The common trends of choosing personal names among the Chinese community in ancient China and contemporary Singapore have distinctive features that call for scholastic research.

From the ancient heritage of using surnames to the improvisation of personal names, the Chinese community in China has had a lengthy tradition in choosing personal names. Despite the dynastic upheavals in the entire history of ancient China, the Chinese ways of naming posterity belong to an unforsaken living legacy. The traditions and trends in China have influenced the choice of personal names in the Chinese society of Singapore.

This academic exercise aims to discover how the contemporary trend of local Singaporean Chinese names juxtaposed with those of ancient China. The undying legacy of choosing names was well-documented in published literature. For the former, a small quantitative study was undertaken. From the birth records of the Singapore Immigration and Registration (SIR), a sample was taken for this purpose. The sample used included the names of local-born babies of Singaporean Chinese paternity, registered in June and December of 1997. With this sample size of nearly four thousand five hundred and thirty records, a frequency count was done to track down the most popular Chinese characters used.

This study reveals that the impact of scholastic culture and folk tradition created a kaleidoscopic view of Chinese names well before our time. The findings also shows that the current popular Chinese characters used do not stray away from
those portraying the meanings of 'beauty', 'virtue', 'graciousness', 'capableness' and 'wisdom'. Such choices of Chinese characters differ from that of Singapore's nation-building years. The popular Chinese characters used then, reflected the desire of name-givers to wish for luck and prosperity. The drastic change may perhaps serve as an indicator that the economic environment has changed significantly for the better in this age and time. Also, the popular choice of Chinese characters that represent the betterment of one's inner qualities may signify the great leap ahead into an age of individual graciousness. More research is necessary for achieving further insight in the practices of choosing personal names amongst local Chinese many of whom would live well into the next millennium.