

Official Launch of the Centre for Family and Population Research
& Conference on Singapore Families and Population Dynamics

April 28, 2015 | 10.00am – 6.00pm | NUS University Hall Auditorium

10.00 – 10.30	REGISTRATION
10.30 – 11.30	LAUNCH CEREMONY
	<p>Welcome Address by Professor TAN Chorh Chuan <i>President, National University of Singapore</i></p> <p>Remarks by Guest of Honour Ms Grace FU Hai Yen <i>Minister, Prime Minister's Office</i> <i>Second Minister for the Environment and Water Resources</i> <i>Second Minister for Foreign Affairs</i></p> <p>Professor Brenda YEOH <i>Dean, Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences, National University of Singapore</i></p> <p>Professor Jean YEUNG <i>Director, Centre for Family and Population Research</i> <i>Professor, Department of Sociology and Asia Research Institute</i></p> <p>Official Launch Ceremony</p>
11.30 – 12.30	LUNCH
12.30 – 1.50	POPULATION DYNAMICS AND FAMILY RELATIONS
<i>Chairperson</i>	Paul CHEUNG , <i>Department of Social Work, National University of Singapore</i>
12.30	Singapore Population and Family Issues: Limits to Efficacy of Government Policy Gavin JONES , <i>Australian Demographic and Social Research Institute, Australian National University and Asia Research Institute, Murdoch University</i>
12.50	Singaporeans' Perceptions of the Marriage and Parenthood Package 2013 YAP Mui Teng , <i>Institute of Policy Studies, National University of Singapore</i>
1.10	Intergenerational Transfers among Older Singaporeans Angelique CHAN , <i>Centre for Ageing Research & Education, Duke-NUS Graduate Medical School</i> Bina GUBHAJU , <i>Tsao Foundation Aging Research Initiative, National University of Singapore</i>
1.30	Q & A
1.50 – 3.25	CHANGES IN STRUCTURE AND VALUES IN SINGAPORE FAMILIES
<i>Chairperson</i>	THANG Leng Leng , <i>Department of Japanese Studies, National University of Singapore</i>
1.50	Evolution of Structure and Values in Singapore Chinese Families from 1940 to 2015 NG Yew Keng , <i>Singapore Genealogy Society</i>
2.10	The Rise of Dual-income Households and the Consistency or Inconsistency of Religion in Determining the Social Dynamics of the Malay Family: 1959 till 2005 Suriani SURATMAN , <i>Malay Studies Department, National University of Singapore</i> Maznah MOHAMAD , <i>Malay and Southeast Asian Studies Departments, National University of Singapore</i>
2.30	Economic, Educational and Migratory Trajectories amongst Indian Families in Singapore Lavanya RAMESH , <i>Department of Sociology, National University of Singapore</i>
2.50	Q & A

3.10 – 3.25	TEA BREAK
3.25 – 4.25	CHILDREN AND YOUNG ADULTS IN SINGAPORE
Chairperson	Vincent CHUA , <i>Department of Sociology, National University of Singapore</i>
3.25	Key trends in the relationship between parenting and schooling in Singapore Jason TAN , <i>Policy and Leadership Studies, National Institute of Education</i> Lana KHONG , <i>Policy and Leadership Studies, National Institute of Education</i>
3.45	Entering Adulthood: Mobile Communication between Parents and their Emerging Adult Children LIM Lee Ming , <i>Department of Communications and New Media, National University of Singapore</i> LIM Sun Sun , <i>Department of Communications and New Media & Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences, National University of Singapore</i>
4.05	Q & A
4.25 – 5.25	POLICIES FOR VULNERABLE FAMILIES IN SINGAPORE
Chairperson	Catherine TANG , <i>Department of Psychology, National University of Singapore</i>
4.25	Female-headed households in Singapore: the case of never married and divorced mothers Shawna TANG , <i>Asia Research Institute, National University of Singapore</i> Sharon QUAH , <i>Asia Research Institute, National University of Singapore</i>
4.45	Falling Short: Performing the Familial while Low-income in Contemporary Singapore TEO You Yenn , <i>Division of Sociology, Nanyang Technological University</i>
5.05	Q & A
5.25 – 6.00	CONCLUDING SESSION: FUTURE RESEARCH AND PRACTICE ON SINGAPORE FAMILIES
5.25	The Singapore Panel Study on Social Dynamics: lessons from the research journey thus far TAN Ern Ser , <i>Lee Kuan Yew School of Public Policy, National University of Singapore</i> Paveena SEAH , <i>Lee Kuan Yew School of Public Policy, National University of Singapore</i>
5.45	Closing Remarks Jean YEUNG , <i>Director, Centre for Family and Population Studies</i>
END OF CONFERENCE	

