Economy and Society Volume 39 Number 3 August 2010: 337–359

Shaping the Singapore family, producing the state and society

Youyenn Teo

Abstract

Baby bonuses, tax incentives and other policies devised by the Singapore state to encourage marriage and boost fertility have attracted much attention: on one hand, demographers have pointed to their limited effects in reversing demographic trends. On the other hand, they are taken as evidence of a strong state with huge capacity for 'social engineering'. These two contrasting perspectives suggest that the state's effects are more complex than either view captures. The article brings together the two 'truths' about family policies to demonstrate the full range of its effects. Drawing on in-depth interview data, it shows that negotiations of the structural context produced by family policies generate self-consciously Singaporean meanings and normative practices, at the same time that they clarify and legitimize the state's often paradoxical positions towards the family. Ultimately, family policies give ideological and practical content to both 'state' and 'society'.

Keywords: state; family; Singapore; state–society relations; governance; power.

The story of the state and family in Singapore unfolds in two directions that do not gel. The basics of the story are shared: the dramatic and sometimes comical efforts the state has devoted to promoting marriage, childbearing and 'filial piety' among its citizens. Distinct interpretations follow: on one side, the case is discussed, primarily by demographers, in the same breath as its East Asian neighbours – as a case where industrialization has led to delayed or non-marriage and corresponding below-replacement fertility (Jones, 2007;

Youyenn Teo, Assistant Professor, Division of Sociology, School of Humanities & Social Sciences, Nanyang Technological University, Singapore, 14 Nanyang Drive, Singapore 637332. E-mail: yyteo@ntu.edu.sg

ISSN 0308-5147 print/1469-5766 online
DOI: 10.1080/03085147.2010.486215

Leete, 1994). State policies are therefore trying to stem a tide largely beyond their control and having, at best, modest effects (Saw, 2005). In a rather odd contrast to this narrative, commentators refer to the state's family policies as evidence of its immense capacities. This version of the story is told humorously by journalists: state-run matchmaking agencies and 'Romancing Singapore' campaigns become fodder for amusing stories about an Orwellian state (Edidin, 2004; Kurlantzick, 2001). For scholars, the story is a more serious one that demonstrates the ways in which the Singapore state imposes a narrow set of ideologies on its peoples.

While in the first version demographers rarely go beyond discussing marriage and fertility trends to scrutinizing the characteristics of state rule and state–society dynamics, in the second trajectory commentators are often too quick to imply the connection between the state's dramatic efforts and its efficacy and power. This analytical separation means we essentially have two contrasting theories about state capacity arising from one set of policies. The baby bonuses, tax relief measures, romance campaigns come across as both futile state attempts *and* as evidence of a powerful, interventionist state. How do we make sense of these contradictory narratives?

In this article, I argue that the 'truths' embodied in the two versions of the story can be productively combined to force a closer examination of the full range and broader implications of family policies' complicated effects. The article reveals the site of family as one of *production* – a space where 'society' and 'state' come to take specific form and content.

Situating the idealized Singapore family

The family looms large in the state's imagination of what contemporary Singapore society is and ought to be. The idealized family, promoted through campaigns, policies and everyday statements by national leaders, comes across as such: at its core, a relatively young – under 50 – heterosexual, married couple. Both man and woman are educated and formally employed. The couple should have children – three, or more, if they can afford it.[1] This nuclear family lives harmoniously under one roof; in most cases, home is a modest but comfortable public flat purchased from the Housing & Development Board (HDB). The couple have parents of their own. These are ageing Singaporeans – pioneers of contemporary Singapore – who will eventually live with them (or their siblings) when they become too old to care for themselves. While they are still healthy and fit, they play key roles as grandparents. Grandmothers, in particular, are portrayed as the best primary caregivers for Singapore's children.

Significantly, this idealized family is framed as being integral to the nation's wellbeing:

> The family is an important institution. It brings fulfillment to our lives and is our anchor in this fast-paced, ever-changing environment. Families serve as an

> important pillar of support for the nation. At the individual level, families are the primary source of emotional, social and financial support. At the national level, they contribute to social stability and national cohesiveness as they help develop socially responsible individuals and deepen the bond Singaporeans have with our country.
>
> (Ministry of Community Development and Sports, 2003)

The idea that family is critical to society – 'an anchor' – is in turn situated in the nation's development narrative.

Historians have recently deconstructed and thereby challenged this official narrative (Hong & Huang, 2008). It remains the case, nonetheless, that the official version of 'the Singapore story' is one that has become taken for granted. The narrative begins from 1819 when the British 'founded' Singapore.[2] Nineteen fifty-nine was the watershed year when Singapore attained self-government and the People's Action Party (PAP), which remains the single dominant governing party today, was popularly elected into power. The late 1950s and early 1960s are told as tumultuous ones with fierce battles between the PAP and 'the communists'. In 1965, after two years as part of the Malaysian Federation, Singapore was expelled and gained an apparently reluctant independence. Having 'defeated' the communists by the late 1960s, the PAP pursued economic growth, primarily through export-oriented industrialization strategies.

