

## **Media construction of patriotism in national day news reports**

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### **Abstract**

National day celebration is among the means for the government to promote a sense of national identity. What is interesting is how patriotism is displayed in national day celebrations and constructed in newspapers. The study examined newspaper reports of national day celebration in Malaysia to identify symbols of patriotism. The thematic analysis of the newspaper reports on national day celebrations revealed that patriotism must be mentioned and the primary symbols of patriotism are the flag and cultural performance. These represent public displays of patriotism. Less obvious, but not less important, is knowledge about the country and history of how independence is attained. In the event that the younger generation is not aware of the contributions of the nation's leaders, the newspapers play their role in educating their readers. There also seems to be a competition among organisers to outdo one another in their display of patriotism in national day celebrations, and the media feeds into this frenzy by means of the space given to the reports. "The media's choice of patriotism has terribly important consequences for democratic life" (Waisbord, 2002) as deeper meanings of love of country give way to a narrow conception of nationalism displayed on national day.

Keywords: media, patriotism, national day

### **Introduction**

There is growing concern that young people are apathetic towards their citizenship, and lack concern for broader communal and national concerns as they become more centred on self and family interests (Morris & Sweeting, 1991). Youths become disenfranchised because they feel disconnected from events and movements in the community and the country, and they cannot be engaged to move along with the national agenda.

To deal with youth disenfranchisement, some governments have embarked on programs to instil citizenship values through the school and the mass media (e.g., Singapore, Hong Kong, Malaysia). This means of political socialisation into the national identity have so far been based on authority-defined notions anchored in the past formed on the basis of dominant views. Because of the flux in local and international situations, socialisation processes are different from yesteryears, and new medias and international political movements are having a stronger influence than traditional socialisation agents. If the attention continues to be on dominant views and dissenting views are not investigated, disengagement will increase.

The key to understanding societal engagement is to examine how political socialisation takes place. For example, beliefs of what constitutes national identity are formed from messages communicated by politicians, intellectuals, media, school and other avenues (De Cillia, Reisingl, & Wodak, 1999). Because of the changes in the sociopolitical landscape worldwide which spill over to many national political landscapes, the previous understanding of