ABSTRACTS

1. SINGAPORE POPULATION AND FAMILY ISSUES: LIMITS TO EFFICACY OF GOVERNMENT POLICY

Gavin JONES

Abstract

The Singapore government has always followed an interventionist strategy with regard to both population and family policy. The aim has been to maximize wellbeing of Singapore citizens, through policies in three areas: (1) influencing people's family building decisions; (2) modification of the Singapore workforce through the import of both skilled and unskilled contract workers; (3) increasing the resident and citizen population through selective award of permanent residence and citizenship. In earlier times, population policy was simpler, focused on lowering the family size from an unsustainable six children per woman to much lower levels. This policy succeeded beyond government expectations (reflected in a failure to modify policies until long after fertility fell well below replacement level), though there is uncertainty about how much of the success was due to family planning policy and how much to other aspects of social and economic change.

The issue for policy is now the reverse of that faced in the 1960s and 1970s. How to raise fertility rates from ultra-low levels, to ensure that there will be enough Singaporeans to enjoy the fruits of social and economic development, and to enable that development to continue? Of course, migrant workers could fill the gap, at all skill levels. But the Singaporean public do not want to become the equivalent of the Arab population of the Gulf states – outnumbered by and reliant on a massive foreign worker population. And many of them, it seems, are not disposed to marrying and raising families either, at least under current circumstances. Herein lies the dilemma for government. How to reconcile its economic strategies with the twin challenges of keeping foreign worker numbers within the limits of public tolerance and encouraging Singaporeans to produce more children so that the reliance on foreign workers can be reduced? Singapore, like South Korea, it seems, is struggling with some of the consequences of “compressed modernity”. In this context, there are real limits to efficacy of government policy.

About the speaker

Gavin Jones retired at the end of 2014 as Director of the JY Pillay Comparative Asia Research Centre at the National University of Singapore. He was with the NUS for more than 11 years. After working for the Population Council in New York, Thailand and Indonesia, he moved to Canberra and worked in the Demography and Sociology Program at the Australian National University for 28 years, serving as head of program for an eight-year period. Professor Jones has conducted research on varied subjects in the field of demography and human resource development, in recent years focusing especially on low fertility regimes in Asia, delayed and non-marriage, urbanization issues, and equity aspects of educational development. He has served as consultant to many international agencies, and has published about 30 books and monographs and some 170 refereed journal articles and book chapters. Professor Jones now lives in Perth, and is an associate of the Australian Demographic and Social Research Institute at the Australian National University and of the Asia Research Institute, Murdoch University.

2. SINGAPOREANS' PERCEPTIONS OF THE MARRIAGE AND PARENTHOOD PACKAGE 2013

YAP Mui Teng

Institute of Policy Studies, Lee Kuan Yew School of Public Policy, National University of Singapore

Abstract

Singapore's Total Fertility Rate (TFR) has been below the replacement level since the mid-1970s and below the 1.3 births per woman level since the early 2000s. On the other hand, several rounds of national surveys have also revealed that most Singaporeans intend to have two or three children. While fertility preferences remain high, there appear to be barriers to achieving these goals. The Singapore government has put in place comprehensive suites of Marriage and Parenthood measures to ease the burden of childbearing and make Singapore a more family friendly place to bring up children in. The latest of these enhancements were announced in 2013.

This presentation draws on a poll of 2,000 married Singaporeans on their knowledge of the Marriage and Parenthood measures and their attitudes towards these. Face-to-face interviews were conducted about one year after the announcement of the package. The study was conducted by the Institute of Policy Studies as part of its Perceptions of Policies in Singapore (POPS) series.

About the speaker

Dr Yap Mui Teng is a Senior Research Fellow at the Institute of Policy Studies, Lee Kuan Yew School of Public Policy, National University of Singapore. She is also an Associate of the Changing Family in Asia cluster at the Asia Research Institute (ARI), National University of Singapore.

Her research interests include policy responses to low fertility in Singapore and elsewhere, policies on the aged, migration policies, and health and social policies in ageing societies.