The control and management of population has been central to these development goals. In the 1970s, in step with global frameworks stipulating population control as a precondition for development, the PAP government launched an aggressive Stop at Two campaign that included punitive measures for those who had more than two children, incentives for sterilization and liberalization of abortion laws (Saw, 2005; Wong & Yeoh, 2003). This anti-natalist orientation was not reversed until the 1980s, when 'the problem' became construed as one of delayed marriage and low fertility; in particular, tertiary-educated women were singled out as problems insofar as they had apparently become too modern – overly career-minded, insufficiently oriented towards motherhood, too choosy in their choice of partners. The fact that these women were delaying or rejecting motherhood was construed as especially problematic from a eugenics perspective: the loss of their progeny was a loss to the nation's talent pool (Lee, 1983). Between the 1980s and now, we see a gradual transition in the state's approach: from an initial concern largely centred around eugenic fears about the quality of the nation's children to an increasingly near-universalized set of concerns around a shrinking workforce and greater old-age dependency. In sum, the nuclear family plays a central role in the nation's economic (re)production.

The economic successes of the past forty years are also central to the national script. The country has attained economic stature wildly disproportionate to its size. The PAP state reminds Singaporeans that this was achieved against great odds. Moreover, it insists that the truly remarkable

element of its success lies not merely in delivering economic growth, but doing it in a way that is respectful of 'tradition' and 'culture'. The state claims that Singapore has attained modernity while retaining certain traditions. A continuing challenge for development lies in being able to take what is good from 'the West' – its technological advances and competitive spirit – and fuse it with the 'values' of 'the East'. The family becomes *both* that which must be protected *and* that which will protect society from the negative fall-outs of economic growth.

While state rhetoric reifies and glorifies certain familial practices and forms, efforts are made to transform ideals into realities through various state practices. Public housing, a near-universal public good in Singapore, is most easily accessible to those who form 'family nucleus' (*sic*) through marriage. Cash grants are further offered to couples who buy flats in close proximity to – within two kilometres of – their (elderly) parents. Baby bonuses and an arsenal of tax relief measures are offered to parents of (up to four) young children. Employed, middle-class women married to their child(ren)'s fathers receive the most help; their employment after childbirth is supported by the state through paid maternity leave and a well-coordinated system of foreign domestic workers.

Singaporeans thus find that their familial positions shape claims on social goods and the limits to these claims. In particular, as marriages are delayed or put off altogether, and as fertility rates fall, marriage and childbearing are increasingly valorized as ideal behaviours that justify greater rewards as citizens.

Interpreting demographic trends and the state

As mentioned earlier, there are at least two analytically distinct strands of interpretations of the state's orientation towards the family – one focusing on the inexorability of the trends and the relative ineffectiveness of state policies, and the other on the unusual power of the Singapore state. I elaborate on how these have each shed light on what is going on but also point to the limitations that come about because these two interpretations have generally remained separate.

In Singapore, as in many East Asian countries, demographic trends point towards delayed and non-marriage, lower fertility and ageing populations (Chan, 2001; Jones, 2004; Saw, 2005; Yap, 2008). The total fertility rate declined from 3.10 in 1970, to 1.83 in 1990, to 1.29 in 2007, well below the 'replacement level' of 2.1 (Singapore Department of Statistics, 2006a, 2008b; UN Statistics Division, 2004). The median age of marriage for women has increased steadily – from 23.7 in 1970 to 27.2 in 2007; for men, it has risen from 27.6 in 1970 to 29.8 in 2007 (Singapore Department of Statistics, 2008b).[3] Consequently, the age dependency ratio of children below 15 to adults between 15 and 64 has decreased gradually over the last decades – from 68.1

children per hundred adults in 1970 to 25.3 children per hundred adults in 2008 (Singapore Department of Statistics, 2008a). On the other hand, the dependency ratio of those 65 years and older to those between 15 and 64 has increased – with 5.9 people above 65 years for every hundred between 15 and 64 years in 1970, to 11.9 in 2008.

Within this context, demographers often discuss Singapore in tandem with its East Asian neighbours. They point to rapid industrialization – with its implications of greater education and employment opportunities for women, accessibility to contraception and generally altered life priorities – as bringing about delayed marriage and low fertility (Jones & Leete, 2002; Jones, 2007; Leete, 1994; Straughan *et al*., 2008). Demographers increasingly point out that changes in the economic sphere have not been accompanied by adequate changes in social support for marriage and childbearing practices, particularly for women (Jones *et al*., 2008b; McDonald, 2008). Existing pro-natal policies thus have had, at best, modest effects (Quah, 2003; Saw, 2005; Straughan *et al*., 2008).

