because their mode of communication should not exclude them from being included in the decisions regarding the future of the city.

As is the case in most cities in developed countries, the ICT in the form of e-governance is available for civic participation in governance, though transparency and accountability are still taxing. It is a slow process in developing world, where undue challenges contest the progress. However, it is not the access to the government that is problematic but the usage of it, especially the youth, whose interactions have outgrown the e-governance mode of participation, whose interactive participation are vitally important for a better future governing.

There are number of research which understands the growing importance of the urban governance (Appadurai, 2001; Kearns & Paddison, 2000; Pierre, 1999) and challenges of citizen participation (Appadurai, 2001; Rajeev, Atreyi, & Mahdieh, 2013) and technology support for e-governance and expected outcome of increased civic engagement in decision making (Carlos Nunes, 2013; Paskaleva, 2009) and the decidely later development of the utilization of social media to enhance and encourage the citizen engagement (Mainka, Hartmann, Stock, & Peters, 2014; Mergel, 2013). These areas of research are expanding on the knowledge of existing paradigms, firstly the acknowledgement of the importance of decision making within the city to accommodate the city

requirement, secondly the already existing problematic of political lethargy, thirdly the prevailing technological support system for participatory democracy and how it can be improved. One noticeable fact is that these topics ignore changes in interaction dynamics, the changes in usage, especially among the youth population. A document for the UN-HABITAT, later presented at a conference discussed the necessity of examining the mobile platforms for possibilities in increasing the youth participation in governing(Ben-Attar & Campbell, 2013).

However, there is certain lack of research that propose the idea of examining the prevailing discussions on online to understand the reasons behind the lack of citizen participation from the perspectives of citizens to facilitate better citizen participation in governing process. This is especially relevant in the case of urban youth, whose technological savviness and online persona is dominant, and who will not keenly embrace a system that offer them less interactive and slower mode of communication. Examining the number of political participatory actions that spread across continents after the economic downturn of the last decade, social media as new interaction dynamics played a role that could not be ignored. Thus, this research understand those gaps in knowledge in the domain of urban studies, specifically urban governance and urban democratic approaches.

1.6 Research Statements

1.6 1 Research Questions

The research questions address two aspects of the research; theoretical and case study related

Research Question 1

(Broader question)

What are factors that influence the engagement, from the perspective of citizenry, which contribute to enhancing mutually supportive practices of governance?

Research Question 2

(Focused question)

How can factors of engagement influence the improvement of the relationship between government and citizenry?

Research Question 3

(Additional question)

How can interactions on social media contribute to improving practices and relations between government & citizenry?

1.6.2 Research Objectives

The objectives of this research extend over several multi-disciplinary contexts. At the outset, this research is aiming at addressing a void in the existing scholarship which has been discussed above. Burrowing in deeper, this scholastic inquiry is focusing on addressing

- Contemporary decision making process can be multi-dimensional and deliberative through adaptation of certain measures, as in certain encouraging soft approaches

- To understand the numerous avenues available to improve and enrich the prevailing relationship between the state and the citizenry

- To understand and appraise the function and the role of social media (and to assign a role) in broader terms in improving the relationships with its abundance of information availability

- Steer Grounded theory research in to a new arena of data analysis, using the very same methods on atypical data sets

- Explore new possibilities in multi-disciplinary studies

1.6.3 Hypothesis

Hypothesis 1

There are engaging factors that contribute to improving the relationship between government and citizenry that are realized through social media interactions. Trust, Responsiveness, Reciprocity and Accountability are the basic engaging qualities and values exposed.

Hypothesis 2

Mutually supportive enhancement of relationship between government and citizenry is achieved by strategizing the factors of engagement through the relationship dynamic called soft rationality, which is combination of rationality and empathy.

1.7   Terminologies

In this research some of the terminologies used refer to a particular idea discussed within the research, while some terms will be used in their exact meaning in scholarship. Some of these terms have been defined and discussed at length in the literature review.

Blog – referring to a discussion or informational site available on the World Wide Web and comprising of distinct accounts or posts usually presented in reverse chronological order.

Blogger - refers to the individual who writes a blog or a weblog

Blogosphere – In this research blogosphere refers to the collection of blogs, bloggers, blog readers, and individuals who comment on blog posts. Reference always represents the socio-political blogs.

Blogging community – In this research this term has a similar meaning to the blogosphere referring to blogs, bloggers, readers and individuals who comment on blogs.

Networked Social media – refers to communications among people in which they create, share, and/or exchange data and concepts over the internet.

Responding public – In this research responding public means the individuals who comment to blog posts.

Engagement - In this research engagement is meaning to covey the civic participation to identify and address the issues of public concern.

Relationship – In this research it refers to the relationship between government

and citizens.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

Hart says that a researcher should develop an attitude that exercises the willingness to "…understand philosophical traditions" (C. Hart, 1999, p. 11). "The selection of available documents (both published and unpublished) on the topic which contains information, ideas, data and evidence written from a particular standpoint to fulfil certain aims or express certain views on the nature of the topic and how it is to be investigated, and the effective evaluation of these documents in relation to the research being proposed" (C. Hart, 1999, p. 13). For advanced research work, the literature needs to provide an overview of the specialization in scholarship and a high level of understanding of the subject matter(s). "Literature review is a library or desk-based method involving the secondary analysis of explicit knowledge" where " abstract concepts or explicit and tacit knowledge are explored" (Jesson, Matheson, & Lacey, 2011, p. 09). It is where a researcher reveals the knowledge of awareness of the subject matter and the ability to interpret the existing knowledge and by doing so recognise and point out the gaps and inconsistencies (Jesson, Matheson, & Lacey, 2011). Taken at its simplest, the traditional form of a literature review is 're-viewing' of the literature. Jesson et.al. (2011, p. 11) have quoted Jankowitz attempt to

emphasise the importance of literature study "Whatever your epistemology, the work that you do is not done in a vacuum, but builds on the ideas of other people who have studied the field before you. This requires you to publish and to marshal the information in a relevant and critical way".

This literature review will be divided into several premises. Each premise will discuss the literature on conceptual and philosophical interpretations, and existing scholarship reading those concepts and philosophies. There are several objectives in this literature reading as is explained in (Figure 7)
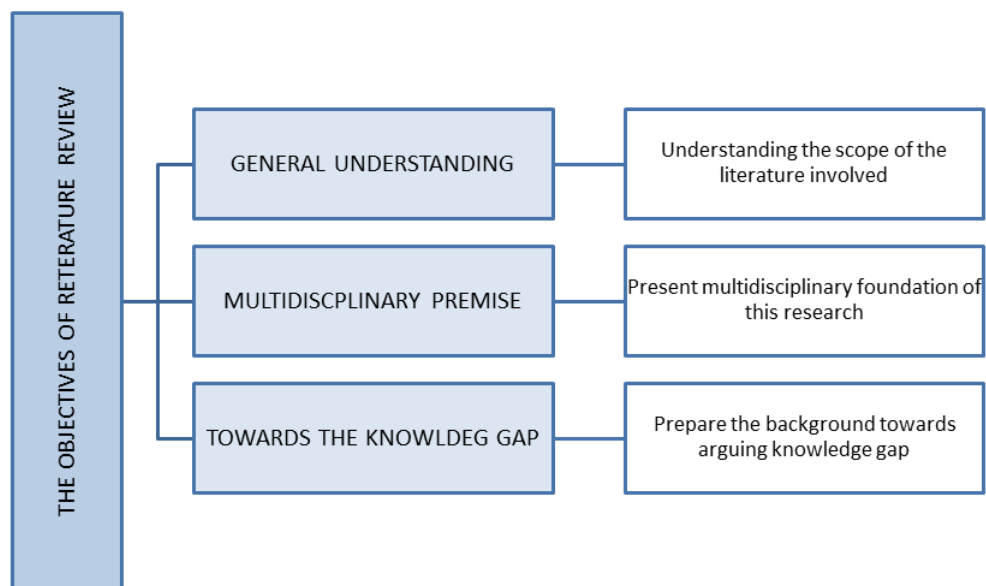
Figure 7 - The Objectives of Examining Literature

The table below (Table 1) shows the premises of discussion in this literature review.

PREMISES		ASPECTS	OBJECTIVES
TERMINOLOGIES *Various terminologies discussed in the research*		Relations – Government & Citizenry Fairness Relationship & Engagement	Examine Literature on conceptual approaches
CASE STUDY *Social media (blogosphere) in research*		Blogosphere in Research- different premises of enquiry Singapore blogosphere	Establishing prior research & background on case study

Table 1 - Premises of Literature

The literature will first examine the research on social media (the blogosphere) to determine the scope of the research. Blogosphere research is a relatively new premise of research, yet rapidly developing due to the high concentration of users and high impact on everyday life. Secondly, the premise of inquiry would be social contract theory, and the focus will be on key theorists, John Locke, Thomas Hobbes, Jean Jacques Rousseau and John Rawls. Thirdly, the literature will examine the concept of empathy.

2.2 Blogosphere in Research

2.2.1 Introduction to Blogosphere

The history blogs or weblogs is concise, in terms of its progression, but not in terms of its activities and accomplishments throughout that period. By 1998 the claim was that there were only 23 weblogs (Blood, 2000) which is hardly unexpected considering that there were no blogging applications available until

Blogger[1] came to life in 1999. Wordpress.com[2], one of the many blogging platforms has more than 62 million blogging accounts. The key to the popularity of blogs, William & Jacob (Williams & Jacobs, 2004) have observed, is the scope of interactivity, and over a period of time the blogger will customize the blog such that it would reflect personal character revealing a certain amount of individual integrity.

The term weblog was a term coined by Jorn Barger in 1997, meaning "log of web", a record of the materials available on the World Wide Web (Aimeur, Brassard, & Paquet, 2003; Garden, 2012), which later changed to the term now in common use; "blog". However, there are doubts on Barger being the first person to maintain a "log of Webs", bestowing the honour to Justin Hall who kept a website (www.links.net) as far back as 1994 (Garden, 2012). "For What It's Worth: I've decided to pronounce the word 'weblog' as 'we-blog'. Or 'blog' for short"(Merholz, 2002).

Over the years, blogs have evolved in usage and technology, turning them from a grassroots alternative space that operated outside of conventional mainstream media outlets to influential, ubiquitous and clearly mainstream. Considering the evolution of mainstream media, blogs have clearly outdone them in the span of time available, bringing with them a new trend in journalism which was

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[1] http://www.blogger.com
[2] http://wordpress.com/

recognized as a participatory journalism (Bowman & Willis, 2003) contributing to an informed citizenry. Conversely, Gubter et el. (Gunter, Campbell, Touri, & Gibson, 2009) tried to determine whether the blogs adhered to the founding principles of mainstream news journalism by examining the credibility of the news. Their review reflected that even though blogs emerged as a reliable source of informing society, the public trust is yet to be earned. The recent activities of blogging communities all over the world, especially during the 'Arab Spring', the political uprisings in several Middle Eastern countries, and the mainstream media turning to blogging, co-opting and adapting the blog format (maddowblog[1], ac360.blogs[2]) has changed the blogging platform into a distinctive public phenomenon.

There is no consensus on defining the blog and the practice of blogging. All social actions are characterized by structure and agency and blogs would be understood to be moving beyond the dualism and standing with Giddens's (Giddens, 1984) 'duality of structure and agency'. "A blog is a web-based tool that permits an author (the blogger) the ability to post information for consumption by others" (Pomerantz & Stutzman, 2006, p. 03), although blogs have evolved tremendously beyond being mere carriers of information into initiating collective activism through shaping the discourse. Constructing an

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[1] MSNBC Rachel Maddow Show http://maddowblog.msnbc.com/
[2] CNN Anderson Cooper AC360 http://ac360.blogs.cnn.com/

analytical framework for blogging practices Schmidt (2007, p. 1411) has explained blogging as a practice where an individual "…uses specific software to attain specific communicative goals". This describes blogs as a communication tool which uses the new technologies. Although this account explains the fundamental function of blogs, it does not explain how the goals or objectives change the habitus of everyday. Therefore, blogs cannot be defined just by their relationships to other elements without examining the 'duality of structure and agency'. Therein lays the problem of trying to define blogs.

The objectives of Iranian blogger http://www.lolivashaneh.blogspot.sg/ appear to be personal on the outside but the context to which his narrative was referring to provide a distinctive definition to blogging. " I keep a weblog so that I can breathe in this suffocating air…In a society where one is taken to history's abattoir for the mere crime of thinking…I write a weblog so that I can shout, cry, and laugh and do things they have taken away from me in Iran today" (Alavi, 2006, p. 13) Alternatively, Chicago Tribune columnist and blogger Eric Zorn visualises a blog as a "… hybrid medium somewhere between broadcast and print," Zorn says. "It strives for the immediacy of broadcast, with the elegance and accessibility of print" (Conniff, 2005). Garden (2012), however, was trying to understand whether there is any strong necessity to define blogs by examining the aim behind definitions. The author has recognized the difficulty

in terming the practice of blogging due to the fact that scholars have been using vague, contradictory, ambiguous & imprecise manners to describe blogs rather than resorting to clear, precise definitions that accord with the epistemological scope of the research.

In this research, the researcher will be using the term 'blogosphere' to define the whole ecology of blogging; the social network of blogging. The term was coined by the late Brad Graham who mentioned it. "Goodbye, cyberspace! Hello, blogiverse! Blogosphere? Blogmos? (Carl Sagan: "Imagine billions and billions and billions of blogs.")" (Graham, 1999). William Quick, a libertarian-conservative blogger continued using the term even bragging that he coined the term 'blogosphere' in his blog 'Daily Pundit' (Quick, 2001). He stated that "I propose a name for the intellectual cyberspace we bloggers occupy: the Blogosphere. Simple enough; the root word is logos, from the Greek meaning, variously: In pre-Socratic philosophy, the principle governing the cosmos, the source of this principle, or human reasoning about the cosmos; Among the Sophists, the topics of rational argument or the arguments themselves" (Quick, 2001) "Blogging is writing your thoughts into your blog, and the "blogosphere," a term is the "intellectual cyberspace" that bloggers (i.e., those who blog) occupy" (Ferdig & Trammell, 2004). Thus blogosphere is the ecosystem that consists of bloggers (agency), the discussion platform and interacting readers (structure).

Literature on blogosphere will be discussed in three perspectives.

1. Universal – to present the phenomena of blogging, activities of bloggers, interactions of readers in different perceptive points. This will provide a holistic view of this social media, as a media, a movement, a tool and dynamism.

The approach of examining the literature (Figure 8) will be separated into two analytical methods; Public sphere and Social capital

Public Sphere
- Deliberative democracy realised through political organization and online mobilization

Social Capital
- Behaviors and trends revealed through online mobilization that benefits economic activities

Figure 8 – Literature on Blogosphere

2. Local – to present an overview of the trajectories of blogging in Singapore and how the literature itself is examining the dichotomy

3. Prior research on blogosphere and social contract – to establish the scope of the research on the relationship of the blogosphere or social media and social contract

In the era of Web 2.0 technologies and computer-mediated communication that provided an immense and unimaginable amount of information and number of prospects to interact and recreate and redistribute through chats, forums and blogs there emerged the question of whether the volume of interactivity is productive. Emerging online social media platforms have always attracted attention, evoking arguments of the good and evil and creating a dialogue that would continue to flourish with more and more user participation. Blogs are no exception but then again blogs have been around for quite some time. Figure 9 shows the short time span of the online media development.
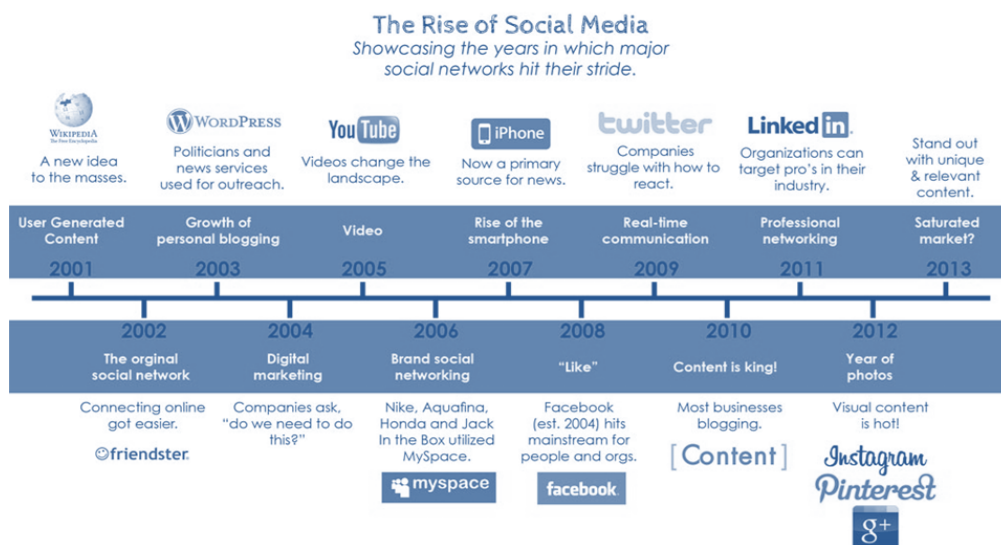
Figure 9 - Online Social Media Development
Courtesy @2013 fandommarketing.com

As a well-developed web-based tool, blogs bring a new dimension to the online communication however, does it, in all its dynamic alacrity, deliver a promise of an interactivity that confronts the challenges of mankind?

2.2.2 Blogs & Public Sphere Discourse

The term public sphere has been given a new narrative with the advances in decentralized communication with the internet-based social media. The public sphere is "…private individuals assemble to form a public body" (Calhoun, 1992, p. 289) and then they behave as a public body conferring without restrictions. Habermas also emphasized that this kind of environment requires specific methods of communicating information and influencing those who receive it. This status he saw as the taking the control of the government actions democratically(Habermas, Lennox, & Lennox, 1974). Dahlberg (2001) has claimed that online interactive spaces enhance and extend the deliberative democracy through the public sphere. His argument was that certain online discursive practices are facilitating the basic structure of rational-critical debate, which is the foundation of public sphere democracy advocated by Habermas. In a doctoral dissertation Pandi (2011) examined whether blogs can facilitate minority population towards a public sphere, arriving at a conclusion that blogging practices and influence could foster political mobilization among marginalized communities. Conversely, the study of blogging practices and interaction during the first stage Arab Spring uprisings in Egypt, a scholar has concluded that the language utilized by the bloggers undermines the possibility of achieving the rational-critical discourse of Habermas's public sphere (Mohamed, 2010). The researcher was arguing that the mode of language or

rather the quality of the discourse conveyed by the use of the language plays a major role in political mobilization.

There are several factors that encourage researchers to discuss the changing nature of the public sphere due to blogging practices. One factor is the freedom to create content. Chadwick (2008) has argued that a political difference was formed through a content creation freedom in the blogosphere, thus changing the landscape of the public sphere. Keren (2010) has expressed that the opportunity to express and argue, built discourses on topics without consent from numerous publishing, editing and political authorities has changed the attitude of political participation. Moreover, blogs are considered to be proving a new connectedness, a new channel to connect, which will undoubtedly moderate or challenge existing political communication and public participation (Coleman & Wright, 2008).

The other factors are accessibility and informality. "Ultimately, the greatest advantage of the blogosphere is its accessibility" (Drezner & Farrell, 2004), which is one of the basic game-changers in social media sphere since the digital divide (Warschauer, 2004) is becoming less momentous. Quoting blogger Fernando Reyes, Keren (2010) states that the accessibility to blogs is digitally empowering individuals towards a modern community-building activity. On the other hand, blogs provide an informal platform for interaction, through the

change of direction of communication. Rather than one directional flow of information, which was the pattern of traditional media outlets like print media and TV, blogs provide multi-directional movement, through the densely linked accessibility to participate in the discussions.

2.2.3 Blogs & Social Capital Discourse

Social capital in simple terms is the expected returns resulting in a cooperated enterprise between individuals and collectives. In other words relationships matter. Social capital scholarship contributes to the understanding of the causes of behaviour and the role of trust, networks and norms in relationships (Bartkus & Davis, 2010). Putnam (2001) has argued that the decay in social capital is due to the decline in participation or engagement which is an integral part of community life, that would cultivate trust, norms and collective resources. Today, there is a new mode of engagement in a voluntary association called online or e-community, which is highly interactive and an immensely popular form of participation. Online communities are "… groups of people with common interests and practices that communicate regularly and for some duration in an organized way over the Internet through a common location or mechanism" (Ridings, Gefen, & Arinze, 2002, p. 273).

Vaezi et al (2011) have recognized the importance of examining social capital in blogs, since blogs are predominant in most of the online communications. They

have argued that blogs provide a new means of networking thus influencing the scope of interaction. The authors have studied 326 blogs in an exploratory study and concluded that blog use can increase the social capital in the blogosphere. Although this study is relatively inconclusive, it highlights the importance of the social capital in blogosphere.

Defining the civic engagement as a social capital in the digital age is one of the significant aspects of the digital era, which is termed as digital social capital (Mandarano, Meenar, & Steins, 2010). Authors are recognizing the changes in public participation, and implications for social capital, and the need for new evaluation practices. On the other hand, Ko & Kuo (2009) have examined whether the self-disclosures on blogs enhance the social capital, concluding that self-revelations influence the perception of bonding and bridging social capital, thus improving the impact of social capital. This study is an assessment of social capital in the blogosphere that in turn could change the subjective social wellbeing. Studying virtual interactions, Kittilson and Dalton (2011) have established that interpersonal social activities and virtual activities built two dimensions of social capital: norms and political participation. This research has determined that traditional social capital processes have a different dimension to virtual interactions i.e. social networking etc.

These publications attempt to ascertain the necessity of including the online interactions when examining the social capital, thus challenging the traditional

social capital templates. Furthermore, they are establishing the changes in the interactions, and how best to define the interactions to understand the new digital social capital.

2.2.4 Blogosphere in Singapore

The Singapore blogosphere is considerably discussed by scholars, due to Singapore's uniquely regulated media setting, and to some extent unobtrusive blogging ecology. It can be argued that the former is responsible for the latter situation to arise. Singapore Internet Project (SIP) (Choi, 2008) in its findings reveals that even though the internet penetration has reached a new height in Singapore, the majority of citizens do not believe that it will have a major impact on political participation or civic engagement. On one level, this political lethargy could be attributed to the government's intolerance towards political activism, and the presence of 'OB-markers'[1]. It can be noted that the offline rules that restrict political participation and engagement are little by little extended to the online platform. Castells (2001) has noted the significance of Singapore's approach to the new media revolution "Guided by a strong, capable government, Singapore has fully embraced technological modernization as a

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[1] OB-markers are known to golfing enthusiasts to be indicators of the boundaries of a particular course. In the Singaporean political context, they refer to limits on (acceptable) political participation which are wholly and exclusively defined at the discretion of the government. OBmarkers often remain intentionally vague and unknown; the only way that their existence is discovered is retrospectively, after a trespass has been committed (George 2000).

development tool. At the same time, it is widely considered to be one of the most sophisticated authoritarian systems in history. Attempting to steer a narrow path between these two policies, the government of Singapore has tried to expand the use of the Internet among its citizens, while retaining political control over this use by censoring service providers..." (Castells, 2001, p. 164)

Terence Lee(2005) has used the word 'auto-regulation' as the measure of government's control over online activities, ensuring that citizens self-regulate their activities, by controlling the narrative (Hudson & Johal, 2011). George(2005) has argued that Singapore's media regulation is a carefully orchestrated coercion.

However, young Singaporean blogger Visa[1] understands the blogging environment in a distinctive manner that emphasizes the pragmatic approach of the 'digital natives' of Singapore. "I think we're still a little "young. We're still new to all of this. It's still mostly a small community at the heart of it, with a lot of passers-by. There are no real rules, but slowly over time we're developing a tacit "code of conduct" through collective and individual self-regulation, self-correction. We started out I think mostly as a release for complaints and frustrations - a vent for emotions - but it's quickly becoming a genuine source of valuable criticism, suggestions and perspectives. I think we could afford to be

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[1] http://www.visakanv.com/blog/

more thoughtful, more responsible, more "heroic" (focusing on things greater than ourselves, not getting caught up in personal struggles). But I like where we're going. I think the blogosphere will play a significant role in shaping our civil society and our cultural identity, and I like it that way. It's far more democratic and fair than anything we've had before this". (Personal interview with the researcher)

Turning to survey the scholarship on the Singapore blogosphere, it is noticeable that researchers have a tendency to focus on the prevailing form of activism that bloggers appear to be adopting. Hudson & Johal (2011) discussed the Singapore government's substantial manipulation of the public discourse, which was part of the narrative controlling mechanism that aided the national ideology creation. They conclude that even though there is a certain restraint, which they describe as a 'chill' in the blogging practices, social media is bringing a significant change, in terms of resistance towards the narrative control. Ting (2010) in her unpublished dissertation, examined collective identity shared among the activist bloggers and the role of the internet on activism in Singapore. The finding of this qualitative study is that "…activist bloggers experience a strong sense of collective identity…" demonstrated by several elements. The relationship between internet and political participation in Singapore is much debated considering the existing dispiritedness. Skoric et al. (2009) have examined whether the online social networking activities present possibilities for a

revitalization of political participation, introducing feasible alternatives to traditional participatory methods. Accordingly, they study the new developments in social capital that will change the traditional methods but will ensure renewed political participation.

To Lee & Kan (2009) Singapore's general election of 2006 transformed the status of the blogosphere making it part of the mainstream 'esteemed and recognized' media. The credibility of the blogosphere, especially in the eyes of the government has ascended making it an added threat to the authoritarian regime. The authors have argued that the pro-economic and pro-technological stance the government has adopted and huge public investment will require a rather lenient attitude towards censorship. However, recently the Singapore government has decided to tighten its regulation in a bid to control the rise of alternative media platforms that challenge the prevailing political climate (Wong, 2013). Aljazeera, on its website, reported "One of the most wired countries in the world looks set to implement new media regulations seen by some as a bid to stifle independent news and information" (H. Tan, 2013).

There are number of elements that can be detected from the existing literature on the Singapore blogosphere. Firstly, the media restrictions in Singapore naturally place a noteworthy implication on blogging activities. Secondly, the combination of censorship and small population renders blogging activities

highly attractive as an alternative media platform for the public sphere. Thirdly, the decidedly connected environment, technology-savvy population and highly regulated political engagement reduce Singapore to a hotbed of possibilities for alternative media to thrive, and achieve success.

2.3 Relationship - Government & Citizenry

2.3.1 Social Contract Theory

Social Contract is a highly contested premise throughout history. It was/is attempting to define and rationalize the power relations in a society, specifically between rulers and citizenry. There are both subjective and objective perspectives; however, social contract debates have contributed immensely to the relationship between the modern day governments and their citizenry, even though whether that relationship is rewarding or not is a debate in itself. One aspect of importance in social contract theories is that they are all products of their time.

The history of western political ideas has been discussed in many different manners, dichotomizing the thoughts to period, people and the political environment. Some simply divided the thoughts into ancient and modern, ancient being the Greek philosophy and the modern era beginning with Machiavellian political deliberations and French political philosophies. Greek

democratic political notions, exemplified by Homeric poems and Plato's notions of justice were transformed in the 16th & 17th centuries, thus changing the question of righteousness, morality and their associations with power (McClelland, 1998). Alternatively, another description of the fundamental difference between ancient and modern western political thought emerged as the division of naturalist and anti-naturalists. Naturalists are the believers in nature and human nature as the foundation of the development of political thought which can be traced back to Aristotle. Anti-naturalists, however, concentrated on the idea of God's law and transcended realities or forms. Plato's theory of form can be described as the foundation of anti-naturalist phenomenon. Then there is the enlightenment as a characterization of western political theoretical ideas. However, each dichotomy concentrates on certain aspect and elements of the political thoughts and thinkers. Thus, the researcher's intention in discussing these diverse divisions is purely to introduce the development of political philosophy in its varying approaches.

The enlightenment era of political philosophy arose principally in the 17th century and became distinctively prolific in Europe during the 18th century. Utilitarianisms, Marxism and social contract are some of the political theories that came out of this era. The most important aspect of this era is that all those various political theories were grounded on science or scientific knowledge

believing that it provides the guidance towards a correct political structure rather than on theology, religion or traditions (Spellman, 2011). In addition the individual freedom and individual right were emphasized as political realities.

2.3.1.1 John Locke

John Locke's political theory is grounded in science yet his fundamental argument is supported by the concept of nature in theology. He has declared that the God created the universe thus he owns it and anything that man created within god's world belongs to man and man owns what he created. This was called the workmanship ideal (Shapiro, 2011). This was developed against the absolutism to promote the individualism. Although the foundation of Locke's principles is based on religion, he has rejected the power of religious intuitions and persons in interpreting God's words, instead promoted the rights of all individuals to interpret the scriptures (Locke, 1947). He acknowledged the superiority of royalty over an individual in power however, in nature, everyone is recognised as equal. Thus, Locke limited the power of sovereignty by admitting the power of individuals to decide whether the sovereignty is against the natural order of the God (Tuckness, Winter 2012). The most important aspect of Locke is this sponsorship of a sovereign individual which defines the relationship of the social contract, and the advantageous position of religion in defining the boundaries. Locke had tremendous influence over the US

constitution, since most of the founding fathers' writings were inspired by his work.

2.3.1.2 Thomas Hobbes

The scholars argue that while Locke's social contract was for a judge, Thomas Hobbes's social contract thoughts were for a master. There is a certain amount of interrelation between Locke's and Hobbes ideas, an undeniable fuzziness in each distinction; however most scholars declare that the modern statecraft is particularly closer to Hobbesian critique than Locke's. In Laviathan, Hobbes (2010) wrote "Nature hath made men so equal in the faculties of the body and mind, as that, though there be found one man sometimes manifestly stronger in body or of quicker mind than another, yet when all is reckoned together the difference between man and man is not so considerable as that one man can thereupon claim to himself any benefit to which another may not pretend as well as he." (T. Hobbes, 2010, p. 55) Thus Hobbes's social contract begins with recognizing that every man is equal in nature. Similarly, he has stated that men are rational, thus they function to achieve the best with minimum effort. They are fundamentally free, thus they function in a manner that they see fits the situation. Competition, diffidence and glory lead them towards disagreements and for gain, safety and for reputation men will fight (Smith, 2006). Thus, Hobbes saw the state of nature as of "…continual fear, and danger of violent

death; and the life of man, solitary, poor, nasty, brutish, and short" (T. Hobbes, 2010, p. 56). To protect men from this state, he has suggested a contract between individuals and sovereignty where individuals surrender certain freedoms in exchange for safety and security. Sovereignty is granted the authority and the autonomy to subject the individuals for their safety. While Locke has argued the will of the individuals to decide the authority of the sovereign, Hobbes has claimed the absolute authority of the sovereign over individuals (Smith, 2006). However, Hobbes has recognized that the sovereign owes its authority to the will of the individuals, yet the contract between the sovereign and individuals prevails. "…there can happen no breach of covenant on the part of the sovereign; and consequently none of his subjects, by any pretence of forfeiture, can be freed from his subjection" (T. Hobbes, 2010, p. 77)

2.3.1.3 Jean Jacques Rousseau

Jean Jacques Rousseau (Jean Jacques Rousseau & Singh, 2006) saw the State of Nature at the beginning as peaceful and quixotic status, where people lived lives. Competition was non-existent and so were the conflicts and fear. With time population increased and social relations have changed. Changes brought inequality and competition. Private property and private interests led to the creation of the government through a contract in order to guarantee equality and protection for all. The contract which claimed to be in the best interest of all

citizens started to serve a few influential people. This is the social contract, which Rousseau observed as responsible for the existing conflicts in society. Rousseau's social contract concept is answering to this state of nature. He has claimed that "Man was born free, and he is everywhere in chains" (J.J. Rousseau & Cole, 2003, p. 01) projecting the idea of the nature of man and what has happened to his freedom within the changing environs. His argument was that man should not relinquish his sovereignty when creating the state; instead they should be given their autonomy in the form of freedom and rights. Both Hobbesian and Lockean arguments discuss the exchange in terms of surrendering all/certain aspects of rights and freedoms; however Rousseau's claim was that when creating the social contract man surrenders his freedoms and rights to secure them back (Barker, 1960). Thus, his assertion was that all the citizens in the state of nature establish a logic where every man relinquishes everyone's freedoms and right. In this state there emerges the general will or general consensus for decision making regarding social or political premises. This is also called the collective will or the sovereign will (Smith, 2011, SparkNotes Editors). Rousseau has argued that not only do people create the state through a contract, but state has no legitimate right to exist if general will decides it should be changed. He firmly believed that the social contract should change, evolve and further develop constantly for the good of the people. Rousseau has had a high influence on the US political system, considering Lincolns famous saying ' …of the people, by the people and for the people' pertaining to the will of the people and Thomas Jefferson's writing 'The **tree of**

liberty must be refreshed from time to time with the blood of patriots and tyrants'[1] which discuss the need for the constant evolvement of the contract. Social contract is naturally criticized in a fundamental manner emphasizing that there was no consensus in creating the sovereignty, that the contract is a myth. This critique arises because social contract theory is unsuccessful in addressing two essential problems in its arguments. One is its grounding in natural law and the other is the concept of social contract. Social contract is rather a fictional state because there never was a contract throughout history. As Aristotle famously stated human beings are inherently political thus there is no pre-political condition.

2.3.1.4 John Rawls

John Rawls's 'A Theory of Justice', which was originally published in 1971, is considered as one of the leading concepts behind the development of modern liberalism. It is understood to be a re-examination of the capacities of the political system created by social contract which Rawls evaluate by introducing "the original position" (Rawls, 1971, 1999) as a way of thought. Rawls (1971, 1999) has described the fundamental idea and objective of his theory as a "…philosophical conception for constitutional democracy" (Rawls, 1971, 1999, p. xi) which is offering a "…reasonable systematic alternative…" to the limitations in the ideas of utilitarianism. Explaining further of his approach to

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[1] Thomas Jefferson, Letters to William Steven Smith, Nov 13, 1787

compose the 'philosophical conception' Rawls says "I used a more general and abstract rendering of the idea of social contract by means of the idea of the original position as a way to do that" (Rawls, 1971, 1999, p. xii). The essential interpretations of Rawls's objectives can be understood in this questions he has asked. "…what is the most acceptable political conception of justice for specifying the fair terms of cooperation between citizens regarded as free and equal and as both reasonable and rational and (we did) as normal and fully cooperative members of society over a complete life, from one generation to the next?" (Rawls, 2001, pp. 07-08)

The basic principle in his theory is developing a well-ordered society where justice is the primary position of operation with the emphasis on the fairness of the justice. Rawls(1971, 1999) determines that although the society is a based on cooperation for common good, there are conflicts and "…identity of interests"; conflicts arising from the distribution of the benefits from the cooperation and identity of interests arising from the contribution to the cooperation. To avoid this division he suggests a set of principles based on social justice. Thus, Rawls(1971, 1999) is looking at a society where "…everyone accepts and knows that the others accept the same principles of justice" and "…basic social institutions generally satisfy and are generally known to satisfy these principles" (Rawls, 1971, 1999, p. 04). He is encouraged that "the public sense of justice"

(p. 05) will ascertain the bonds of civic relations towards a "well-ordered human associations" (p. 05).

Rawls's faces the problem of determining what is just and unjust to which he says "…institutions are just when no arbitrary distinctions are made between persons in the assigning of basic rights and duties …" (Rawls, 1971, 1999, p. 05) and also when statutes maintains a balance among various assertions for the betterment of the society. However, he also states that "…one conception of justice is preferable to another when its broader consequences are more desirable" (Rawls, 1971, 1999, p. 06). Rawls understands justice as the fundamental composition of society or the distribution of fundamental rights by the social intuitions decides the way in which the advantages of cooperative society should be divided. It is at this point, the division of advantages, that the intuitions promote certain individuals' beginning over another, thus encouraging inequality. Rawls explains this condition as unavoidable in any society and it is to this position that his principals of justice are being applied.

Rawls's basic conception of justice is "justice as fairness"(Rawls, 2001). Although it is the common understanding that justice is fair, Rawls wanted to establish 'justice as fairness' as a political application. For this he introduces the 'original position'. According to Thorsby (2013) the 'original position' will assist in understanding the aspects of the priciples of justice. Rawls (1971, 1999) calls this "the original position of equality" where an individual is devoid

of specific knowledge that indicate the state of the society. It is a hypothetical status where the knowledge of particular identifiers such as gender, race etc. are removed. The original position is somewhat similar to the state of nature discussed by Hobbs or Locke, yet significantly unlike. In Hobbs's state of nature, the man is driven by self-interest to succeed thus his social contract addresses that problematic but Rawls removes the imperatives for self-interest by creating a hypothetical position where the man is evaluating the values for fair terms of social cooperation.

Rawls has a method for his arguments. To begin with it is assuming the 'original position' where the knowledge is basic not specific, and move on to the position of rational universal standpoint which Rawls described as 'a veil of ignorance'. "The veil of ignorance prevents us from shaping our moral view to accord with our own particular attachments and interests."(Rawls, 1971, 1999, p. 453) and provide us with an obligation to value the principles on general considerations. Next step in Rawls's method is determining principles through deliberation and then reflections on the equilibrium (Thorsby, 2013).