Her recent publications include a co-edited volume entitled Migration and Integration in Singapore; Policies and Practice (co-editors Gillian Koh and Debbie Soon), published by Routledge in 2014; and a book chapter entitled, "Immigration in Singapore; An Overview" in Immigration in Singapore, edited by Norman Vasu, Yeap Su Yin and Chan Wen Ling, Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2014. In 2013, she published a co-edited book, Economic Stress, Human Capital and Families in Asia; Research and Policy Challenges (co-editor: Jean Yeung), Springer: 2013.

3. INTERGENERATIONAL TRANSFERS AMONG OLDER SINGAPOREANS

Angelique CHAN

Centre for Ageing Research & Education, Duke-NUS Graduate Medical School

Bina GUBHAJU

Tsao Foundation Aging Research Initiative, National University of Singapore

Abstract

The family has historically been the main provider of support for older adults in Singapore. Demographic changes over the past 50 years, in particular, increases in longevity, smaller family sizes, increases in non-marriage and divorce rates and migration may be associated with changes in how older adults and children support each other. Recent evidence has shown that older adults are not only recipients of care but also providers of care for their children and grandchildren. We use cross-sectional data collected in 2011 on a cohort of older Singaporeans (62+) to examine intergenerational transfer patterns. Previous studies have identified a number of key determinants such as age, gender, marital status, number of living children and health status on receipt and provision of transfers. However, gender and marital status are often analyzed separately. We focus on the interaction between gender and marital status in predicting intergenerational transfers, by type, and direction. We are particularly interested in the effect of being female and “single” (never married/divorced/separated/widowed). Typically, “single” women are hypothesized to be mainly receivers of support. We test this hypothesis using data from the 2011 *Panel on Health and Aging of Older Singaporeans* survey. The survey provides a rich source of data on both the receipt and provision of several types of transfers among 3,103 elderly Singaporeans. Our preliminary results show that women are more likely to both receive and provide monetary and time transfers compared to men. The effect of being “single” on intergenerational flows differs by whether the older person is widowed, divorced/separated or never married. Widowed women are more likely to receive *and* provide monetary and time transfers compared to widowed men. Marital status and gender affect intergenerational transfers in later life and we discuss the policy implications of these findings.

About the speaker

Dr Angelique Chan holds joint appointments as Associate Professor in the Signature Program in Health Services & Systems Research, Duke-NUS Graduate Medical School and the Department of Sociology, NUS. She is Executive Director of the Centre for Ageing Research & Education (Duke-NUS). Dr Chan obtained her undergraduate degree, BA (Sociology) from Reed College, her PhD(Sociology) from the University of California at Los Angeles as a Rockefeller Foundation PhD fellowship awardee, and a US National Institute of Aging Post-Doctoral degree at the University of Michigan.

Her current research examines disability transitions, mortality, and the effects of social support on health, caregiver burden, and use of long-term care services. She has published widely on aging issues in leading international journals including the *Journal of American Geriatrics Society*, *Journal of Aging and Health*, and *Journal of Gerontology Series B: Social Sciences* and book chapters. She is co-author of a book titled [Ageing in Singapore: Service Needs & the State](#) (Routledge 2006) and [Co-editor of Ultra-low Fertility in Pacific Asia: Trends, Causes and Policy Issues](#) (Routledge 2009).

Her international work includes working with collaborators from Japan and USA on caregiving, work and retirement, and disability transitions. She has consulted for Singapore Ministry of Health, Ministry of Social and Family Development, Agency for Integrated Health, the United Nations, Temasek Foundation and the World Bank.

Bina GUBHAJU is a Senior Research Fellow at the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences, National University of Singapore. She is currently working on a number of projects related to aging in Singapore under the NUS-Tsao Aging Research Initiative. She completed her PhD in Sociology and Demography from the Pennsylvania State University. Since then she has worked on various research projects at academic research institutes in Singapore and Australia on research areas ranging from marriage trends in Southeast and East Asia to social policy, family and children’s wellbeing in Australia.

4. EVOLUTION OF STRUCTURE AND VALUES IN SINGAPORE CHINESE FAMILIES FROM 1940 TO 2015

NG Yew Kang

Genealogy Society Singapore

Abstract

Using a case study of a Chinese family, the paper traces the change in the size, structure and value systems in Singapore families in the Chinese community.