In contrast to this view of pro-natal policies as inadequate in reversing demographic trends, the Singapore state's family policies have been the target of much mockery as well as serious critique. For Western journalists, the comic possibilities of national campaigns promoting romance, state-run matchmaking services and government officials' comments about sex seem endless (Edidin, 2004; Kurlantzick, 2001). The tone in these stories – part amusement, part condemnation – is captured well in this *Atlantic Monthly* piece:

> Singapore's government – a conservative, semi-authoritarian entity dominated since independence by the People's Action Party – has a long history of mounting enormous social-engineering campaigns. Previous crusades have included efforts to make Singaporeans flush public toilets, speak better English, and stop chewing gum.
>
> (Kurlantzick, 2001)

The very *existence* of campaigns and policies targeting fertility is presented as requiring imagination for the average American reader. Pro-natal policies are represented as a type of 'social engineering' uncommon to liberal democratic polities.

Scholars too have used family and population policies to scrutinize the Singapore state's 'strong hand'. Chua (1995, p. 64) points to the eugenics phase of population policies, in particular, as a time when the state ignored scientific and demographic evidence and paid little heed to issues of democracy. Chan (2000) argues that the state upholds patriarchal practices – with men as heads of households – through a slew of regulations on the family. Some of the most interesting work has pointed to the ideological implications of the population policies: Heng and Devan (1995) argue that the state is packaging certain traditions and compelling their embodiment by women; these embodiments are moreover differentiated along ethno-racial lines. PuruShotam (1998) and Chua (2004) separately demonstrate that the state's use of the 'Asian

values/traditions' discourse is *post hoc* but nonetheless resonant with certain segments of the Singaporean public. PuruShotam further implies that much self-governing is at work as gender and class aspirations interact to produce 'fears of falling'. Collectively, these works demonstrate that the state *has* had profound influence on how Singaporeans think about their roles in both family and society.

While demographic analyses suggest policies which have failed in their ostensible goals, the critical analyses – both journalistic and scholarly – suggest important ideological achievements. Yet, because the two sides of the coin – ostensible failure and apparent success – have not been seriously analysed in tandem, it remains unclear how to account for the simultaneity of these two conflicting outcomes. If indeed the state is as ideologically successful as the literature suggests, how do we account for the failures in reversing demographic trends? Conversely, insofar as human practices are shaped by ideological beliefs, why have resistances in practice to marriage and child-bearing not been accompanied by overt rejections of the discourses around the idealized Singaporean family?

This article examines the complex effects of family policies. Methodologically, this involves a strategy that departs from existing scholarship. Besides analysing family policies and state rhetoric – which others have done – I conducted sixty interviews with Singaporeans from a range of ethnic backgrounds.[4]

Almost all the respondents had recent encounters with the public housing process. They were typical of Singaporeans insofar as they owned and lived in HDB flats, and insofar as they had formed 'family nucleus' (*sic*) – primarily through marriage – and therefore qualified to purchase the highly subsidized flats. Most can be considered upwardly mobile – having received significantly more education and being employed in more high-status and secure professions compared to their parents – in ways that reflect the rise in wealth of the country over the past four decades. I chose them for two intertwined reasons: first, although the ideals of 'family' are applicable to all Singaporeans, this group of relatively young (late 20s to early 40s) citizens are the state's main targets, and correspondingly most likely to have had recent and concrete encounters with state policies. When it came to bearing the contradictory desires of modernity and tradition, this was the group most likely to experience these demands directly and most able to articulate their responses to these demands. Second, I wanted to ensure that there was no artificial dislocation of discourse from practice – that I would uncover not just people's opinions and musings, but concrete beliefs and values that stemmed from and were accompanied by practice; insofar as discourse and practice occasionally move in different directions, interviews with this particular group allowed for reflections on how and why. Importantly, the people within this core group were on a continuum in terms of how well they fit the state's ideals of family – some had children and others did not, some lived with or near parents and others did not. In addition, I also interviewed a handful of people who,

primarily by virtue of being unmarried, were situated at the fringes of the idealized family. Interviewing across this continuum allowed me to look at how the 'normal' is produced not only by those who have much to gain – materially and ideologically – from the upholding of ideals, but also by those on the margins.

The interview data speak to how rules and regulations are experienced, ignored or embraced and negotiated and navigated. In focusing on process and not just (demographic or ideological) outcome, the article 'thickens' our understanding of state effects. In what follows, I show how family policies shape the context for producing norms and values around the issues of housing–marriage, childcare and 'filial piety'. Although the policies have had limited success in reversing demographic trends, they have had very important effects in generating feelings of being Singaporean and giving content to the very notion of Singaporeanness.