John Rawls(1971, 1999) put forwards two basic principles of justice which at an 'original position' he believed would be agreed upon

1. "Each person is to have an equal right to the most extensive scheme of equal basic liberties compatible with a similar scheme of liberties for others." (p. 53)

2. "Social and economic inequalities are to be arranged so that they are both (a) reasonably expected to be to everyone's advantage, and (b) attached to positions and offices open to all.   Each person is to have an equal right to the most extensive basic liberty" (p. 53)

2.4 Fairness, Relationship & Engagement

2.4.1 Values of Relationship

2.4.1.1 Trust and Responsiveness Matters

Human beings are social, finite and reflective individuals. Though we are individuals, we need other skills and abilities to accomplish certain tasks. Though our social individual is required for this, we know the risk of that individual, thus we use our reflective power in harnessing the social creature into accomplishing the task. Through this scenario, where communication, sharing and faith are required, we experience the trust and responsiveness persistently and prosper.

Trust is important for political process to progress; not just the trust on the part of the citizens regarding their government, and the trustworthiness of the government, but also the trust, the government as an institution maintains of its people. Most extensive studies on political trust and trustworthiness comes from

the United States, where until the mid-1960s, citizens have trusted their government to do what is right for the best of the country and that there is minimal corruption and dishonesty within the institutions (Hetherington & Husser, 2012; Norris, 1999). It was argued that political scepticism has increased, with most US citizens unequivocally distrusting the governing institutions' ability to make the best decisions for them. The political trajectories are becoming increasingly intricate for citizens to side with governing institutions without dubiousness. However, the political inclinations becoming progressively more complex and the citizens' understanding of the political practices and institutional behaviour is gradually becoming obfuscated and an all too genuine decline in trust on both sides could not render trust invalid in the relationship between government and citizenry.

The notion that responsiveness is not part of the policy-making process where governing institutions assume the role of higher authority makes the decisions political actions. Government responsiveness towards its citizens is not an afterthought, an indifferent act that is desired yet not necessary. Meskell, Brillantes Jr & Fernandez (2011b) have expressed that the governing bodies are aware of the fact that for democracy to flourish citizens must be actively involved in the public sphere sharing and interacting, taking an active part in the well-being of the country as a whole. To accomplish this, both trust and

responsiveness need to be at the forefront of expected qualities. One notable aspect is that both trust and responsiveness complement each other; trust will generate increased public participation which will bring forth responsiveness.

2.4.1.2 Visualizing Trust and Responsiveness

There are number of studies that examine whether civic participation increases the trust in government and responsiveness of government (Petts, 2008; Tomkins, PytlikZilllig, Herian, Abdel-Monem, & Hamm, 2010). The actively involved public on key governmental decisions is believed to enhance citizens' trust in government. Petts(2008) has argued that trust or responsiveness do not necessarily come from engagement.

Over the years the interest in researching numerous advantages of trust and responsiveness has increased (Hobolt & Klemmensen, 2008; Kramer, 1999; Kramer & Tyler, 1996; Rohr, 2002). The literature has evolved in exploring the positive aspects of trust and responsiveness. Ikonen (2013) recognizes several benefits which was described metaphorically in the unpublished thesis. Bourgon (2007) on the other hand, contemplate new approaches in responsiveness.

Trust and responsiveness are a collective binding which enables cooperation, collaboration and are crucial in providing the correlated harmony and communality (Ikonen, 2013; Lewis & Weigert, 1985). Trust and responsiveness

are both emotional and cognitive dynamics that function as core elements in relationships and collaboration. Both trust and responsiveness have major roles in shaping attitudes and behaviours (Dirks & Ferrin, 2002), thus creating a positive milieu for relationships to flourish.

Concepts of citizenship and democracy have evolved and continue to evolve with new implications and as the result of new implementations such as e-governance. The role of the government and the role of the public have moved beyond their rigid cast of old. Citizens have moved beyond being merely constituents, voters, and supporters of the old norm towards new influences in determining ethical and interaction dynamics (Bourgon, 2007). Consequently, the challenge is to understand these dynamics realistically and move towards developing a pragmatic relationship between government and citizenry. Trust and responsiveness become the stepping stone towards realistic expectations to overcome the divide and pursue improved engagement.

Trust and responsiveness are intangible riches and smart strengths. In this era intangible assets are an important element of social capital influencing creativity and innovation. Trust and responsiveness are not merely stepping stones towards greater changes; they are intangible resources that make the entire mechanism and structure beneficial. Trust and responsiveness strengthen both micro and macro level interactions by building emotional connections and enriching

emotional contentment which becomes a strength through the growth, smartness and richness of engagement.

2.4.2 Qualities of Engagement

2.4.2.1. Visualizing Accountability and Reciprocity

Accountability in simpler terms is the process whereby one actor holds the other responsible for what he/she has done. However, accountability is not merely between two individuals but a characteristic of governance where accountability relations exist on a larger scale (Craig, 2009). To be accountable is to be answerable; providing answers, reporting, or more apparently 'giving an account' (Kaler, 2002). Netra & Craig (2009), however say that accountability in its cleanest form has two features; answerability and enforcement. In this literature answerability means giving information and justifications, while enforcement ensures the rewards or punishment/sanctions.

Accountability is the conduct, in this context the conduct of the governing bodies, in respect to carrying out responsibilities. It is determining how well or badly the government has carried out its responsibilities. Then, there is the question of whether the answerability should be voluntarily or not. That is the imposition of legal, organizational or societal obligation on those who are accountable or giving them the freedom to engage only when they want to on

their own terms. The former is recognized as hard accountability while the latter is soft accountability (Kaler, 2002).

Reciprocity and accountability are both important features of governance promoting assurance, collaboration and solidarity. Enquiring into how accountability and reciprocity contribute to citizen engagement, the researcher examined the existing literature on both accountability and reciprocity in relation to governance and case study data. This will be pondered by examining certain perceptive statements.

Both accountability and reciprocity are related. Accountability can be reciprocal. In simpler form, Accountability is being answerable to responsibilities, and that act will be reciprocated by people placing their trust in the government. It is difficult to understand the nature of the accountability in this type of exchange without appreciating the dynamics of reciprocity, both necessitating to be voluntary and unilateral to engage its maximum potentials. (Brandt, Colaresi, & Freeman, 2008).

Accountability and reciprocity equally strengthen the power of the government. When the governing bodies are accounting for their high points as well as low and enforce regulations and punishments, it is assuring citizenry of fairness of justice. That strengthens the position of government through the projection of

the adoption of ethical standards, which will promote trust and consequently engagement. It strengthens the structure of government, because the ethical principles are in place. In addition, citizen engagement improves the overall composition of values. Reciprocity, furthermore, strengthens the relationship since it is an honest and fair exchange, thus it increases the trust. In other words, the 'soft logic' in accountability and reciprocity, instead of weakening, strengthens the governing power through the softer approach. " … reciprocity promotes positive feelings and perceptions of relationships that counter the negative effects of power inequality…" says Linda Molm (2010, p. 129)

Both accountability and reciprocity are appealing and attract engagement. This is one of the fundamental aspects of reciprocity. It invites engagement through the very act of 'giving in return'.

Accountability and reciprocity have been widely researched, developing the concept and practical aspects. Accountability has become a key concept in corporate governance, reflecting on how it can increase the reliability (Licht, 2002), how it can contribute to behavioural practices (Huse, 2005) etc. Reciprocity has become extensively discussed with the introduction of the social capital concept (Putnam, 1995) and social networks.

On one hand, being defensive they lack the qualities of answerability and enforceability and being unyielding about exchanging information they declined to be reciprocal or initiate the reciprocity. These concepts, both accountability and reciprocity should be initiated from the top of the hierarchy. Namely, if the head of the government incorporated these ethical values into the structure, it will spread to the ground level constructively. "Reciprocity is structured. It is not just a norm, not just a process, and it is variable across different forms of exchange" says Linda Molm (2010, p. 120)

Both accountability and reciprocity are motivational, in terms of there is a motivation in practicing it. Ideally, accountability can motivate the government to seek more engagement from people to maintain transparency and promote freedom of speech to facilitate the engagement. Though governing bodies incline towards alienating and silencing in practice, good governing practices are ideally motivated by the positive impacts of practicing those.

The point of departure here is that, government's unquestionable conviction of being good just by the virtue of existence. Governments, unsurprisingly, face governing challenges with regard to their constitutional rules, stakeholders' concerns and rights, decision making practices and unstable world economy (Woods, 2000). Nonetheless, embracing accountability and reciprocity as

governing practices which projects the incorporation of values put on providing a fair environment, ultimately will be effective in the citizen engagement stakes.

Following the assertion of the significance of the expected qualities and values of the relationship between citizenry and government, it is established that they would lead to a meaningful and constructive engagement. Nevertheless, what would guarantee that the government would be motivated to act on these directions? Both government and citizenry are in a relationship that could be described as a prisoner's dilemma (Rapoport, 1965), where one party may not cooperate in self-interest even though it might serve the best interest of both parties. The idea that common good could be achieved through cooperative action was introduced as part of the strategic solution to the prisoner's dilemma by John Nash (Binmore, 1998). The equilibrium is where each faction holds the correct expectation about other faction's behaviour and acts rationally. In other words this is called playing fair and arriving at a win-win situation where loss and gain are equally fair. Rawls (1971, 1999) described this as a 'fair system of cooperation' because the environs under which the principles of justice are determined is basically fair.

Examining the above narrative of self-interest, cooperation, common good and fairness, the inquiry is what could be the core cognitive and effective context

that would inspire the government to engage people by adopting ethical stances of trust, responsiveness, accountability and reciprocity.

Lack of accountability due to irresponsible conduct decreases the willingness of citizens to engage and cooperate with government across the board (Greiling & Halachmi, 2010). Explaining further the researchers has explained that this scenario in turn affects the daily governing activities with a possibility of government failure, incompetence and ineffectiveness, leading towards greater mistrust and distancing. Good governance is naturally fair in its conduct, thus increasing its performance level. Both performance and accountability of a government is regarded as two sides of the same coin (Goetz & Jenkins, 2005).

Reciprocity is in its simplest form is treating other people as others treat you, voluntarily without the aid of an agreement (Kolm, 2008). Reciprocity is generally a part of social relations, whether it is in its complete form of give and take or not. It is a given that for a society to be dynamic and constructive mutually developed relations such as respect are required. Communities are built on values of reciprocity. Family is the smallest community in the social order and is intensely reciprocal. Thus, reciprocity is an interactive process.

Reciprocity was part of the social contract concept of Thomas Hobbes, who discussed men in a state of nature (Evan, 1962). The brutal and hard nature of

mankind in the state of nature, man must be willing to surrender certain liberties for the greater advantages for all. In the later years along the developing social contract theory podium, Rawls (1971, 1999) has expressed the sentiment of justice as fair, that it should serve the least advantageous in the society shrouded in a 'veil of ignorance'.

2.4.3 Fairness & Empathy

The term 'empathy' is a 19th century German word *Einfuhlung* (*ein* =in, *fuhlung*=feeling), although the Greek word empatheia is closer in linguistic meaning (Anthony M. Clohesy, 2013). Rudolph Lotze (1817-1881) and Wilhelm Windt (1832-1920) first used this term but it was Robert Vischer who made the term mainstream. Vischer is famous for developing the aesthetic theory that held the view that beauty does not exist in the object, but rather in eyes of the beholder who judged the quality and affixed it to the object. Theodore Lipps shared the same view expressing that it was through empathy that the subject attributes beauty to the object. Referencing to Guass (1973) Clohesy (2013) quotes Lipps as saying "… my experience of that object is an experience of a self-activity projected as an attribute of the object. This is the first fact of empathy." (A.M. Clohesy, 2013, p. 12)

To Lipps, the idea of empathy was significant as he saw it as a result of an inner activity of a subject that with the influence of the object to which the subject is

naturally connected. He has stated "After all, empathy is varied, yet an unavoidable and natural affair"[1] (Stueber, 2008, p. 01). Although, Lipps was examining empathy in the context of aesthetics, his approach to understanding empathy encompasses many spheres. However, Lipps' perception of empathy was rather insufficient to describe a multifaceted relationship between mind and an object (Anthony M. Clohesy, 2013). Nonetheless, he has declared empathy lead a subject towards understanding the mind of another and thus he has brought empathy into the realm of psychology. Even though Lipps' claims in describing empathy have further imparted several problems (Anthony M. Clohesy, 2013; Stueber, 2008) his contribution in making empathy a significant factor in relationships is very much highlighted.

Empathy is the core cognitive and effective context that would make for a successful engagement, leading to mutually constructive governance. Empathy is a psychological and social connection built on the conception of "take yourself out of your shoes and put yourself into the shoes of another person" (Richards, 2010). Empathy has the ability to bind entities into being responsible for the welfare of each other, expanding the growth of human capabilities and changing the perspective on communication and relationship building. (Krznaric, 2012). Coplan & Goldie(2011) recognized empathy as a complex

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[1] Theodore Lipps (1912-1913)

cognitive and effective process that has clear self-other differentiation. In deliberative reasoning, empathy as an emotional factor plays a major role. Rawls'(1971, 1999) thinking of justice as fairness stipulated that both emotions and reasoning are equal parts of the process of the system of justice.

Thus, empathy is

- Imagining another's experience by stepping into that situation
- Perspective-taking
- Maintaining self-other difference
- Emotional moral grounds to purposeful reasoning

Consequently, here the researcher aims to consider these characteristics with regards to improving the relationship between government and citizenry through engagement. Getting an actual understanding of the other's experience by stepping into that person's shoes is a multifaceted process. A government practices it through gathering information of what people think, rather than experiencing their experiences. This idea at the outset sounds preposterous; since there is much an institution is capable of doing.

The expectation is government revealing more of its practices through trust, responsiveness, accountability and reciprocity so that as an institution they step out of structured environment which is an 'out of the box' action.

The Government will not have to give up its perspective as the 'self', merely develop a perspective 'other', because empathy functions very well with one perspective. There are two perspectives in empathy; self-oriented and other-oriented (Coplan & Goldie, 2011). Self-oriented is representing one's own self while other-oriented means taking a perspective oriented towards the 'other'. Besides, government will be able preserve its control and conventional prominence, by maintaining the self-other differentiation, while altering its fundamental approach in engaging people.

2.5   Challenges in Urban Governance

According to the Global Campaign on Urban Governance, an index released by UN-HABITAT, the urban governance "…can be defined as the sum of the many ways individuals and institutions, public and private, plan and manage the common affairs of the city"[1]. Appadurai (2001) has recognized the "new geographies of governmentality" which is happening within urban cities, and the crisis in national government saw a shift in the power towards urban cities, with their vast resources. Thus, urban cities are encountering challenges to develop democratic approaches to structure cities to be more inclusive and efficient. Urban governance is a multilevel activity says Kearns & Paddison

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[1] http://ww2.unhabitat.org/campaigns/governance/documents/UGIndex%205%20pager.pdf

(2000) which involved different hierarchy of stakeholders. It is not just what is done that is important but also the governance process itself is important. The quality and the effectiveness of the governance are important for responsive decision making and the quality of the democracy.

The primary challenge is democracy, inclusiveness and scaling communication boundaries. Governance is not a new phenomenon neither is democracy; however the social, economic and political complexities have changed the prevailing environs. "Governance is about the capacity to get things done in the face of complexity, conflict and social change…*empower themselves* by blending their resources, skills and purposes with others" (Kearns & Paddison, 2000, p. 847). It has progressed beyond mere problem solving towards collective participation and efficient problem solving.

Apparurai's (2001) deep democracy is discussing the values and efficacy of urban alliances in strengthening the urban governance. The alliances bring forth the deep democracy which "…suggests roots, anchors, intimacy, proximity and locality" (p 45). It is a discussion of social capital, social networks within the urban environs, and values of civic participation, transparency and inclusion. Social cohesion is strengthening fabric of urban governance while citizenship practices foster participatory democracy (Eizaguirre, Pradel, Terrones, Martinez-Celorrio, & García, 2012). The research emphasis the

importance of comprehending the social cohesion as a policy aim, and the necessity to incorporate citizen practices when analyzing the problematic of urban governance.

The quality of the urban governance depends on the effective and responsive decision making and administration and transparent and accountable political structuring towards local democracy that would bring the value to the urban environs (Kearns & Paddison, 2000).   The challenge is making citizen participation effective, valuable and communicative. This is where the urban governance required to turn to the new interaction dynamics, new social media platforms where youth participation is high. As mentioned before, greater percentage of urban population consisted of digital youth, whose communication requirements have evolved rapidly, which needs to be included into the systematic process of governing for more inclusive and better civic participation.   Through the scope of e-governance, Sanchez & Brenman (2013) are arguing that information and communication technology can reduce the obstacles in urban governance towards exchange and bonding which will help to create partnerships and connections within civic bodies. Exploring the urban governance and their deployment of social media tools as part of the public engagement system, Thomas & Kimberly (2013) in their research has found that the social aspect of the social media has been ignored when using those tools. Exploring the governmental activities utilizing social media across

31 informational world cities, Mainka et al.,(2014) and their latest paper (2015) examined the social media platforms which popular and productive, and information link thus making information viable, and the activities of government on media towards successful citizen participation. Although the authors failed to ascertain whether the social media activities of government increased the participation, they disclosed that popular and exposed cities show higher activities on government social media. On the other hand,

These researches emphasize the lack of attention towards relaxing the bureaucratic rigidity of the decision making process, which would encourage the youth participation. The urban digital generation is marginalized through conventional interaction tools i.e. e-governance, and lack of creative inclusion of social media platforms. On the other hand, the flow of information and discourse building on decision making is happening elsewhere, with creative crowdsourcing could be enterprising for good urban governance.

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

Methodology represents the procedures in planning and executing a piece of research. It is also about the scope of the data/information collection, deciding on a suitable case study, and choosing an analytical method that could be applicable and productive (Kothari, 2004). Creswell(2007) has sketched that methodology is a process to research on one or more of these elements; ontology, epistemology, axiology and rhetoric. Silverman & Marvasti (2008) have stated that a research methodology can be broader as in broadly defined qualitative or quantitative methodologies or could be narrow as grounded theory or content analysis.

This chapter will discuss the adoption of methodology and provide the rationalization for particular choices. Subsequently the discussion will focus on data collection methods, process and techniques, and the chapter will conclude with a discussion of ethical considerations.

3.2 Quantity vs Quality in Research methodology

There are extensive publications on qualitative and quantitative methodologies, discussing the methods and challenges and introducing new aspects to the existing scholarship. Tan (2009) has described both these methodologies by recognizing quantitative research as an empirical approach that measures data, while a qualitative approach examines the meanings, concepts, symbols etc. in a non-numeric sense. Some researchers view these methodologies as competing views, at the different ends of the spectrum. For others, quantitative and qualitative methodologies signify the different ways of conducting social investigations (A Bryman, 1988).

The researcher has adapted a table to highlight basic differences between qualitative and quantitative methodologies, thus emphasizing the reason for this researcher's choice of methodology (Table 2).

Further, the reasoning in quantitative and qualitative methods differs in approach. Quantitative method uses inductive logic while qualitative method prefers deductive reasoning. However, qualitative researchers are known for constructing hypothesis before embarking on data collection and analysis.

	Quantitative Methodology	Qualitative Methodology
Philosophies	Objective reality	Reality socially constructed (subjective)
	Natural science view	Social Scienec
	Positivistic	Phenomenological
	Method first	Subject matter first
	Variables identified and connections measured	Variables are multifaceted, hard to measure
	Etic (outside view)	Emic (inside view)
Objectives	Generalization	contextualization
	Prediction	Exploratory
	Causal explanations	Understanding perspective
	Results driven	Process driven
Approaches	Hypothesis and theories at the beginning	Hypothesis and grounded theory at the end
	Manipulation and control	Emergence and portrayal
	Experimentation	Naturalistic
	Deductive	Inductive
	Component analysis	Search for patterns
	Reduce data to numeric	Minor use of numeric
	Abstract language use in writing	Decretive writing
	Large scale samples	Small scale sample
	Probabilistic data collection	Purposive data collection

Table 2 - Variances between Quantitative and Qualitative Methodologies
Adapted from (A. Bryman, 2004; Creswell, Plano Clark, Gutmann, & Hanson, 2003; J. Tan, 2009)

3.3   Grounded Theory Research

3.3.1 Overview of Grounded Theory

Grounded theory (GT) is "…discovery of theory from data - systematically obtained and analysed" (Barney G. Glaser & Strauss, 1973, p. 01) and "…grounded theory methods consist of systematic, yet flexible guidelines for collecting and analysing qualitative data to construct theories 'grounded' in the

data themselves" (Charmaz, 2007, p. 02). GT was formally developed by Barney Glaser and Anselm Strauss in their joint effort in 1967 called "The Discovery of Grounded Theory". It is commonly accepted that original theoretical foundations in GT were from pragmatics and symbolic interactionism (Charmaz, 2007; Barney G. Glaser & Strauss, 1973; A. L. Strauss & J. M. Corbin, 1998). The objective of GT is to construct a theory rather than verify an existing theoretical model (Barney G. Glaser & Strauss, 1973). The data is systematically collected and analysed to generate an "… inductive effort, a substantive theory…" (Barney G. Glaser & Strauss, 1973, p. 226). The major difference between GT and other qualitative data analysis methods is the emphasis upon theory generation (Strauss & Corbin, 1994).

Data is constantly compared to generate theory in GT studies. Strauss and Corbin(1994) stressed that initially theory may be generated from the data, then those theories may be elaborated and modified as incoming data are played against them. Glaser (2002a) says the constant comparison method offers a developmental tool for researchers to conceptualize and form the emerging theories. He is keen for the researcher to independently generate concepts, " …own concepts generated from the data instead of using, and probably forcing, the received concepts of others, especially those concepts of unduly respected theoretical capitalists" (Barney G Glaser, 2002a). Morse (1997) is of the opinion

that theory could appear in many forms in GT research, while Punch (2005) has decided that GT is essentially an approach, a strategy rather than a theory.

There are five basic premises of Grounded Theory that could be understood according to Denscombe (2010).

1) qualitative data analysis is basically pragmatic

   There is a vast space for ingenuity and creativity within the basic guideline in the literature.

2) the aim of qualitative analysis was to generate new concepts and theories

   Researchers must be capable of analysing data to conceptualize. Glaser (2002a) says when the researcher is less inapt at conceptualizing, look for the data, because data (participants) are theory.

3) 'theories should be "grounded" in empirical reality'

   Researchers examine similarities and differences to clarify emerging theoretical concepts.

4) Open mindedness

   Researchers should be able to set aside their prejudices when examining data.

5) Participants cannot be decided at the beginning of the research

Researcher develops the participants as the research progresses.

The open-mindedness of the researcher is a much debated aspect in GT studies. Glaser's (2003) instructions to GT researchers is to concentrate on arriving at the stage of 'knowing nothing' before going into research. Yet open mindedness does not necessarily mean blank mindedness (Creswell, 2013). Researchers require knowledge about the premises of inquiry, and perspectives to contribute to the research development, since it is imperative that researchers have prior knowledge of certain aspects of the research. Charmaz (2007) has highlighted the importance of researchers' perspectives in conceptualizing the data. However, researchers required to set aside their pre-conceived ideas or prejudices for a better understanding of the subjects, actions and interactions which will contribute positively to the research (McCallin, 2003).

3.3.1.1 Various Canons of Grounded Theory Studies

The Grounded theory research approaches have undergone several evolvements, firstly due to the separation of ideas between Glaser and Strauss. Glaser has promoted the traditional theory by the data conceptualization method, while Strauss (with Corbin) provides a clear, explicit framework that is often reassuring for newer researchers (McCallin, 2003). However, Strauss with Corbin could be inhibitive since the rigidity and precision of guidelines lack the freedom which presented in Glaser's model. Glaser (1992) was critical of

Strauss (with Corbin)'s approach stating that it is no longer GT, but a full conceptual description and forcing data. However, Strauss and Corbin (1998) have revised their original rigidity by stating "Sometimes, one has to use common sense and not get caught up in worrying about what is the right or wrong way. The important thing is to trust oneself and the process. Students should stay within the general guidelines … and use the procedures and techniques flexibly according to their abilities and the realities of their studies". (A. Strauss & J. M. Corbin, 1998, p. 295)

'Glaserian'	'Straussian'
Beginning with general wonderment (an empty mind)	Having a general idea of where to begin
Emerging theory, with neutral questions	Forcing the theory, with structured questions
Development of a conceptual theory	Conceptual description (description of situations)
Theoretical sensitivity (the ability to perceive variables and relationships) comes from immersion in the data	Theoretical sensitivity comes from methods and tools
The theory is grounded in the data	The theory is interpreted by an observer
The credibility of the theory, or verification, is derived from its grounding in the data	The credibility of the theory comes from the rigour of the method
A basic social process should be identified	Basic social processes need not be identified
The researcher is passive, exhibiting disciplined restraint	The researcher is active
Data reveals the theory	Data is structured to reveal the theory
Coding is less rigorous, a constant	Coding is more rigorous and defined by

comparison of Incident to incident, with neutral questions and categories and properties evolving. Take care not to 'over-conceptualize', identify key points	technique. The nature of making comparisons varies with the coding technique. Labels are carefully crafted at the time. Codes are derived from 'micro-analysis which consists of analysis data word-by-word'
Two coding phases or types, simple (fracture the data then conceptually group it) and substantive (open or selective, to produce categories and properties)	Three types of coding, open (identifying, naming, categorizing and describing phenomena), axial (the process of relating codes to each other) and selective (choosing a core category and relating other categories to that)
Regarded by some as the only 'true' GTM	Regarded by some as a form of qualitative data analysis (QDA)

Table 3 - Differences between Glaser and Strauss on Grounded Theory
Adopted from (Onions, 2006)

Glaser was of positivist perspective, while Strauss with Corbin moved towards social constructivist ontology and postmodernism. The key differences and arguments between the perspectives of Glaser and Strauss has been summarized by Onion (2006) as illustrated in the table below (Table 3).

In contrast, Kathy Charmaz (Bryant & Charmaz, 2010; Charmaz, 2007) has developed a grounded theory research approach with a constructivism perspective. She has highlighted the pragmatism and the fluidity in GT studies. "Glaser and Strauss talk about discovering theory as emerging from data separate from the scientific observer. Unlike their position, I assume that neither data nor theories are discovered. Rather, we are part of the world we study and the data we collect. We construct our grounded theories through our past and present involvements and interactions with people, perspective and research practices…" (Charmaz, 2007, p. 10). Glaser was critical of this approach pronouncing that this is an attempt at accuracy "She is trying to solve the

worrisome accuracy problem of QDA by trying to ascertain the data emerging in the deep, long (hour or so) interview situation. This kind of interviewing is characteristic of her "pet" substantive areas requiring depth, again a small piece of the GT action. Her quest is not to take the data as it comes, but to be sure it is accurate, so she gets to mutual interpretation as the answer" (Barney G Glaser, 2002b, p. 02).

Charmaz (Charmaz, 2000) has expressed the subjective perspective of the researcher, saying that the researcher is not independent of reality. "…an external reality those researchers can discover and record ... Glaser and Strauss (1967) imply that reality is independent of the observer and the methods used to produce it. Because both Glaser and Strauss ...follow the canons of objective reportage, both ... write about their data as distanced experts ..., thereby contributing to an objective stance." (p. 513) The conception that the researcher has interpretational involvement with the data, making him/her subjective in analysing that data is an argument Glaser refused to conform to since he has emphasized that a researcher should 'know nothing' when getting acquainted with data.

3.3.1.2 Criticism towards Grounded Theory Method

Realities are constructed through social interactions where symbols are shared to express. Grounded theory is used to interpret the meanings in these

communications which will give the researcher an understanding of how a group of individuals form their realities (Cutcliffe, 2000). Cutcliffe (2000) has recognized several key areas with which researchers of GT will be having issues and has contemplated the need for particular attention to details. The key areas he is suggesting are   sampling, creativity and reflexivity, the use of literature, and precision within grounded theory. Besides the different versions of Grounded Theory, there are several deliberations on the merits of GT. Silverman (2013) has argued that GT neglects to recognize inherent concepts which guide early analysis. "…the adaptability of the GT approach positions it uniquely as a paradigmatic bridge between post-positivist, interpretive/constructivist, and post-structural or critical approaches…" (Fassinger, 2005, p. 157). On the other hand, Goulding (2002) has reflected on the difficulties faced by novice researchers when they try to grapple with experiences and narrowing down to specifics within the GT research. Denscombe (2003) argues that the GT process ignores the implications of social, economic and political influences and the historical role in the data. However, Strauss & Corbin (1994) have made this point overtly clear when they said "…theories are embedded 'in history'- historical epochs, eras, and moments are to be taken into account in the creation, judgment, revision, and reformulation of theories."(Strauss & Corbin, 1994, p. 280) In addition to this, both authors have encouraged researchers to adopt the multiple actor perspective.

Regardless of different versions of GT research, those representing positivism, constructivism or structuralism, it is a basic qualitative research process consisting of data collection, analysing and theory generation. The distinctiveness in GT research is due to three fundamentals that have been constantly discussed by GT theorists (Charmaz, 2003, 2007; Barney G Glaser, 2002a; Barney G. Glaser & Strauss, 1973; Strauss & Corbin, 1994; A. L. Strauss & J. M. Corbin, 1998) and concisely explained by Tan (2009);Theory emerges from empirical data not from an existing theory, Constant comparative method during a systematic collection and analysis enables the theory to emerge and Memo writing to formulate and revise the emerging theory

3.4 Adoption of Grounded Theory Method

3.4.1 Introduction

In this research, the researcher's basic understanding of Grounded Theory was acquired by reading the first book on GT methodology written by Glaser and Strauss (1973), even though GT approaches have evolved over the years. Though interpretations of the core standards of GT have been re-evaluated constantly (Charmaz, 2007; A. L. Strauss & J. M. Corbin, 1998) and discussed and criticized (Goulding, 2002; Silverman & Marvasti, 2008), the basic methods have not altered to a great extent. Thus, the researcher is conscious of a certain

lack of limitations offered in adopting the method in Glaser's approach, meticulous and fastidious attention to detail in adopting the techniques advised by Strauss and Corbin, and the middle path adopted by Charmaz. Hence, the researcher has adopted a position that would best serve the research question and collected data, which embraced the basic principles of GT method discussed by all parties, which can be seen described throughout this dissertation.

There are several reasons that directed the researcher towards adopting the GT method. GT is a well-documented and systematic process, which provides a cohesive approach to data analysis and exposing the relationships inside data (A. L. Strauss & J. M. Corbin, 1998). Ability to use multiple sources of data, interactivity within the system and the freedom for multiple perspectives to be developed has a positive impact on the research process (Strauss & Corbin, 1994). Since the researcher's objective is to interpret informal responses which could reveal factors of engagement towards an existing relationship, these multiple options provided by the GT method support the objectives rather than limit them.

3.4.2 Rationalizing the Adopted Method

This research is examining data derived from a relatively new source; the blogosphere. The virtual interactions on the blogosphere present a number of concerns. Firstly, even though the interactions are at times descriptive and could

be continuous, the data could be completely irrelevant to the research questions of the researcher. Secondly, data could be insufficient to warrant an interpretation or it could portray a different emotion (e.g. veiled sarcasm). Thirdly, data could be unmanageable and irregular with the interactions moving from topic to topic with no moderation. The fourth issue is the non-existent identity of individuals who are interacting. (These issues will be discussed further in the section called 'limitations of the research') Strauss and Corbin (1994, p. 280) have emphasized that " …grounded theories…grounded directly or indirectly on the perspectives of the diverse actors towards the phenomena studies by us" The blogosphere contradicts the traditional data assembly of the GT research in the manner and demonstration of interactions; anonymous, unconventional and rapid. It has perspectives from diverse actors interacting on those grounds, with no contribution or involvement from the researcher.

The research questions of this research presented a challenge because they are inquiring into the unknown; engaging factors. The amount of uncertainty in the research questions, where they heavily depend on the data to provide the factors of engagement, has placed the researcher in a dilemma of constructing a hypothesis. Factors of engagement are a nonfigurative context thus it required the data to provide answers. However, when the researcher was experimentally examining the socio-political blogs of Singapore together with international

blogs, the discursive elements in the blogosphere have inspired adopting a specific analytical methodology. Theory development prior to collection of data is a crucial and a necessary phase in doing case studies (Yin, 2009) but GT adopts a reverse method. Thus, the researcher's data has originated from an exploratory case study (Fernández, 2004), adopting the GT method was imperative and it provides the researcher a fluidity in the process.

On the other hand, not only is the blogosphere a new socio-technical arena but the GT method is largely ignored by blog content analytical research. GT is an appropriate way of studying a previously ignored area of study says Fernández (2004).

Blogs are largely an on-going conversation among readers and the blogger, thus it varies in its engagement and content production. The phenomena is relatively new, self-moderated or moderated by the blogger, and the research on various aspects of the blogosphere are fairly new knowledge, with barely developed theories and not enough developed knowledge to advance the theories. Thus, the adoption of the GT method was to understand, to explore, to discover and to interpret the blogosphere from the perspective of the stakeholders; bloggers and readers.

3.5   Understanding the Grounded Theory Process

Grounded theory, after its introduction by Glaser and Strauss in 1967, is still debated and experimented and packed with multiple meanings. "Discourse about grounded theory blurs distinctions between the method as process and the theory as product of that process" (Charmaz, 2007). The GT process can be problematic not just because of the diverse versions and connotations but also because it is open-ended, and the researcher's assembly of concepts will structure the process. The researcher needs to move back and forth, constantly comparing the data, coding, categorizing, refining and interconnecting through additional data or existing data.
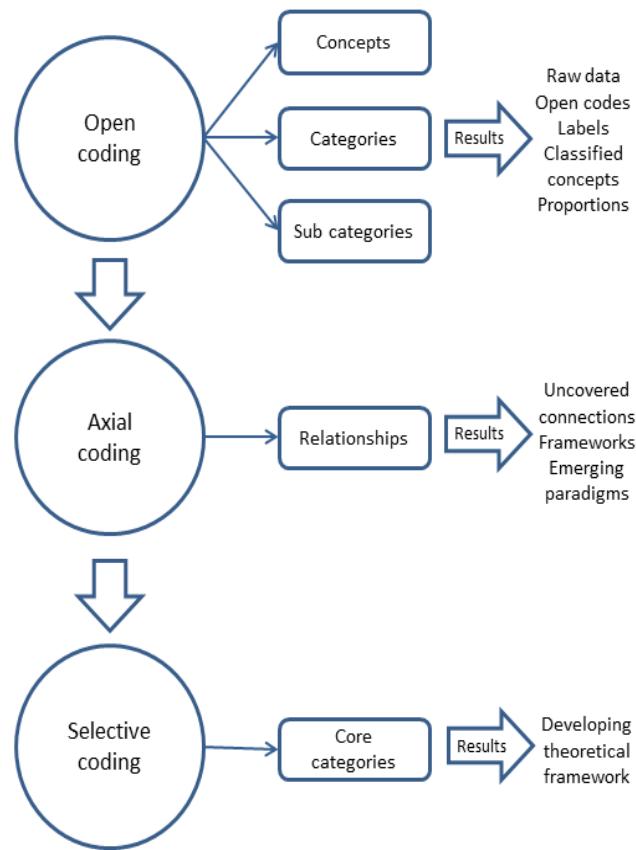
Figure 10 - Coding Process and Expected Outcomes
Adapted from (J. Tan, 2009) which was adapted from (Warburton, 2005,)

Charmaz (2007) has advised GT researchers to be flexible, not transforming GT methods into austere directives, making the data collection, analysis and theoretical positions accommodating. The process should develop "without subscribing to a prescribed theory of knowledge or view of reality" (Charmaz, 2007) and "open minded" (Barney G. Glaser & Strauss, 1973). GT researchers are interested in patterns emerging out of actions and interactions between/among various types of social units or actors (Strauss & Corbin, 1994). "We are not compelled to view grounded theory as discovering categories that

inhere in data in an external world. Nor do we need to see grounded theory as an application of procedures. Rather, we can view grounded theories as products of emergent processes that occur through interaction. Researchers construct their respective products from the fabric of the interactions, both witnessed and lived." (Charmaz, 2007, p. 178)

Thus, continue with the basic guidelines of the GT process, the researcher's aptitude towards a robust design of the process is satisfactory. The researcher has sketched the GT process (Table 4) adapted from Tan(2009) to provide a broader understanding of the method.

	METHOD	ACTIVITY	RESULTS

Initial stage — Open coding
- Research questions → Interview questions
- Selective sampling → Interview questions
- Data collection → Raw data
- Code development → Concepts
- Constant comparison → Concepts

Improvement stage — Axial coding
- Develop Categories → Categories
- Relationship between categories → Categories / Tentative model

Development stage — Selective coding
- Core category development → Sub categories
- Constant comparison → Sub categories
- Develop and refine concepts → Theoretical model

Culminate stage — Consolidating
- Emerging theoretical model → Theory & substantiating
- Literature review → Theory & substantiating

Table 4 - GT Process of the Research
Design adapted from (J. Tan, 2009)

The researcher, at this stage, is unable to claim that the data collection process started with 'no knowledge' of the phenomena to be examined. The researcher has possessed a certain amount of knowledge about the state of the existing relationship between the citizenry and the government in this case study. Similarly, being part of the social media crowd, the researcher is well versed in blogging and the impact of blogging. Glouding (2002) said that coming with an 'open mind' to GT research does not necessarily mean an empty head. However, even with a certain amount of previously acquired 'mind set', it has not essentially affected or prejudiced the researcher's interpretation of the data. This matter has been deliberated further down when data collection is being discussed.

The GT method is primarily an analytical process; analysing, organizing and making patterns out of textual data. The analysis relies on the coding practices described by Strauss & Corbin; open coding, axial coding and selective coding, which have been illustrated in Figure 10.