In the 1940s to 1960s, the typical structure of a Chinese family in Singapore was a large, multi-generation extended family living under one roof. Average size was 12, comprising grandparents, parents and 8 children. Housing and living conditions were poor, but the family value system was strong. Filial piety was central and respect for the elders was the norm. Working children were duty bound to look after parents. Grandparents took pleasure in looking after grandchildren and regarded a closely-knit and harmonious family as life's ultimate satisfaction. Diligence, family unity, mutual help & networking, and ability to exploit prevailing opportunities were the success formula.

From the 1960s to the present, Singapore has become a Developed Nation. The family structure and value system have changed correspondingly. The extended family has progressively given way to the nucleus family, with an average size of 4, comprising 2 parents and 2 children.

Family relationship has also become more distant. Grandchildren often do not know the life and times of grandparents. Cousins, nephews and nieces may not recognize one another due to infrequent family gatherings. People has little clue about their roots.

The rootlessness among Singapore families is a cause for concern. To help arrest and reverse the situation, Genealogy Society Singapore, National Library Board, Singapore Chinese Cultural Centre, People's Association and other partners are embarking on a campaign to encourage and help Singapore families to research and compile their own Singapore Chapter of family history, starting from the first generation which came to work or settle in Singapore. Families can submit their family histories for a competition and have them preserved perpetually in the "Singapore Memory" portal of the National Library.

About the speaker

Born on 9 August 1940, Mr Ng graduated from the University of Singapore with a BSc Honours Degree, Second Upper Division.

He carved a career in the Singapore Government's elite Administrative Service. He held positions as Dy Directors/Directors in a number of statutory boards and ministries, including the then Ministry of Social Affairs and Ministry of Community Development, where he was Director of Family Services. He was appointed Consul General to Xiamen, China from 2000 to 2002, looking after Singapore's interests in South China.

Mr Ng is the founding President of Singapore Genealogy Society. Together with the National Library Board, the People's Association and the Singapore Chinese Cultural Centre, they are organizing the "Singapore Family History Competition" to celebrate SG 50, and to encourage Singaporeans to compile the Singapore Chapter of their family histories. Entries in the Competition will form an important part of the collective memory of Singapore.

5. THE RISE OF DUAL-INCOME HOUSEHOLDS AND THE CONSISTENCY OR INCONSISTENCY OF RELIGION IN DETERMINING THE SOCIAL DYNAMICS OF THE MALAY FAMILY: 1959 TILL 2005

Suriani SURATMAN

Malay Studies Department, National University of Singapore

Maznah MOHAMAD

Malay and Southeast Asian Studies Departments, National University of Singapore

Abstract

The labour force participation rate of Malay women in Singapore has been steadily increasing. In 1970, it was 14% and in 2005, this rate has increased to 41%. This has led to a trend of the dual-income household, which was not common among Malays in the late 1950s (Djamour, 1959). Then, even though divorce frequency among Malay families was high the family was kept intact due to strong kin relations which provided moral and financial support to single mothers and children. Fifty years onward, the divorce rate among Malays remain the highest in comparison to other ethnic groups; in 2005 the divorce rate for Malays was 15.5% as compared to 6.6% among Chinese, and 7.9% for the overall population. This paper will examine if dual-income households have transformed social relations within Malay families in the form of changes related to “marriage instability”, unequal gender division of labor and gender inequality within the households. Within the context of rising dual-income households we will look at the role of religion in either persisting or transforming the features of the Malay family. Aside from qualitative data, in the form of in-depth interviews, this paper will draw on data starting from Judith Djamour’s pioneering study of the Singapore Malay family in 1959 to the 2005 Singapore General Household Survey.

About the speaker

Dr Suriani Suratman is Senior Lecturer with the Malay Studies department, at the National University of Singapore. Her area of specialization is Malay culture and society, Malay ethnicity and identities and Singapore families and households.

A/P Maznah Mohamad is with the Malay Studies department and the Southeast Asian Studies department, at the National University of Singapore. Her area of specialization is Islam, Syariah family law and gender relations in the Malay World.