Singaporean common sense

A few years after graduating from university, I noticed conversations among Singaporean friends increasingly referencing ROM, HDB and CPF. Friends and acquaintances discussed and traded tips on: when to fill out applications for HDB flats; the optimal ways to use money from their CPF accounts; timing legal registration of marriage ('ROM-ing') with the 'collection of (flat) keys' and how to plan for 'reno' (renovations) and 'customary' (weddings). For many Singaporeans in their late 20s and early 30s – a few years out of school and employed in secure jobs, attached to reasonably marriageable partners, with savings in their Central Provident Fund (CPF) accounts and offered the prospect of owning a Housing & Development Board (HDB) public flat – this was a time for planning the 'natural' next step in life. At the time, I was a Singaporean graduate student living in the US. Although I belonged to this social milieu – enough, at least, to understand the references – I was not on the same path and was thus often an outsider in these conversations. When I expressed curiosity, people explained that this is the 'Singapore way' of doing things. The subtext in their responses was this: the conversations may sound odd to someone living in the US, but they are perfectly 'normal' for anyone building a life in Singapore. In the years to follow, I moved back to Singapore for dissertation research and had further conversations with people – this time mostly strangers – about how they think of marriage, children, relationships to their parents and how they negotiate and navigate various family policies. I would see that declarations of 'this is Singapore *lah*'[5] are ubiquitous; people fall back on the phrase to explain why they think or act in the ways they do.

This is an important finding. That there are ways of thinking and doing 'family' that are *experienced as* Singaporean, and that people *self-consciously*

frame certain practices as unique to their national culture – even when they are not – suggest that family policies have complex effects that go well beyond explicit demographic or ideological outcomes. In the process of negotiating HDB rules, CPF regulations and ROM requirements, people talk to friends, co-workers, families. The ubiquity of the conversations extends beyond those who are immediately affected; there is an extraordinary degree of consensus about 'normal' ways to be. Even the broader popular culture is infused with references to and jokes about the 'very Singaporean' processes. This comes across particularly strongly on three issues relating to the organization of family life: marriage; the care of young children; 'filial piety'.

Housing–marriage: 'want to apply for a flat?'

Public housing stands at the core of family policies. About 90 per cent of Singaporeans live in public flats. Most of them own the flats they live in, pay for them with their mandatory, state-managed CPF savings and depend on them for asset accumulation (Low & Aw, 1998; Tan, 1998; Wong & Yeh, 1985). The public housing system has been an explicit nation-building mechanism – an important form of welfare for citizens in a growing and rapidly urbanizing city and a crucial site for parcelling out which citizens deserve which benefits (Castells *et al*., 1990; Chua, 1997, 2005).

At the core of the regulations shaping HDB living lies the prerequisite that flat-owners must form 'family nucleus' (*sic*). To partake in this most Singaporean of social goods, one has to be a member of a particular type of family. A 'family nucleus' consists of a married couple, a parent with an adult child or, in rare cases, a divorced/widowed person with a minor child. Some exceptions have evolved over the years so that, for example, unmarried individuals over 35 years old may purchase certain types of flats. By and large, however, marriage is the normative precondition for flat ownership. Programmes are targeted precisely to guide marriage-age heterosexual couples down the path of marriage and home ownership: the 'HDB Fiancé/Fiancée Scheme' allows two unmarried individuals to put in applications for new flats. When their flats are ready, they have three months to legalize their relationship before taking ownership. This scheme, as well as the overall 'family-centred' structural environment set by HDB rules, has had significant impacts on how people think about their decisions.

Even with the trends in delayed and non-marriage, the idea of marriage as a 'natural' step in life for Singaporeans remains surprisingly strong. Survey data show that Singaporeans continue to express great desire for marriage and childbearing (Ministry of Community Development, Youth and Sports, 2008; Pereira, 2006; Quah, 1994); my interview data reveal that these are perceived not only as desirable behaviours but also largely taken-for-granted as natural life paths. Also surprising is that HDB's particular familial orientation, though a point of contention among some, is generally

seen as necessary and inevitable. The following describes how collective negotiations of HDB rules produce this sort of self-consciously Singaporean common sense.

Narratives about marriage and housing are inextricably linked and conversations about one lead easily into the other. Respondents described this as a typical path: apply for HDB flat, wait for flat allocation, arrange to be legally married, 'collect the keys', hold a 'customary' wedding ceremony and then move into the new home.

One respondent, Tek Chong,[6] told me: 'Our whole marriage was like a natural progression. Getting a flat, then the next thing is, I think it's about time we're comfortable with each other – let's get registered, then let's go for the formalities, the traditional wedding. Another, Yan Lee, talked about the importance of 'being practical' when thinking about marriage; for her and her boyfriend, marriage would have to wait until after they succeeded in securing a flat. A third interviewee, Lyn Na, told me that it was a no-brainer to apply for a flat as 'fiancé/fiancée' even though she and her boyfriend were not ready to marry at the time of application. To her, marriage was a step-by-step process and some of the steps related more to the somewhat mechanical steps that everyone around her were taking and advising her to take, and had relatively little to do with her and her partner's relationship.

These responses do not imply that everyone went through exactly the same sequence of steps or that they all saw the process and the state's role in it in equally positive or negative terms. Nonetheless, what was shared and thus particularly significant is the following: first, there was a high degree of knowledge about the minutiae of rules, regulations and incentive schemes. People *collectively* figured out policies, exceptions to rules, the best ways of maximizing interests and even loopholes. By talking and gossiping with colleagues, friends and family members, even those not planning to marry had good understandings of the process.