Throughout the coding process, the researcher has kept in mind the research questions. The parameters of coding were decided upon the intentions of the research. Open coding is the initial step in the GT process for analysing data (Barney G Glaser, 1992) and it is a revelatory process that categorizes the data into individual units of meaning by asking simple questions i.e. where, when,

what, how etc. Strauss & Corbins' method of open coding through line by line has been problematic due to the time constraints and difficulty to focus on the contextual meaning. However, this method has been successfully contested providing researchers with freedom to move through the data. The researcher has used computer software that is commercially available for qualitative/quantitative & mixed method analysis called MAXQDA[1] rather than manual coding the data.

Key words, expressions, and sentences, created by comparing the similarities and differences amongst relationships, practices and contexts are the outcomes of codes (A. L. Strauss & J. M. Corbin, 1998). These are the concepts as described by Goulding (2002) who said "…meanings, uniformity and/or/pattern within a set of descriptive incidents" (p. 77)

Axial coding is "a type of coding that treats a category as an axis around which the analyst delineates relationships and specifies the dimensions of this category" (Charmaz, 2007, p. 186). This is the second phase of the coding process and at this point the concepts derived from the open coding process are examined to construct an understandably coherent framework. Strauss & Corbin(1994) have been critical of some researchers using GT who lend an inordinate importance to the coding process thus suggesting that GT comprised

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[1] http://www.maxqda.com/

primarily of coding. Their neglect of theoretical coding which apply the relationships among substantive codes in building up a hypothesis to be included in the theory affects the richness of the research work. Table 5 provides an example of the coding process of this research.

Memo writing is considered as one of the most important parts of the GT process. This is a practice which starts with data collection until the research writing (Charmaz, 2007). The memos are the researcher's thoughts on data and these ideas are constantly referred and re-referred to, to understand emerging categories in the GT process. The researcher in this study has used two types of memo writing. Firstly, she used the memo writing facility provided by the data analysis software. Secondly, a notebook was kept for manual writing in which overall ideas were developed and constructed and discussion was built with the data. Memo writing not only helped the researcher to stay in focus within the main frame of research, but also helped in building up the literature related to research since the researcher has an unconventional and 'un-GT' like way of jotting down the pertinent literature.

There is one important aspect that the researcher personally experienced and gave rise to Charmaz' persistent advocacy for being flexible with the method. It was realized that when developing the data and coding, the researcher inadvertently acquired a third sense for data sets and emerging categories. It

could not be ignored that the personal experiences and knowledge may have influenced these happenings. However, it has to be acknowledged that this sense has in a way affected the intensity of the research.

Sample source	Quotation	Code	Category	Memo
Comment	"…the difference between HK & SG lies in concentration of economic control, hence job opportunities, for the well-educated class…" – Yuen	Economic vulnerability, control , indifference	Relationship (gov & citizenry)	HK & SG successful economically and majority Chinese
Comment	"To think critically? What is the use if you cannot really apply it when it matters most in national issues and institutions– which is the nub of the problem " –Jimmy	Relationship, public input, policy & practices	Education & National Issues	
Interview (face-to-face)	"…government seemed to do far more social engineering than I am comfortable with, and social control… to large extent the role of the government is to mitigate and counteract market failure,.." – Alex	Role of Government, Social control, Social Engineering	Government & Power	SG Gov controls the market less people more
Interview (online)	"…that we really, most of the time, have no idea how things work at such large, complex levels, so we should be less recklessly interventionist and spend more time and energy carefully observing what's going on. "- Visa	Negotiating, Informed, less intervention, understanding	Relationship parameters	Idealistic, let intellectual discourses guide him, less eager to jump to conclusions

Table 5 - An Example of Coding Process

3.6 Data Collection methods

3.6.1 Rationalizing Data Collection Process

Best & Krueger (2004) advise identifying, selecting and collecting data of the sample that would provide information on the investigative elements of the research question. To achieve this end, they have indicated the importance of clarifications from the beginning of the research.

3.6.1.1 Identifying the Focus Population

The target population should be determined by the objectives of the study, (Best & Krueger, 2004) and the research questions that enquire into the nature of objectives. If a researcher incorrectly defines the target population from which the samples would be drawn, the research outcome would be vulnerable heading towards misleading conclusions (Kalton, 1983). Creswell (2012) has described this as 'the unit of analysis', which contributes the information to structure answers for the research question.

In this research the purpose is to understand factors of engagement to form a mutually beneficial exchange between the public and governing authorities. Thus, the emerging target populations are bloggers and blog readership in Singapore. Taking into account the fact that internet access in Singapore is

162.1% (as of Oct 2012)[1] in terms of the rate of penetration of wireless broadband, Singapore is a highly data-fertile area for internet related studies.

1) Readers' feedback

Blogging is a process of learning and knowledge sharing where bloggers interact with the public (J. Tan, 2009). It provides an informal and personalized setting, where people can acquire information, interpret, form a dialogic interaction on issues and share awareness and knowledge with others (Röll, 2004). Thus, blogs secure a platform where the public is given the opportunity to develop a specific discussion, share knowledge and communicate with others, like-minded or otherwise. This informal public gathering is one of the target populations.

2) Bloggers

Blogs provide an online province where individuals are given the prospect of voicing their own opinions, encounter like-minded people and establish interest-centred networks (Efimova, 2004). Therefore, bloggers perform a foremost role in assembling and moderating a diverse cluster of individuals to express views, share knowledge, reflect on issues and form a discourse. Hence, bloggers become a target population.

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[1] 2013 Info-communications Development Authority of Singapore, http://www.ida.gov.sg/Infocomm-Landscape/Facts-and-Figures/Telecommunications/Statistics-on-Telecom-Services/Statistics-on-Telecom-Services-for-2012-Jul-Dec.aspx#.UPAmeG9QGSo , Accessed Jan15, 2013

3.6.1.2 Create a Sample Framework

The sample framework will provide a clear outline of recognizing and detecting the sample participants (Kalton, 1983). In traditional methods, sampling is somewhat uncomplicated with fixed individual identities and centrally administered organizations, but online research samples tend to be challenging due to online identities, or online anonymity etc. (Best & Krueger, 2004).

Bloggers, customarily, are in the process of building a viewership or following. They are constantly conscious about their approach in presenting their blog posts and the type of and number of viewers they secure. Celebrity bloggers create a certain image that they attempt to maintain through the fan base in terms of how many people open their blog regardless of viewers reading the contents. Bloggers who discuss social & political concerns, endeavouring to shape a discourse among the public, are essentially immersed in the viewer response or the discourse that is generated through interaction.

Therefore, the sample framework (Figure 12) consists of several entities that are appraised as data, in the form of published content analysis and interviews.
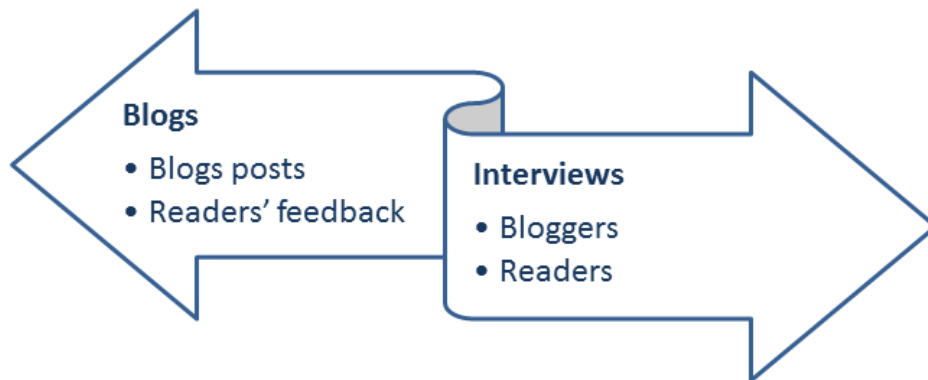
Figure 11 - Sample Framework

3.6.1.3 Electing a Sample Scheme

The qualitative researcher is entrusted with the responsibility to reveal the context of the sample to maintain the integrity of the research as well as in order for the other researchers to use the knowledge in their sampling methods. (Byrne, 2001).

There are two fundamental approaches to sampling – probabilistic and non-probabilistic - respectively assisting separate research purposes (Best & Krueger, 2004) (Figure 12). The probabilistic sampling method selects samples from a target population which could be claimed as clearly representing the population (John W. Creswell, 2012). Probability sampling facilitates researchers to form statistically based interpretations. In this method, a researcher can use one of the following (Best & Krueger, 2004)

1) Simple sampling method: presents individuals with an equal probability of being selected

2) Systematic sampling method: choose every *n*th individual in the population until desired size of the sample is achieved

3) Stratified sampling method: researcher divides the population on some specific characteristics

4) Multi-stage cluster sampling: choose a sample in two or more stages

Conversely, non-probabilistic sampling extracts samples arbitrarily without an imminent probability arrangement at hand" (Best & Krueger, 2004). The researcher decides upon individuals, who are available, geographically accessible and willing to contribute to the understanding of the phenomenon (John W. Creswell, 2012). The disadvantage of this method is that the researcher will be factually unable to assure that the sample represents the target population. Researchers use two methods of non-probabilistic sampling;

   i) Convenience sampling method:

      The researcher selected participants because they are available and willing to partake in the research.

   ii) Snowballing sampling method:

      The researcher request participants to identify others to become part of the research sample

"Probabilistic sampling method can be employed on the internet only when the target population is restricted to a group of users that can be fully identified and contacted" (Best & Radcliff, 2005, p. 724). In this research, target populations are bloggers and the interactive public who comments on blog posts, which tends towards ambiguity. Certain bloggers are disposed towards being anonymous, a commonplace tendency on the internet, due to matters of identity, accountability etc. (Davis, 2005; Malloy, 2006). The public, who interact on blogs, are moderated by the bloggers and predominantly have a propensity to appear anonymous to viewers. In this enquiry, two bloggers are publicly acknowledged figures with their names openly used in the public arena however; the interacting public is moderated by the blogger hence the comments appear as anonymous with a user-name used to gain access to comment on a blog post. The blogger collects the email addresses that need to be provided in order to comment on the blog posts.

Accordingly, there is an undeniable amount of uncertainty in identification and possibility of contact in the sample. The sample in this research is neither completely identified or contacted nor entirely anonymous, rendering the probabilistic sampling methods non-applicable.

Non-probabilistic sampling methods suit this situation by providing the researcher with "…experimental manipulation to demonstrate the potential

effects…"(Best & Krueger, 2004) and can be employed to develop hypothesis and enhance theories, and it is exceptionally suited to qualitative research on the internet (Best & Krueger, 2004).
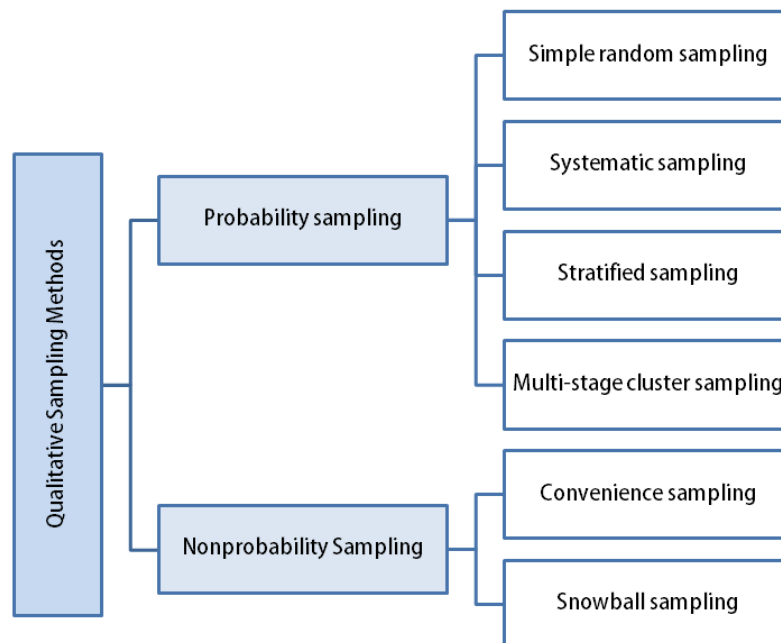
Figure 12 - Qualitative Sampling Methods
Adapted from (Best & Krueger, 2004; John W Creswell, 2012)

3.7 Data Collection Phase 1

3.7.1 Background

Sample collection phase one consisted of gathering socio-political blog posts of Singapore. Singapore is an independent state with an area measurement of 274.1 square miles (710 km²) located in the Southern tip of Malay Peninsula, neighboring Malaysia and Indonesia. The total population as of 2013 is

5,399,2001 and only 61% of this figure are citizens (Figure 13). Singapore has a

multi-ethnic background; Chinese, Malay & Indian as major ethnic groups with

the Chinese ethnic population in the majority (Figure 14). The language of

communication has been recognized as English though Standard Mandarin,

Malay and Tamil stand as official languages (Figure 15). Thus, there are a

considerable amount of blogs written in the English language, and few bilingual.

Figure 13 – Singapore Population
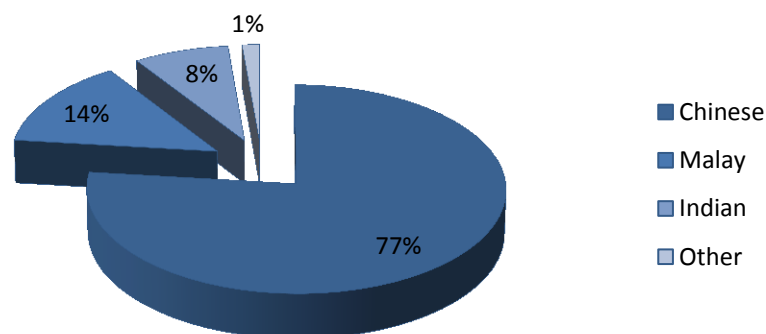
Figure 14 – Singapore Ethnic Diversity

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[1] http://www.singstat.gov.sg/statistics/browse_by_theme/population.html

Soon & Cho(2011) in their quantitative study of communication flow in the Singapore political blogosphere and organizations have sketched the statistical summary of blogs active in Singapore.

Figure 15 – Language Use
http://www.singstat.gov.sg/index.html
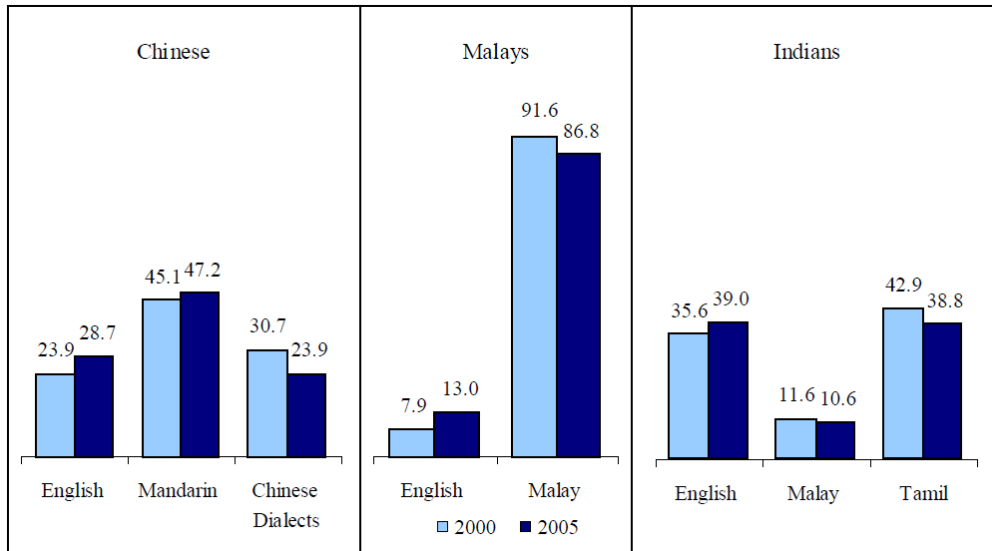
Referring to list of blogs in Singapore prepared by Soon & Cho, the researcher attempted to access the majority of those blogs. The greater part of the blogs in their list are;

- no longer available – unable to access the URL address

- inactive for some time – their blogs are inactive for years

- discontinued - the bloggers were requested to discontinue blogging by authorities - they stated in their blogs that they received warning letter from a certain government body requesting discontinuation of their blogging activities

- discontinued - blogger migrated to another country – alienated from their birth country

- discontinued - disenchanted by the process – dissatisfaction with the activity

Naturally, the above-mentioned causes, except for the cases of authorities forcing a discontinuation, are expected of the blogosphere. Considering the rather constrained environment in Singapore's political arena, socio-political blogging is a risky affair and only a few prominent bloggers charter the treacherous environs and bravely continue. This does not insinuate that bloggers are discouraged solely because of the political constraints but they are challenged by it and considerably intimidated by the situation. Furthermore, there are no professional socio-political bloggers in Singapore which normally contributes to the development of blogging environment.

The researcher was challenged by a lack of prior research in these premises when attempting data collection. Though there is some literature (Eysenbach & Till, 2001; Fernback, 1999; Hamilton & Bowers, 2006; Chris Mann, 2000; Markham, 2004) on researching online or using internet communication for qualitative study, the nature of this study has not been directly conversed. The majority of discursive approaches on the internet as a case study in qualitative study are about ethical and practical issues, and use the accessible information

for research conclusions. Meraz (2007) has conducted a content analysis of political conversation on a blog of a presidential candidate. However, that study collected random samples and concentrated on how deliberative democracy can be successful online. Thus, this lack of prior research has an impact on this researcher in the approach and sample collection process.

3.7.2 Sample Collection Approach

At the experimental level, the researcher has collected 100 blog posts of socio-political blogs without creating any parameters. Several blogs were initially experimented on as potential data. However, most of the selected blogs appeared to attract limited readers willing to participate in the discussion. Furthermore, the researcher observed that the responses readers posted have no substance that would contribute to the ongoing dialogue on the blog post. This dilemma, the sum of responses and the substance of the responses, directed the researcher into adopting parameters for sample selection. It was decided to adhere to Habermas' (Barton, 2005) public sphere argument of rational critical debate, where rationality in presenting the argument to contribute to the discussion enhances the whole process.

Thus, the researcher has established the parameters of sample collection by concentrating on identifying blogs that the following present key elements;

- blogs discussing socio-political issues – this was a major consideration because this study is about finding factors that improve political engagement from the perspective of citizenry

- blogs retaining a considerable readership – at least 30 reader responses to a post

- blogs written in English language

The researcher, as a pilot study collected 50 blog posts with the above criteria in mind. In GT studies the analysis process starts while data is being collected however, while engaged in initial analysis the researcher understood that data needed to be collected and examined before progressing with analysis. This realization came when the researcher was confronted with data that had several additional reading links attached and those readings contributed to the ongoing discourse. Thus, adopting the GT measures advised by Cathy Charmaz (2007), where she recommended researchers be flexible with data and employ the perspectives, the researcher examined and explored the data before progressing to analysis. Therefore, the pilot study data and analysis was discarded and a new set of data was collected.

50 blog posts were collected after they were thoroughly examined for their contents. Another 8 blog posts were added until saturation point. Collection was randomly carried out with the above mentioned key points in mind. There were

two renowned blogs that provided the majority of the blog posts; Yawning Bread [1](YB) blogged by Alex and The Diary of a Singaporean Mind [2](TDSD) blogged by Lucky Tan. Both blogs attracted a fairly large number of readers' responses. Nevertheless, in comparison both YB and TDSD argue factually rich concerns and their approaches to topics inclined towards finding deficiencies of the government within the existing system. However, the readership is considerably dissimilar. YB readers were disposed towards enriching the argument and building a discourse on the primary issue that was discussed by the blogger. TDSD readership does not necessarily introduce new material to the argument nor do they build a discourse, instead they incline towards expressing their animosity in the form of opinions towards the governing process or they harmonize with the blogger. Beyond this behaviour, the readership does not contribute in any way to towards a rational communication. This state of play influenced the data collection method adopted on this research. Although data collection is a convenient technical sampling method for grounded theory study, the circumstances described above lead the researcher to examine the blog posts in detail for their quality of discussion as well as all the other criteria.

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[1] http://yawningbread.wordpress.com/

[2] http://singaporemind.blogspot.sg/

For data analysis the researcher has purchased the MAXQDA[1] (version 11 for

Microsoft   Windows   7),   commercially   available   software   for

qualitative/quantitative & mixed method data analysis. Each blog post is

separately analysed using the software and stored in a folder created by the

software. In addition to the blog posts, face to face interviews the researcher had

with bloggers and blog readers were included in the analysis separately. An

example of a blog post and readership comments are displayed in Figure 16 and

Figure 17.

Figure 16 - Blog Post

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[1] http://www.maxqda.com/
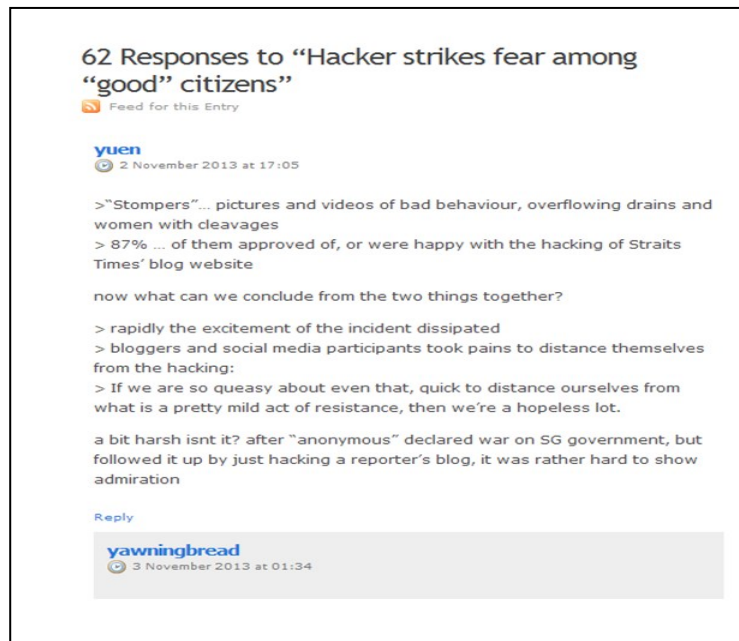
Figure 17 - Readers' Responses

3.8 Data Collection Phase 2

3.8.1 Rationalizing Phase 2

The second phase of the sample collection consisted of interviews. There are several reasons for selecting to add interviews as part of the data collection. Though at the beginning of making decisions about the case study and sample collection, the researcher was introspective about the sufficiency of blog posts as samples, the blogosphere being virtual thus obscure in that respect. Thus, after examining the initial research questions and GT analysis method, it was decided to include interviews of bloggers and blog readers who respond to blog posts. Outlined below is the justification for this decision.

3.8.1.1 Give a face to the Virtual

Online or Internet research faces a major hurdle in terms of grounding the data to the reality. The computer mediated communication data can be rich in contents says Mann & Stewart(2000) yet they question the trustworthiness and the accountability of the information transmitted. Malinowski, a prominent anthropologist of the last century, once advised the anthropologist to come down from their verandas to mix with the ground to understand the subjects in research (A Bryman, 1988). The important point is that the researcher should have a personal knowledge of the data being studied, either through experience or through meaningful conversations with the data source. Fernback described this as "develop a sense about the truthfulness and candor of the informants" (Fernback, 1999, p. 216). However, in a field where anonymity and pseudonyms are the standard behaviour and where the virtuality provides participants with the opportunity to experiment with the presentation of self, and where integrity and credibility are contested words, it is problematic to conduct a qualitative research. Thus, after much deliberation, the researcher focused on giving a face to the virtual.

3.8.1.2 Clarity to the Dialogic Interaction

The second reason for the decision on including interviews as part of the data is the necessity to give clarity to the existing dialogue that has been analysed. The blog posts are essentially brief compared to a newspaper editorial or magazine article. The bloggers have preconditioned themselves to make their blog entries as concise as possible, due to the fact that online readers are notorious for their short attention span. On the other hand, readers are challenged by the same issue. They have to comment concisely to have any chance of being read. Thus, both blog posts and readers' comments are brief, concise and mostly address one perspective of the discussion, even though those discussions have multiple perspectives. Interviews provide an outlet for both parties to express their viewpoints beyond 'brief', thus offering the researcher the advantage of putting more clarity into the data.

3.8.1.3 Understanding Stakeholders

As mentioned before, a qualitative researcher is required to know the subjects, whether it is the personality presented on the virtual world or real world. Although it has to be understood that more and more research would be turning to the virtual world for information since it is freely available and in abundance, the challenge of associating data with actual physical beings will still be

problematic. In this research, the researcher is enthusiastic to add experiences and perspectives of personal encounters with the creators of data; bloggers and readership. Charmaz (Charmaz, 2007) in her constructivist grounded theory approach has encouraged the researcher's perspective in producing a rich GT study.

3.8.2 Interview Process

Both bloggers and blog readers were invited to participate in an interview through an open invitation letter (**Error! Reference source not found.**) attaching the researcher's credentials certified by the university. Invitations were sent through emails; Facebook[1] messages, Twitter[2] massages, and as an open request on the readers' comments section of various blogs. The anonymity and pseudonyms used by the blog community and the bloggers' privilege to moderate readers' responses on comments section made this task difficult. The initiative behind the anonymity and false names implicitly express the particular desire of readers or blogger; to stay unidentified. In addition, in the case of blogs, the bloggers have the privilege to moderate the comments on their blog posts by not displaying certain comments to the public. Thus, most of the researcher's requests for interviews were moderated by bloggers. However,

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[1] https://www.facebook.com/

[2] https://twitter.com/

some bloggers were exceedingly helpful by even entreating their readers to help the researcher; however that did not garner very positive results.

In the case of Facebook, most of the messages sent were delivered to the 'other' incoming message box, where the messages from non-friends are stored . This was a recent addition to Facebook which most users are unaware of thus making my effort unsuccessful. Some of the blog readers who were contacted via Facebook have communicated after the researcher has completely finished the data collection and analysis, admitting to being unaware of the 'other' folder and thus not noticing the request. The difficulties faced at this stage are further discussed in the limitations section since the researcher deemed those complications as limitations of this study.

	Name	Age (yrs)	Education	Blogger	Reader
Face to face	Alex	50-60	Dip	■	
	Daniel	30-40	Dip	■	■
	Goorts	30-40	Degree		■
	Bufeng	30-40	PGD		■
	Jin	30-40	PGD		■
Email	Visa	20-30	Dip	■	
	Kirsten	20-30	PGD	■	■
	Jeraldine	20-30	Degree	■	■
	Yuen	60-70	PGD	■	■
	Molly Meek (pseudonym)	30-40	PGD	■	
	Han	20-30	PGD		■

Table 6 - Interview Participants

Bloggers and Readership (Table 6) were presented with two options in the request for an interview. Either they can choose to meet the researcher face to face or answer via email. Three participants out of eleven individuals were female bloggers and two of them are fervent blog readers.

3.8.2.1 Face to Face Interviews

There were five individuals who agreed to a face-to-face interview. Each face-to-face interview participant was presented with an open ended semi-structured questionnaire. The participants who agreed to a face-to-face meeting for an interview were met at their convenience at a place and time of their choosing. Most of the locations were quiet coffee shops where they agreed to an audio recording of the interview. The researcher prepared 30 questions and follow-up questions were asked when deemed appropriate for further clarification. Interviews normally took 1 to 2 hours depending on the information exchanged and most of the time the researcher was meticulously careful when requesting clarifications because the less the interviewer speak the more articulate & descriptive the interviewee becomes (Seidman, 2012). All interviews have turned into friendly and amicable exchange, where more critical significant views were 'off the record'. The researcher understands the complexity and the import of these 'unofficial' views and those exchanges have enhanced the researcher's perception of the existing trajectories.

The participants were informed in advance of their preferences regarding the audio recording of interviews. The interviews were audio recorded using two MP3 players, second MP3 player as the backup in case of a loss or malfunctioning equipment. Each audio file was put in storage safely, and transcribed using Google Transcribe, which has changed with the latest Google version. However, while transcribing, MAXQDA qualitative data analysis software released their version 11 which supports audio/video transcribing and analysing, thus making the task uncomplicated.

On the other hand, key aspects of the interviews were documented by the researcher as further references. At the end of each discussion the interviewer presented the participant with a token of appreciation. Never at any moment were photographs invited or taken by any of the parties.

3.8.2.2 Online Interviews

Online interview was an option the researcher provided for interview participants. They could either answer via email or live text/audio/video chat. The participants who declined face to face interview but opted for answering via email were sent the questionnaire via email or via Facebook as an attachment. After examining the returned answers, the researcher requested to ask follow up questions for which all participates answered favourably and were very

cooperative. One participant was favourable to using live audio chat for the interview. Thus, the researcher set up Skype[1], a commercially available online chat platform, and started the interview process, however the audio started to fail in the middle of the interviewing and the researcher had to resort to text chatting.

3.8.2.3 Questionnaire

The questionnaire (

Appendix) was prepared with the research questions in mind and also with the intention of understanding the people behind the virtual personas. Thus the questionnaire concentrated on five aspects;

- Personal particulars in verifying certain social criteria

- Personal objectives with regards to blogging and being a reader of blogs

- Personal positions on the activity and impact of blogging and readership (Blogosphere)

- Relationship between blogosphere and socio-political decision making

- Position on citizen engagement in the governing process

Though initially, the bulk of data analysis concentrated on the blog posts, with the increase in the number of participants, the interviews were also included to

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[1] http://www.skype.com/en/

form the final theoretical model. The insight the researcher has gained in conversation played a major part in understanding the socio-cultural, political values and attitudes of Singapore's blogosphere.

3.9 Data Analysing Technique

The qualitative research method allows researchers the freedom to investigate unfamiliar variables, develop themes and abstract meanings (John W. Creswell, 2012) . Data analysis in the grounded theory method varies depending on the data that is being analysed. The researcher has explained the GT method and the process carefully to present a clear understanding of the process involved. Here, a comprehensible sketch is provided for better understanding of the technique of GT that the researcher has adopted in this study. Firstly an outline of the process is provided in Figure 18. Each step of the analysis in this research will be discussed (Table 7) with illustrations from the researcher's work.
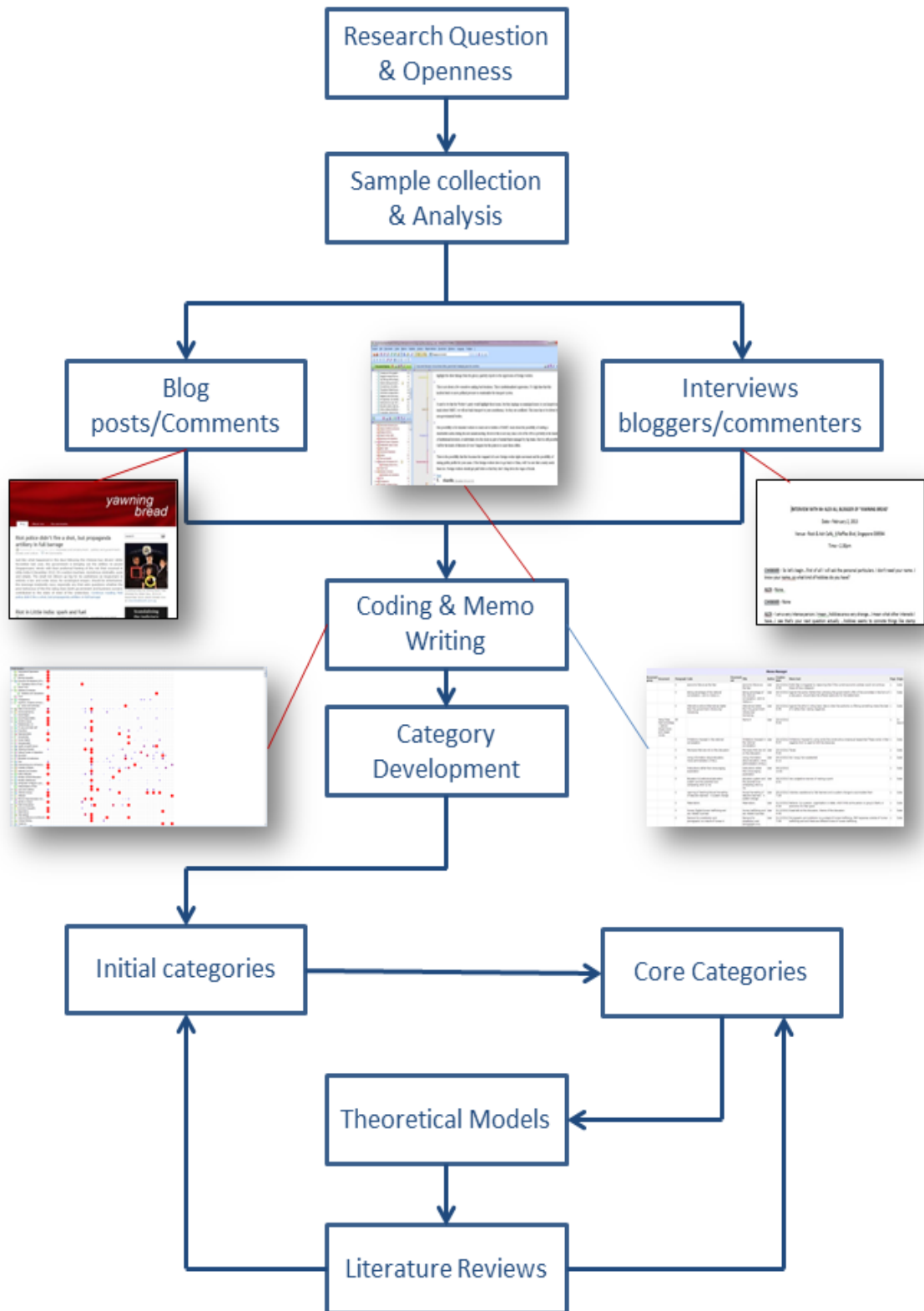
Figure 18 - Outline of the Analysing Process

Element	Phase	Description	Researcher's impressions	Example Source
Open-mindedness	During the process	Grounded theory methodology is basically an inductive analysis. Induction progresses from the particular to the general, it develops hypotheses from many observations and comparisons. GT studies tend to take a very open approach to the process of studying data. GT relies on data for answers rather than using data to prove a pre-constructed hypothetical position.	To start a GT study, an objective attitude is required. Open mindedness is debated in GT studies, but open mindedness helps to understand the priorities in coding and comparisons and understanding the developing concepts. The researcher experienced that pre-existing knowledge of the context and data can interfere with the analytical process to a certain degree. However, pre-existing knowledge helped in being familiar with particular aspects of the data. The SG socio-political blogosphere is discussed variedly in both academia & media due to the SG government's restrictions on media and internet. Thus, the researcher is exceedingly exposed to the general consensus on these matters.	Raw data examples (Appendix 1)
Analysing	Data collection and analysis	In a GT study the researcher starts analysing while collecting data. Both data collection & analysis are simultaneously conducted. While analysing the researcher moves back and forth within data which then prompts the collection of extra data when relevant.	The researcher faced no difficulty in this parallel studying method because data was collected from online (See Sample collection phase 01). It must be noted that, this research is collecting a type of data that has not been analysed using GT method, the instructions applied to this level GT method became not	Example analysing process (Appendix Appendix 5)

			very significant. However, the freedom to move with data and analysis facilitated a rich conceptual outcome.	
Initial Coding	Analysis	"Data analysis relies on coding - a process of breaking data down into much smaller components and labelling those components - and comparing -comparing data with data, case with case, event with event, code with code, to understand and explain variation in the data"(Sbaraini, Carter, Evans, & Blinkhorn, 2011, p. 03).	The first stage of dealing with the contents of data and understanding variations in coding process. The researcher used MAXQDA 10 (http://www.maxqda.com/) qualitative data analysing software for this task. It is time efficient and user friendly software for analysing qualitative data.	Initial codes Appendix)
Memo writing and note keeping	Analysis	A researcher writes many memos throughout the process. They can be about relationships, context, thoughts, comparisons or explanations for the code.	The researcher wrote a number of memos mostly explaining the context and relationship and also kept personal notes of certain developments and literature to be referred and such. Since the researcher has a tendency to doodle on pieces of paper and contemplate and put it into writing most of the hardcopy notes ended been discarded	Memo example (Appendix) Example of personal notes (Appendix 7 - Personal Notes)
Category development	Sampling and comparison	Category development is where the constant comparisons of initial codes move towards an axial coding. After constant comparisons of codes a researcher noticed	The researcher developed 90 categories out of 2381 codes. 19 core categories have emerged after constant comparison and coming to a saturation point.	Concepts Codes (Figure 10)

		several numbers of categories developing out of the coding process.		
Theoretical model	Interpretation	The outcomes of a grounded theory study are explained in a substantive theory, a set of concepts that are related in building a cohesive narrative As in most qualitative studies this theoretical outcome is unsound, dependent on the context ,never the final	The researcher has presented several theoretical models as the outcome of this study and started developing narrative for the outcome. (refer to Chapter 5) Glaser (B. Glaser, 2010) explained that a researcher needs to go back to literature at this stage to support and solidify the narrative of the study .	(Figure 19 Figure 28)

Table 7 - Steps of Analysing Process
Design adapted from (Sbaraini et al., 2011)

3.10 Ethical Considerations

"Ethics is the science of morality determining the values for the regulation of human behaviour" (Homan, 1991, p. 01). In social science research, there are two professional social research associations which provide guideline for researchers; Social Research Association (SRA) & British Sociological Association (BSA). Conducting a social study always requires attention to issues regarding ethics. Participation in a research study should be "Any participation in a study should be strictly on the voluntary basis says Leedy & Ormrod (2012). There are four categories of ethical issues according to those authors; protection from harm, informed consent, right to privacy and honesty with professional colleagues (Leedy & Ormrod, 2012) and several authors have particularly highlighted the professional conduct of the researcher and that treatment of participants shall be fair, equal, respectful and honest (Aguinis & Henle, 2002; Gregory, 2003).