6. ECONOMIC, EDUCATIONAL AND MIGRATORY TRAJECTORIES AMONGST INDIAN FAMILIES IN SINGAPORE

Lavanya RAMESH

Department of Sociology, National University of Singapore

Abstract

Census Data reveal that Indians in Singapore today are economically prosperous and educationally successful having the highest number of University graduates. Statistics further attest to Indian students fast closing educational gaps with the national average in landmark examinations. However, a more nuanced analyses of the demographics reflects that the more recent Indian migrants have contributed substantially to this upward trend. Qualitative fieldwork shows that these recent migrants are also increasingly visible in public participation spaces as evidenced by their involvement in grassroots activities, and in the admission of their children into top educational institutions in Singapore. The developmental trajectories of Indian families in post-colonial Singapore have thus been historically shaped by the differential migratory contexts; and have become increasingly diverse structurally and culturally. In this paper, the evolution of ethnic Indian families through the postcolonial nation building years to present day are critically analysed along class, family structure, education, economic, language and sub-ethnic lines using Census Data from 1970 to 2010. This data will be further corroborated with other forms of secondary data (i.e. newspaper articles) and qualitative data from the field that suggests the need to make sense of the structural and cultural heterogeneity of the ethnic Indian community that is obscured in statistical or census data perspectives.

About the speaker

Lavanya Ramesh is a PhD candidate with the Department of Sociology at NUS. Her research interests include race and ethnicity; educational achievement; and diaspora studies which she attempts to merge through her thesis - *Examining Achievement amongst Indian Youth in Singapore Schools*.

7. KEY TRENDS IN THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN PARENTING AND SCHOOLING IN SINGAPORE

Jason TAN

Policy and Leadership Studies, National Institute of Education

Lana KHONG

Policy and Leadership Studies, National Institute of Education

Abstract

This paper identifies key trends in the relationship between parenting and schooling in Singapore. It begins by outlining the main social context within which both parenting and schooling are taking place. First of all, meritocracy has long been a founding pillar in Singapore's dominant political ideology. The idea of individual ability, talent, hard work and effort being the sole determinant of an individual's educational and career success has manifested itself in the education system in various forms. These include the use of standardised national examinations at various levels of schooling as a means of ensuring fair access to educational opportunities, and the awarding of Edusave scholarships based on students' academic performance. The highly competitive nature of schooling is coupled with the key notion of education as a central conduit for intergenerational social mobility.

Meanwhile, rising family incomes, increasing educational levels of parents and an increase in the number of households where both parents work have meant not only a greater amount of emphasis on schooling achievement but also the amount of financial resources available for parents to ensure their children's educational success.

On its part, the Ministry of Education has openly welcomed the active involvement of parents, as exemplified through the formation of COMPASS at the end of the 1990s. It has also incentivised parental involvement in school within the annual primary school admission exercise. In recent years, the role of parents' financial resources as well as parental strategizing has become increasingly apparent. This can be seen in the growth of various parental networking websites. In addition, private tutoring agencies have mushroomed, offering not only help with academic subjects (for both parents and students) but also assistance with preparing students' portfolios during the annual Direct Schools Admission exercise. At the same time, there is growing evidence of an over-representation of students with highly educated parents in the most prestigious secondary schools.

This paper highlights the changes in parenting and schooling, and introduces the term 'parentocracy' (existing alongside 'meritocracy') in the Singapore context. It will ask whether the growing role of parental background and resources challenges the concept of fairness embodied within the concept of meritocracy. It will also raise key implications for parents of school-age children, as well as for wider educational inequalities.

About the speaker

Jason Tan is Associate Professor in Policy and Leadership Studies at the National Institute of Education. He has a research interest in education policy and is editor of *EDUCATION IN SINGAPORE: TAKING STOCK, LOOKING FORWARD* (2012, Prentice Hall).

Lana Khong is Lecturer in Policy and Leadership Studies at the National Institute of Education. She is interested in home-school partnerships and is author of *FAMILY MATTERS: THE ROLE OF PARENTS IN SINGAPORE EDUCATION* (2004, Eastern Universities Press).

8. ENTERING ADULTHOOD: MOBILE COMMUNICATION BETWEEN PARENTS AND THEIR EMERGING ADULT CHILDREN

LIM Lee Ming

Communications and New Media, National University of Singapore

LIM Sun Sun

Communications and New Media, National University of Singapore

Abstract

Using the Theory of Emerging Adulthood and Family Communication Patterns as the analytical framework, this paper discusses the findings of ethnographic interviews with families in Singapore on the topic of mobile communication between parents and their emerging adult children. It explores how parents and their emerging adult children adopt and capitalize on the affordances of mobile communication platforms in response to the unique challenges they face when the children are in the life stage of emerging adulthood. Concurrently, this paper pays special attention to how established family communication patterns within each family guides and influences members' mobile communication choices. While similar in many ways to emerging adulthood in the U.S., this study found that Singaporean emerging adults face certain situations uniquely formed by the sociocultural climate they live in. Consequently, this informs the way in which Singaporean emerging adults and their parents engage with and through mobile devices, where the devices are strategically used to negotiate the boundaries of parenting and personal space.