Second, also collectively generated, are meanings about marriage that go beyond mere knowledge of regulations. Here, the overwhelming presence of housing rules led people to make efforts to explain how they were not just following a script. Respondents thus took extra pains to express the positive meanings they assign to marriage (*sans* housing). In the same breath that they made fun of the HDB–ROM process as 'unromantic', they insisted that romantic love is still relevant, and that marriage remains a serious matter that should be considered apart from the desire for housing. Indeed, the uniformity implied by housing policies generated certain defensiveness. Michael, among several other male interviewees, volunteered without being asked: 'I did not propose to my wife with "let's get a flat"'. In describing the steps they took, and the ways they negotiated the policies, people insisted that marriage should and does still carry with it assumptions about commitment, growing up, responsibilities and love.

One particular set of meanings generated is that the linking of marriage and housing may not seem very natural to non-Singaporeans, but that they are

indeed 'very Singaporean'. People told me they took cues from other 'normal' couples in Singapore. They were self-conscious about the process being uniquely Singaporean. Vivian laughingly told me that the housing–marriage process is 'SOP' – standard operating procedure – in Singapore, while Kevin described his and his wife's experience of queuing up for a flat as 'one of those Singaporean stuff'. Noor Rita's response conveys a common theme – slight embarrassment and scepticism coupled with rather comfortable recognition and resignation that such is life in Singapore: 'I think it's so typically Singaporean to say this, but I would say, once you get married, you must have a home'. Noor Rita's words are particularly illuminating: that marriage means cohabitation and that cohabitation requires a dwelling is really *not* all that unique to Singapore. Yet she, and indeed others, framed it as such. For them, certain familial practices are nationally inscribed – 'Singaporean'.

State policies set limits and possibilities around the formation of conjugal families, but the shared process of policy negotiation generates entire sets of meanings quite outside the scope of the policies themselves; even those Singaporeans who are not directly involved in the housing–marriage process understand normative practices. These collectively generated norms are not without attendant contradictions and incoherence; their impact lies not in perfect consistency, but in rendering certain practices around family formation real, common-sensical and indeed inscribed with self-consciously national meaning. A similar set of dynamics permeates discussions of childcare and elderly care.

Ideal and less-than-ideal caregivers

Feminist scholars have documented and critiqued the gendered worldviews and biases in state family/fertility policies in a wide range of cases, including Singapore's (Chan, 2000; Gordon, 1990; Heng & Devan, 1995; Jolly & Ram, 2001; Kligman, 1998; Lyons, 1998; O'Connor *et al*., 1999; Paxson, 2004; Soin, 1996; Teo, 2007). The mechanisms that reproduce gender roles are obviously complex. Here, I emphasize just one: as in the housing–marriage example, the limits and constraints set by state policies provide the context in which people think about and make decisions. In facing rules and incentive schemes, people develop particular perceptions and interpretations of their actions. What results is counter-intuitive: despite socioeconomic trends which one expects would undermine 'traditional' gendered notions about division of labour,[7] there is instead a strong sense that gender is more important than ever in framing people's conceptions about who should be responsible for the wellbeing of the household, particularly the children. As in the housing–marriage example, my respondents insisted that there is something 'Singaporean' about such gendered values.

Policies are gendered in at least three ways: first, they presume and reproduce the ideal that women are inextricably linked to family – that

building and maintaining families ought to be a woman's principal role in life, and that women are the ones with primary responsibility for maintaining the (non-financial) wellbeing of households. Second, and somewhat contradictorily, shaped by an orientation towards nationalist goals of economic development (Pyle, 2001) as well as, historically, a eugenics framework about who should be having more and who fewer babies (Heng & Devan, 1995), women – particularly highly educated (ethnic Chinese) women – are also encouraged to maintain formal employment. Third, the state insists that the care-giving functions of the family belong in the 'private' realm – to be fulfilled and resolved within the spatial confines of the household.

These ideals are translated into policy in various ways. For one, the concessions and benefits available to employees when they have babies differ sharply by gender: employers of married women are required to provide sixteen weeks of paid maternity leave; the costs of the leave period are shared between the state and employers.[8] In contrast, men may – if their employers choose to comply – receive up to three days of paternity leave. Second, tax policies remind Singaporeans that women workers are different from their male counterparts insofar as they are also mothers. Working mothers[9] can claim tax relief not only on their child(ren), but also on the women they either hire or otherwise depend on to help with caring for their homes and/or their children while they work. The 'foreign maid levy relief'[10] and 'grandparent care-giver relief' signal the state's assumption, recognition and ultimately reproduction of certain – equally gendered – care-giving arrangements. Finally, while there are increasing efforts to promote flexible work hours and enhance childcare facilities, these are overshadowed by the option of female foreign domestic workers available to Singaporean families. By regulating their entry and work conditions in ways that make them a highly exploitable and relatively cheap labour force – with virtually zero limits on work hours or tasks, living within the confines of individual households under largely unregulated conditions – the state makes this a particularly 'logical' option for married and working women.[11]

All this culminates in a structural and discursive context where childbirth and care giving are women's domain, and where the acts of having and raising children are paradoxically simultaneously 'public' – thoroughly deserving of sustained state attention and public resources – and yet highly 'privatized' – ultimately to be resolved within the household. My respondents, particularly women, found themselves struggling to do the best for their families given these conditions; this had particularly poignant effects on conceptualizations of ideal and not-so-ideal childcare practices.