This research principally uses blog data. Information on the internet, unless otherwise stated, can be used for research. Taking into consideration that this research is not violating copyright laws by coping or reproducing blog contents or quoting without appropriate referencing, blog contents were indisputably within the ethical boundaries of social research. However, as Mann & Stewart have described

it "The internet…cannot rely on laws alone to keep order. There must be some level of ethics that people operate …"(C. Mann & Stewart, 2000, p. 47)

Nevertheless the interview process presented a dilemma in ethics. Firstly, the researcher had to impinge to a certain amount on the privacy and anonymity of bloggers and readers. The researcher contacted the bloggers and readers requesting permission for an interview through their social media pages and emails mostly without prior permission although one can argue that, the information was available on the internet for anyone to access. However, Mann & Stewart (2000) have pointed out that informed consent, giving participants comprehensive and correct information about the research, before proceeding towards the interview process is one of the primarily important ethical considerations in online research. In this research, the researcher has informed in the request statement, the purpose of the research and the type of data that will be obtained through interviews. Furthermore, the researcher attached a copy of the researcher's credentials certified by the university. On the second level, when there are consents from bloggers and readers for an interview, in face-to-face interviews and virtual interviews;

- The researcher has verbally/in writing explained in detail the purpose of the study and safety of information assuring each participant that the

information they disclose will be used solely for this research and related publications

- The researcher asked each participant to sign a consent form (emailed to the virtual participants) (Appendix)

- The researcher requested permission, verbally and in writing, to record the interviews from the face to face participants (Appendix)

- The researcher has neither asked permission to take photographs nor has taken any without permission

The participants, both virtual and physical, were extremely accommodating and collaborative which made the process very pleasurable and satisfying.

CHAPTER FOUR

DATA ANALYSIS

4.1 Introduction

This section expands on Chapter 3 where the grounded theory procedures were discussed with illustrations. The purpose here is to provide an understanding of the stages of the data analysis process and how concepts have evolved into patterns. Referring to Table 4 , the researcher is required to move back and forth among the results of data analysis to achieve satisfactory outcomes. Naturally, a GT study is not conclusive (Charmaz, 2007), however through continuous comparisons, and building interconnections between raw data, coding and categories a researcher would arrive at the point of saturation (B.G. Glaser, 1998). This could be the point where the researcher has achieved satisfactory results or needs to collect additional data. The difference between a GT study and other qualitative methodologies could be recognized; unlike other qualitative methods, GT depends on data to deliver a theory or develop a theory instead of vice versa. The interplay between data collection and analysis is an essential part of the process that supports the emergence of theories.

Referring to the Table 4 anew, it could be noticed that literature review has been positioned at the end of the table. Literature review plays a significant role in GT studies, since GT researchers are advised to approach the data with 'an open mind'. As mentioned in the previous chapter, a researcher unavoidably acquires a certain amount of knowledge of the premises of study before embarking on a GT study. Though Glaser (2010) highlighted that literature can help in concept building and theoretical framing, devoid of the assistance of literature a researcher could lose focus and stumble into disastrous ambiguity. Thus, even though Table 4 designates literature to the very end of the process, the literature has portrayed an important role throughout the analysis process.

At the end of data analysis process, the research produced two hypothesizes and several exploratory models. There are a number of categories that emerged from constant comparison while coding raw data from blogs and interviews. While engaged in coding, the research questions have provided the parameters for understanding the data. Birks & Mills (2011) examining the rules of grounded theory, have highly emphasized the need for constant reference to the original research questions that instigated the research.

4.2 Data Analysis Process

Following data analysis using the grounded theory method, once the saturation stage was attained, the researcher possessed 2381 elementary codes, with 118 early stage categories from which 19 primary categories are developed. This stage was accomplished by open coding, axial coding and selective coding (refer to Figure 10), at which point the analysis process concluded.

In view of the fact that the research questions of this dissertation are about factors of engagement that could lead to an improved relationship between government and citizens from the perspective of citizenry, the categories which emerged related to premises that citizenry deemed as imperative. It has to be expressly mentioned that the above-mentioned categories sketched several trajectories in the blogosphere dialogues. Fundamentally the discussions are in negative connotations. This does not incontrovertibly imply that all blogosphere dialogues are pessimistic or that the nature of discussion always inclines towards the antagonistic or the provocative. The majority of the discussions construct a discourse, creating awareness and encouraging viewpoints and fact-based dialogues. Since the majority of topics question the discrepancies or excessive conducts of authority, the discussions emerge as widely discordant. When examining the pattern of discourse every so

often it is apparent that this state of nature is not premeditated or intentionally developed, but the flow of discussion created the environment.

Another noticeable aspect is that the majority of discussions focused on what was quintessentially expected of a relationship between government and citizenry. This leads to critical conferences on themes such as deliberative democracy, social liberalism, and libertarianism in comparative discussions. Evidently this reveals the reason for the wide collection of scholarship available on the Habermas's public sphere and theory of communicative action with regards to blogosphere which the researcher has discussed in the supporting literature chapter of this dissertation.

Furthermore, these blogosphere discussions inclined towards inspiring & encouraging change conferring on certain benchmarks. This promotes wider discourse on governing practices and citizen engagement. Additionally, blogs concentrated on aspects where the relationship between government and citizenry is functioning unsuccessfully. The blogosphere is intent on improving the relationship and understanding the deficiencies of both factions.

After observing the blogging practices of both bloggers and readers/commenters, and the expectations of citizenry for an improved engagement, the researcher has discovered several models emerging from the categories. The first set of patterns

that materialized related to the blogosphere with the intention of understanding actors and their discursive patterns. The researcher has correlated this premise by deriving models on three perceptions; 1) participation & approaches 2) contribution and 3) contents. The first model intends to understand the blogging practice, actors, ethos and the significance of their collective actions.

Regulars

Antipathy ← → Sympathy

→ government   government ←

Infrequent
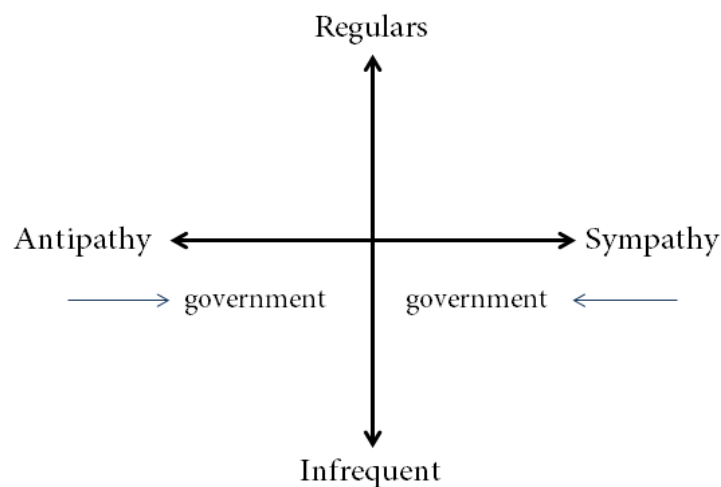
Figure 19 – Understanding blogosphere - Participation & Approaches 1

Participation and Approaches is a dimension that is proposed to explain the attitudes of bloggers/readers in their focus on subjects of discussion in the socio-political blogosphere of Singapore. The researcher has noticed that there are bloggers who blog frequently i.e. daily or a few times a week on current socio-political issues or contemplative matters. Alex and Lucky Tan are frequent bloggers, with varying degrees of hiatus, emanating from a vacation or a tour

abroad. However, those interruptions to their regular blogging are not a regular occurrence. Whereas, bloggers such molly meek[21] or illusio[22] or Andrew Loh[23] blog infrequently, and their blog posts are prompted by a current socio-political happenings or concerns that are circulating the arena. By and large these current affairs-related blog posts inclined towards opinionated pieces of writing that stimulated a wide variety of discussions and spin off writings and discussions.

Blog readers/commenters likewise are disposed towards being consistent which can be detected through their frequent responses to blog posts. It is apparent to the researcher that each blogger has a fan base; enthusiastic followers who are mostly aligned positively towards blogger's stance, and consistently read and comment. The researcher has detected three types of readers/commenters to blog posts in the course of this study.

- Those who leave comments consistently to each blog post:

  These are the individuals who read the blog posts and leave their arguments as a way of expressing their position to the issue in discussion. They might revisit others' responses or might re-examine the blog post, but they refrain from leaving another response in the

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[21] http://mollymeek.wordpress.com/
[22] http://akikonomu.blogspot.sg/
[23] http://andrewlohhp.wordpress.com/

developing discussion. However, they would leave a response to another blog post. These individuals will leave one response to every post in the blog.

- Those who leave countless comments on one blog post and consistently do this on every blog post:

  This refers to 1) a set of individuals who sometimes intimidate the others by stubbornly presenting opposing views; 2) a set of individuals who regularly bring facts and inspire others to create a discourse; 3) a set of individuals who frequently join the discussion with new ideas

  These individuals seem to exhaust themselves, because they appear for a certain period of time. Poker Player is a pseudonym used by one of these commenters, who appeared in the blog Yawning Bread for over 4 months consecutively. This could be a case of using a different pseudonym, but nevertheless; the researcher noted that the pattern of composition that exclusively belonged to Poker Player did not appear with an altered pseudonym.

- Those who read consistently, respond occasionally;

  Quek Bufeng, an avid blog reader, who volunteered for an interview with the researcher, likes to read blog posts and the ensuing discussions.

However, he believes that his understanding of the issues is not sufficient to participate in the discussions. Even though he is a final year graduate student, he hesitates to partake in the discussions, simply making very occasional observations to blog post.

Whereas the participants inclined towards two spectrums; regular & infrequent, the attitude orientated between sympathy and antipathy. This represents the sympathetic and antipathetic attitude towards governing practices. Sympathetic attitude disposed towards various degrees of support and approval for the decision-making measures of government. Occasionally, it emerges as reluctant endorsement while the antipathy emerges readily yet guardedly, with a certain amount of awareness of the ambience of the discussion.
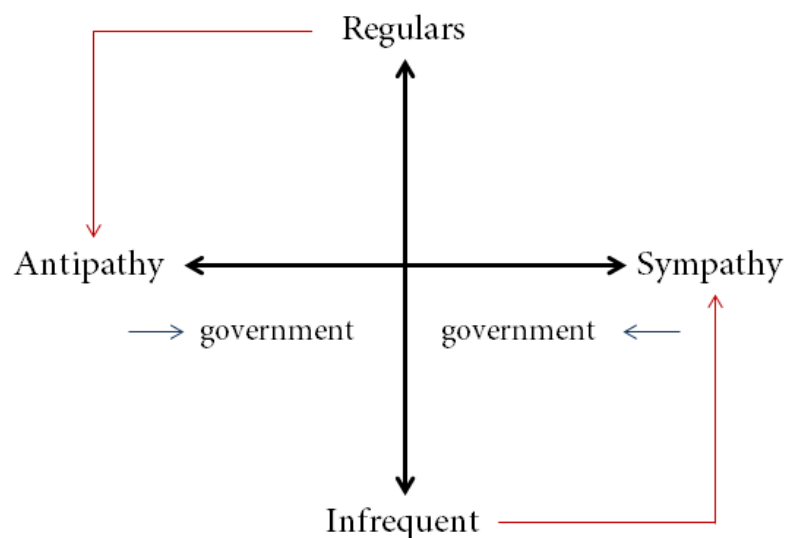
Figure 20 - Understanding blogosphere - Participation & Approaches 2

The researcher noticed that consistent commenters to blog posts were exceedingly liable to be antagonistic to decision-making practices of government (Figure 20). A considerable amount of equitable standpoints has overall predisposition in the direction of antipathy. Infrequent commenters are relatively moderate and lean towards support and praise. However, this observation does not necessarily imply that this is the case with all blog posts and blogs. There are external factors such as the comment moderation privileges afforded to bloggers, plus the issues in discussion play a major role in including and shaping the ambience of the discussion.

The second set of patterns is aiming at evaluating the contribution of blogging community as in bloggers/readers/commenters (Figure 21). The scheme is to understand and assess the contribution of thoughts into the discursive process that would further the deliberative system.

Regular

Bridging ← → Bonding
Adding new facts to dialogue   *Continuing the dialogue*

Infrequent
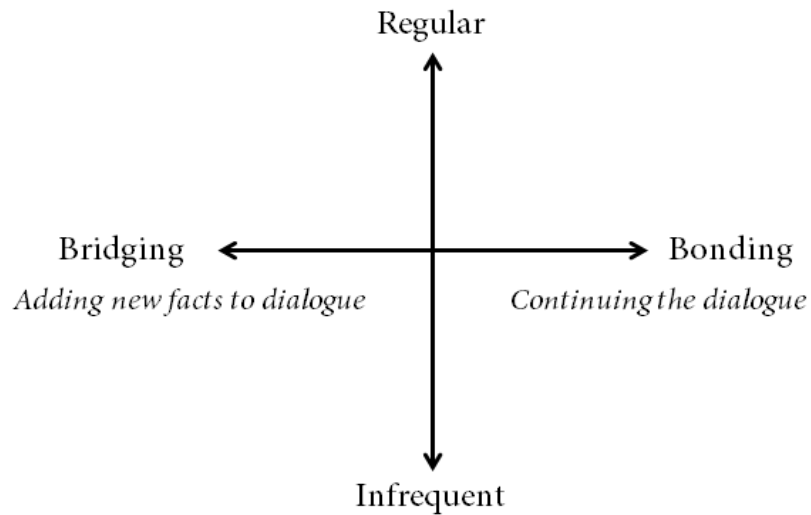
Figure 21 - Understanding blogosphere – Contribution 1

As discussed above, there are regular readers/commenters who contributed 1) continuously with a higher number of comments going back and forth on one blog post, 2) continuously once to every blog post. The former group slants towards concise pieces of writing to convey their views, while the latter may be disposed to write prolonged versions of their view. Infrequent contributors are predisposed to write both lengthy and condensed pieces. Nonetheless, both parties use their language cautiously, the latter more so than the former.

The contributions from the blogging community are either bridging or bonding in their contents. By bonding, the researcher is categorizing the contributions that help

to continue the dialogue by maintaining a prolonged discussion. These contributors create the dialogue in the first place and carry on adding points of discussion. This is a familiar pattern of dialogue on Singapore socio-political blogs where questions were raised, answered and the pattern is sustained until it discontinues due to no further bonding contributions i.e. no issue was raised or answered.
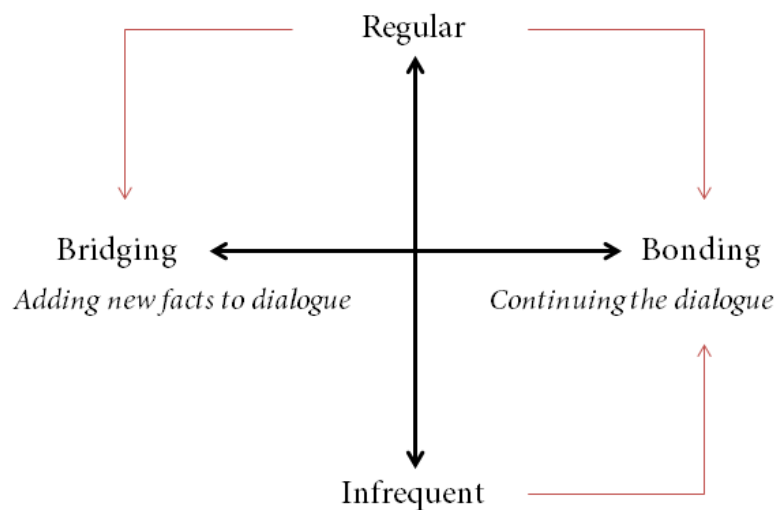
Figure 22 - Understanding blogosphere – Contribution 2

However, by introducing the bridging contribution the researcher is describing the sustainable dialogue where new facts are introduced to build a discourse. The dialogue could deviate away from the primary issue in discussion, yet it builds knowledge bridges, where commenters share facts and build discourses, thus expanding the scope.

Both bonding and bridging contributions are significant in developing the discourse. The researcher has observed that frequent readers/commenters are both bonding and bridging contributors (Figure 22). Their unvarying involvement with the discussion compels them not only to raise issues and answer others, but also contributes by bringing in external facts which expand and enhance the dialogic interaction. Infrequent contributors are observed as leaning towards bonding contributions, since the extent of their involvement is marginal in the context.

The third set of patterns that emerged from this study with regards to the perception of blogging capital is related to the contents of the discussions (Figure 23). These patterns are derived from reviewing the contents presented in the form of texts, audio or video. The substance of the dialogues where the use of language, tenor, the expressions and the contents and the quality of the dialogue determined the variety of nuances that influenced interactions are measured to determine the projection of this emerging pattern.
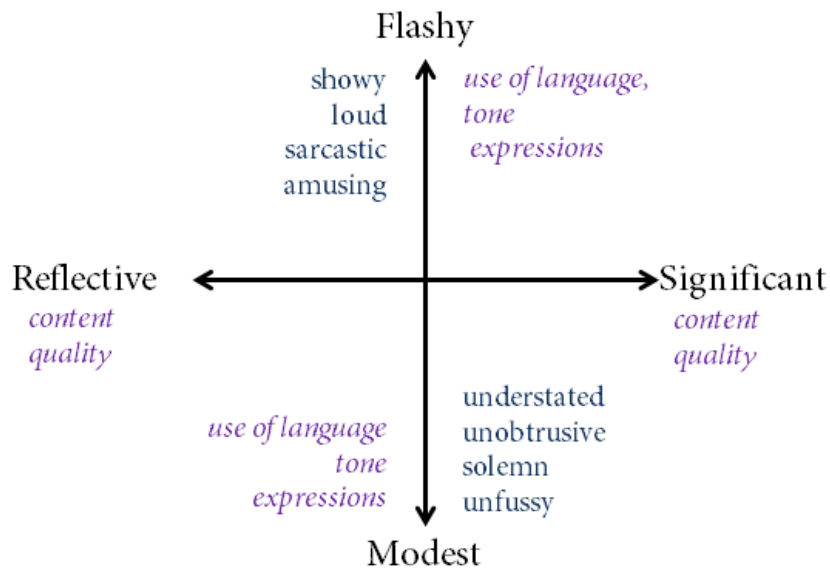
Figure 23 - Understanding blogosphere – Contents 1

Flashy and modest are two different spectrums used here to explain the use of language, tone and expressions in the contents. As alluded to before, the comments from readers are by and large circumspect in their content and the tenor; however the researcher has discerned that within that parameter, the comments inclined to be in between the extremes of flashy and modest. Flashy is a magnitude that describes the dramatic nuances in the expressions, language use and common tone of the text. The contents express vexation, weariness, and general dissatisfaction regarding the issue and occasionally mild sarcasm and humor were identified. The researcher has observed that a number of individuals were predisposed towards flaunting their eloquence in English language relative to the quality of contents.
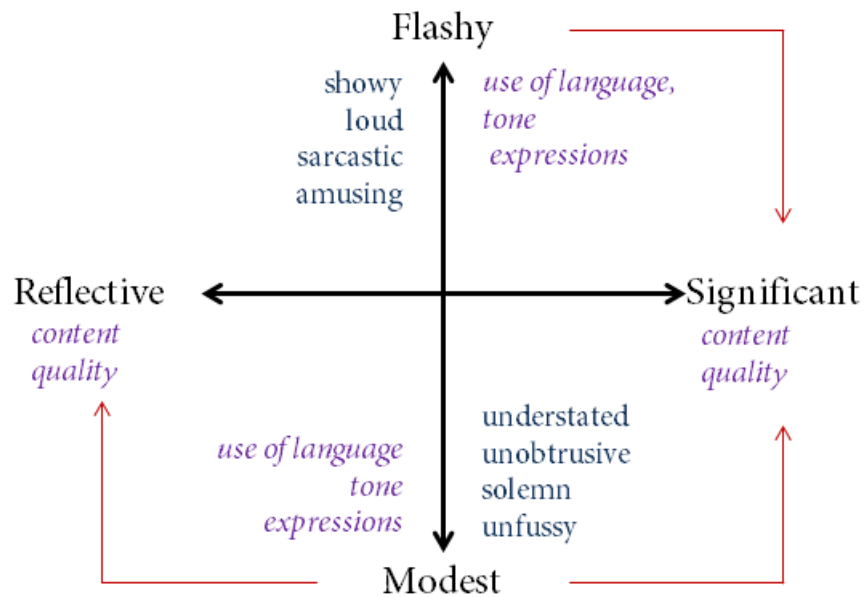
Figure 24 - Understanding blogosphere – Contents 2

Alternatively, modest refers to the unobtrusive, grave and formal use of language, tone and expressions. The researcher, examining varying number of blogs, noted both flashy and modest is a development elicited by the patterns set forth by the blogger. Since the blogger has the moderating authority, the use of language, tone and expressions are not only a result of their influence but also their moderation. The researcher has expressively noted that comments that slant towards the flashy end of the spectrum inclined towards being significant in their content to existing dialogue within the blog (Figure 24). These comments assist in continuing the dialogue. The modest commenters are not only noteworthy but also reflective in

their contents, thus their content enhances the knowledge and discourse building process.

Thus, from the three patterns that emerged concerning the blogosphere, the researcher has collected several trajectories of blog conversations. Regular readers/commenters revealed an aspiration that frequently contradicts the objectives of sporadic participants. Though both parties contribute to the conversation, the dimensions are clearly diverse. In the following chapters, the researcher will examine these dimensions to characterize the specificity of blogging community i.e. bloggers/readers/commenters.

There two premises of discussion can be sketched like this (Figure **25**)

1) Perception & Relationship

2) Deliberation & Engagement
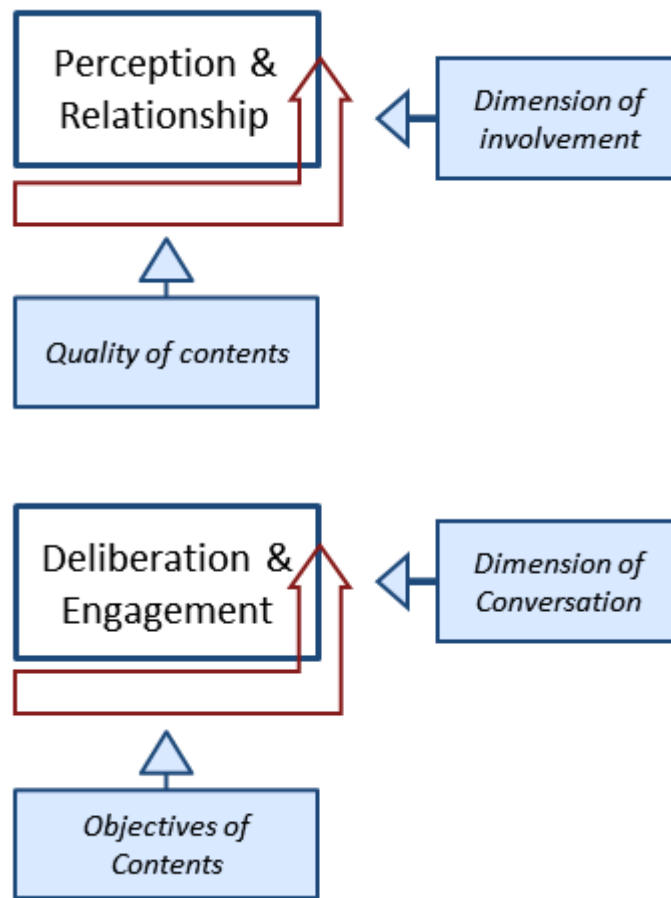
Figure 25 – Two premises of discussion

The second set of patterns emerged in relation to the engaging factors, which are considered as the strengthening pillars of the citizenry engagement with the government which in turn improves the relationship. The researcher is examining the evolving concepts in blog conversations to ascertain two elements; engaging factors & relationship improvement. Engaging factors are the fundamental research

interest of this study, while the improvement of relationship between government and citizenry is the expected end product.
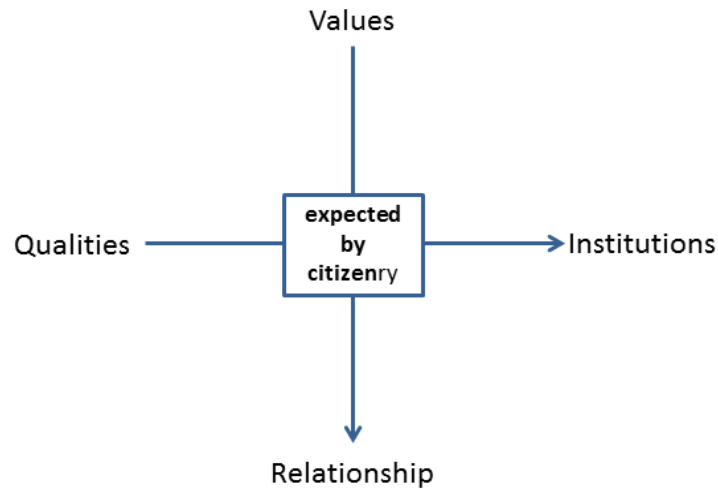
Figure 26 – Interpreting Expectations 1

Thus, the researcher has framed two patterns from the developing concepts. The first pattern (Figure 26) sets forth the formula that the citizenry is expected to perk up the relationship between government and public. The data illuminated the perspectives of citizenry as a set of expectations that they consider will enhance the interrelations between the two parties. One aspect is related to the values expected of a relationship and the other aspect is related to the qualities expected of an institution. These two dimensions illustrate the basic model that developed from data analysis.

By values expected of a relationship the researcher is signifying the distinctive attributes of characteristics the citizenry expects from the existing relationship with the government. Likewise, qualities expected of the institutions (institutions in this case refers to the three branches of the government) are the principles and standards of performance expected from the existing arrangement.

The second pattern (Figure 27) emerged to expand values and qualities in discussion; the septicity of values and qualities in discussion and how those elements correspond to the engaging factors. Trust and responsiveness came forward as expected values of the relationship and reciprocity and accountability transpired as qualities expected of the institutions.
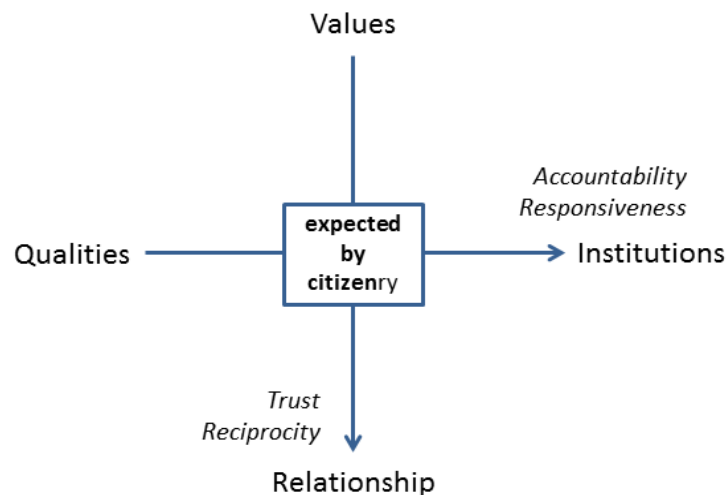
Figure 27 - Interpreting Expectations 2

Synthesizing the second set of patterns the researcher has moved to portray discussion statements for comprehensive deliberations in the next chapters (Figure 28).

1) Disintegrating relationship

2) Unhappy engagement

3) Alienating empathy
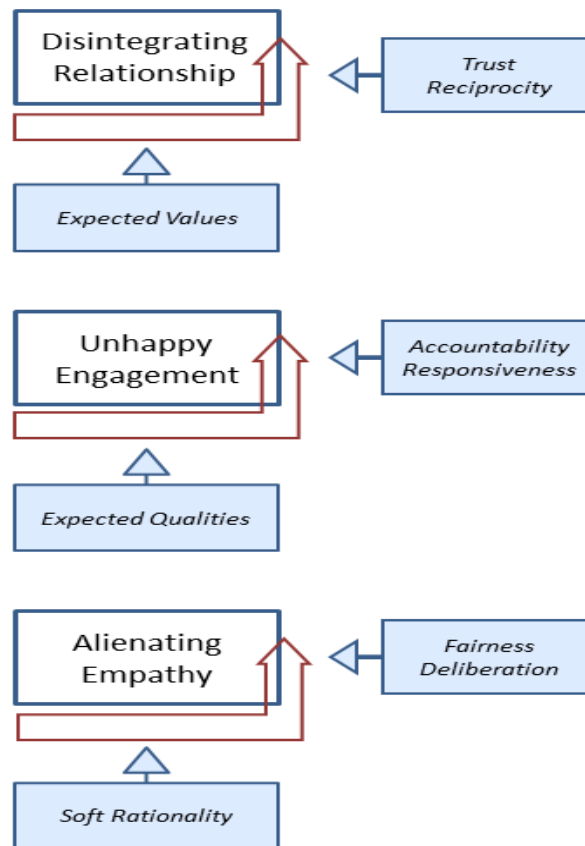
Figure 28 – Synthesis of Patterns

4.3 Research Limitations

There are several limitations in this research that deserve a mention because of constrains they put on data acquisition.

4.3.1 Indirect Inhibitions

The Singapore socio-political blogosphere as a case study presented considerable challenges due to the decidedly regulated media and political environment in the country. The regulated media environment is a well-documented condition (Hudson & Johal, 2011; Lee, 2005, 2010; McDermott, 2007; H. Tan, 2013; Wong, 2013) and was lengthily discussed in Chapter 2 of this dissertation. Most of the bloggers/readership prefers to appear anonymous, thus making them incommunicado. Therefore, the interview process became a problematic task not just due to hesitancy and anxiety on the part of the interviewee, but also due to the interviewers' apprehension of their concerns. Of late, the Singapore government has slightly deviated from strictly enforcing its policy of banning 'explicit political content'. However, the government has recently imposed new laws to regulate the news sites, openly disapproving of blogs being converted into news sites[24].

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[24] http://rt.com/news/singapore-website-protest-bloggers-419/

Nevertheless, the government maintains a sharp vigil over the blogs by denouncing them with the threat of defamation lawsuits. On several occasions, Alex, the blogger of Yawning Bread, who the researcher had the honour of interviewing, was threatened with a letter of demand by none other than the PM of Singapore for slander in one of his blog posts[25].

Nevertheless, some openly rejected the idea of anonymity and trepidation as excessive and were unguarded in answering questions. These two different narratives about freedom of expression in Singapore have contributed to the researcher's knowledge of the subtleties in the blogosphere. The researcher personally found it very hard to discern the demarcation boundaries one should not cross, because the subtleties are too intricate to understand. Though it can be argued that this inhibited environment does not project robust citizen participation, the sensitiveness of the environs however, propel the bloggers and readers to be subtle and extra aware of their practices.

4.3.2 Direct Inhibitions

This context unquestionably affected the researcher's attempt at securing more bloggers and readers to partake in interviews. The majority of my requests were

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[25] http://www.singapolitics.sg/news/pm-lee-takes-action-against-blogger-alex-au-update

ignored in a manner that was visible. At one time, when the request for an interview was placed on the comment thread of one of the well-known blogs, there were several comments requesting everyone (including the blogger) to be careful of infiltrators. Though those may have been extreme responses, they still portray a certain apprehension and misgiving about the current environs.

Several bloggers declined my request due to time constraints, which brought forward another limitation in this study. Singapore's socio-political blogging community does not consist of permanent bloggers who blog as a profession. The political and media restrictions have reduced them to being part time bloggers who have permanent occupations which take precedence over blogging. They cannot be assumed as bloggers who blog leisurely, because their passion and dedication are clearly vibrant. The researcher personally assumes the position that they are a product of the existing political, economic cultural environment of Singapore.

In general, the anonymity of blog readers made them practically unapproachable and after number of frustrating attempts at communicating with blog readers, the researcher abandoned the notion and concentrated on the existing sample.

Another limitation that needs to be highlighted is the restriction presented by language. This research concentrated solely on English language blogs in a country

where over 70% are Chinese in ethnicity. Granted that English is one of the official languages and the medium of education in Singapore, yet the research parameters discard the voices of language tested individuals noticeably. Naturally, it can be argued that the bloggers made that choice by targeting a particular population by blogging in English, even though the public is given a choice to interact between languages. In this study, the researcher in her language limitation has inadvertently marginalized a section of stakeholders in society dependant on their ability to use English language.

Naturally, a few bloggers, who have attained certain celebrity status, are substantially influential and their readership tends to develop a significantly rich dialogue. Their English language blogs, in their narrative style, use of language, arguments and discourse-building, cater to a certain social echelon of the society, namely the educated middle income class. Alex[26] has openly confessed that he is blogging for 'an elite crowd' and that his intention is to influence the mass that has the capacity to be influenced and influential. Thus, the researcher is conscious that the study sample consists of a certain strata of the society.

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[26] http://yawningbread.wordpress.com/

CHAPTER FIVE

PERCEPTIONS & RELATIONSHIP

5.1 Introduction

In previous chapters, the researcher has revealed the methodological particulars, methodological practices and emerging data patterns. This chapter will start the narrative of the results of grounded theory data analysis towards a theoretical model that would explain the research outcomes. This section will contemplate the dimensions of involvement of the blogging community i.e. bloggers/readers/commenters. The involvement will be determined through their online personality and how they perceive and develop the relationship with the governing authorities.

The results that emerged from the data are related to the bloggers and blog readers/commenter attitudes and their relationship with the governing authorities. The purpose is to understand the premises of their perception and the specificity of the relationship which are reflected through their practices. The researcher was able to label three distinctive narratives emerging from the core category; self-demoralizing, emotional involvement, and cautionary approach (Figure 29).
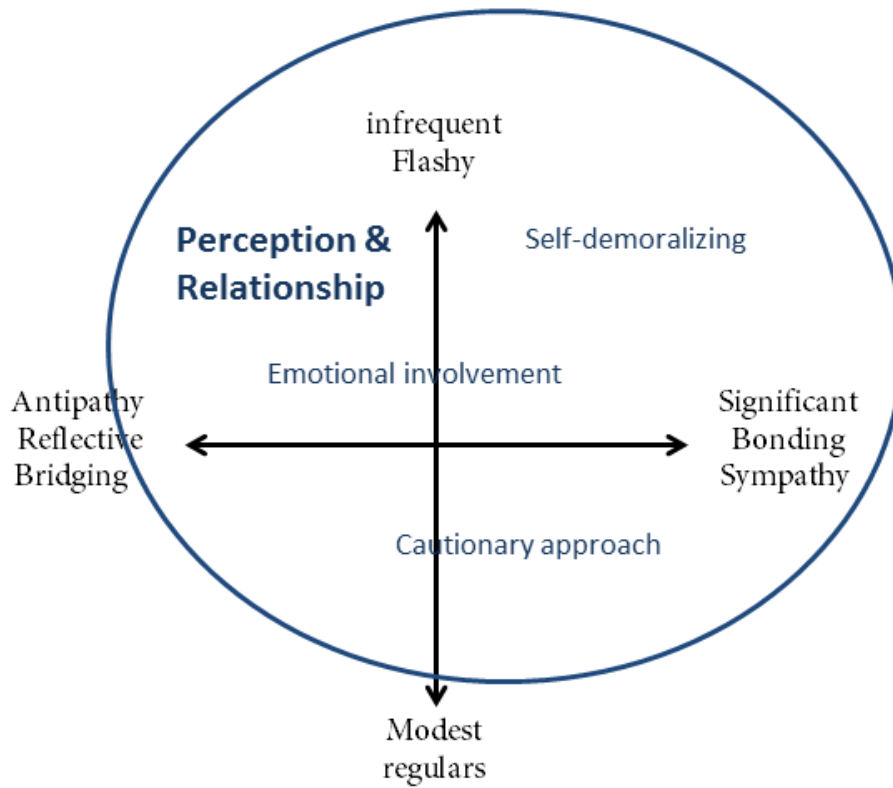
Figure 29 – Perception & Relationship

As discussed in the previous chapter, the three patterns of blogosphere are synthesized with the core categories from the emerging data.

5.2 Self-Demoralizing

Self-demoralizing is a category that replicates the reach of the blogging community in their involvement in reflecting and developing the relationship. This implies the

amount of uncertainty and consciousness in their approach to reflecting on issues related to civic involvement, as individuals or as a collective. This is a tendency specifically visible in the infrequent blog readers/commenters (in future references they would be mentioned as responding public). Some bloggers, both frequent and infrequent in their practice, demonstrated the same propensity, which the researcher will discuss in another section. Examining the data, the researcher has noticed several aspects to self-demoralizing; self-doubts, self-conditioning, and self-imposed divide.

Responding public is extremely guarded and circumspect in their replies which they acknowledge as being conscientious and sensible. Conscientiousness is a public façade that they develop as a representation and sensible is mindfulness of the consequences. These are two different aspects of responding public. One is how they present themselves to the outside world and the other is how they are within themselves. Conscientiousness does not manifest their self-confidence but rather their self-doubts. Self-doubts about their ability to express political thoughts whether it is political philosophy or political deliberation is a noticeable part of their rhetoric. The tentative approach to discussions and defensiveness that develops

when the discussion continues may not always be self-doubt as Bufeng, one of the responding public, described it "…I wanted to feel comfortable about what I am saying… not be rude". By comfortable he implies that he requires himself to be well-informed about the issues that are in the discussion. "…there are experts on those subjects…"

Singapore is essentially a meritocracy thus the intellectuals are awarded a higher ranking in a philosophical debate. Therefore, the self-doubts that are visible in the dialogues are typically ingrained. However, the responding public tends to be effusive in the matters of economy, whether it is economic policies or philosophy. Bufeng comprehended this as the influence of the country's drive towards economic success and the lack of political connection between government and public.