About the speaker

Lim Lee Ming graduated from the Department of Communications and New Media with an Honours degree in 2014. Her research interests are the use of media devices in the family context and has conducted research on panel mediation of children's video game play, and adult-child relationships as mediated by mobile devices.

Lim Sun Sun (PhD, LSE) is Associate Professor at the Department of Communications and New Media and Assistant Dean for Research at the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences, National University of Singapore. She studies the social implications of technology domestication by young people and families, charting the ethnographies of their Internet and mobile phone use. Her recent research has focused on understudied and marginalised populations including youths-at-risk, migrant workers and international migrant students. She has authored more than 40 book chapters and articles in international flagship journals. Her forthcoming book *Mobile Communication and the Family: Asian Experiences in Technology Domestication* will be published by Springer in Fall 2015.

9. FEMALE-HEADED HOUSEHOLDS IN SINGAPORE: THE CASE OF NEVER MARRIED AND DIVORCED MOTHERS

Shawna TANG

Department of Sociology, National University of Singapore

Sharon Quah

Asia Research Institute, National University of Singapore

Abstract

In Singapore, the concept of family as one made up of a legally married couple with the husband as 'head of the household' is widely adopted and accepted. This idea of family is taken for granted and naturalised in nationalist constructions of the Singaporean family stemming not just from the State, but from various moral institutions in multicultural Singapore. As family policies and services are designed and provided based on this state-approved definition of family, non-mainstream families often find themselves confronting various obstacles in their navigation within public systems and institutions. Female-headed households such as never married and divorced mothers are often allocated to the same official category of 'single citizens', hence at times making them unqualified from obtaining services provided for Singaporean families. Using empirical data collected from in-depth interviews with Singaporean respondents from female-headed households, this paper provides insights into how these mothers lead, organise and practise family under the condition of patriarchy. What challenges do they face in an unfavourable policy environment? How do they overcome these? What hopes and aspirations do they have for their particular families? While the government defends its policy approaches towards non-mainstream families by stating that traditional family form should be upheld and parenthood should be encouraged within the context of marriage, this paper provides sociological reasons as to why unconventional families should be supported. The research findings have implications for policy review and the management of diversity in population and family demographics as the nation comes of age.

About the speakers

Dr Shawna Tang is a Lecturer at the Department of Sociology, National University of Singapore. She studies the cultural and political expressions of sexuality and gender in Singapore, situated in the broader context of Asia and the West. She is currently writing a book titled 'Postcolonial Lesbian Identities in Singapore' to be published by Routledge. Her interest is in the convergence of postcolonial theory, transnational feminist studies and queer theory in engaging sociological questions of modernity, globalisation, sexuality, gender, state and nationalism.

Dr Sharon Quah is a Research Fellow with the Changing Family in Asia cluster at Asia Research Institute (ARI), National University of Singapore (NUS). She received her PhD from The University of Sydney in April 2013. Her research interests include divorce in Singapore and Australia, individualisation, personal relationships, gender, and alternative and transnational intimacies. She has just completed writing a sole-authored monograph (*Perspectives on Marital Dissolution: Divorce Biographies in Singapore*) scheduled to be published by Springer in mid-2015. She is also conducting a research project on transnational divorce in Singapore as the Principal Investigator with a research grant awarded by the Ministry of Social and Family Development (Singapore Government).

10. FALLING SHORT: PERFORMING THE FAMILIAL WHILE LOW-INCOME IN CONTEMPORARY SINGAPORE

TEO You Yenn

Division of Sociology, Nanyang Technological University

Abstract

The family is framed as central in contemporary Singapore. Both discursively and practically, membership in a narrowly-defined family has significant consequences in Singapore society. How people perform the familial shapes their access to both symbolic worth and public goods. In this paper, I show that class matters greatly in shaping family lives and forms, and that low-income Singaporeans face particular challenges in performing the idealized family, with significant consequences for reproducing poverty. The paper unfolds in three parts: first, I discuss the various needs families in Singapore have—for wages and savings, childcare and education, healthcare, consumption, and leisure. Drawing on ethnographic data, I describe the challenges faced by low-income Singaporeans in their efforts to meet these needs. Second, I examine the conditions they face as well as the conditions they lack in their efforts to fulfill these needs. I highlight the roles of public policy in reproducing these conditions. Finally, I end by reflecting on how public policy can more effectively address inequalities in people's access to stable and satisfactory familial lives.