'The maid – unfortunately', Noor Rita answered when I asked who took care of her children. This was a sentiment commonly expressed by both women and men – regardless of whether they actually had children or, if they did, who cared for them. Asked how they organized or planned to organize childcare, people pointed to foreign domestic workers and (in the 'happier' scenarios) mothers or mothers-in-law. They framed childcare as problems with

some practical but very imperfect solutions. Their expressions of discomfort with foreign domestic workers ran on a continuum – from fairly innocuous comments about them not being family to far more charged references to their 'racial' foreignness, lower-class status and 'different values'.[12]

A surprising number of women and men – surprising given that these were people who otherwise took women's employment for granted – expressed desires for full-time motherhood for themselves or, if they were men, for their partners. For the most part, they saw this as a romantic ideal that had little chance of being fulfilled given economic needs. My respondents' lives reflect the economic successes of Singapore since Independence insofar as they were wealthier and more educated than their parents; as a newly emerging middle class, the need to 'keep up' and work hard in order to maintain or attain certain 'lifestyles' was keenly felt.[13] Work is thus experienced and framed as necessary and full-time motherhood as a nice but impractical ideal; we see more clearly then why the maid is the 'unfortunate' solution.

Ultimately, people formed ideals about and carved out solutions based on the options available, and, as in the housing–marriage example, these solutions were imbued with meaning through concrete practices shared by their peers. For most of the people I spoke with, childcare centres were outside the realm of possible solutions for infants and became probable choices only for children of two years or older. This corresponds to the differential availability of facilities for infants versus toddlers, but people talked about their decisions in ways that went beyond mere issues of access. There was a sense that it is somehow wrong and irresponsible to put infants in institutions of care. Even as children grow older, 'the maid', though an 'unfortunate' solution, is still the preferred route compared to full-time institutional care, particularly if there is also a grandparent around. Here, we should recognize that grandparents and foreign domestic workers provide vastly more economical labour: compared to paying upwards of US$200 per month for childcare facilities, paying a domestic worker US$150 to US$280 per month (and roughly US$120 in levies) means not only that there are round-the-clock options for childcare, but that groceries are bought, dinners get cooked, clothes washed and floors cleaned. There is furthermore none of the hassle involved with having to drop off or pick up children at fixed hours. The structural conditions, significantly shaped through state policies toward families as well as migrant workers, point to clear and 'logical' choices for individual actors.

As in the housing–marriage example, as people talked to me, they assumed that we were discussing 'standard' Singaporean ways of doing childcare. In conversations with respondents as well as friends and acquaintances, talk of childcare flowed easily and predictably: 'who takes care of your child?' brought quick responses of 'my mother' or 'my mother-in-law' and quips of 'plus maid'. Then, people would say something about the physical arrangements – whether the child(ren) went to grandmother/parents' home, or whether the grandparent(s) travelled to the child's home, or whether, in rare instances, they all lived together. The entire set-up – including what is referred to as the

'ferrying' of children to and from separate households – was information nonchalantly offered, as if following a practised script. Even people who did not have children could tell me what are typical, *Singaporean* ways of raising them.

As in the housing–marriage example, certain normative practices of childcare have developed in response to the structural and discursive context of family policies, and as people look to how their peers deal with similar issues. The norms and values about marriage and raising children are concrete and give material shape to what it is to be Singaporean. Importantly, however, some of the practices are *not* absolutely unique to Singapore. They give content to Singaporeanness not on the basis of their uniqueness *per se* but on the basis that they are articulated with such ease and naturalness and with self-conscious articulations that the choices are 'typical', 'normal', 'standard' for Singaporeans.

In the final example, I show that people not only imagine that Singaporeans 'do' family differently than other countries, but that they do it *better*.

Singaporeans still better: of Asian values and filial piety

'Filial piety' was a phrase people used in conversations. 'Asian values' and 'Confucian values' were often uttered as well. These were invoked when I asked people to describe their relationships to their parents, what they thought about them becoming older and how they conceived of their care. People insisted on the importance of caring for their ageing parents, and the importance of 'filial piety' for society in general. They saw this care as entailing financial support, providing company – particularly sharing meals – and eventual co-residence. There was strong aversion toward institutionalized care, and the phrase 'old folks' homes' carried with it strong negative connotations of abandonment, lack of compassion and ingratitude – in other words, bad values.