Alex, a blogger has fathomed self-doubts as "…looking in the mirror and seeing certain realities that we really don't want to see". He is with the belief that self-doubts are part of the process of not wanting to commit a faux pas, or present themselves as politically incorrect individuals. A faux pas, even on the internet, will lead to a question of intellectual soundness.   Thus, they develop sensibleness, where they are mindful of the consequences, always assuming there is a

consequence. It is not just ultimate consequences such as government retribution that concerns the responding public, but the immediate criticism.

Self-conditioning is second element of the self-doubt where the individuals develop a pattern that they have been conditioned during the course of their life. Self-conditioned status is in this scenario is what blogger and one of the responding public Daniel described as the inability to surpass the " spoon-feeding mind-set". He has blamed the education system, where lack of promotion of critical thinking wedge the public immovable in a place where their minds will not function to critically assess political realities. He further clarified "…public condition themselves to think that all decisions should be made by the top". Thus, the public conditioned themselves to depend on the governing institutions. Commenting on a blog post discussion about foreign brides & immigration woes, one of the responding public has remarked "…any improvement would have to come from government action…" to which most responding public has agreed insistently.

The self-imposed divide is part of the above mentioned characteristics. The division is not just a consequence of a lengthy period of systematic political manoeuvring on the government's part but also self-imposed by the public on themselves. However,

the political culture has played a decisive role in political participation of the public. Alex, blamed the government for this divide, saying that "…it [government] is becoming far more defensive about its records than open to new ideas …becoming more and more self-serving…spending a lot of energy in protecting itself from people".

The self-demoralizing is a matter of thinking big or small and a blogger and one of the responding public Kirsten has been unable to imagine them being allowed to think big through the amount social engineering the government is performing.

5.3   Emotional Involvement

Emotional involvement is a classification that attempts to understand emotional investment portrayed by responding the public through their responses to blog posts. This is an endeavour to comprehend the emotional play of blog posts on the responding public and whether their emotional involvement can have a challenging effect on their discourse. Furthermore, the purpose is to be familiar with the development of soft emotions such as empathy or sympathy within the dialogues.

The researcher has observed two aspects of emotional apprehension; experiencing emotions, and expressing emotions

Primarily, the responding public tends to lean towards rationality more often than not, in the way they approach a particular issue and form their thoughts. This is often manifested through their use of ultra-logical rhetorical phrases in the form of philosophical explanations and rationalizing. The majority of socio-political concerns were attempted to be confronted in a semi-detached manner, which leads to a discussion of another set of matters. This logical approach has a thriving effect on the ongoing discourse and further developments.

Jeraldine, a blogger and one of the responding public, considers this a national trait "…we [Singaporeans] are little uptight …scared to show their emotions" and she further explains by saying that she thinks that Singaporeans feel it is uncool to show emotions. Consequently what Jeraldine has to say about expressing emotions "…I think it is liberating, to show you care deeply about something...". Responding to blog posts on the education system, one of the responding public has observed that "Singapore is very lacking in coolness factor. Part of the problem is not wanting to be cool" thus, implying that they declined to experience the emotions.

Since emotions are generally considered as irrationally driven, experiencing emotion is controlled through changing the image of a good citizen. Han, a responding public, a firm believer in libertarianism, has been very evocative about the government's emotional control of citizenry through micro management of their social lives. He has articulated "…they don't have space to feel…every single feeling is being managed or delivered...". Both Kirsten and Alex expressed that there is an excessive amount of social engineering which suffocates the citizenry. Recently, the new immigration policies[27] have initiated an emotional debate yet it has not generated enough expression to be a resounding success. Expression of emotions is restrained, not letting the spontaneities be part of the dialogue. Kirsten believed that the public is being made to inhibit their natural drive for political participation through a series of 'mind games'. Writing on her blog about bus captains' collective action in 2013, the first in Singapore after 26 years, she remarked about the significance of the strike and the lack of empathetic feelings towards social justice.

Though the majority of the prominent socio-political bloggers have expressed emotional empathy with the issue, the same cannot be said of the majority of the responding public. Though some applaud the act for its anti-government stance,

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[27] http://population.sg/whitepaper/#.U4c0SfmSzg0

there were other factors (strikers are migrant workers) they found unable to sympathize with. Though, the blogosphere activities pertaining to this incident are not part of the researcher's data pack, the researcher has intensely studied the blogosphere activities of this incident due to its nature of importance.

Thus, trying to understand the emotional involvement through the experiencing and expressing of emotions, it is apparent that emotional involvement is strategically stage-managed. It has been happening for such a long time now, as Kirsten says people do not know how to opt out of the cycle.   As stated by one of the responding public "…social trust in Singapore is very low. People do not feel emotional for collective causes…". Thus, emotional involvement is labelled as irrational and dismissed from the overall assemblage.

5.4   Cautionary Approach

Cautionary approach is a category that attempts to understand the behaviour of the responding public in blogosphere. The specific focus is on how they define their behaviour to accommodate or challenge the boundaries raised by the governing authorities when they reflect on socio-political issues. In this category, the researcher has established three areas of significance; consciousness of limits, deference to limits, challenging the limits

Singapore, as mentioned before, has strict media control policies which control every aspect of media, whether it is online or media art. From time to time the media authority of the state will impose certain regulations that will restrict particular element of online media activities or they will launch a campaign of awareness that will inadvertently regulate that same activity. Very recently the Media Development Authority imposed a licensing requirement which requires what they deemed as 'online news sites' to put up a 'performance bond' of 50,000 Singapore dollars and "comply within 24 hours to MDA's directions to remove content that is found to be in breach of content standards"[28].

There seems to be no margins for media democracy, as blogger Daniel says "…it is unsure what the next regulation would be until it is upon you…". Blogger Alex has been reprimanded several times and threatened with legal action for defamation of character by the Prime Minister's office. When the researcher invited him to talk about his view on this matter, he has stated that he immediately retracted the blog post with an apology and explanation to the readers and then continued to blog. Asked whether this tension and stress instigated by the governing authorities has

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[28]http://www.mda.gov.sg/AboutMDA/NewsReleasesSpeechesAndAnnouncements/Pages/NewsDetail.aspx?news=4

affected his blogging, he admitted that he is sceptical yet he observed a certain amount of prudence in his practice.

Singapore's blogosphere is a cautionary tale about practices. It is not only bloggers who are conscious about their limit in reflecting on socio-political issues but also the responding public. A blogger and also a responding public Visa fundamentally believes in free reflections rather than censorship. However he has expressed that "… we have a history of being depoliticized – someone described us as "politically cauterized", which I thought was great analogy because it captured the trade-off that was made – our leaders then made the decisions to suppress political freedom in the interest of economic growth…". Visa's 'political cauterized' is the consciousness of the existing limitations and limitations are understood as anything that impede the economic growth of the country. Visa further clarifies "…i can understand the rationale then, but now that we are past those rough times of social unrest, it seems that the cauterization has resulted in learned helplessness…"

Bufeng, on the other hand, disregards this cautionary view, saying it is no longer "… as bad as before". He is of the understanding that the mindfulness of parameters is hereditary, an account that pass down to generations and generations and just ingrained into the psyche. "… i do not think it is as bad as before, it is an

apprehension…rather a dread of the past that our grandfathers talk about…I mean it is not my experience". However, he admits that he presumably may not overtly criticize the government in online media because he likes educated and intellectuals to bring critical thoughts into debate.

Bufeng's circumspection in engaging in civil matters in deference to the limitations presented which may not have arisen from intentionally acknowledging the consciousness of imposed limitations, but an in-built characteristic that defined the parameters of the relationship with the government. Kirsten has described this deference to the limitations as 'awe'. "…Singaporeans are still sometimes in "awe" of the governing bodies and do tend to defer to them. We can see it in the way people like to make police reports for almost anything and everything, especially when there are disagreements online. Rather than engage and challenge racists or xenophobes online and take part in debate, some Singaporeans would prefer to make a police report, which just legitimizes the government's claim that Singaporeans need someone to take care of them and extend control". Visa understands this deference to limitations as stemming from the gap developed by both parties "…We tend to perceive government as some sort of distant entity, almost an authority in the sky. The government is ultimately the representative of the people, and government officials are Singaporeans too! We forget that, I think, because of the unique circumstances of our founding, and the authoritarian nature of the government that followed" and he also believes that it is respect and admiration

that commonly guide citizens to concede to the limitations on freedom " I think most people still do respect and admire our government. We manage our budget well; it seems…I think we respect our government's ability to carry itself with dignity among other nations' governments"

These are the paradoxes that the researcher observed throughout the data analysis of blog responses. Once it approaches the point where the mere arguments needed to be built on constructive criticism, where the limitations needed to be challenged, discussed and built into a discourse, the responding public perceptibly becomes conscious of their reverence to the limitations. This ambiguity of both the bloggers, who initiate the blogosphere's dialogic interactions and the responding public, who continue the dialogue, is not only problematic to the development of healthy online discourse but also to the citizenry engagement because limitations do not develop bonds.

5.5 Synthesizing the Discussion
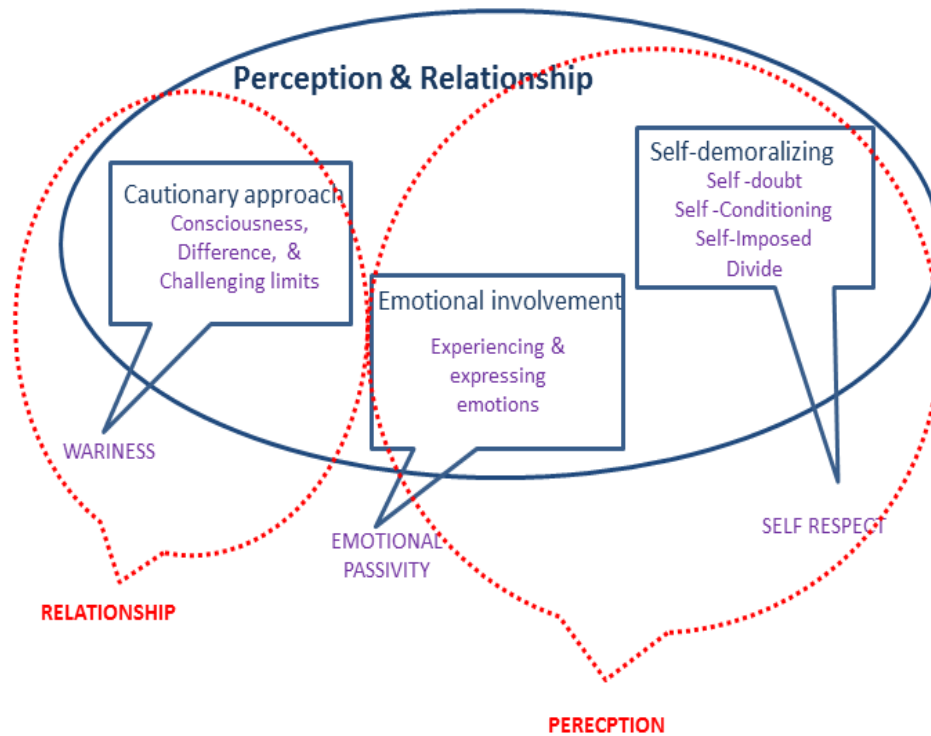
Figure 30 – Synthesizing Perception & Relationship

In conclusion, the researcher will cluster all the aspects examined in this chapter and synthesize the discussion into a fathomable perception (Figure 30). The objective is to discern the specificity of personality and the relationship with the government, thus to determine the citizenry as a collective and their approach to engagement.

Bloggers and responding public are inclined towards doubting their ability in their reflections. It emerges as conscientiousness, sensibleness, preferring not to blunder on expert grounds and opting for political correctness. These attitudes condition the way they involved themselves with socio-political concerns, which leads to imposing barriers on how they should participate in the decision making process. These developments are part of the deficiency in self-respect. Self-respect enhances the ability to develop mutual respect where engagement and cooperation can thrive.

On the other hand, lack of self-esteem tends to demonstrate in the way the emotions are experienced and expressed. The long developed uncertainties and reservations influenced the perception of emotional self. The emotional lethargy and indifference towards political participation and expecting/delivering a nudge towards the 'correct' emotional expression has progressed towards an emotional passivity.

Cautionary approach to the political participation is the other element in this discussion. Carefulness and circumspection in voicing views, building discourses, engaging politically and socially, that are discernible in blogosphere through their dialogues and arguments, are the attributes of the relationship between government and citizenry.

Lack of self-esteem and emotional passivity are the perception of public on the blogosphere while their relationship with the governing authorities is wary. Thus, there are three facets that have emerged out of this chapter about blogging citizens and their relationship with the government; lack of self-esteem, emotional passivity and wariness.

CHAPTER SIX

DELIBERATIONS & ENGAGEMENT

6.1 Introduction

In previous chapters, the researcher has discussed the dimension of involvement through perceptions of citizenry and their relationship with government. This chapter will narrate the elements of conversation by exploring the premises of deliberation and engagement. Deliberation is a process of contemplating the various possibilities towards best possible decisions. The contemporary political philosophy has placed a lot of weight on the importance of deliberation in democratic practices. For deliberation to be productive, individual or collective actions are required that will recognize and address the issues of civic concern or in other words, public engagement.

The narrative will focus on the nature of deliberation and the quality of engagement towards an understanding of deliberative approaches in political participation. The researcher was able to discern three particular portrayals emerging from this category; Pragmatic deliberation, Soft objections & Bonding & Bridging (Figure 31).
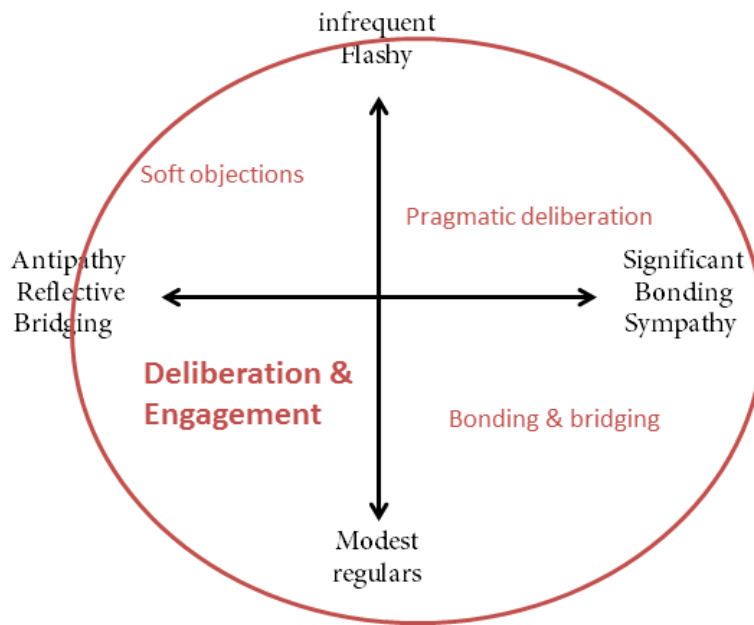
Figure 31 – Deliberation & Engagement

6.2   Pragmatic Deliberation

Pragmatic deliberation is a category that aims to understand the nature of the deliberation of citizenry through bloggers and responding public in their interactions on the blogosphere. Pragmatism in philosophy is generally the dismissal of the idea that the function of thought mirrors reality; instead it is considered as a tool for action. Pragmatic deliberation is considered as a way of producing positive outcomes that could change the views of the effected public.

In this section the pragmatism is considered in its linguistics meaning; dealing with matters in a sensible and practical manner, rather than theoretical consideration. Thus, pragmatism is an approach to deliberation, and it will be discussed in three reasoning; pragmatic approach as an escape, pragmatism as a positive move, pessimism as the other side of the coin.

Pragmatic approach is one of the most used methods of dialogue by the responding public. Some of them enter the conservation pragmatically, while some develop pragmatic arguments and some recourse to pragmatic method when the dialogues develop deeper arguments. Yuen, a constant voice in socio-political blogosphere, believes that any dialogic approach should be pragmatic from the beginning. Asked whether he considers himself an activist in the blogosphere, his answer was "Not an activist just likes to talk…occasionally".

The realistic or practical way of explaining the involvement in blog discussions is one of the methods adopted by most of the bloggers and responding public. The neutrality they attempt to embrace, not acknowledging their activities, whether they are regular or infrequent in their involvement, does affect the entire efficacy of the blogosphere as an influential media platform. Both Visa & Han believe that Singapore's blogosphere is evolving and growing. It has to be understood that the

blogosphere is new and fresh and still evolving throughout the globe. However, a technology-savvy country like Singapore still attempting to be dexterous in the blogosphere and still believing it to be new territory is emphasizing the underlying problematic nature in one aspect while it also conveys the overtly pragmatic stance in making excuses.

This pragmatic stance, as an escape from discussing the pressing issues or creating a prolonged discourse related to fundamental concerns, is visible in the manner of the approach to matters related to the political democracy. Most of the responding public avoids pronouncing political realities, however the critical stance adopted towards economic matters are a clear leap into the enthusiastic idealistic mode. " …we are doing good,. our economic policies make sense, given our circumstances" Visa concludes about the economy, and on the political front "…government should be …less flagrant interventionist". On the other hand, the responding public's attempt to understand democratic principles with regional ecologies is one of the distinctive ways of expressing the pragmatic views on the political sphere. In an effort to view the trajectories in the relationship between government and citizenry one of the responding public discerns "…part of Democracy with Asian characteristics…" which brings the debate to understand the Asian characteristics. The 'democracy with Asian characteristics' is a political ideal promoted to

rationalize the political system developed during the nation-building stage in Singapore (Chua, 2002; Emmerson, 1995; Zolo, 2001). The ideological confilct between Western political democratic philosophies and adaptation in the Eastern political environment requires inventive narrative to rationalize.

The pragmatic view tends to develop the debate. As mentioned in the above example, the viewpoint of Asian characteristics dominated the remnants of the blog discussion trying to arrive at a consensus about Asian democratic features. This is a positive part of the pragmatic approach. While in one aspect it overtly flattens the trajectories, the positive side effect works towards enhancing the deliberation by calling forth the blatantly practical evening-out of pressing matters of public interest.

The researcher has noticed this conflicting tendency in the discussions which occasionally deviated away from the object of discussion serving less to the developing dialogue. Goorts, a Dutch national and Permanent Resident of Singapore, reflects that the nature of pragmatism has slowed down the constructiveness of the deliberations in the blogosphere. "… they think they need to be pragmatic in order to be positive. They are doing fine but they can do better, much better if they view beyond pragmatic…". He believes that the overtly pragmatic discourse has unfavorable effects on their relationship with the

government. Molly Meek believes that a pragmatic nature in deliberation is a positive trait towards negative outcomes. She ponders that most very well informed public fail to be positively pragmatic because they have been conditioned to be pragmatic merely for the sake of it.

While a pragmatic approach serves both positive and negative in deliberation, pessimism serves certain frustrated traits in the citizenry. Han is unforgiving in his assessment of the pessimism in the blogosphere. " … At this stage, most people are either blindly anti-PAP or blindly pro-PAP. A person belonging to either partisan group is more than happy to dismiss outright the claims that they do not believe in, and mindlessly believe in anything that they like."[*sic*]. Most responding public inclined towards pessimism even when they are being pragmatic, which Jin, a keen blog reader/commenter, finds entertaining because he believes it to be more or less a national trait of complaining.

The researcher has discovered that most of the interviewees have ironically mentioned this quality of constant airing of grievances when conferring about blog comments. Jin expressed that public is very apt at grousing, and protesting endlessly yet hardly contemplate of changing the status quo. Alex explains pessimism in deliberation as part of the over-dependency syndrome; the excessive

dependency of citizenry on government(George, 2000). The negative consequences of over-dependency are manifested as pessimism.

6.3   Soft Objection

Soft objection is a category that is illuminating the nature of the engagement of blog citizens or responding public whose dialogues reveal how they envision interacting with the government. This section is discussing the complexity of expressing dissatisfaction and non-compliance to either policy matters or socio-political issues. The soft objections will be discussed in three conjectures; behaviour, which will be determined as 'behave nicely', 'behave well-mannered' and subjection to regulations (regulated objections).

Molly Meek believed that there are two types of bloggers and responding public in Singapore's blogosphere. Bloggers who are "… too 'balanced', too 'rational' and too 'tactful'…" and the responding public respecting those boundaries and then there are those bloggers who are focused on "… stirring public emotionally in a manner akin to sensationalism…" and responding public who follow that. However, she believes that generally people are grudgingly "…circumspect and resigned…" in their responses. Molly Meek's observation is that the online public tends towards being undemanding in their behaviour. Responding to a blog post on smarter online

governance, one of the responding public is scornful about the entire online exchanges stating "…the vast majority of online critics or keyboard warriors, are basically armchair critics where any ordinary Joes and Janes can say what they like and easily…". This illustrates the phenomenon of online actions not progressing to actions offline. Explaining further the same responding public has argued that the online public interactions have little or no impact on the political arena on the ground because online discourse seldom develops into any impacting activity offline.

However, these two thoughts, one being the undemanding responses erecting barriers to online and offline activities replicate what the researcher perceives as soft objections and well-mannered responses. These two manifestations may well be influenced by the cultural philosophies of this region, nevertheless the researcher expands on the idea that soft objection is a political engagement routine of the public judging from their responses. The responding public is inclined towards expressing their views animatedly using evocative rhetoric yet their protests against public policies lack the power of argument. Instead, protests have a habit of being insipid and regularly lacking in conviction. The importance of the voicing of dissatisfaction or protestation is lessened by the defensive stance adopted by the public. The researcher has particularly noticed that due to the satisfactory attitude

adopted by the responding public (and most bloggers) regarding the economic policies, the socio-political issues were delicately and diplomatically approached and discussed.

Han says he is discouraged in participating in most deliberations on policy and philosophical arguments due to the public's ultra-diplomatic attitude towards discussions. "…sometimes it is all whiny and other times it is all about tact and sensitive… unless we put an issue out there to scrutinize it and argue over it factually, the dialogue is useless…serves no purpose to me except waste my time…". The researcher understood that Han does not want to take a lead in changing this soft objection propensity towards a robust and active dialogue.

Yuen believes that the public are well-informed but whether they 'think' is another matter altogether. Contemplating on this notion further, it can be noticed that objections from the public regarding their discontent are by and large expressed within the structured boundaries set out through media regulations. Thus, the objections or protestations are regulated, which the majority of the public responses indicate as being adhered to even unwillingly.

In turn Han expressed dissatisfaction with the public responses exposes another facet of soft objections; the wariness in engaging the soft objections towards a stronger engagement and solid dialogue on socio-political matters.

6.4   Bonding & Bridging

Bonding and Bridging is a category that attempts to determine the progress or unfolding of deliberation and engagement from the interaction of the responding public.   This will discuss the trajectories of dialogic bonding and knowledge bridging within the blogosphere and positive and negative elements in its development. Bonding and Bridging is a concept of social network that became popular with social capital (Francis, 1995; Putnam, 1995). Bonding is considered as social network within a hegemonic group while bridging is a social network developed among groups. In this study, the researcher is using these terms in their linguistic form to explain the deliberation within this context, thus it is not directly referring to the social network concept in social capital discourse.

In this context, the bonding examines how continuing dialogue bonds the thought process, while bridging refers to how the information from various outside sources builds a knowledge bridge.   The discussion will continue on several key areas; communication builds bonds (eager yet subdued), bridging through informing, contextualizing, apathy and grievances.

One of the most encouraging aspects of blogosphere or any other networked social media is a cetain anonymity granted to its interactive community. The imagined

invisibility encourages the public to be courageous and spirited in expressing their opinions. This quality facilitates the responding public in bonding through somewhat daringly expressed opinions. It maintains the dialogic interaction, continuing it towards what the researcher would like to term in this context as bonding. The researcher has observed that not a single interviewee considered that the responding public's tenacious continuation of dialogue could create a bond in the deliberation process. Almost all of them either completely dismissed the continuing dialogue as a trivial pursuit, or their opinion as lackluster; neither here nor there. Bufeng, as one of the responding public, would not dispute the bonding factor in conversations on the blogosphere but he is highly dubious of exact nature of the bonding. He doubts that the public actually bond on deliberation through continuing conversation. "…people like to complain…I don't think they pay much attention to the ongoing conversation…". Naturally there arises the question about the contents of the complaints, however the researcher has noticed that people who frequently respond to blog posts incline towards conversation bonding. They build arguments and develop a conversation with others on topics which are not the same as the original discussion. The contents of the dialogue may vary from insightful to trivial, but bonding of readership and bonding of thoughts do take place on the blogosphere.

Both Molly Meek and Han think there is no constructive dialogue on the blogosphere. Molly Meek expresses "…they lack insight or critical thinking. They jumped in to say something…sometimes just anything which is not productive at all". Visa on the other hand thinks that public is remarkably well-informed but not willing get involved. Bufeng appreciates the amount of knowledge some people bring into the conversation, which he believes contributes a lot in due course. These two different spectrums of the responding public's bridging capacity, the capacity to bridge the knowledge, characterize the common attitude towards the blogosphere; a public who criticize negative aspects and a public who sees future potential.

The researcher has observed that the exchange of knowledge towards informing society is unmistakable in the socio-political blogosphere which is part of the rational conversation of educated society as discussed in previous chapters. Thus, the possibilities are present for bridging and bonding, however, the question is whether the public will take advantage or their emotional apathy will preclude them from benefiting from it.

6.5 Synthesizing the Discussion

In concluding this chapter the researcher is synthesizing the aspects discussed into understandable perceptions (Figure 33). The purpose is to recognize the attributes of the blogosphere as a collective through their deliberations and engagement.
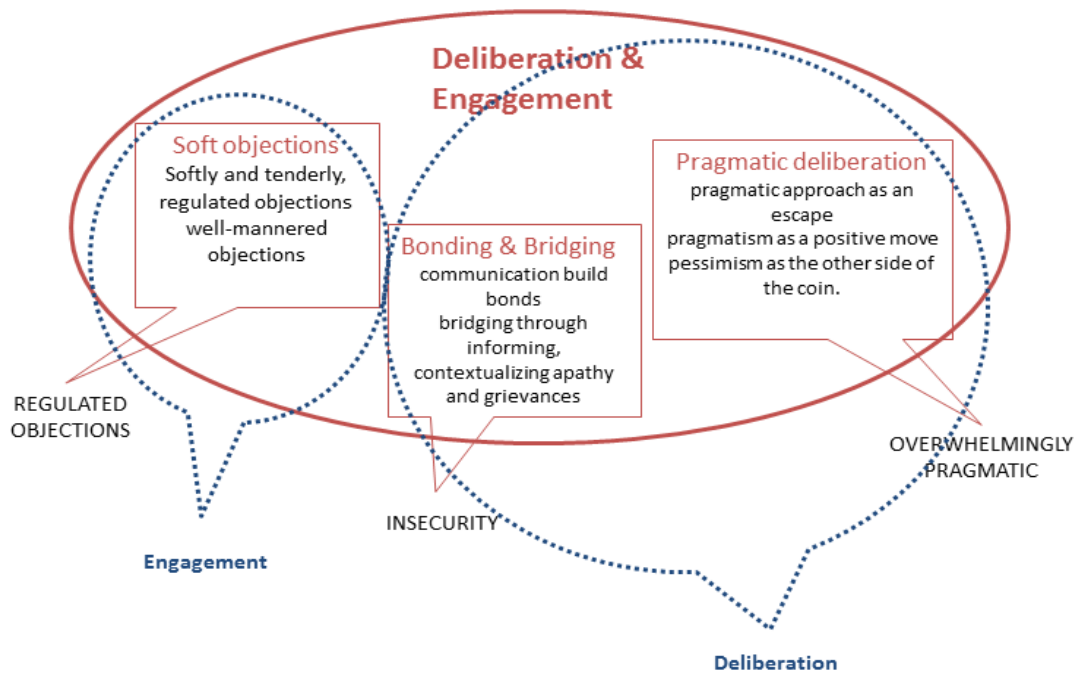
Figure 32 - Synthesizing Deliberation & Engagement

The responding public inclined towards utilizing a pragmatic approach to avoid discussing multilayered socio-political concerns. Comparably their pessimism surfaces in a similar manner and might be serving the same purpose. The pragmatic attitude appears to be embedded, an opinion most of the interviewees maintain. The

researcher, instead, throughout her study of blog conversations, has noticed that the pragmatic attitude is a veil they wear to moderate or soften the tone or the contents of the conversation. Thus, it appeared as a self-regulating method. In a similar manner, the objections or the protestations are regulated by adopting a softer, well-mannered attitude.

In the case of bonding and bridging, the dubious nature of practice is apparent not only from the conversations with interview participants, but also observing the manner of taking advantage of the opportunity. The researcher's perception is that the pragmatic attitude and constant self-regulation has cultivated an insecurity that is projected in the misgivings about the bonding and bridging.

CHAPTER SEVEN

DISINTEGRATING RELATIONSHIP & UNHAPPY ENGAGEMENT

7.1 Introduction

In Chapters Five and Six, the researcher has contemplated the dimension of involvement and elements of conversation of the responding public on the blogosphere. Both chapters provided an understanding of the responding public on two respective levels. In this chapter, the researcher will examine the second set of patterns that emerged from the grounded theory data analysis; the perceived expectations of citizenry from the relationship with the government. The focus would be on understanding the trajectories of declining trust and dilemmas of reciprocity that cause the disintegration of the relationship.

7.2 Declining Trust

Trust is important for political process to progress, especially mutually created trust and trustworthiness. Political trajectories are becoming increasingly intricate for citizens to side with governing institutions without dubiousness. However, the political inclinations are becoming progressively more complex and the citizens'

understanding of the political practices and institutional behaviour are gradually obfuscated. The all too genuine decline in trust on both sides could render trust invalid in the relationship between government and citizenry.

Study of the blogosphere has illustrated the problem of declining trust, on both sides; governing bodies towards citizens and vice versa. To examine this, the researcher has adopted and amended the golden circle concept of Simon Sinek (Sinek, 2009). Sinek introduced an unconventional approach to measuring and reaching a goal (Figure 33).

This concept is adopted and adapted by the researcher to comprehend the core problem of declining trust. The *why* will fathom the bigger picture while the *how* will develop the reasons and the *what* will discuss the changing perspectives (Figure 34).
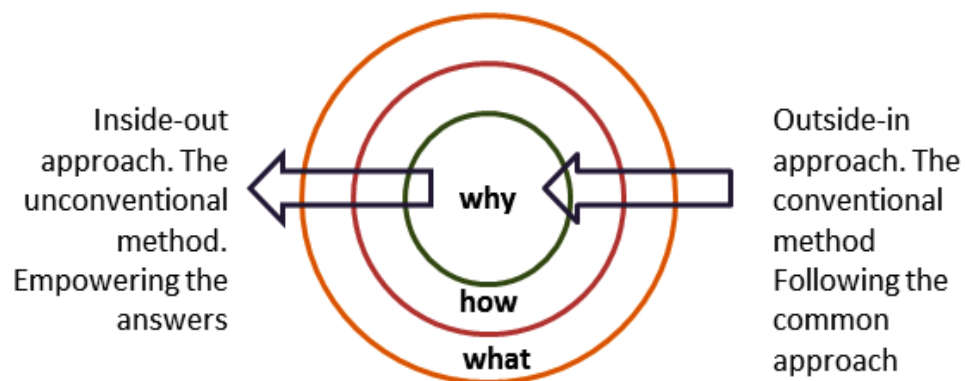
Figure 33 – Sinek's Golden Circle

7.2.1 Distance & Self-Doubts

The heart of declining trust is long term development of distance, an undeniable reserve and detachment from the citizenry. This gulf is partly due to the authoritarian nature of the governance, and the political culture (Emmerson, 1995; Englehart, 2000; Roy, 1994) of the region. However, the distance is not naturally set in place where people characteristically develop a disinterest in political matters while government does not interfere in individual social life. This is a distance intentionally developed for a long period of time by controlling metaphors of citizen participation. The de-politicization of citizenry has been discussed by various scholars in the Singapore context (Chew, 1994; K. P. Tan, 2010). Visa has articulated this state of deliberate distance enforced by government as a 'politically cauterized' condition. He further explains "…it captures the trade-off that was made - our leaders then made decision to suppress political freedom in the interest of economic growth…resulted in general apathy and learned helplessness". Molly Meek explains that political conditioning has not prevented people from being informed "…the problem is that …informed people fail to recognized the ways in which they have been conditioned to think"
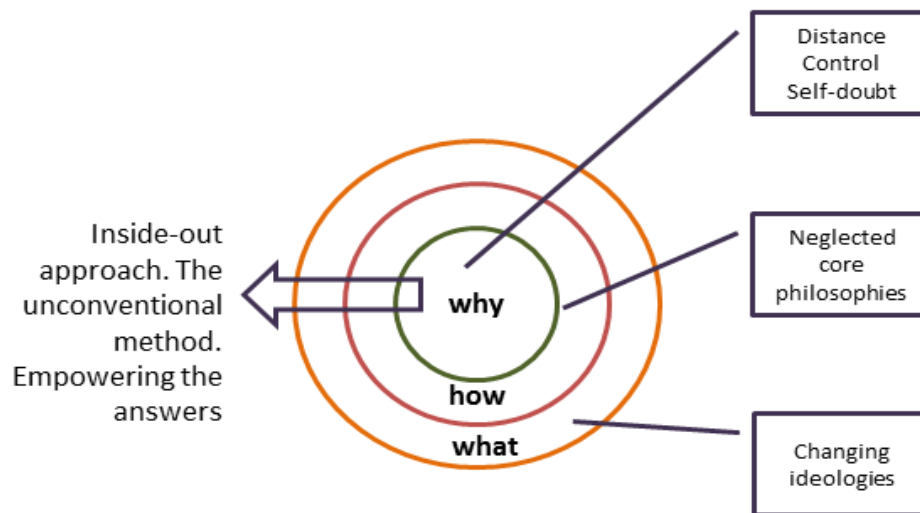
Figure 34 – Adaptation of Golden Circle

Thus, distance is cultivated and encouraged by the government as a political culture, which the researcher observed the citizenry is discovering as challenging. They are obstructed by rhetorical claims of inadequacy, underserving and the importance of economic growth. Visa, in his early 20s, examined this distance in terms of how the metaphors could change. "…Singaporeans have had a "distant" relationship with our governing bodies - the distance between the common man and the politician/leader was heightened in the 60s and remained that way since. This has its pros and cons, and I think lately the cons have become more significant (because the pros have already been "exploited", in a sense). LKY [Lee Kuan Yew] was once quoted as saying, "Please do not assume that you can change

governments. Young people don't understand this" (Following the 2006 elections).

I thought this was quite reflective of the strange situation where we were in. How does a young person respond to such a situation? If life is great, then sure, all is well. But when the going gets rough, she'll surely wonder- "Why *can't* I change my government? Do they really have my best interests at heart? Can I do anything about it?". If she can't, and she's unhappy, then I think the rational responses are anger, frustration, apathy or helplessness."

Contrastingly, Visa summarizes the perception of citizens regarding the distance, explaining that public lean towards considering the government as a distant and lofty entity. "… I think that the divide between government and populace is too wide. We [public] tend to perceive government as some sort of distant entity, almost an authority in the sky. The government is ultimately representative of the people, and government officials are Singaporeans too! We forget that, I think, because of the unique circumstances of our founding, and the authoritarian nature of the government that followed". Visa himself accepta the distance as a given because distance or detachment gains respect. "…I do understand arguments that a government should always err on the side of stuffy, because you don't want people to start mocking it and losing faith in it altogether". This brings forward the argument the researcher was making that the distance was conditioned into the

political engagement, where citizenry consciously argue their way to depoliticizing themselves.

The other element in this dynamic is the present day contribution of citizenry to maintain the distance. Visa demonstrates this element by rationalizing his own conviction of depoliticizing or deliberate nurturing of distance by the governing authorities. The researcher understands that the predisposition of citizenry as self-doubt materialized from extended dependency. Bufeng, who is a graduate student in early his 30s, has misgivings about his suitability to talk about socio-political matters. He believes socio-political deliberations should be reserved for experts which raises the question of what is the criteria for experts and the benchmark for political deliberations.

Whereas the government is involved in politically cauterizing the citizenry, the citizenry is steeped in self-doubt about their adequacy and worth. The relationship is perplexing because the distancing that has transpired through persistent regulation and manipulation has developed a citizenry who are "…informed…muted …resigned" according to Molly Meek. As discussed in previous chapters the responding public is conscientious, pragmatic, diplomatic, sensible, overtly cautious and anticipate experts to vocalize rather than make blunders themselves.