About the speaker

TEO You Yenn received her PhD in Sociology from the University of California at Berkeley. She is currently Associate Professor in the Division of Sociology at the Nanyang Technological University. Her work has focused on how state policies intersect with and shape norms and practices. In ongoing research, she explores the everyday experiences of people in low-income households in Singapore and the phenomenon of poverty in a wealthy city. Her writings address questions around governance, state-society dynamics, citizenship, welfare, and the reproduction of gender and class inequalities. Her book, *Neoliberal Morality in Singapore: How family policies make state and society*, was published by Routledge in 2011. Her work has also been published in *Signs; Economy & Society; Population, Space and Place; Social Politics; TRaNS; and Development and Change*.

11. THE SINGAPORE PANEL STUDY ON SOCIAL DYNAMICS: LESSONS FROM THE RESEARCH JOURNEY THUS FAR

TAN Ern Ser

Institute of Policy Studies, National University of Singapore

Paveena SEAH

Institute of Policy Studies, National University of Singapore

Abstract

The Singapore Panel Study on Social Dynamics (SPSSD) examines the challenges that Singaporean families face. This includes the daily hassles that family members have to cope with, and unforeseen difficulties that emerge over time. It assesses significant life events and its impact on family functioning and wellbeing including the coping resources and strategies used, as well as the policy levers that would moderate the deleterious impact of the challenges.

The SPSSD involves three waves of data collection in the first instance. Wave 1 seeks to understand the landscape of the families and key issues, Wave 2 on family dynamics, and Wave 3 on family change and resilience. W1 interviews the Head of Household, while W2 and W3 interview both the Head of Household and a randomly chosen second respondent from the household. The Wave 1 fieldwork is still ongoing, and expected to be completed by June 2015.

The questionnaire covers three themes: Challenges (i.e. demands of daily living and significant life events), Management of Challenges (coping resources and strategies), and Family Outcomes. The questionnaire also measures both objective (e.g., income) and affective (e.g., subjective wellbeing) variables.

Unlike a cross-sectional study which interviews sampled households once, the SPSSD will have to establish a long-term relationship with them. For this reason, tremendous effort is directed towards sustaining the interest and securing the commitment of respondents. This is critical to ensuring the development of a growing, high quality dataset, which will prove increasingly valuable for tracking and understanding causation over time.

This presentation will focus on the SPSSD's research journey thus far with a view to sharing on the challenges encountered and the lessons learned.

About the Speakers:

Dr Tan Ern Ser

Dr Tan Ern Ser is Associate Professor of Sociology, and Head, IPS Social Lab, National University of Singapore. He received his PhD in Sociology from Cornell University, USA.

Dr Tan has written on social stratification, welfare policy, ethnic relations, and politics and democracy. He is author of "Does Class Matter?" (2004), and "Class and Social Orientations" (2014). He is also co-investigator of Asian Barometer-Singapore, the World Values Survey-Singapore, and the Singapore Panel Study on Social Dynamics.

Dr Tan has served as principal consultant to the National Orientations of Singaporeans (NOS) survey series I-IV, and a consultant to the National Survey of Senior Citizens 2005 and 2011, the Learning Needs of Senior Citizens Survey 2008, the Social Capital Phase I Study 2014, as well as REACH. He is also a Research Adviser, MSF, and Adviser for Socioeconomic Research and Chairman of the Research Advisory Panel, HDB. He was appointed a Justice of the Peace in 2013.

Ms Paveena Seah

Ms Paveena Seah is a Research Analyst at the Institute of Policy Studies (IPS) Social Lab. She received her Bachelor of Social Sciences (Honours) in Sociology from the National University of Singapore and her Master's degree in Ageing and Society from the Institute of Gerontology, King's College London.

Prior to joining IPS, Ms Paveena worked at the People's Association where she was responsible for the development and implementation of the Mountbatten Wellness Programme. She has also served as a mentor to National Junior College Humanities and Social Science Research Programme students in 2014/15.