As in the housing–marriage and childcare examples, there are important structural corollaries. The state's explicit stance on social support for the elderly is that families should be the first line of defence. The 1995 Maintenance of Parents Act indeed implies that parents have legal rights to claim financial support from their children. There is, moreover, a relative vacuum in direct state provisions and state-led institutionalized care, except for the truly destitute. Instead, the state has made a number of policy efforts to get young Singaporeans to care for their ageing parents.

The CPF Housing Grant Scheme, for example, is a S$30,000 (about US$20,000) grant given to first-time flat buyers who purchase flats on the market (and not directly from the HDB); an additional S$10,000 is given to buyers who purchase flats within two kilometres of their parents' homes. Given that flat prices range roughly from US$65,000 to US$300,000, depending on size and location, the grants are significant. The HDB also

gives priority to married adult children and parents applying to live either in the same flat or in two adjacent flats.

The context of rapid economic change is crucial for appreciating the significance of all this. The increases in living costs mean that many in the retirement population today do not have sufficient savings – either privately or in their CPF accounts – to support themselves (Lee, 1999). Furthermore, reflecting the realities of society as a whole, respondents' comments reminded me that their parents' dependence really has to be even more broadly conceived: many never received much formal education, and the drastic changes to the social environment in the past decades mean that they cannot easily function in contemporary society entirely independent of younger people. Many talked about the importance of reminding their parents about and accompanying them to regular medical examinations – both because this is not something they are in the habit of doing and because negotiating with doctors and the medical establishment is challenging given their lack of (English) language proficiency or basic medical knowledge, as well as certain types of bureaucratic literacy. In such a context, without aggressive coordinated state interventions, the care of the elderly has to fall on individual families.

As people described their plans for eventual co-residence with their ageing parents, of the value of living close to parents or in-laws for mutual care-giving – including care of young children by grandparents – it was clear that they were aware of the complexities and difficulties and were making the best of their situations. It was also clear that not everyone would really be able to do as much as they hoped, given financial and other constraints. This recognition of difficulties came through especially poignantly as people insisted that they would not want their children to have to do for them what they are now doing for their parents.

Yet, despite the struggles and conflicts, people seemed to find significant affirmative meaning in their definitions of 'filial piety'. One key element of this is that the practices distinguish Singapore from other countries, Singaporeans from other peoples. For them, there is something Singaporean about the particular practice of 'filial piety' and pride in what they see as national exceptionalism.

Ai Ling explained: 'I think we're still a very Asian society. Filial piety is still something that is ingrained in all of us. I think it still features very strongly'. Faye made it even more narrow and explicit when she declared: 'in other countries, I think it's very different. I think in US right, they don't really take care of their parents, right? From what I understand *lah*. I think they prefer to stay by themselves, so they don't really take care of their parents that well. I think Singapore still better'.[14] For many, 'filial piety' not only distinguishes Singapore and Singaporeans, it is a *superior* trait and one particularly noteworthy given that Singapore is so 'Westernized' and 'First World' in other ways. Although narrowly defined and not necessarily genuinely traditional, 'filial piety' is framed as something Singaporeans have managed to retain despite rapid changes.

The three issues – housing–marriage, childbearing/raising and elderly care – allow us insight into values, practices and norms around the family in Singapore. I am not claiming that people's values and practices would be *radically* different absent of policies or that they are utterly incomparable to practices in other national contexts. Yet, the inescapability of some of the policies creates rather narrow and specific meanings, for example, around 'romance', 'unfortunate' childcare options and 'filial piety'. What is even more striking is that people constantly refer to how 'most Singaporeans' do things, and specific scripts arise to describe 'typical Singaporean ways' of doing things. This is finally what I mean by the production of society: that, in the process of collective negotiation of policies, there arises a self-conscious articulation of Singapore as exception, of Singaporeanness as unique and superior. The policies themselves differentiate Singaporeans only to a limited extent, but what really produce the subjects as an identifiable entity are the identities they create in response to the policies.

Shaping the family, producing the state

In tandem with the production of Singaporean society, the processes described also give content to the very notion of a state. This has at least two analytically distinct but empirically overlapping dimensions: the first institutional–disciplinary and the second ideological–nationalist.

The state as institutional–disciplinary entity

Family policies provide rhythm, logic and boundaries that guide the average Singaporean's life choices. Even though pro-marriage and pro-natal policies have not reversed demographic trends, they have shaped norms and ideals around marriage, childbearing and care-giving practices.

The use of the word 'institutional' highlights two things: first, it draws attention to the regularity and predictability of relationships between the state and individuals and their families. Through the Central Provident Fund/Housing & Development Board system, in particular, citizens establish particular positions *vis-à-vis* the state – depending on their familial roles. In conceptualizing state–society relations, family policies are one site where the relationship is direct and overt, and where it is universal insofar as all citizens are compelled to have a relationship with the state.