These self-conditioning measures of citizenry are due to the negligence of core philosophies on the part of the government. The determination to place governing institutions and their agents on a superior level of hierarchy generating a distance with citizens have created a gap in trust; the citizens' trust of their government and vice versa. One of the values citizens expect from their relationship with the government is trust because they have established that the government has developed an attitude of indifference towards trusting its citizens. Goorts, who imagines his experience of the Dutch political system interferes with his assessment of Singapore's political environs, ponders that trust on the part of the government is absent compared to the trust the public has of the government. " …it [trust] is mostly one sided…government rely on power to control people and people trust government to do good by them. It is not mutual…we [Dutch] demand our government should trust us, ask us before making decisions…but here it is the other way round. Don't get me wrong, it is not as leaner as I make it sound. We have our own problems…Of course the political environment here is different to Europe…"

7.2.2 Trust Needs Efforts & Sustenance

Thus, the core philosophy is that trust takes effort to build and needs sustenance to persist. The grounded theory study of the responding public revealed that the constant discussion theme on trust is the trustworthiness of the government in the

context of its trust in people. The complexity of this matter is that citizens comprehend that their trust in government exceeds its reciprocity and they believe that government disregards this scenario since it serves its purpose of maintaining distance. The public believes that the majority vote being cast in favour of the ruling party of the government articulates the divide on trust in governing agents.

Bloggers like Molly Meek believe that people are blindly faithful and trusting of the government, except that there are numerous factors influeincing the public to vote in favour, such as the insubstantial opposition and the fear of economic downturn but the government chooses to apply this majority approval to create the narrative of trust and trustworthiness. The philosophy of trust is that citizenry by a large margin trusts the government's policies and practices. Thus, it is acknowledged that the trustworthiness of the government is legitimized by the majority, implying that majority vote replicates the trust. This narrative is the effort on the part of the government to project its trustworthiness to the citizen, while mutual trust is not mentioned as part of the narrative. Conversely, citizenry considers themselves as trustworthy because they want to improve the relationship with the governing institutions, thus it would be mutually beneficial.

Both Kirsten and Alex express that the government has impressed upon citizens to believe that they are amateurish and inexpert for involvement in political matters

effectively indoctrinating self-doubt and questionable self-worth. Kirsten is exasperated by being considered as incompetent and immature to converse on socio-political matters. "…the government insists on being patriarchal and telling everyone that it knows best, rather than trusting Singaporeans to give them a real voice in things… ". Nevertheless, she reasons that citizens, on the other hand, endorse this attitude by deferring to government to manage the challenges. She explains this with an example "Despite their complaints I think Singaporeans are still sometimes in "awe" of the governing bodies and do tend to defer to them. We can see it in the way people like to make police reports for almost anything and everything, especially when there are disagreements online. Rather than engage and challenge racists or xenophobes online and take part in debate, some Singaporeans would prefer to make a police report, which just legitimizes the government's claim that Singaporeans need someone to take care of them and extend control.".

Hence, declining trust from the perspective of citizenry (of what they expected of the relationship), is a matter that requires change from the enforced ideologies. Trust necessitates mutuality for citizens to experience equality and that could enhance the relationship.

7.3   Hypothesizing Reciprocity

The succeeding step of trust is reciprocity. Reciprocity in its simplest form is treating other people as they treat you, or responding positively to a positive action, voluntarily without the aid of an agreement. Reciprocity is generally a part of social relationship, whether it is in its complete form of give and take. It is given that for a society to be dynamic and constructive mutually developed relations such as respect are required. In addition reciprocity is an interactive process.

The grounded theory study to examine engaging factors revealed reciprocity as one of the factors for engagement. It exposed the need for exchange, a give and take for the political engagement to succeed. The researcher will capture the various continuums of reciprocity by discussing the contextual challenges of reciprocity, and the problems of sharing and exchange.

7.3.1 Contextual Challenges of Reciprocation

By contextual challenges of reciprocation the researcher aims to illuminate the challenges of adopting reciprocity to improve the relationship. The challenges are multi-faceted, because reciprocation contests the political cultures of South-East Asia where the line between authority and citizen is drawn in an 'obeying' manner. Thus, attitudes of the public and the governing authorities are not quite on equal

turf. Therefore, understanding of reciprocation arises from two different levels of the spectrum. On the other hand, reciprocation is a perspective driven approach such as negative and positive reciprocity and the grey areas in between. Hence, the reach of reciprocity relies on the comprehension of reciprocation by both parties.

In this study, the researcher understood the challenges of contextualizing reciprocity as the attitude of citizens and government towards reciprocation and the role of public dependency on government. The grounded theory study revealed that the public expects the government to be reciprocal in order to improve a disintegrating relationship. This notion reveals the frame of mind of citizenry in terms of their understanding of their role in reciprocation and how they understand reciprocity as a practice.

The ordinary lives of citizens of Singapore are exceedingly socially regulated as conferred in the literature review chapter. They are expected to live within this controlled and structured space without being antagonistic to the system or its agents. Government ensures social and political cohesion and economic stability, thus rendering citizens highly reliant on the smooth operation of the organization, which requires support not challenge. Thus, the connectedness between both parties is decidedly contained and disciplined by the government. Kirsten Han, while acknowledging that the government has brought the country to success, believes

that it treats citizens as economically viable entities without social persona. "The government has, on the whole, done a good job for the country, but I think they now see people too much as economic digits, which affects social issues."

The element this study explored is the contrasting emotions citizens professed to have about government. They are clearly dissatisfied with the relationship yet they are bound by their gratitude to properly explore the contemporary problems. The citizens are undoubtedly grateful and in debt to the country's leadership for financial success of the country which is a legend in itself. However, they fail to notice or be ambiguous about their contribution to the economic success. The majority of bloggers and responding public interviewed for this study expressed that the government considers itself as an 'elite' and treats citizens as mediocre and immature mass.

Thus, the socio-political environment is that citizens believe that government thinks of itself as elite, while they are constantly mindful of being grateful and in debt to the government. Government, alternatively, consider itself elite and the public as mediocre thus legitimizing the need for regulations. The government continuously reminds the public the reasons for which it needs to be grateful and the benefits of their continuous gratitude. This is the existing stratum of the relationship within which the citizenry expects the government to be reciprocal.

The researcher has observed that reciprocity is regularly expected on the grounds that citizenry has continuously performed according to government's expectations. Specifically, the citizens imagine reciprocity within the existing confines, without changing the status quo. Daniel thinks that there is no essential reason to revamp the system because it has proven that it is performing well. "… [government] need to change the way they practice…sharing, giving …inclusiveness". Very nearly every interviewee voiced their faith in the organization, but are dissatisfied with the practices. Alex articulates this as the government's inability and disregard to thinking 'outside the box'. "… in terms of its ability to absorb and integrate and seriously weight alternative and new ideas. …I see it is becoming far more defensive about its record than open to new ideas…"

Alternatively, government is concerned with sustaining power by regulating the power sources. Alex captures this scenario this way. "…It is spending lots of energy in protecting itself because it has assumed already that it is good therefore it must be protected…" Therefore, it maintains the narrative of citizens' gratefulness, obligation and duty while maintaining the advantage through social engineering. This, incidentally, results in citizens' excessive dependency on government.

Accordingly, this study has noticed that the cultivated hierarchical gap, social control, narrative of obligation and gratitude, and excessive dependency are the challenges in contextualizing reciprocity.

7.3.2 Sharing & Exchange

Having examined the challenges in contextualizing reciprocity, this section will examine the succeeding level of understanding; what entails reciprocity. Reciprocation is achievable and effective when there is sharing and exchange is involved; sharing and exchange of power towards robust decision making. Putnam (Putnam, 2001), studying decaying political engagement in United States, has noted that reviving the civic organizations, changes in public policy and social plans and use of technology can recover the political engagement.

Technological involvement in enhancing citizen engagement has been abundantly explored in Singapore with its e-governance measures considered as one of the most effective in the world. However, e-governance serves to facilitate the services and feedback on services and facilities rather than an exchange of ideas on policy matters. Civic organizations are naturally under government control. The external layer of requirements is operational and effective within the system, even though Alex expressed strong misgivings about the functioning part of government services. He believes that government being vigilant about safeguarding power

instead of bringing new ideas into the process has deteriorated the ability to perform outside the comfort zone. This is hindering their problem-solving capacity.

Alex expresses that the government is unwilling to share or exchange ideas because that would destabilize their power thereby undermining authority. Citizenry has lack of faith in reciprocation because there are lot of demands on them without much return. As Kirsten Han expressed, government considers the citizens in terms of their economic worth. Yuen likened the government to a listed company where the citizenry are stakeholders. " … They are like shareholders of a listed company: they want the directors and executives to make money, and complain about not getting enough of it themselves…" This is a very common-place understanding of the relationship between government and citizenry. It illustrates the amount of attention bestowed on the importance of economic success even when the intention is to measure the efficacy of the relationship. The researcher has observed that the responding public's discussions on the blogosphere, where they evocatively explain economic matters, but are rather pretentious in social and political matters. This explains the structure of the narrative where economic imperatives are the forerunners as opposed to all other concerns. Thus, the sharing and exchange required take place within this milieu.

Hence, the citizenry senses that they are being compelled to give a good deal, while the returns are mostly without choice. Han, who believes in free market economy and individualism, is frustrated by lack of choice given to him to shape his country's policies. "…we vote, apart from that everything is forced on us one way or the other…" He would like government to communicate its policy ideas to people and build a dialogue, exchange ideas and let people participate by choice. Visa is politically optimistic wanting to be on the positive side of the government because he believes that government is essentially moral, and the citizenry needs to connect with the government in the hope of achieving further success. To achieve this he thinks government needs to be willing to carry out trial and error approaches, in terms of sharing and exchanging.

Furthermore, Visa considers that government's lack of reach is problematic in building common ground for sharing because people have no in-depth knowledge of the workings of governing bodies. "…I think the government badly needs a PR team for its policies and day-to-day operations. I don't think enough Singaporeans on the ground have any idea whatsoever about what the government is doing on a day to day basis. MOE [Ministry of Education] should be telling us about what difficulties they're facing. What trade-offs they have to make. I would like to know what the Ministry of Finance is thinking when figuring out how to set our monetary

policy, for example. What are their considerations, what are their concerns?..." Visa reflects that government will not contemplate that action even though it is a feasible idea. Daniel projects this attitude as government's inability or refusal to change even though it endeavours vigorously to convince people that it has adopted new policies regarding sharing and exchange. He imagines that it is the same institutions and policies only the actors have changed.

Sharing and exchanging towards reciprocation is not a measure in the schemata of the government. The long established authoritarian structure is discovering it is problematic to relax its stronghold on citizenry because they intensely believe that dominant administration is the key to success. Almost all interviewees observe that the authoritarian establishment has led the nation towards success, yet now it needs to relax its grip on citizens. However, the government has strategized its operations into compelling people to be dependent upon it, a dependency that is highly visible in every nuance of society. Alex supposes that both the government and the citizenry require changing in order to exchange and share. This environment explains the position of reciprocity and that exchanging and sharing requires careful integration into the system and nurturing thereafter.

Visa thinks that even though the government considers sharing and exchange as frivolous and inconsequential to its practices, it will ultimately be beneficial. "…The better an understanding we have of what exactly our government is doing, the better we can interact with the government, the more productive our feedback can be, the more meaningful our conversations …"

7.4   Ignored Accountability

Accountability in simpler terms is the process whereby one actor holds the other responsible for his/her actions. Accountability is the conduct, in this research it is concentrating on the conduct of the governing bodies, on how they carry out their responsibilities. Accountability has two features; answerability and enforcement (Craig, 2009). Answerability means giving information and justification, while enforcement ensures the reward or punishment/sanction. There is the query of whether the answerability should be voluntarily or not. That is the imposition of legal, organizational or societal obligation on those who are accountable or giving them the freedom to engage only when they want on their terms. The former is recognized as hard accountability while the latter is soft accountability.

Transparency is presumed to lead towards accountability. Though this idea is very much contested in academia, the availability of reliable information will lead to

parties being responsible for their actions.   In this discussion, to understand the accountability as a factor of engagement, the researcher will focus on the soft accountability with transparency as part of the equation. The intention is to understand another spectrum of accountability relating to transparency and vice versa while emphasizing on the problematic nature of conceptualizing and integrating soft accountability.

7.4.1 Soft Accountability & Clear Transparency

Transparency could be foggy, somewhat opaque in distributing information that would not reveal the actual behaviour of institutions. Alternatively, transparency can be clear where reliable information about intuitional behaviour is easily accessible. Accountability as described above could be soft, which demands answers from stake holders and hard, with emphasis on answers with consequences. The soft accountability is the right of citizenry, where they are entitled to know the strategies and tactics with regard to policy decisions & implementation. The expectation is that clear transparency will empower the efforts to demand changes from governing institutions, thus making them accountable.

This section is examined in juxtaposition with previous sections of trust and reciprocity, because accountability requires both trust and reciprocation at its fundamental level. Accountability is one of the qualities expected from the governing institutions by the citizenry. The grounded theory examination of the

blogosphere and interviews with bloggers/responding public has revealed that the citizenry is discontented with the transparency of the government thereby providing the government with greater leverage to be non-accountable.

Alex is a staunch advocate of transparency and responsibility of government, highlighting the need for change within the government towards open public access. Kirsten Han is critical of government with regards to the way it approaches the access to information and responsibility to citizens. She says "…same story just different context. Keep on saying that we need not to know because the government knows what is best for people…" The citizenry is inclined to think that the government informs them about things after decisions have been made and are in progress of implemention. The researcher has been an interested observer when the government introduced the new population policy planning until 2030 in the latter half of the last year[29]. The government did not provide information to the public until several days before the proposition was presented to the legislature. The process overpowered the populace leaving them ineffective, even though customarily they are unable to demonstrate their dissatisfaction within the prevailing regulations. It evoked alternative media frenzy; every blogger actively discussing the implications of the policy, culminating in a restrained public protest

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[29] http://population.sg/whitepaper/

at the government designated Public Park for demonstration[30]. This is a scenario that synthesizes the entire chapter of discussions, giving voice to all juxtapositions. Alex and Daniel both conveyed that this development explained the attitude of government towards transparency and accountability.

Since the citizenry is not permitted to participate in the decision making per se, they are incapable of demanding accountability. Hui Jin does not believe that transparency or accountability exists within the current political system, because, even though the right is there, there is no freedom to demand; only to accept what was handed down. He thinks that the current political system will not allow people to access reliable information, except for what it deemed appropriate and the citizen will not trust that information. "…it is doomed from the beginning. Government will not give, people have no freedom to demand, and that ends the relationship. And then the government will play a game with statistics. It will display lots of statistical data to prove what they are doing is the best…" Visa is adamant about transparency, though he will not expect it to empower the citizenry, but believe it will make citizenry appreciative and supportive of government, which will enhance the engagement. "…The better an understanding we have of what exactly our

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[30]https://sg.news.yahoo.com/final-white-paper-protest-at-hong-lim-park-attracts-1-000-153626039.html
http://www.bloomberg.com/news/2013-02-16/singaporeans-protest-plan-to-increase-population-by-immigration.html

government is doing, the better we can interact with the government, the more productive our feedback can be…"

Inform the society and let them judge is the approach suggested for accountability. As a step towards soft accountability the above statement resonates satisfactorily, however, the question remains how far the government will proceed in promoting the transparency and accountability to encourage citizen participation. Alex has frequently discussed the government's tendency to leave the citizens behind in the grand scheme of things. "…when it comes down to the core issues, people are without a clue, not only because we don't demand but also because we are not in the loop…"says Daniel , which explains the gap between government & citizenry. Inclusion is one of the fundamental features for transparency and accountability to initiate and flourish. The government is extremely engrossed in preserving its power; the authority that built a political culture within the country. Bufeng believes that the present day authority is relaxing its influence slightly to a more approachable level; however he considers that it is cautious of people. Kirsten explains that as long as the public is excluded, government as an institution is a disappointment. "…when it starts to treat us not just as financial digits and statistical data, but as part of the whole organization…".

7.5   Responsiveness Matters

Concepts of citizenship and democracy have evolved and continue to evolve with new implications and the roles of the government and the citizenry have moved beyond the rigid cast of old. Citizens have matured from being merely constituents, voters and supporters of the old norm towards new influences in determining the ethical and interaction dynamics. Consequently, the challenge is to understand these dynamics realistically and move towards developing pragmatic relationship between government and citizenry. Responsiveness becomes the stepping stone towards realistic expectations to overcome the divide and pursue an improved engagement.

Responsiveness is an intangible wealth and a smart strength. It is not merely a stepping stone towards greater changes; it is part of an intangible resource that makes the entire mechanism and structure beneficial. Responsiveness strengthens both micro and macro level interactions by building connections, enriching contentment which become strengths through the growth, smartness and richness of engagement.

7.5.1 Intangible Wealth & Smart Strength

The notion that responsiveness is not part of the policy making process where governing institutions assume the role of higher authority by making decisions on behalf of citizenry and taking political actions is not understood as a sustainable philosophy nowadays (Rondinelli & Unies, 2007; Vigoda, 2002). A government's responsiveness towards its citizens is not an afterthought, an indifferent act that is desired yet not necessary. The governing bodies are aware of the fact that for democracy to flourish citizens must be actively involved in a public sphere of sharing and interacting, taking an active part in the well-being of the country as a whole (Brillantes Jr & Fernandez, 2011a). Responsiveness towards citizens in governing is demonstrated by various initiatives, such as community meetings with the representative and e-governance. However, it is necessary to integrate the responsiveness to very core of the process, thus it is not just the actions but a complete philosophy-based practice going beyond mere initiative towards an authentic approach. This far-reaching association is what the citizens are expecting as qualities of their government; the ability to connect at the deep level through responsiveness.

The most commonplace claim in the blogosphere is government scarcely listens to its citizenry nor responds to them in a reliable manner that could lead to an increase

in their engagement. They believe that the citizenry is a postscript to government's intention; needing neither hearing nor explanation. When the researcher explored the expected values of the relationship and the qualities of the institution, throughout the discussion this discontentment prevailed. Citizens deliberate that government is unquestionably confident in its ability to provide for the people thus, it ignores whether people essentially require of the government. In this context, Alex explains that the government has a preconceived notion of its actions as advantageous by default; therefore it assumes it has the morality to continue with its practices and the rest is merely supplementary but not a requirement. Listening, hearing or responding to citizenry is at the nethermost region, and even then only what it deems necessary for people know.

Kirsten thinks the government is unable to listen or respond because it is innately condescending. "…the government insists on being patriarchal and telling everyone that it knows best, rather than trusting Singaporeans to give them a *real* voice in things…" Conversely, as discussed in the section of declining trust, the public inclined towards a certain amount of trust in government, which Molly Meek considers as 'blindly trusting', preparing to accept the disregard for their voices. Hence, the demand for government responsiveness is not a typical occurrence. Undeniably there are certain other outside dynamics for the lack of demand for

responsiveness such as a highly regulated environment and being subdued under the authoritarian regime. Molly Meek has expressed this emotional apathy as "…excessive misplaced trust…muted unhappiness…grudging resignation…".

On the contrary, Singapore has a highly effective and efficient e-governance system that has been praised worldwide. Since the country is small (274.1 sq. miles [710 km²]) the citizen representative meetings are easy to conduct. However, neither e-governance nor citizen representative engagements, address the core philosophical aspect of responsiveness. Alex thinks the first is about governmental services to the public while the latter is where people go to complain about petty matters. Bufeng's opinion is that "… (we) use e-government to smooth our lives, which are already running mechanically…methodically, not to discuss our issues…". Nevertheless, on the surface level, the initiatives for responsiveness are available to citizens, but core philosophy of responsiveness is the aspect that citizenry expect from the government. Bufeng believes that the government needs to adopt an 'out of the box' method to build a serious connection that could be mutually favourable. Since the country is undoubtedly not functioning on a European model of democracy, the researcher has requested Bufeng to explain the paradox of responsiveness and authoritarian leadership. "…government needs to

adapt, think 'out of the box' because unless they would not the loss will be to them as well as public in the long run. …this is sort of a…you know… win-win…"

Responsiveness is undeniably a win-win situation. Both citizenry and government can benefit from that however, how far would government proceed to adopt this, let alone adapt to it. Alex thinks that until government is willing to arrive at a middle ground, the responsiveness will always be dictated by it leaving the citizens behind. "…there is no consensus with public because it [government] is too influential and aware of its power to concede … and it has a deep-rooted mistrust of people…" says Daniel . It is a common opinion among the responding public that citizenry should be included not as an afterthought or in false piety but, because including them will be advantageous and conceptually it will develop into intangible wealth and smart strength.

7.6   Synthesizing the Discussion

Concluding this chapter, discussions are synthesized for comprehensive understanding of the aspects in argument (Figure 35).
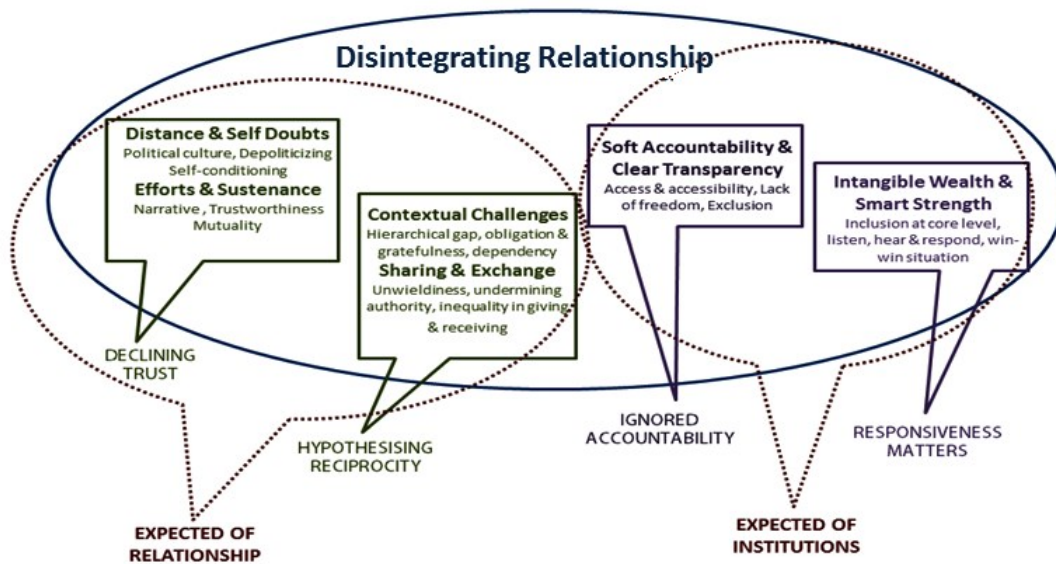
Figure 35 – Synthesis of the Chapter

Public on the blogosphere expected the values of relationship to be trust and reciprocation. They saw these as the reasons for the disintegration of the relationship. Trust on the part of the government needs effort and sustenance and lack of distance and self-conditioning. Reciprocation is a challenge due to the conceptual understanding of it to be included in the context. Numerous emotional and physical disparities and deficiency in sharing and exchanging are problematic to reciprocation.

Conversely, the public expected the government to have accountability and responsiveness as qualities of its institutions. Trajectories of access and accessibility, lack of freedom and exclusion from the core practices are the chasms

that were discussed. Responsiveness as a wealth and strength in a nation is impeded by the government's lack of listening, hearing and responding.

The researcher has understood that there are al number of outside dynamics that influence the aspects discussed here, and that they were not considered in this enquiry, which the researcher has clarified when deliberating on the limitations of this study.

CHAPTER EIGHT

ALIENATING EMPATHY

8.1 Introduction

In Chapter Seven the researcher has examined the factors of engagement that have emerged from the grounded theory study of socio-political blogosphere in Singapore. It revealed the trajectories of the blogosphere conversations and the problem of contextualizing. In this chapter, the researcher is integrating the aspects expected by the citizenry from its government and the relationship with the government in order to contemplate and politicize the process of political engagement and how it would lead to an improved and enriched citizen engagement by organizing the concepts towards a central ideology.

This will be discussed using terminologies such as fairness, deliberation and soft rationality.

As explained and discussed in pervious chapters, the grounded theory study revealed the expectations of citizenry and the state of the interactions between governing bodies and citizens. At an elementary level, citizens have perceived that distance, lack of sharing and exchange, exclusion at core level, lack of access & accessibility have disintegrated the relationship making the engagement apathetic.

On the side of the citizens, they emerged as immersed in self-doubt, wary, emotionally passive, insecure, self-conditioned and overwhelmingly pragmatic as a defense mechanism in their relationship and engagement with the government. Thus, at the citizens' level, where they are concerned they are at the steep end of the stratum.

Alex explains that the pragmatic outlook is developed, not as a positive manner of understanding the phenomena, but as a rhetorical method of fighting the despair of their place in their interactions with the government.

Daniel considers that the government has made the political engagement superficial making it hard for the public to find a positive way to engage. The restrictions on political freedom play a major role in shaping the citizenry and the government's relationship with citizenry. The researcher wished to understand each interview participant's views on the extent of their activism for an unobstructed political engagement and the answers were mostly related to the public's reluctance towards collective action. Collective action of any manner is forbidden by law in Singapore, without prior approval from the authorities. Thus, active collective political engagement is restricted, limiting possibilities and probabilities of dynamic civic participation. According to this study sample Singapore's political engagement is mostly outside of the mainstream; mostly online. The public engage politically,

through e-goverance and townhall meetings with their representatives, yet arguably these engagements are about services rather than building a discourse in politics. While the authorities are restricting the essentials for citizen engagement, citizens are constraining themselves through various measures because the relationship is sceptical and fraught.

Therefore, it is very significant for the citizenry to arrive at a win-win situation. The factors of engagement served the purpose of creating a win-win condition that will be advantageous to both parties. Naturally, scepticism prevails when deliberating the lack of freedom of expression and restriction on political activities.

8.2   Adopting Soft Rationality

When scholars contemplate the connection between government or state and the citizenry, they discuss the theories on social contract. Social contract theory argues the legitimacy of authority over individuals by state in the form of government. There were several concepts developed from the enlightenment period (though Greek philosophy is full of this idea) such as arbitrary sovereignty (Thomas Hobbes, 1960), rights of citizens (Locke, 1947), free will & democracy (J.-J. Rousseau, 1762) and later developments such as utilitarianism (Mill, 2007) and Marxism (Marx, 2004). The discussion of social contract that the researcher deemed

most significant to this research was introduced by John Rawls (1971, 1999) from which the soft rationality argument is proposed. Rawls's basic argument is that the moral and political standpoint should serve the least advantageous individual in the society employing the impartiality as the perspective. It should be equal and impartial unless inequality and partialty could serve toawads a more advanategous position (Shapiro, 2011). To achive this stance Rawls's suggested method is 'behind the veil of ignorance', where the decisions are made by imagining a hypothetical sphere. Rawls has reasoned towards a connection between governing institutions and people through the understanding of "…resources at disposal…" (Shapiro, 2011) "…capacity to reason from the universal point of view…" (Friend) Soft rationality is adopting these principles of persons' capacities; the moral and intellectual capacity, in adopting an impartial point of view. By way of explanation, it is meeting halfway on what matters, compromising for consensus, and experiencing the other by stepping into their shoes. It can be projected through emotions and practices such as empathy, benevolence, compassion, cooperation, generosity, responsiveness, trust, bonding, reciprocation etc. Furthermore, the factors of engagement that emerged from blogosphere dialogues are a projection of soft rationality. The citizen's expectations in terms of values of the relationship and qualities of the government are about the individual person's capacity to rationalize

universally. The citizenry's expectations are determined by the central concept of changing the moral reasoning of the connection with the government or rather the social contract. In doing so, they anticipate a transformation of core philosophies, adopting an impartiality or behind a 'veil of ignorance'.

As discussed in previous chapters, with regards to the social contract, from the perspective of the citizens, it is disintegrating, because the government is unable to think of 'outside the box' solutions says Alex. Visa believes it is because government does not share and compromise on the relationship, instead widening the distance, so it is the gap that governs. Kirsten is critical of the lack of trust government is displaying towards the public, which takes shape in excessive social control. Daniel thinks that the relationship should be that of compromise, a 'win-win' where people feel that government is alongside them. Bufen, by and large optimistic about the government, expresses that the government is aware of the unhappiness of people, but also knows it possesses the ultimate say in all matters. .

Thus, it all comes down to the question of impartial rationalisation to enhance the engagement that will see a paradigm shift in the social contract. To Han the connection with government is imbued in suspicion and cynicism and he admits his engagement with the government, in whatever form, is minimal. However, Visa, Kirsten and Daniel have faith in in citizen engagement; the improved engagement

they trust will lead to changes. The majority of the responding public believe that changes could be achieved through engagement. Alex is a firm believer of engagement saying that "…letting go means you lost half the battle. Above all you have to engage…". However, to citizenry, the engagement remains a government's responsibility, determined by governing practices.

Throughout interviewing bloggers/responding public and analyzing blogosphere dialogues, the researcher has observed that, despite considerable scepticism, citizenry believe that change in engagement is conceivable. They have reservations about the feasibility, but they have not resigned to despair. Visa is expressive when talking about mutual understanding "…heart of the problem is there is no mutual understanding…both sides presume to know the other side…"

The realization that humans are fundamentally empathetic has changed the approach of many principles and practices. Rawls in his fairness and justice is deliberating on empathy in the decision making process though he is extremely unclear when discussing the 'veil of ignorance', the focal point of his argument (Morrell, 2010). However, Rawls' 'veil of ignorance', a condition where conceived and constructed notions of individuals are set aside to form a hypothetical reality, relates to empathy through the dynamics of its implementation. It is through empathy that the hypothetical actuality where all notions of differences are put

away by concentrating on core humanity is visualized. Giving solid basis to explain the trajectories of empathy Krznaric (2012) says it has the ability to bind entities into being responsible for the welfare of each other, expanding the growth of human capabilities, and changing the perspective on communication and relationship building. An empathic entity will more likely to respect others' point of view and engage in reciprocity and encourage trust (Krznaric, 2012).

From the perspective of the citizenry, the government neglected the core principles to encourage the engagement that will ultimately improve the social contract. The government is gradually failing to conserve the connection with people, or it is indifferent to the perspectives of people. Referring to Alex's remark of thinking 'outside the box , the government fails to think and feel with regard to the public and thus alienates the soft rationality of empathy.

8.2.1 Relationship Dynamics: Revisiting Social Contract

In the literature reviewing chapter, the researcher has discussed some macro theories on social contract, which will be re-examined here to descern the relationship models that emerge from each to build the micro context of this argument. The social contact of Thomas Hobbes's reveals a relationship that develops through a transction between the government and the citizenry. Although it is a transaction it is still arbitary in nature. Hobbes saw the human nature all

together as uncomporative, and susceptible to promoting self-interest, even though human beings are rational. Thus, his idea of the relationship between government (soverinity in his case) and citizenry is that of handing over political power of citizenry to soverinity to control the basic uncooerative and self-interest driven human nature. Without this transction, Hobbes saw the State of Nature overtaking the society which will then be of "…continual fear, and danger of violent death; and the life of man, solitary, poor, nasty, brutish, and short" (T. Hobbes, 2010, p. 56).

Essentially, Hobbes has assumed that human nature needs controling, and that controling element should be establshed through a transction of power in return for a harmonious and coopeartive society. Thus, the relationship imparative is the transction; surrender political power for security.

John Locke, in contrast to Hobbes, has believed in the individual rights and liberties and rather than surrendering the right in exchange for a regulated society he emphaises the protection of the rights and liberty. Locke's state of nature is of liberty where the human being has the freedom and the right to live as he/she wants if it doesn't infringe on somebody elses' rights. The power was granted to the government to protect the rights and the liberties of people by penalizing the those

who violate the rights and liberties. However, if the government is failing to protect the rights and liberties, Locke has expressed that the citizens have the right to protest against the governing authority.

Thus, Locke's social contract has revealed several dynamics in the relationship between government and citizens. The basis of the relationship is the protection of individual liberty and rights, and the individual has the right to curtail the government overreach.

While Hobbes has recognized the state of nature as brutish and uncivilized, Locke's state of nature is of liberty; however Rousseau's state of nature is peaceful, until it was destroyed by the private ownership of property which has brought greed and greater inequality. To Rousseau governing authorities were created by the wealthy to protect their private ownership from who does not have private ownership, effectively protecting and promoting inequality. Rousseau's social contract is resolving this fundamental relationship which does not benefit all.

Rousseau's central claim is that "Man was born free…" (J.J. Rousseau & Cole, 2003, p. 01) and the man is no longer free with the private ownership of property. His suggestion was to build a government by creating a collective power over individual power, thus protecting everyone's property as a collective. When the

man yield his/her individual rights and freedom for the group there creates a government "…for the people, of the people" ("The Gettysburg Address,") Thus, Rousseau's idea of relationship between the government and citizens is of freedom, and collective will.

Rawls 's social contract was an effort to develop a well-ordered society where justice prevails as the basis of conduct. He has determined that the society is based on cooperation for common good, however he has seen conflicts arising from the distribution of benefits from the cooperation and conflicts from the contribution to the cooperation. These conflicts create inequality to which Rawls answers with principles based on social justice " …everyone accepts and knows that the others accept the same principles of justice" (Rawls, 1971, 1999, p. 04). Rawls's basic conception of justice is "justice as fairness"(Rawls, 2001). Although it is the common understanding that justice is fair, Rawls wanted to establish 'justice as fairness' as a political application. For this he introduces the 'original position', which is a hypothetical position where the man is evaluating the values for fair terms of social cooperation. He has claimed that the people in the original position will embrace the 'veil of ignorance' which devoid the information that compromise their mind-set and they will begin at position of all equality because they are devoid of information on divisions. It is in this states that the rights are determined, social

and economic benefits are distributed. Thus, Rawl's relationship dynamics between the government and citizenry is determined by the social justice as fairness.

Theorist	Thomas Hobbs (1588-1679)	John Locke (1632-1704	Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1712-1778	John Rawls (1921–2002)
Concept	surrendering political power for security and cooperative society	protection of individual liberty and rights, & small government	creating a collective power over individual power	" justice as fairness"
Relationship Dynamics	Transaction of power	Protection of individual liberty and rights	Freedom & Collective Will	"Veil of ignorance "

Table 8 – Relationship Dynamics

As can be seen in the table (Table 8), each social contract theory brings in a relationship bridge, a dynamic that is the focal point of the interactions in the society.

8.2.2 Relationship Dynamics: Soft Rationality

In prisoner's dilemma of game theory, it was explained why two rational individuals may not cooperate even when it is in their best interest. In this uncomplicated game (Figure 36) the basic concept of cooperation is explained. If both prisoners confess both of them will serve 5 years each in prison. If one

prisoner confesses while the other remains silence, the silence will earn 10 years

prison term, while the confessor will earn freedom. And if both prisoners remain

silent both will serve only one year each. If all the other factors at this point

remained unchanged in this scenario, the best possible choice & pay off will be

through cooperating to remain silent which is called the equilibrium. This is the

win-win status.
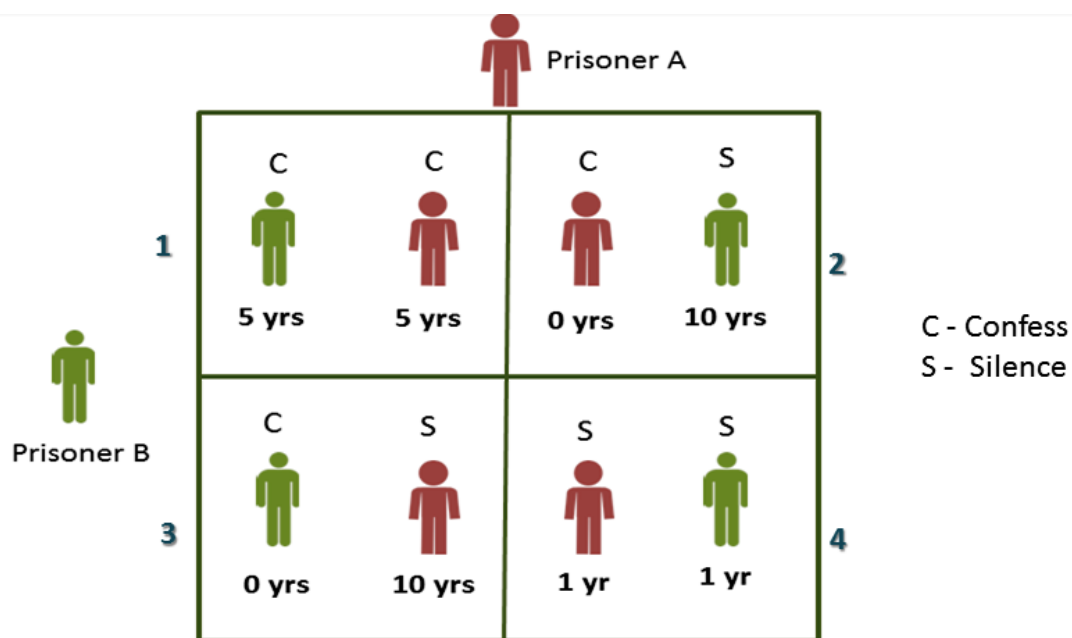
Figure 36 – Prisoner's Dilemma

Glaucon challenging Socrates on the topic of justice has explained that "...the

badness of suffering injustice far exceeds the goodness of doing it..." so it is

"…profitable to come to an agreement neither to do injustice nor to suffer it"

(Reeve, 2004, p. 37). The equilibrium is found between the best and the worst; the

best being able to do injustice without penalty and the worst is suffering injustice being unable to take revenge. John Rawls (1971, 1999) saw this agreement, 'neither the do injustice nor to suffer it', as something that should be acted upon behind a hypothetical situation. The equilibrium in the prisoner's dilemma became 'behind the veil of ignorance' in Rawls's theory of justice. John Dewey saw the equilibrium as 'intelligence', which he describes as related to larger social process where communities use shared methods for common solutions (Campbell, 1995). Habermas (Habermas et al., 1974) described a process of deliberation and reflection. All these concepts are about rational methods and actions, for a best possible equilibrium.

Soft rationality is an argument the researcher is bringing to incorporate the factors of engagement, to strategize trust, reciprocity, accountability and responsiveness in this context into the political system, with the purpose of those factors being integrated in to the whole scheme, not as an amendment, but an integral part of the functioning. Soft rationality is accommodating every story, every dream productively and effectively, so that the political system is both inclusive and efficient, because the factors of engagement identified here is questioning the inclusiveness and efficiency of the governing system.

Soft rationality is a combination of both rationality & empathy, a combination that provide mutually favorable solutions that are both inclusive, efficient and influential, because empathy is a very powerful force of human nature. Empathy is Imagining another's experience by stepping into that situation while maintaining self-other difference, It is about perspective taking, an emotional moral ground towards purposeful reasoning.

It can add intimacy, mutuality, and enhance the rationality with softer touch which could lead to binding entities for mutual welfare, increase the capabilities of individuals and has the capacity to change communication and relationship building.

If Rawls's veil of ignorance is the starting point to good governance, an improved relationship between government and citizens, then soft rationality would be suggested as part of the continuation of the process.

8.3 Discussion

This section aims at discussing the research outcomes with certain external factors and literature. The discussion will, on one direction, focus on dynamics of the Singapore blogosphere as an alternative media and another voice to improve the

socio-political environment. The other perspective is the focus on the ambiguities of government as a highly influential entity. The objective is to include both perspectives; analysis of the case study and the perspectives of the researcher whose objective observations and cultivated insights prevailed upon the presentation of this study. Charmaz (2007) has expressed that the researcher's perspective is very important in grounded theory studies to complete the research outcomes.

The researcher has commenced this study with the singular focus on the blogosphere of Singapore. The research questions were developed after a comprehensive scrutiny of blogging practices, bloggers and readers who comment on blogs. Singapore blogosphere is small in terms of numbers of active bloggers and readers, and the scope of their discussions. In the highly regulated media environs of Singapore, bloggers entertain a certain amount of risk of being noticed by the authority and also certain amount of notoriety for defying the odds. However, it is not similar to the prosecution of bloggers in another authoritarian regime because it was mostly accomplished through silent intimidation (communication from state councilor's office) and the notoriety does not carry an equal extent of motivation as that offered in other countries, because Singapore's blog readers are not exceedingly immersed bloggers and blogs and are continually conscious of being noticed by association.

Conversely, the other aspect is that Singapore bloggers are not professional bloggers. Kirsten thinks that this is one of the drawbacks of the Singapore blogosphere, because they blog out of interest and within time constraints. "…bloggers are doing this on a voluntary basis out of interest, which makes it very difficult for the blogs to really be sustainable at a consistent high quality. When we have to work our regular jobs and can only attend to the blog when we have free time …" This also has an impact on the readership, because the quantity and quality of the readership depends on the steadiness, consistency and quality of contents.

The researcher's preoccupation with linguistic patterns of the responding public revealed that they are mostly college educated, middle income level individuals. The researcher has described their rhetorical patterns in Chapter 4 and most of them inclined towards mentioning their level of education to legitimize their claims during the dialogues while some used this information to impress on others the self-importance of those individuals in the given conversation. Since, the researcher only examined English Language blogs, this competitive advantage is also expressed through the language; usage of elaborate vocabulary & complex terminologies. Han put this into perspective saying "…comments from tertiary or postgrad educated people trying to outdo each other at using obscure multi-syllabic words that nobody uses in day to day conversations…" Alternatively, as mentioned

in the limitations of the research section, this study does not represent a multitude of other blogs/responding public using Mandarin/Cantonese, Bahasa Melayu or Tamil languages.

Since, Singapore's blogosphere is relatively small; it is to be assumed that there is a blogging community consisting of bloggers and blog readers (fan base) that is active offline. Alex is forthright about not having an affinity with other bloggers. "… it is fiction, in one's imagination of being a community. There is no community…" says Alex and asked whether he would want to create a collective he further clarified "…am I out to create a paternity out of that…no definitely not ...no interest whatsoever…I think it violates the efforts towards a free discussion". Goorts imagines Singapore bloggers as solitary bloggers who blog alone and mostly with a pessimistic mindset. The researcher, with the experience gained from constantly examining a number of blogs for a long period scrutinizing various aspects, reflects that Singapore bloggers may blog alone but there is a certain amount of passion and conviction behind their efforts, which ultimately has the possibility to develop into an effective alternative platform. However, it is perceptible that there is albeit a considerable amount of courage displayed in their practices, the insufficient clarity of objectives and ambiguous focus on collective accomplishment makes Singapore's blogosphere vulnerable in their outreach.

The contents of the blog posts and responding public dialogues are a kaleidoscopic portrait of emotions from apathy to infuriation. As discussed before apathy is a self-conditioned status where the citizenry is engaged in the pre-conceived notion of helplessness assuming change is out of reach. However, there are a large number of individuals who believe that change is necessary and change is possible yet would not want to resort to the action to achieve it. There is another set of individuals who are enthusiastically vocal, informed, and would not hesitate to participate in actions to achieve the desired change. Thus, the contents of blogosphere inclined towards a balance of each characteristic, both informative contents and futile conversation equally. The researcher has observed that futile conversation is somewhat a guilty pleasure of the citizenry. They are unable to voice their displeasure openly and publicly hence they take pleasure in voicing their discontent anonymously online. The trepidation or anxiety is another element the researcher has discerned within the blog conversations and during interviews. When the researcher has circulated a message on the response thread of the blog 'Diary of a Singaporean Mind[31]', requesting to interview the blogger, the responding public started to continuously caution the blogger expressing that the researcher could be a government instrument bringing unspecified damages to the blogger. The blogger Lucky Tan eventually

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[31] http://singaporemind.blogspot.sg/

bowed out of the interview (Both online/face to face) although the researcher has no way of knowing whether he was inadvertently affected by the negative rhetorics. Nevertheless, the anxiety and concern remained with the responding public because they continue to refer to the researcher's message whenever they engage in a discussion of excessive political control of the government. Bufeng has refused to accept this incident when the researcher mentioned it during his interview, concluding that it is unmistakable fear mongering. Kirsten was sceptical about the extent of the anxiety while Han saw it as the problem of citizenry as a collective "[public] swung to extreme opposites…from blindly trusting government to blindly distrusting…this is our problem…" Alex, whose blogging activities are intensely scrutinized by the authorities, has expressed he can empathize with the blogger and the public.

Both Alex and Visa are philosophical when explaining the anxiety and concern, saying that truth makes people uneasy, because it is uncomfortable and in all probability far devoid of the expectations. Thus, rather than accepting the truth and challenging the fear, they remain comfortable with half-truths and fiction.

The excessive dependency is part of the lifestyle of the citizenry, and it is frequently projected through contemplations and practices. The citizenry depends on the government to keep the system on an even keel, without questioning the legitimacy

or advantages. Lingle (1996) argues that government accomplishes this by 'politicizing the economy' thus leaving the economic control to the trusted political supporters. Accordingly, the citizenry relies on the government to perpetuate a stable economy. The government, conversely, manipulates the citizenry by convincing them that their survival depends on the benevolence of the government. This is a 'Catch-22' situation which has muted the citizenry, preventing them from reasoning beyond government publicity.

The government playing the 'nanny state' (Kim Cheng Low, 2006) and the citizens being excessively dependent have significant impact on political engagement of the public. Kirsten believes that the public is still immature to participate in socio-political discussions effectively. Visa feels the citizens are well-educated and informed however, not directed in a path to be productive in socio-political deliberation. Alex expresses that people are too comfortable with the existing state of affairs and hesitant to muddy the waters. Goorts thinks the citizens need to be a little daring, which could be motivating and Daniel believes that change should happen within the system. Of ten interview participants, (the researcher discounts Goorts since he is a Singapore PR/Dutch citizen and his exposure to political engagement in Singapore is marginal) the researcher has discerned that all of them are disturbed to different degrees by the state of dependency on the government and

they are effusively aware of the problematic nature of this aspect of the relationship. However, their articulation of the problem of dependency is scarcely problem-oriented and overly broader in approach, thus it represents less likelihood of reaching out towards building a discourse.

The majority of citizenry of Singapore are descendants of a culture of Confucius ethics. Confucius ethics (Englehart, 2000; Tu, 1984) preach heavily on supremacy of the sovereignty and unchangeable destiny of life. In broader spectrum, Confucius ethics or 'Asian values' are not a phenomena that can be put under a microscope with its various nuances and thus defeats the western democratic thoughts. The cultural imperatives are unquestionably an important part of the everyday life of citizens, thus playing a major role in shaping their relationship and engagement with the governing authorities. This is one of the arguments against the western democratic philosophy, emphasizing that the eastern political traditions based on Confucius ethics are significantly important to political structuring in Singapore (Huat, 1989; Kuah, 1990). The argument that Confucius ethics provides a more coherent ideological foundation for a well-structured Asian society which surpasses the incompatibilities of Western democracy preempts the development of any robust relationship between government and the citizenry by its cultural restrictions which in turn affect the engagement. Fukuyama (1995) has expressed that there is

very little fundamental difference between western democratic philosophy and Confucianism at the core level.

George (2000) says Singapore is considered as an air-conditioned nation where comfort is utmost with a highly regulated everyday life, thus emphasizing the peculiar trajectory of comfort and control in Singapore's political ambiance. There are a number of scholarly writings on Singapore's political dynamics; politics of control (Mauzy & Milne, 2002), politics of nation building (Hill & Lian, 2013; Ortmann, 2010), politics of disengagement (Lau, 1998). For decades one political party is in power and they still gain the vast majority of votes. The changes in the representative political system in Singapore are not significant except during the 2011 parliamentary election where the leading opposition party has won one group representation constituency (GRC) which triggered a storm in alternative media. This has fundamentally challenged particular political beliefs; negative political aspiration.

The e-governance in Singapore is much deliberated in scholarly circles, admiring it as a successful attempt at public administrative management (Calista & Melitski, 2007; C.-W. Tan, Pan, & Lim, 2005). However, e-governance serves a different purpose to deliberative governance. Deliberative governance is concerned with engaging citizens for a discourse on decision making processes, while e-governance

is engaging people in public administration. Recently, the Singapore government has attempted to engage people in a conversation aiming to plan for the future by conversing about expectations[32]. 'Our Singapore Conversation' was a government initiative where the public was asked to participate voluntarily and provide their ideas.

The researcher had the opportunity to participate in two initial level conversations, and one secondary level conversation. At the initial level the participants were asked to express their opinion on certain conceptual ideas conveying how citizens would like to see Singapore in the future (

Appendix 7). Since the concepts were in an abstract frame, the participants were perplexed by the underlying meanings that should be discussed. Thus, the conversation revolved around trivial matters, and disjointed complaints. The

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[32] http://www.reach.gov.sg/Microsite/osc/index.html

citizens who wished for a constructive exchange of ideas followed by compromises were disappointed. The conversation was formal, traditional, limited to pre-prepared topics. The researcher has observed that the majority of the participants were not prepared for the conversation, in terms of their in depth of knowledge of the issues that concerned them. The researcher's interactions as a participant have provided an understanding of the frame of mind of most of the attendees. To provide an example, they were critical of the modern society discussing the need for thorough moral education with Asian values for the young, and they were all in agreement for the young to be taught to value their elders. The lack of intelligibility and focus and the invariable monitoring of the government have confounded the outcome. However, the government resorting to a discursive program is a positive step and if the citizenry were provided the liberty to liberally engage it would have served both parties' expectations. The researcher has noticed the absence of discussion topics such as freedom of speech and income inequality.

All the interview participants except for Alex did not participate in the 'Our SG Conversation' initiative and were critical of its agenda. Alex is of the opinion that "…one has to engage even if it coming from the top…" however, he was sceptical about its purpose and end results. His articulation of 'Our SG Conversation' reveals the extent of the initiative. "…from what I have seen of the national

conversation, people who have been given the opportunity for few seconds to say something, tend to say thing that are top of their mind, that are not necessarily well formulated or well argued. It is very different from someone who wants to write 1000 words article. He has to formulated, think through support, and has some consistence between the first and the last paragraph. That kind of discipline is not essential when you stand up in a national conversation to say, you can speak about how you are annoyed by your neighbor is keeping six dogs without actually them discussing a bigger issues in terms of what are civic responsibilities in terms of keeping pets. So the national conversation allows that kind of grousing without demanding that speaker speak in more general and deeper and coherent and intellectual way…" *[sic]*

The alternative efforts at engaging people towards vitalizing democracy are a constructive approach that would produce beneficial results. However, when it is top-down where government is involved from the beginning to end, its productivity diminishes, because the effort lacks the expected sincerity and transparency; not a genuine effort to engage citizens in a dialogue. 'Our SG Conversation' has become another negative mark regarding the trust from the perspective of citizens. When responding public and interviewees were talking about trust and distance, they were

struggling with the problem of both narratives. The distance is the attitude of governing while social control is the governing method.

The perceptible absence of freedom of speech rendered the factors of engagement discussed in here ineffective and unproductive. For the concepts like trust, responsiveness, reciprocity, accountability and ultimately soft rationality to succeed and be part of strategizing, there needs to be an exchange of ideas; a dialogue that would evolve into a discourse that develop these concepts from mere words to practices and strategies. Unless the free speech and analytical thoughts are given unobstructed reign to flourish and build a discourse on social contract, the citizen engagement will remain as Han has described it "…blindly trusting and blindly distrusting…" with no margin for compromises, thus unproductive.

The researcher was examining online dialogues where citizens expressed their dissatisfaction with the government, while remaining cautious, self-conditioned, in self-doubts, and emotionally passive. They inclined citizenry towards stepping back rather than forward which symbolizes their practices online and offline. The absence of convincing ideological positioning within collective citizens (even among bloggers) lessens the influence as a stakeholder in the social contract. The observable lack of leadership within citizenry is paradoxical considering the strong leadership which was behind the building of the nation. Over the years, the forces

which provided the leadership to build the nation have become the hegemonic forces which control the ideology. Scholars have described this development as communitarian democracy (Chua, 2002), ideology of pragmatism (Hill & Lian, 2013) recounting this new development as an ideological phenomena signaling the changing socio-political ecology of South-East Asia.

The researcher has observed a singularly important element in this study to determine the factors of citizen engagement. The public is particularly undecided of their objectives with regards to the socio-political change, which clearly seems to influence their activities. To evoke changes in the social contract, the citizens need to have a strong interpretation of their requirements.

Broadly examining the research findings, the researcher has understood for the factors of engagement to succeed for an improved relationship towards a proactive social contract, it requires the involvement of both factions moving for a compromise. The focus of this research is to conceptualize the factors for an improved engagement from the perspective of citizenry in relations to their expectations of the government. However, without a connected and responsive citizenry with a clear grasp of their requirements from the social contract, the relationship would not be well-adjusted for the best outcome because one party is at a disadvantage.

8.3.1 Contribution towards Urban Studies

Roughly speaking, an urban study in architectural context in broader terms is a study of the utilization of urban resources and the freedom of an individual to access the urban resources. However, Henri Lefebvre (1996) and later David Harvey (2008) dispute this claim by introducing the idea of the right to the city, claiming that there is more to urban studies or rather the urbanization process than just the utilization and consumption of resources. "The right to the city is … a right to change ourselves by changing the city. It is, moreover, a common rather than an individual right since this transformation inevitably depends upon the exercise of a collective power to reshape the processes of urbanization…"(Harvey, 2008, p. 23). This idea of right to the city expanded with the concept of social justice, a fair distribution of gains. Joseph Stiglitz (2013) who won the Nobel prize for economics in 2001, wrote book about 'the price of inequality' and he has lengthily examined the political uprisings that started after the economic slump in the last decade, and spread all over the world. The leading motivation he saw for these political unrests was the distributional inequality in urban cities.

Urban governance has failed the cities considerably in terms of securing the right to the city, because new dynamics have developed in cities with high influx of immigrants due to globalization and political turbulences. The inequality has risen

to unimaginable proportions in urban cities in both developed and developing world. It is imperative to understand that new methodologies required to be adopted for a better urban living, to minimize the divide that is increasingly widening. Increasing the civic engagement, not in the traditional sense, but inclusive of new dynamics is one of the methods that is introduced in this research.

This research is looking at the civic engagement and relationship building in broader terms, yet the suggested methodologies could be adopted for urban governance. Perhaps this format could have a better success at the urban level rather than the national level. The process of urbanization is highly political and the social construction of city needs diversely structured decision making capabilities (Eizaguirre, Pradel, Terrones, Martinez-Celorrio, & García, 2012). Studies such as this aiming to improve the structure of decision making focusing on each city as one entity will greatly assist the urban studies practices, because challenges in urban governance is its diversity of problems. In any case, urban study always starts and ends with governance and cities are efficient and just when they experiment in greater democratic practices

Conversely, urban population is growing fast, and majority of the population is youth which brings forward the important question of youth political participation. The discussion of youth civic engagement has moved beyond the point of the importance of their involvement towards the methods to influence and encourage their participation. Empowering youth can create solidarity and respect for institutional environments (Driskell, 2002) and youth civic competence is discontented by demographics factors (D. Hart & Atkins, 2002) thus effectively marginalizing them. This is where their interaction habits play an important role, because that is a common practice with digital generation.

Rather than depending on the e-governance and ,as discussed in the section 2.5, throwing the social media into the milieu for added attraction, it is effective to crowdsource the youth discussions towards an active participation. This research examined Singapore's blog discussions, to understand what hinders the political participation and strengthening the relationship with the government. This method could be adapted to crowdsource using qualitative method for specific data sets concerning particular issues in urban governance.

Thus, this research contributes towards experiments in approaches and practices in urban democracy through new social media adaptation in civic participation and

also towards methodological explorations in improving urban governance in urban studies.

CHAPTER NINE

CONCLUSION

9.1 Let me Conclude

The face of governance is rapidly changing. Throughout the world new ways to involve citizens in politics, to encourage their participation, to enhance their engagement are being experimented with and becoming productive. It is no longer a viable option to leave the citizenry behind when engagement can provide robust results. This research was aiming at understanding the factors of engagement that would advocate a mutually beneficial governance. The study focused on examining the blogosphere in Singapore, a country where the government is authoritarian and to establish the factors for engagement. The factors were derived from the perspective of citizenry.

The research questions have directed this research to adopt the grounded theory method. Grounded theory is an inductive qualitative analysis method where data or information reveals the research outcome. The methodology was selected to frame the best possible outcomes from the case study. The preliminary components of the research questions were citizen engagement, governance and social media. Citizen engagement became the research culmination and the governance was the premise

while social media served as the case study. The entire research is planned with the awareness of the absence of research of this combination, thus making this journey a challenging and stimulating experiment for the researcher.

The literature for this study was structured at the beginning to understand the case study and research methodology. Therefore, the early literature references, as befits a grounded theory study, were mostly about research on numerous aspects of social media, especially blogosphere and grounded theory. The results of the grounded theory study have advanced the further examination of literature.

The researcher has extensively discussed the data collection methods in literature and adopted data collection methods and challenges. Data analysis was conducted using commercially available software; MAXQDA version 10 and 11. Data analysis has examined two trajectories to understand the factors of engagement. One is the internal trajectories in the form of citizens who interact on the blogosphere. The researcher has a dominant interest in understanding the perspective providers because the factors of engagement are examined from the standpoint of the citizenry. The second trajectory is the external which consists of discovering the factors of engagement at the concept level.

The intensive grounded theory analysis of blogosphere revealed that the citizens expected two aspects to improve on the side of the government. The first being the

relationship the governing body has with the citizenry. They expected particular values from the relationship; trust and reciprocation. The second is the expectation of particular qualities from the governing bodies or the institutions; accountability and responsiveness. For these factors to be adopted and thus to enhance the engagement, there is a requirement to embrace soft rationality which will internalize into the core philosophies of governing.

Following the outcome of the grounded theory study of blogosphere, the narrative of the findings were recounted correlating with the interviews the researcher had with bloggers and responding public. Narrative focused on logically comprehending the broader framework of citizenry and government, the paradoxes of relationship and continuums of engagement with one another. The portrayal of research findings answered the research questions and established the hypothetical position The concluding remarks section in Chapter Eight synthesizes all trajectories that have been deliberated in this composition by discussing the outcomes with the researcher's perspectives. The study consists of three major stages (Figure 37).
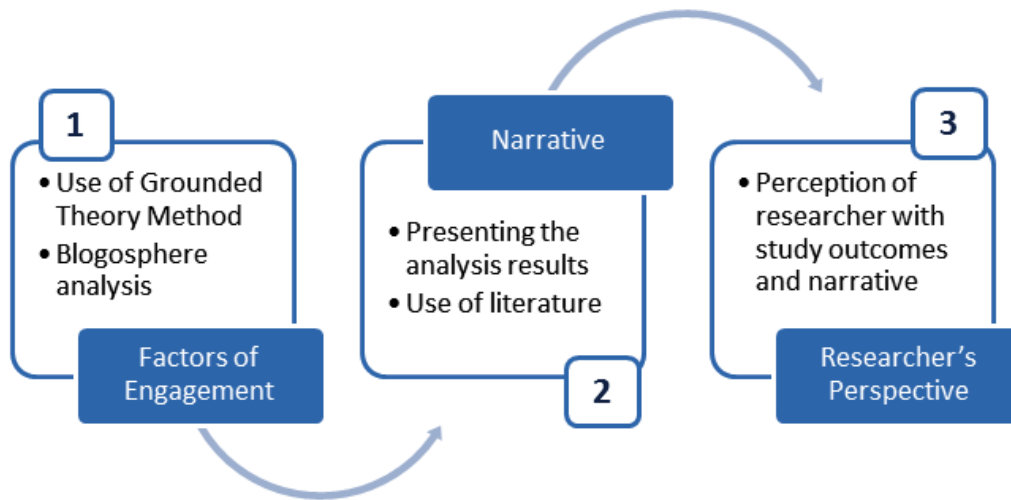
Figure 37 - Flow of the Research

The first stage has focused on examining the blogosphere using the grounded theory method to determine emerging data on factors of engagement. The second stage consisted of compiling the emerged factors and relating them to the research questions and construct and present the narrative. The third stage focused on discussing external dynamics and researcher's experiences and perceptions in relation to the narrative.

This research emerged with everyday sentiments like trust, reciprocity empathy etc. and grounded them by synthesizing and rationalizing using literature and case study. Fundamentally, this inquiry has arranged and positioned diverse spectrums

such as social media, social contract, citizen engagement and soft rationalities together to achieve a satisfactory outcome to the objectives of the research.

Hence, to summarize the specifics of this research, at the beginning of this research there were three research questions formed (Figure 38). Those questions basically inquired into how the social media contents can provide information to decide on factors that influence the engagement that could improve the relationship between government & citizenry.
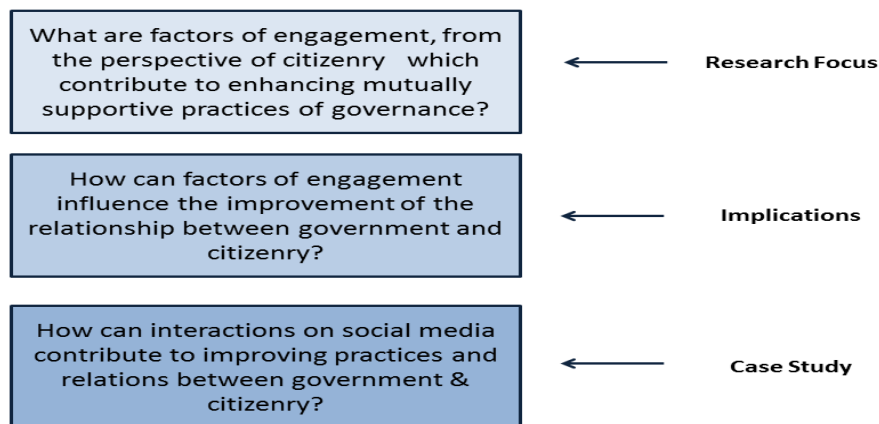
Figure 38 - Research Questions Revisited

The research framework (Figure 39) was constructed to answer those questions and devised a methodology for the data collection and analysis.

And at the end of the research data revealed that the factors influencing the engagement is trust, reciprocity, accountability & responsiveness

The improved relationship could be achieved through strategizing the factors of engagement through the relationship dynamic called soft rationality, which is combination of rationality and empathy.
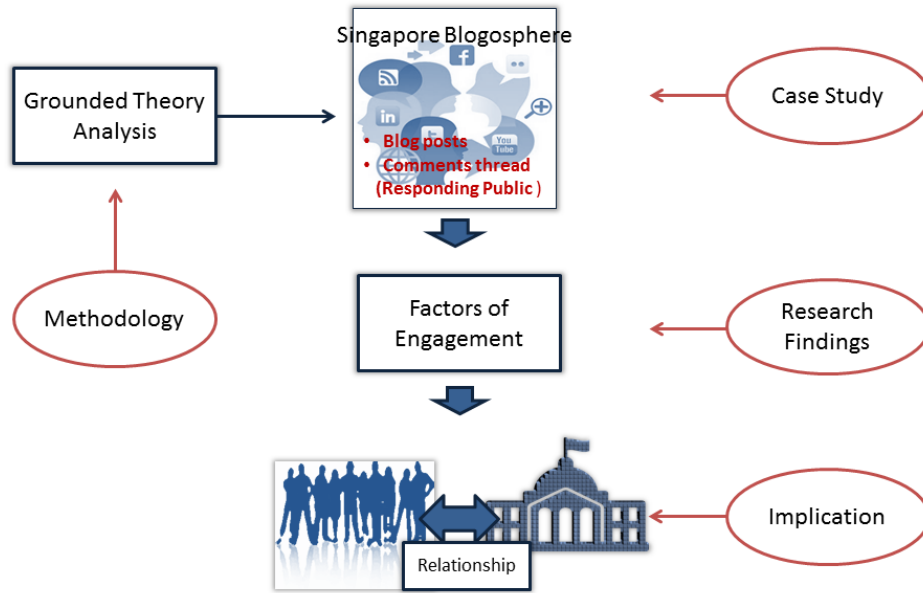
Figure 39 – Research Structure

On a Special note the researcher would like to express that this research has several outcomes, both conceptual and methodological. On conceptual level this research claims that the factors which influence the engagement are trust, reciprocity, accountability and responsiveness within this context which could be strategized into the process of governing through 'soft rationality'. On the

methodological front, the research revealed the advantages and significance of 1) online forum discussions as data sets 2) qualitative analysis of online discussions 3) use of grounded theory to analyse social media contents

Michel Foucault (2010) said that political economy is "...any method of government that can procure nation" (p 13). According to Foucault (2010), Rousseau reflected on political economy as "...organization, distribution and limitation of power in a society" (p 13). This research is discussing the merits of 'procuring nation' by 'organization, distribution and limitation of power'. Foucault (2010) further said "Political economy reflects on governmental practices themselves, and it does not question them to determine whether or not they are legitimate in terms of right. It considers them in terms of their effects rather than their origins" (p 15). Thus, this research is foremost in the domain of political economy.

However, above mentioned outcomes are results of studying Singapore's blogosphere. Singapore is a popularly known as a city-state with roughly 5.4 million (2013) in population. Thus, this research can be adapted to study big cities and their citizen requirements. Since the cities are becoming rich and the city governing is becoming more and more independent of nation state, this methodology can be adopted to research issues in participatory

democracy such as engagement and inclusiveness urban environments, thus bridging a relationship to the urban governance in the domain of urban studies.

9.1.1 Conceptual framework

At the beginning of this research, the researcher has recognised three stages of the research framework, each stage concentrating on the intended actions and expected outcomes. At this point, this research recognised three stages of actions that encompass the entire framework of actions (Figure 40).

At the initial stage the research questions were formulated, case study was decided and methodology was determined. At the conceptual stages, the concepts were developed and theoretical frameworks were developed. The outcome stage saw to the culmination of research questions, implications and final position.
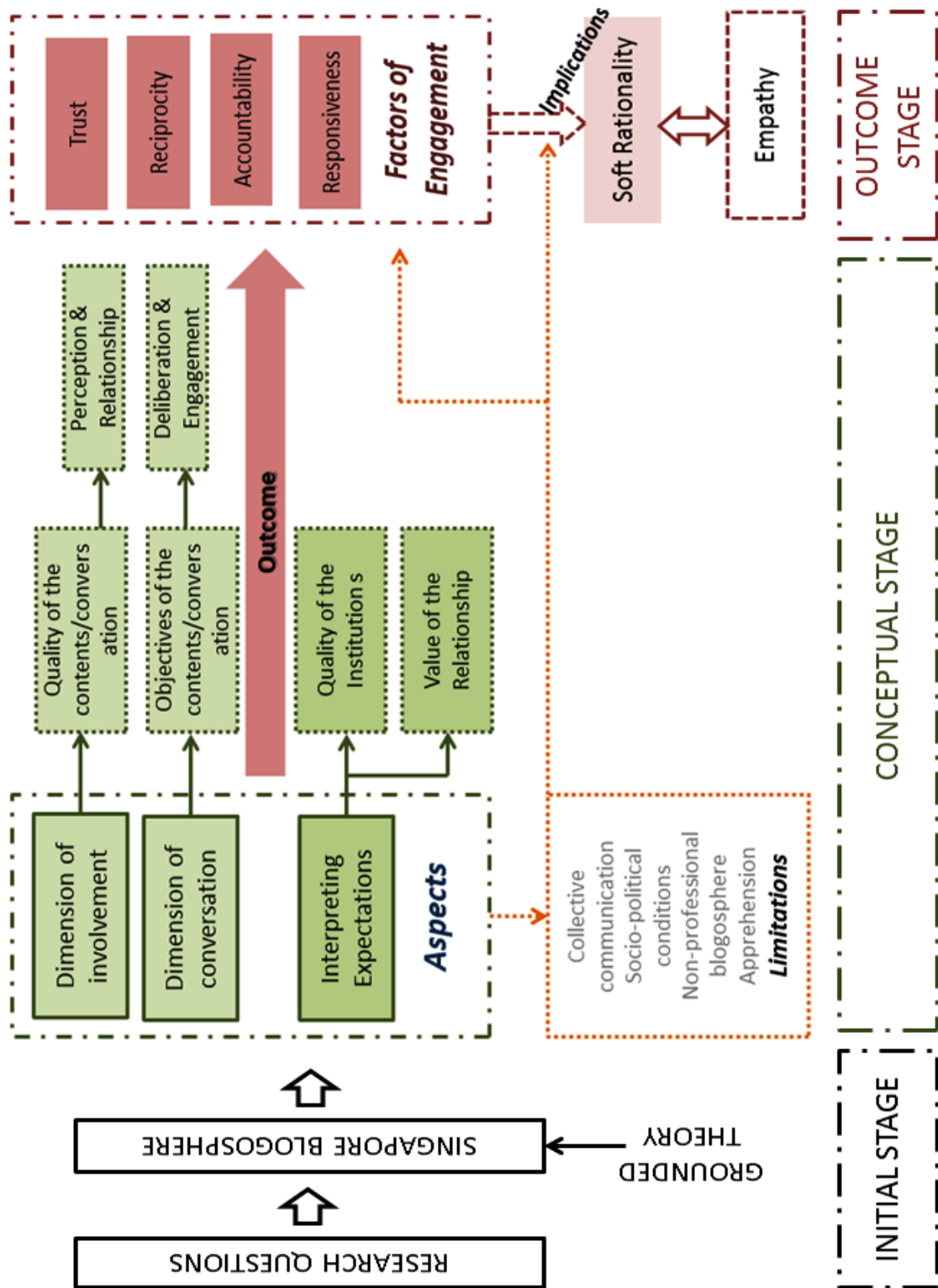
Figure 40 - Conceptual Framework

The micro level framework (Figure 41) is an expanded look at the outcome stage of this research to contemplate the objectives with the research outcome. The intention is to provide a framework for the outcome narrative. The factors that influence the engagement are realized as extrinsic aspects. Factors influencing engagement were recognized as having two aspects; the expected factors and through it the integrated factors. The expected factors were recognized through the grounded theory study of Singapore's blogosphere while the integrated factors are related to the implications. Extrinsic aspects lead towards the intrinsic aspect which is the relationship improvement.
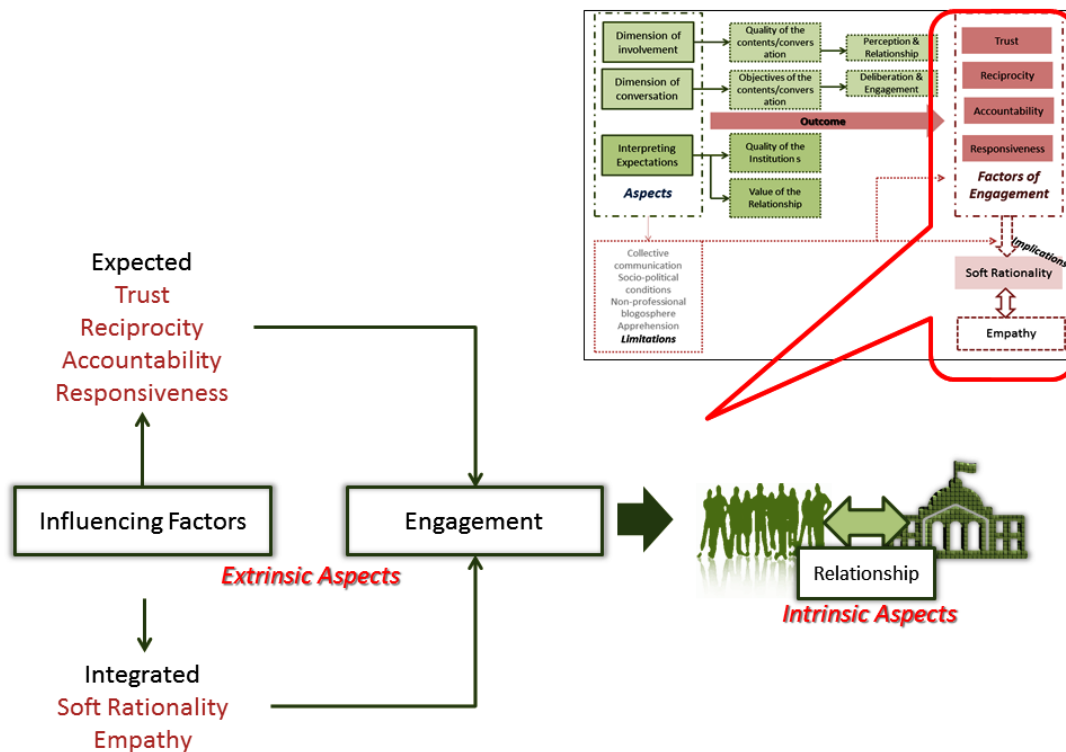
Figure 41 - Micro Level Conceptual Framework

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APPENDIX

Appendix 1 - Questionnaire

<u>**QUESTIONNAIRE**</u>

PERSONAL PARTICULARS- **To understand the person, what has shaped his/her life and what can influence the worldview**

> Name
>
> Hobbies
>
> Interests
>
> Describe yourself briefly
>
> What is your religious belief?

1. When did you start blogging
2. Describe to be how your blogging journey developed/ tell me where the milestones

PERSONAL OBJECTIVES - **what motivated him/her to this particular practice, and what objectives drive him/her, what are the fundamental thoughts on the effect of blogging**

3. What is the motivation for blogging?
4. What makes you choose to be an activist blogger? Alternative politics
5. What kind of aspiration you personally have about your practice of blogging?
6. Is your blog progressive & liberal?
7. What are your personal political leanings?

8. How do you presume the government should be in a State?

9. What are your thoughts on SG government as an institution?

10. What are the fundamental measures you suggest in improving the present governing process?

PERSONAL POSITIONS – What are the personal viewpoints, how it can affect the practice

11. Are blogs an alternative voice?

12. Do you think all blogs should be progressive and liberal?

13. What is the power of the blog like yours?

14. How do you see the blogging environment in SG?

15. How do you see the future of alternative political blogging in SG?

16. What are weaknesses & strengths you see in your blog and generally in SG blogosphere?

17. Are there instances that you think or you actually witness your blog posts achieving responses in the governing process?

18. Do you think blogs inform the society?

19. How do you think Singapore blogs can contribute to building an informed society?

GOVERNING & BLOGS – views on key components of the research topic

20. What are your thoughts on Singapore public and their relationship to governing bodies?

21. What is the progressive method you think that could adopt mutually by both blogging community (both bloggers & readers) and governing bodies that would facilitate both parties?

BLOGS & READER RESPONSES & GOVERNING PROCESS - – views on key components of the research topic

22. What do you believe as bloggers' duty to the readers?
23. Do you value the reader responses you received to your blog posts?
24. How would you rate the reader responses and subsequent discussion?
25. Do you think the responses you received to your blog posts contribute to a higher purpose?
26. Do you see any possibility of those responses contributing to a wider discussion of governance? How so?
27. What are the issues on which you think there should be a wider public discourse? What is your stance on them?
28. What are the measures you suggest in creating a mutually beneficial governing process which can be aided by including your blog discourse?
29. Do you think the governing institutions should include popular political blogs and their reader discussions into account as part of Singapore conversation?
30. What is your thought on top-down formal public discussions (e.g. Singapore Conversation) vs informal public discussions (as comments) on blogs?
31. Do you think public has an irrational fear of truth (social or political)? Could you explain?

Appendix 2 - Declaration

DECLARATION

I want to thank you for taking the time to meet with me today. My name is Chamari Edirisinghe, a PhD candidate of the National University of Singapore. My research is on examining the engaging factors of informally interacting public to blog posts which advocates mutually supporting governing practices. You are being interviewed in order to understand perspectives of bloggers and supposed mediations they advocate.

The interview would be conducted face to face. I will be tape-recording the session(s) and taking notes. All responses will be kept confidential. This implies, as part of a research your interview responses will be scrutinized by my supervisors and examiners and will be included in my final thesis, but will not be revealed to any other party. The transcript of the interview will be sent to you via email as a courtesy and appreciation and you will be free to correct or add to your responses if you deemed necessary.

Please remember at any moment you feel the need to end the interview you can stop the recording.

With your signature, I will assume you are a willing participant of this interview.

You support is greatly appreciated.

Interviewee - Name   [ ]

Signature & Date   27/02/2013

Interviewer - Name   Chamari Edirisinghe.

Signature & Date   27/02/2013

yawning bread

Blog   About me   Re comments

« Queasiness quiz   Chan Chun Sing's "reform" call hews to form »

search [go]

Atrocious police work: murder conviction overturned

Published 6 July 2011 law, crime, court cases . media   💬 58 Comments

The Straits Times did the right thing to put the story on the front page, for it is a very serious case.

Straits Times
6 July 2011

A political play by Wong Souk Yee, directed by Peter Sau, 20 & 21 December 2013. Book tickets now at www.ticketbooth.com.sg

Scandalising the judiciary

For an update of the case against me, please see AGC versus me, the 2013 round.

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58 Responses to "Atrocious police work: murder conviction overturned"

📡 Feed for this Entry

Desmond
6 July 2011 at 16:08

It is so funny, I was just telling my colleagues that the Singapore Police Force is only good for keeping the opposition in check and also to ensure people wearing "black t-shirts" not get into Starbucks.

This article really proves the point that the Police don't put manpower into things that matter but on things their masters want them to.

Reply

> **Poker Player**
> 6 July 2011 at 17:22
>
> Apparently "black t-shirts" worry them more than unexploded WW2 bombs.
>
> Reply

> **jem**
> 12 July 2011 at 21:22
>
> They do seem to have time to help make drama serials though. Got to wonder where their priorities lie.
>
> Reply

Chanel
6 July 2011 at 17:32

Two unrelated puzzles:

1) Why aren't police interrogations video taped?

Appendix 4 - Data Analysing (Screen Shot)

Appendix 5 - An Example of MAXQDA 11 Data Analysis Window

Appendix 6 - Memo Writing

Document group	Document	Paragraph	Code	Document set	Title	Author	Creation date	Memo text	Page	Origin
		0	economic failure as the fear		economic failure as the fear	User	23/10/2012 6:39:	Public fear is triggered by reasoning that if the current economic policies would not continue there will be a recession	1	Code
		0	taking advantage of the national conversation, work to make a c		taking advantage of the national conversation, work to make a c	User	23/10/2012 7:11:	Against the author Rather than criticising the government's offer of the commitee in the form of a discussion, should take the offered opertunity for the betterment.	1	Code
		0	Alternative actions\Alternatives better than the government introducing? Complying		Alternatives better than the government introducing? Complying	User	23/10/2012 8:59:	Against the athor's writing basic idea is when the authority is offering something make the best of it rather than viewing negatively	1	Code
	Heng Swee Kiat committee – behind closed doors and closed minds	69			Memo 9	User	23/10/2012 9:04:		1	In-docum
		0	limitations imposed in the national conversation		limitations imposed in the national conversation	User	23/10/2012 9:37:	limitations imposed by using words like constructive consensual researched These words in their negative form is used to limit the discourse	1	Code
		0	the topics that are not on the discussion		the topics that are not on the discussion	User	23/10/2012 9:40:	Taxes	1	Code
		0	wrong information about education, more administration of the s		wrong information about education, more administration of the s	User	24/10/2012 8:10:	Not 'wrong' Non-substantial	1	Code
		0	Instructions rather than encouraging exploration		Instructions rather than encouraging exploration	User	24/10/2012 10:53		1	Code
		0	Education & Institutions\education system and the parantal love-contarsting which is mo		education system and the parantal love-contarsting which is mo	User	25/10/2012 6:51:	Very subjective manner of making a point	1	Code
		0	Learning & Teaching\Mutual harvesting of late/slow learners - A system change		Mutual harvesting of late/slow learners - A system change	User	25/10/2012 7:29:	Volantary assistance by fast learners and a system change to accomodate them	1	Code
		0	Paternalism,		Paternalism,	User	31/10/2012 4:34:	behavior, by a person, organization or state, which limits some person or group's liberty or autonomy for their good	1	Code
		0	Human Rights\Human trafficking and sex related business		Human trafficking and sex related business	User	31/10/2012 4:45:	Guest talk at the discussion, theme of the discussion	1	Code
		0	Demand for prostitution and pornography is a result of human tr		Demand for prostitution and pornography is a	User	31/10/2012 7:05:	Pornography and protitution is a subset of human trafficking, P&P happenes outside of human trafficking and there are different kinds of human trafficking	1	Code

- Female national service.
- cultural identity.
  (Achieve statehood)
- multi-racial
  gracious
     diversity
  tolerance

- Technological devices
  more f2f talk.

- coporal punishment -
     right of children

Education & work bred

missed the informed
Society

Loving society.

natomalistic

- health care.
- poor not educated -
     parents not promisi
        them to go to
        School.

Singapor is treating
     poor well.

- invidualism -

- Education & Acade

- Rather lacking in
  political freedo

- lack of cultur
  impact

- still value the
     trad traditio
  conservative.

Appendix 8 - Code System (Print Screen)

Appendix 9 - Our SG Conversation Topics

SOME IDEAS FROM THE CONVERSATION SO FAR···WHAT DO YOU THINK?

I would like to see a Singapore···

With more kampong spirit   With strong families

Where life feels more fulfilling   Where we take better care of the less fortunate

With a strong Singaporean core

Where we can grow old with dignity   That is affordable   With many definitions of success

With a vibrant economy

Where there are ample opportunities for Singaporeans to succeed

Where government does less and society does more

Which of these resonate most with you?   What are the values that underpin these ideas?

?   Are there ideas that should be added to this list?   ?

Appendix 10 - Codes (Initial Coding)

MAXQDA11Coded_segments.htm

Coded segments

Comment	Document	Code	Begin	End	Weight score	Segment	Author	Creation date	Document group	Page	Text segment	Area	Coverage %
	The future according to sushi-Blog post- Yawning Bread	Human resource design, manual labour	4	4	0	Sakae Sushi's $3,000 cleaner-and-dishwasher job has many of the characteristics of poor human resources design so prevalent in Singapore	CHAMARI	1/10/2012 6:09:	YB	1	1	136	1.30
	The future according to sushi-Blog post- Yawning Bread	Sustainable solution to labour problem	4	4	0	Sakae Sushi's $3,000 cleaner-and-dishwasher job has many of the characteristics of poor human resources design so prevalent in Singapore. Even if they manage to fill the ten positions that the company has, I suspect it is not a sustainable solution. Employees will not stay long or will call in sick with little notice, causing disruption to operations. Singapore bosses often pin blame on employees' poor work attitude but few bosses interrogate their own attitudes towards their staff and their own limitations when it comes to designing jobs.	CHAMARI	1/10/2012 6:13:	YB	1	1	546	5.21
	The future according to sushi-Blog post- Yawning Bread	Describing the job responsibilities	6	6	0	Yesterday, the company gave more details while urging only "serious" applicants to contact it. "We would like to emphasise that this position includes other cleaning responsibilities, not just dishwashing, and is very physically demanding," it said in a Facebook post.	CHAMARI	1/10/2012 6:14:	YB	1	1	269	2.57
	The future according to sushi-Blog post- Yawning Bread	Describing the job responsibilities\Physically demanding	6	6	0	Yesterday, the company gave more details while urging only "serious? applicants to contact it. "We would like to emphasise that this position includes other cleaning responsibilities, not just dishwashing, and is very physically demanding," it said in a Facebook post.	CHAMARI	1/10/2012 6:15:	YB	1	1	269	2.57
	The future according to sushi-Blog post- Yawning Bread	Long working hours, contradictory statements about working hour	7	7	0	Brand and communications manager Gregg Lewis said the dishwashers need to work 12 hours a day, six days a week – from 10.30am to 10.30pm with breaks. This differed slightly from the nine hours a day that Sakae Sushi chief Douglas Foo had told the media previously.	CHAMARI	1/10/2012 6:18:	YB	1	1	265	2.53
	The future according to sushi-Blog post- Yawning Bread	Overtime, Central Provident Fund contribution	9	9	0	Earlier, Douglas Foo had mentioned that the $3,000 package includes overtime pay for the extra hours. One presumes that the employer's Central Provident Fund contribution is on top of that.	CHAMARI	1/10/2012 6:19:	YB	1	1	190	1.81
	The future according to sushi-Blog post- Yawning Bread	Employment Act, Work breaks	10	10	0	Some online comments have queried if the total hours contravene the Employment Act. Foo said they do not. Taking him at his word, I did some back-of-the envelope calculations, and found that the only way the job would fit within the maximum hours permitted by the law would be if the employee, despite having to be on station for 12 hours a day, six days a week, gets about two hours of breaks each workday — perhaps an hour-long meal break and two half-hour tea breaks. His net working duration would be ten hours a day.	CHAMARI	1/10/2012 8:14:	YB	1	1	523	4.99
	The future according to sushi-Blog post- Yawning Bread	Legal maximum hours of overtime	12	12	0	As you can see from the calculation above, after deducting the 44 normal-pay hours per week as provided for in the Employment Act, the balance 69.6 hours a month would be considered overtime hours, a shade beneath the legal maximum of 72 overtime hours a month	CHAMARI	1/10/2012 8:15:	YB	1	1	260	2.48
	The future according to sushi-Blog post- Yawning Bread	Salaries, foreign labour and local employers,\Salary by today's starndard of living	13	13	0	This works out to a basic salary of $1,941 a month (for the 44 hours) which looks quite good for a cleaner-and-dishwasher position, by today's standards. However, as I will argue below, it may not be long before we consider this below par.	CHAMARI	1/10/2012 8:16:	YB	1	1	240	2.29
	The future according to sushi-Blog post- Yawning Bread	physically demanding job, disrupts the social life of the emplo	14	14	0	However, what mystifies me is why the company thinks this is the best design they can come up with. When they design a job that is so physically demanding, they immediately reduce the pool of available candidates. How many people would take a job that means wet hands and being on one's feet almost 12 hours a day? The job is also destructive of a person's social life and emotional wellbeing by being so demanding of his time.	CHAMARI	1/10/2012 8:18:	YB	1	1	428	4.09
	The future according to sushi-Blog post- Yawning Bread	manual or machines	15	15	0	Has the company invested in dish-washing machines? The absence of any mention of such equipment in its public communications seems to suggest not, and that it wants its employees to wash dishes the old-fashioned way. [Correction: I see from a video of the Chinese program on which Foo appeared that he described the job as one of scraping off food from chinaware and putting the plates and bowls into dishwashing machines.]	CHAMARI	1/10/2012 8:19:	YB	1	1	535	5.11
	The future according to sushi-Blog post- Yawning Bread	Deviding one job into two	16	16	0	Moreover, why has it not considered splitting each job into two? It would mean hiring two workers each grossing 36 hours a week, at perhaps $1,500 a month. Wouldn't that be more attractive?	CHAMARI	1/10/2012 8:19:	YB	1	1	190	1.81
	The future according to sushi-Blog post- Yawning Bread	paying too little	18	18	0	The Sakae Sushi news story gained traction because it tapped into a wider sense that some jobs are paying too little. This "too little" argument actually has two flavours. One is that, given our cost of living, it is morally troubling that any worker, local or foreign, should be paid less than a "living wage", but I don't think this is the sense at work here.	CHAMARI	1/10/2012 8:20:	YB	1	1	362	3.46
	The future according to sushi-Blog post- Yawning Bread	paying too little\living wage	18	18	0	The Sakae Sushi news story gained traction because it tapped into a wider sense that some jobs are paying too little. This "too little" argument actually has two flavours. One is that, given our cost of living, it is morally troubling that any worker, local or foreign, should be paid less than a "living wage", but I don't think this is the sense at work here.	CHAMARI	1/10/2012 8:22:	YB	1	1	362	3.46

Document	Code	Beginning	End		Segment	Author / Date	Doc	W	W	Area	%
The future according to sushi-Blog post-Yawning Bread	disparity between wages of foreign labour& local labour, restri	19	19	0	The other, quite different flavour, is that wages for this kind of job need to rise substantially to attract Singaporeans to them. It may be quite alright to pay foreigners such low wages, but if we have to attract Singaporeans, significantly higher pay is necessary. This issue comes up as the government, in response to cries that there are too many foreigners in Singapore, tightens quotas for foreign employees in various industries.	CHAMARI 1/10/2012 8:27:	YB	1	1	438	4.18
The future according to sushi-Blog post-Yawning Bread	"Job's worth"	22	22	0	"Job's worth"	CHAMARI 1/10/2012 8:34:	YB	1	1	13	0.12
The future according to sushi-Blog post-Yawning Bread	"Job's worth"\Out of date idea of job worth, high cost human labour	22	22	0	Our ideas of "Job's worth" is probably out of date. We need to start thinking of any work that involves human attention as being a high-cost one. Your ten-minute $10 haircut will need to be around $20. A restaurant with table service will need to add $30 more to the tab per diner to cover the cost of wait staff. Even a food court that has busboys to clear your tables may perhaps need to charge $5 entry — before you even pay for your food — to cover the cost of the busboys. Plumbers? Electricians? Perhaps $100 per hour.	CHAMARI 1/10/2012 8:38:	YB	1	1	526	5.02
The future according to sushi-Blog post-Yawning Bread	nothing absolute about any job's worth	24	24	0	There is nothing absolute about any job's worth. It's all a matter of supply and demand	CHAMARI 1/10/2012 8:39:	YB	1	1	87	0.83
The future according to sushi-Blog post-Yawning Bread	High competition for jobs\high status jobs lose relative market value, job hirachy change	25	25	0	What it means is that sit-down jobs or high-status jobs that Singaporeans prize will lose relative market value. Salaries may not fall, but a bigger and bigger portion of salaries will have to be expended to buy human-attention services such as domestic help, food catering, cleaning of the estate, renovation, manicure and clothes alteration, and leaving us feeling poorer (unless we're the ones doing those jobs). Our idea about the hierarchy of jobs by value will have to change. If you want to earn big bucks, stop chasing an academic qualification; work with your hands.	CHAMARI 1/10/2012 8:41:	YB	1	1	576	5.50
The future according to sushi-Blog post-Yawning Bread	High competition for jobs\high status jobs lose relative market value, job hirachy change\human-attention services	25	25	0	human-attention services	CHAMARI 1/10/2012 8:41:	YB	1	1	24	0.23
The future according to sushi-Blog post-Yawning Bread	More Skilled & Professional workers demand low-skill workers (l	31	31	0	However, these skilled and professional workers and their families created a demand for more low-skill workers. Homes had to be built. More shops and restaurants opened. More cleaning was needed. More hospital beds had to be added. Inevitably, with the growth in the skilled and professional foreign population came growth in the low-skill population too. It was made worse with no attention paid to automation and productivity improvement.	CHAMARI 1/10/2012 8:46:	YB	1	1	441	4.21
The future according to sushi-Blog post-Yawning Bread	Locals Unhappy with the number of foreigners	35	35	0	But what the diagrams imply is how difficult it is to reduce our dependence on foreigners. Diagram 2 is unrealistic. Our choice is largely limited to Diagram 1 or 3, with some tweaks through automation and productivity improvement. An aggressive move attempting to revert our society and economy to Diagram 1 will mean a smaller economic output which will have strategic implications. Staying at Diagram 3 on the other hand means a continuing unhappiness with the numbers of foreigners in our midst.	CHAMARI 1/10/2012 8:49:	YB	1	1	500	4.77
The future according to sushi-Blog post-Yawning Bread	No foreign labour at human-attention jobs, rise in cost of livi	36	36	0	Perhaps the best we can do is to slow down the growth in foreigner numbers and work harder at alleviating infrastructure bottlenecks, so people don't feel so crowded. But once we start restricting the inflow of foreigners into the human-attention jobs ranging from domestic work to construction to cleaning to food service, costs will rise. The current (abnormal) period of low-cost human services will end. Your relative wealth vis-a-vis these classes of workers will decline. Get used to it.	CHAMARI 1/10/2012 8:53:	YB	1	1	494	4.72
33 Responses to "The future according to sushi"	GREEN	4	4	0	Well said, Mr. Au! I hope all Singaporeans realise this and adapt cheerfully.	CHAMARI 1/10/2012 9:04:	YB	1	1	78	0.29
33 Responses to "The future according to sushi"	Realising and adapting	4	4	0	Well said, Mr. Au! I hope all Singaporeans realise this and adapt cheerfully.	CHAMARI 1/10/2012 9:04:	YB	1	1	78	0.29
33 Responses to "The future according to sushi"	Happier	5	5	0	Ultimately this will result in more happiness for all. Really. Truly.	CHAMARI 1/10/2012 9:05:	YB	1	1	70	0.26
33 Responses to "The future according to sushi"	Lifestyle\2 instead of one job=happy, better productive, morale	6	6	0	As for Sakae Sushi, its sad that they haven't cottoned onto 2 x $1,500 jobs > 1 x $3,000 job in terms of happy staff which = better productivity & morale.	CHAMARI 1/10/2012 9:06:	YB	1	1	155	0.58
33 Responses to "The future according to sushi"	mindset change	7	8	0	omehow, this is related to Shanmugam's link to Korean graduates and their reluctance to accept menial jobs. Obvious from the comments that Singaporeans are of similar persuasion. It's as though a degree must entitle you to things ... but is worthless of itself. A huge mindset needs changing and not only of our Lord LKY etc. Reply	CHAMARI 1/10/2012 9:07:	YB	1	1	434	1.63
33 Responses to "The future according to sushi"	fairer society	10	10	0	Hi Ricardo – I realise this and am cheerful about it. It'd be nice to live in a fairer society.	CHAMARI 1/10/2012 9:08:	YB	1	1	96	0.36
33 Responses to "The future according to sushi"	social inequality\social equality in young minds	11	11	0	social equality in young minds	CHAMARI 1/10/2012 9:09:	YB	1	1	30	0.11

Document	Code				Segment	Author	Date/Time				Weight
33 Responses to "The future according to sushi"	victims to the Phenomenon	18	18	0	victims to the Phenomenon	CHAMARI	1/10/2012 9:10:	YB	1	1	25	0.09
33 Responses to "The future according to sushi"	High competition for jobs\higher pay + less taxes - locals, higher pay+high taxes - forei	24	24	0	Here's a suggestion: I can safely say that nobody aspires to become a dishwasher, toilet cleaner or road sweeper. So to compensate for that, anyone who take up these unpleasant jobs should be paid higher than the median salary. Then the human resource shortage might be decreased. The decreased shortfall can then be filled by foreign workers, but they should be taxed more.	CHAMARI	1/10/2012 9:15:	YB	1	1	375	1.41
33 Responses to "The future according to sushi"	Mindset change to accept the salary hierachy	25	25	0	That requires changing the Singapore mindset that workers in these Industries should get bottom pay. For a start, we may change our thinking that dishwashers cannot earn a salary comparable to the chef. As much as the food is important, they cannot be served without dishes.	CHAMARI	1/10/2012 9:16:	YB	1	1	275	1.03
33 Responses to "The future according to sushi"	Financial Security & Financial gain\Businesses the biggest benificary of GDP growth, balance in th	29	29	0	Alex, rising cost does not need to result in higher prices for consumers ... businesses in Singapore have by far been the biggest beneficiary of GDP growth which is aided, in large parts, by large influx of low-skilled foreign workers. It is time for some balance in the system and for businesses to share GDP growth with the common worker, rather than shifting the rising cost to the consumer	CHAMARI	1/10/2012 9:22:	YB	1	1	392	1.47
33 Responses to "The future according to sushi"	disparity in society, morality in acquiring wealth	35	36	0	Funny thing. Everybody else seems to be enriching themselves with price and pay increases and passing it to the consumers including the low wage earners and we are talking about how painful it would be to do the same for the workers. This situation has taken on a moral dimension When maximizing earnings and profits seem to be ok for some groups of people only.	CHAMARI	1/10/2012 10:45	YB	1	1	363	1.36
33 Responses to "The future according to sushi"	Weak to non-existence labour representation\worker has no voice nor bargaining power	37	37	0	worker has no voice nor bargaining power	CHAMARI	1/10/2012 10:45	YB	1	1	40	0.15
33 Responses to "The future according to sushi"	State & Government\Government Intervention, progressive taxation, non-capitalist	42	42	0	he only way is through government intervention by raising corporate taxes and personal income taxes in a progressive manner to claw back whatever they pass on to consumers. But that intervention can only happen with a non-PAP, non-capitalistic government.	CHAMARI	1/10/2012 10:47	YB	1	1	256	0.96
33 Responses to "The future according to sushi"	High competition for jobs\High rent, low salary	44	44	0	The other major cost component is rent. Businesses are paying too much money to the Landlord and hence they need to squeeze workers on salary. So if wages increase and businesses are unable to increase prices, then they will either be making less profits or losses. Business owners may then decide not to continue the business.	CHAMARI	1/10/2012 10:49	YB	1	1	328	1.23
33 Responses to "The future according to sushi"	Independent body for fair labour practices (An institution)	48	49	0	I'm not sure if I'm too naive here, but if the law doesn't protect workers' rights, if labour unions cannot do that, if taxation and redistribution cannot do that indirectly (all suggestions mooted by previous comments), perhaps we can have some kind of Independent body certifying businesses which are fair to labour - maybe a Fair Labour Practices label? Singaporeans who care about fair hiring practices can patronise only businesses which are fair in hiring. Well I guess it probably won't be profitable and hence won't be attractive, except to a niche market. And I'm cynical about Singaporeans penchant for fairness. And it only works at the final consumer point (doesn't affect business to business transactions).	CHAMARI	1/10/2012 10:54	YB	1	1	721	2.71
33 Responses to "The future according to sushi"	political freedom and right to express	51	53	0	Surely, your question alone reveals the answer: we SHOULD fight for the political rights and freedoms that open the door to workers' rights, independent unions and a fairer taxation system/social safety net. Please don't just wring our hands about our social condition and then still try our darnest to avoid drawing the necessary political implications. Get political, not avoid it.	CHAMARI	1/10/2012 10:55	YB	1	1	384	1.44
33 Responses to "The future according to sushi"	Sustainable profit	60	60	0	Sustainable profit	CHAMARI	1/10/2012 10:57	YB	1	1	19	0.07
33 Responses to "The future according to sushi"	Differences between high and low earnings, cutting cost	61	63	0	Otherwise, they will have to be innovative and create new machines or processes to improve productivity. What on earth will a CEO do with a salary, bonus of 25 million dollars? The ratio between the highest wage and the lowest wage must be reduced. Thrift is not for enterprise, profit Is... (Lord Keynes) Cutting costs is the most simple of all strategies even my grandmother knew. No need to go to Harvard.	CHAMARI	1/10/2012 10:59	YB	1	1	409	1.54
33 Responses to "The future according to sushi"	Naivity of politicians	74	76	0	does it remind you of the case whereby tharman minister claim it is possible for those with $1000 per month salary to afford a flat with naive real live example ? Isn't the question is why should we live with such extreme condition ? Look like this Sakae Sushi boss try to bullshit his way to impress PAP by blaming on lesser mortals and endup backfiring. No more Sakae Sushi for me.	CHAMARI	1/10/2012 11:02	YB	1	1	384	1.44
33 Responses to "The future according to sushi"	Salaries, foreign labour and local employers,	79	80	0	It's all a well known deception by concerted self-interest employers that there is more than real apparent critical dire shortage of employees to man their businesses. It is a question of being blissfullly and purposely ignorant of easily seeking out the hungry job-seekers out, even Phds what more, PMETs !!! The hoohaa ploy by the fat cats is all a disingenuous deceit of hookwinking the Citizenry (and, especially, MOM ??) at only wanting to employ foreign imports basically because these all out and out scums besides depressing our normal labour wages In the market, are cheaper, better and faster for more sheer blood and sweat profits to the fat cats' bank accounts. That's what is meant as being more foreignly competitive for us than against us. Morons !! This is paramount self-indulgent patriotism for thier own selfish business ends right to the innest core !!! Can't the incumbents discern this simple no brainer scam !! Incompetent and incapable of fair reasonable governance of Singapore for Singaporeans first, others, second ??????? MAJULAH SINGAPURA !! Profit is their prime motive. Just like the fat cats that employed the foreign imports and talents because these labour interiors are cheaper, faster and better at depressing our wages and displacing our PMETs, shorted sightedness at boosting artificially our GDP too monentarily, overloading our ancillary business infrastructure, evoking the first prime ministerial public apology at a national election rally, etc, etc. You know the rest. A political whiplash that was never seen here before. But the political	CHAMARI	1/10/2012 11:35	YB	1	1	1711	6.43

salaries are still the greatest and highest in the world. Are there any drawbacks for these terrible economic misdeeds ????

Source	Code				Author / Date / Time	YB				
33 Responses to "The future according to sushi"	State Re-distribution\State regulates civil rights\State-owned enterprises, price increase	83	84	0	CHAMARI 2/10/2012 5:28:	YB	1	1	230	0.86
33 Responses to "The future according to sushi"	Rent increase cause price increase	92	93	0	CHAMARI 2/10/2012 5:29:	YB	1	1	413	1.55
33 Responses to "The future according to sushi"	Control of price increase	95	98	0	CHAMARI 2/10/2012 5:33:	YB	1	1	1074	4.03
33 Responses to "The future according to sushi"	Authority & Authoritarian\authorities avoiding the issues	102	102	0	CHAMARI 2/10/2012 5:35:	YB	1	1	594	2.23
33 Responses to "The future according to sushi"	main causes for the issue not declared	108	108	0	CHAMARI 2/10/2012 5:39:	YB	1	1	148	0.56
33 Responses to "The future according to sushi"	Not enough locals to supply the demands	113	114	0	CHAMARI 2/10/2012 5:52:	YB	1	1	863	3.24
33 Responses to "The future according to sushi"	Creativity\Automation and innovative use of serving staff	117	117	0	CHAMARI 2/10/2012 5:55:	YB	1	1	1057	3.97
33 Responses to "The future according to sushi"	Value of foreign talent information	120	122	0	CHAMARI 2/10/2012 5:56:	YB	1	1	419	1.57
33 Responses to "The future according to sushi"	Student part time workers, Building personalities	131	136	0	CHAMARI 2/10/2012 6:08:	YB	1	1	1442	5.42
33 Responses to "The future according to sushi"	Student part time workers, Building personalities\Part time salary has actually shrunk.	139	139	0	CHAMARI 2/10/2012 6:10:	YB	1	1	37	0.14

Coded segments:

It is a well known fact that rent, fuel and utilitiesare the main causes of price hikes in everything. The biggest land/property owner is the HDB andthe essential goods and services providers aremostly state-owned enterprises.

In terms of total business cost, labour is more likely to exceed rental; a typical Sakae Sushi outlet would have chef, waiters, dishwashers, etc; their total wage bill with CPF etc would exceed the rental except in the most prime districts but in terms of "price hike", the trigger is more likely to be rent increases, which are usually quite substantial; wage increases are usually milder and more easily absorbe

Rent, essential goods such as fuel and utilitiescosts have cascading and snowballing effecton all end products. When fuel price goes up, everything that has tobe delivered, including services where even thedelivery is the service technician him/herself goesup. The passengers that rely on any transportationlikewise have to pay more. When operators have to pay more for utilities, againall their goods and services follow. As for rent, it is obviously going to cause permanenthike each time it is raised. Wages for most unskilled workers had remainedstagnant and some even brought down by contractwith little or not much medical, leave and holidaybenefit and incentive. Many had resorted to hiringforeigner workers which further depressed the salaryof the locals. As such, me does not think wage hasmuch to do with price increases in the market place. Well known fact maybe an understatement, for, knowor not, the said items are indeed the main causes, unlessme am allowed to factor in the Authority and its' policyof not controlling the spiraling hikes.

Hi Alex, I was at MG Chan CS's session at Buona Vista a couple of weeks back where he was talking about health care costs. He asked "what are the main drivers of rising healthcare costs". I answered based on what friends who run GP/specialist clinics tell me about the bulk of their expenses – land and retail costs account for more than half of what they spend every month. He promptly ignored that and began to give us a lecture on supply induced demand and other economic gems from his days as a first class Hons economics grad from Cambridge. You are probably right – it is not well known!

Rent,fuel and utilities plus high managerial cost for fewtop managers in Singapore are definitely the main causes,it may not be presented as such.

I take issue with the above. The problem of our over-reliance on cheap foreign labour began about 10 years ago, in the early 2000s / late1990s. How did we cap inflation at 2% to 3% prior to that? Did our economic structure deteriorated overnight such that inflation is out of control? The answer lies in basic demand and supply. Foreign workers consume goods and services when they are here. As the population exploded in the past several years, it doesn't take a genius to realize that demand for goods and services grew exponentially as well. For example, demand for hospital beds and other healthcare services has increased dramatically. Add to that the focus on tourism (healthcare tourism in this example), businesses need more manpower to accommodate the heightened demand. This need for manpower exceeds the available native supply (i.e. S'porean workers).

We should be open to best practices in other countries which use automation to increase productivity. Like a supermarket in Germany that only requires 2 staff, a German cafe that only has a cashier, and a Ramen shop in Japan that is only manned by 2 persons. Using the ramen shop as an example, it uses the vending machine concept like that of the Japanese 10-min cut salon, QB House. Customers select their choices in the vending machine and make payment, a coupon is issued and they enter the shop for their meal. This shows that even with a smaller population, we can raise productivity through automation and innovation using local staff. These staff can be paid a higher wage for their efficiency, and labour cost may not necessarily increase since fewer staff is required. The automation requirements of businesses can produce entrepreneurial start-ups that provide engineering services and even develop machines for further automation, which is what is happening in Japan. We have to think out of the box, instead of confining to conventional thinking.

On the low-end foreign labour side, the hard truth is we have to live with them for some time while we try figure out what to do. at least the PAP Government admits this is a valid issue. The biggest problem here is, where are all the supposed value created by the foreign so-called professionals? The PAP Government talks non-stop about attracting foreign talent but gives us almost zero information on their value.

There is a cheaper workforce. And they are call "students" . Get rid of some useless CCAs that teaches them nothing but marching drills and the importance of some are to the nation over others and instead expose them to the real world as early as possible. As early as the age of 12 where they can be meeter greeters, bubble tea makers, part time maids or even dishwashers, subject to age, maturity and safety. Tweak the education system where no studying is still very damning but studying too hard is simply a waste of their time which A* students will go nowhere faster/further than the rests who get B+, an added incentive to have a balance in their life. Technology therefore plays a part in simplifying job processes to make them as safe as possible as every parents want it to be. Remove the risk of long term injuries while a little bruise to their pride will probably be the best for them. It will not eliminate reliance, but will definitely reduce it, after all nobody in the right mind wants their children to be construction workers. At the same time, when these students graduate, they would definitely be much more wiser and appreciative of the supposedly managerial role they are trying for and make them more competitive compared to others. In this manner, we reduce the population needed, we fill the menial jobs that we now depend heavily on others, we push our next generation even higher on the ladder. What do you think?

Part time salary has actually shrunk.

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Code	Label	#	#	0	Segment	Source	Date	No.	Val
Heng Swee Kiat committee – behind closed doors and closed minds	State & Government\Government Committee, Change and Action	4	4	0	Another one? Education minister Heng Swee Keat will lead yet another committee that "should review what needs to change and where we should act more boldly", said Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong in his National Day message.	CHAMARI 2/10/2012 7:40:	223	0.51
Heng Swee Kiat committee – behind closed doors and closed minds	Skepticism and resignation	5	8	0	"We will engage Singaporeans in this review, and build a broad consensus on the way forward." Rachel Chang of the Straits Times spoke to academics, political observers and ordinary Singaporeans, and reported in her blogpost that there were two main reactions: First: "Another committee?" Second: "Will they really do anything radical?"	CHAMARI 2/10/2012 7:42:	414	0.95
Heng Swee Kiat committee – behind closed doors and closed minds	Distrust of government committee for not achiveing	9	9	0	People remember various other committees in the past that had grand-sounding names but produced 'forgetable reports. I have always thought that the main problem was inherent in the format, and there is nothing to indicate that the new committee will be any different. The flaws are these:	CHAMARI 2/10/2012 7:49:	289	0.66
Heng Swee Kiat committee – behind closed doors and closed minds	Commitee produced within the existing system, rose through it,	10	10	0	1. It is headed by people with a stake in the existing system — people who have spent their careers within the system, rose through it and currently have their political fortunes tied to its legitimacy. There is going to be a natural resistance to any idea that is far from their comfort zone, so how radical can they get?	CHAMARI 2/10/2012 7:51:	323	0.74
Heng Swee Kiat committee – behind closed doors and closed minds	Education\alternative methods of education, breaking the rigid confines o\Alternative stakeholder opinion disregarded	11	11	0	. It is trying to hoover up ideas from, it hopes, all and sundry, but as more likely, there will be a skewing in the the sources of inputs. They will probably get them from individuals, including some very learned ones. But it is unlikely that they will go out of their way to invite inputs from organised groups, especially those who have criticised the government in the past. This means opposition parties and even many civil society groups, formal or informal, will tend to be excluded or only given a polite hearing. Yet precisely because these are organised groups, whether of artists or economists, means they have been thinking about issues they are familiar wth for some time. They will have tossed and dissected ideas among themselves. They will have evidence at hand to support their arguments, they will have tested their ideas for internal coherence, and compatibility with other facets of public life and governance. Generally speaking, groups come up with better proposals than individuals, but because this government is allergic to dealing with groups, especially critical ones, the very nature of such a committee will skew it to inputs that are less well-formed, less tested by debate, and piecemeal.	CHAMARI 2/10/2012 8:02:	1220	2.80
Heng Swee Kiat committee – behind closed doors and closed minds	Conventional and orthodox in acquiring information	12	12	0	It then sits behind closed doors as prosecutor, judge and jury of all the (probably conventional) ideas that it manages to get; almost surely unaware that it will be viewing and selecting them through the lens of the committee's own orthodoxies.	CHAMARI 2/10/2012 8:04:	246	0.57
Heng Swee Kiat committee – behind closed doors and closed minds	Hierachical, insider-driven, like minded selective, closed-door	14	14	0	In a nutshell, the process is flawed because it is hierarchical, insider-driven, like-minded selective, with no way to create public buy-in of its findings, simply because of its closed-door process.	CHAMARI 2/10/2012 8:06:	200	0.46
Heng Swee Kiat committee – behind closed doors and closed minds	democracy allo\owing religion to enter state affairs\democracy in speech; allowing all angles\Democracy, public participation, transperency	16	16	0	The funny thing is that a proven process exists: it's called democracy. It's a process whereby groups of people – in political parties, think tanks and civil society organisations – would have spent years thinking about issues from their perspective and coming up with solutions, then selling those ideas doggedly to the public. Needing to be sold to the public, contestation occurs in the public arena. The ideas' flaws are identified, argued over and modified, and what emerges then would have been tested for public acceptability.	User 23/10/2012 6:20:	533	1.22
Heng Swee Kiat committee – behind closed doors and closed minds	Freedom & Rights\Freedom of expression, free media and civil rights\Freedom for political expression	17	17	0	In its narrow form, "strategic review" would actually be a national election, where different political parties present their vision of what a country should be about and strive to get their vision accepted. Of course, as anyone can plainly see, a pre-requisite must be to have political parties with the freedom and resources to brainstorm and package their proposals.	User 23/10/2012 6:21:	370	0.85
Heng Swee Kiat committee – behind closed doors and closed minds	Freedom & Rights\Freedom of expression, free media and civil rights	18	18	0	However, there are also parallel ways short of an election, in which a society can debate and arrive at a consensus about many other issues, e.g, on questions such as euthanasia, healthcare funding, single-parenthood, school reform or investments in roadbuilding. These parallel ways however, require a free media and an unshackled civil society. And a government that lets the debate play out without trying (as so often) to steer it to its preferred conclusion.	User 23/10/2012 6:24:	463	1.06
Heng Swee Kiat committee – behind closed doors and closed minds	State & Government\government refrain from steering the discourse	19	19	0	The best thing the government can do therefore is to free up the space and step back. This Heng Swee Keat committee is going to be little more than an imposter of a meaningful process.	User 23/10/2012 6:26:	185	0.42
Heng Swee Kiat committee – behind closed doors and closed minds	pre-composed agenda	21	21	0	One big danger, because it is almost invisible, lies in the unquestioned assumptions held by the committee members, which prime minister Lee Hsien Loong said would comprise younger ministers.	User 23/10/2012 6:28:	192	0.44
Heng Swee Kiat committee – behind closed doors and closed minds	pre-concieved scenarios	22	22	0	An example of orthodox thinking kept echoing back and forth at the recent scenario-brainstoming conference (yes! yet another one) I attended recently. Participants were asked to think through the implications of a few future scenarios. But everywhere I looked, one scenario kept popping up for discussion: that of "populist pressures" rising, government having to accede to demands for redistribution and more public services, leading to budget deficits and economic stagnation. Various shades of this scenario were continually thrown up by participants; it wasn't a	User 23/10/2012 6:28:	623	1.43

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