Second, highlighting this institutionalized dimension of state rule is meant to suggest the confluence of culture and structure. That meanings are generated when people negotiate state policies, and that overt ideas about the nation and the state are produced in the process, should not eclipse the fact that, in people's everyday lives, somewhat mechanical, rule-directed practices may sometimes matter more than deep beliefs. Notwithstanding that people

attach meaning to the ROM process, for example, the application for flats as fiancé–fiancée can be taken matter-of-factly as merely a hoop to jump through and a hoop that makes sense to jump through just because everyone else does. This is an important point for destabilizing the perspective of state–society relations as solely ideological; there *are* indeed times when habits and norms do not have much to do with ideology, and it is the coming-together of both these practical mechanical moments when overt ideology takes a backseat *and* those moments where explicit views of state and society inform practices that makes up the relationship between state and society.

The word 'discipline' is meant to suggest the state's role in setting boundaries, and therefore a concept that clearly articulates the state's power over people's lives. Here, insisting on the Foucauldian use of the word is crucial: power is exercised not so much from above, but laterally, insofar as the process of hierarchization, self- and mutual surveillance, normalization and examination depends upon subjects' participation (Foucault, 1995; Foucault *et al.*, 1991). The state provides the structural context that motivates behaviours of comparing and contrasting practices around marriage, child-bearing, elderly care, but this has the full effect of disciplining subjects' self-understandings and practices only when they negotiate the context in tandem with other subjects' doing so. In other words, it is the very process of collective negotiation that produces the state as an effective disciplinary actor.

It is therefore not the strict rules, amusing rhetoric and relentless interventions of the Singapore state *per se* that make for a strong state. Instead, it is the regularity and predictability of the relationship between state and individuals, the way family policies generate certain mechanical habits and taken-for-granted norms and the way they compel collective negotiation that truly give form to the state as an institutional–disciplinary entity.

The state as ideological–nationalist entity

Beyond the institutional–disciplinary, there is an ideological–nationalist dimension to the state. The process of dealing with policies forces people to think about the state – what Singaporeans refer to as 'the gahmen' (government) – as a coherent entity with particular roles, responsibilities, privileges and constraints. On 'the family' as on many other issues, there is rarely any news of disagreements within the PAP government. Because of this, and because the idealized family is conveyed so thoroughly through so many different channels, people come to think of the state as a monolithic whole.

Some common overlapping themes pepper their descriptions: critique of the state as being misled in using certain types of monetary incentives to promote family; insistence that Singapore *should* be concerned about the family, particularly in the context of socio-economic changes *qua* development; and, finally, grudging acceptance that the state needs to be involved in 'protecting'

the family, however imperfectly. I elaborate briefly on these, before turning to a discussion of the implications for imagining the state in these ways.

Singaporeans *are* sceptical and critical of the state. My respondents spoke especially often about the problematic use of monetary incentives, and argued that they undermine the very values they are purported to promote. Nonetheless, when I asked whether the state should be involved in shaping the family, most of them said 'yes'. The idea of the inherent worth of the family, so central to their critique of the state, is also at the centre of their belief that the state has to continue to intervene. Indeed, as we moved from talking about details of policies to the larger question of state interventions in the family, their descriptions of the importance of family broadened as well.

There were two dimensions to their responses. First, they articulated the view that Singapore faces big challenges as a nation, namely, economic survival, population growth and the maintenance of strong family ties, and that these are interdependent. Second, they talked about the state *vis-à-vis* these problems and expressed the belief that the state has the nation's interests at heart and is acting in good faith. Having raised these issues, this is the view that emerges: the Singapore state must maintain its interventions into the family because the issues at stake are complex and massive – namely, the pursuit of 'modernity' in tandem with the 'protection' of 'tradition' – and the state is the only agent committed and able to manage such a Herculean task.

There is, then, a clear imagination of the state: as an imperfect and yet necessary agent, operating in a global context under conditions beyond its control, and with intentions that are aimed at a greater good. Family policies, beyond producing collective norms, values and a sense of Singaporeanness, also ultimately produce a clear articulation of the state – both its institutional reach and its imagined purpose and form.

Rethinking state power and the constitution of society

The family policies of the Singapore state are well known. I began by pointing out two contrasting stories about these policies and went on to argue that 'failures' and 'successes' need to be scrutinized in tandem if we are to understand the full spectrum of state effects. And the effects are profound indeed: the site of the family turns out to be a place where the very meanings of being Singaporean are produced. It is also the arena where the state – as an institutional–disciplinary object as well as an ideological–nationalist entity – is produced. The processes leading to these outcomes force a rethinking of the relationships between state and society wherein the two are mutually constituted.

Scholarship on Asia has rightly focused on the question of social change in contexts of rapid industrialization. There are vast literatures, on the one hand, excavating the roles of states in development processes[15] and, on the other hand, detailing the ways in which 'culture' has shifted in response to 'globalization'.[16] The broad message from these bodies of work is twofold: first, global forces and

states are primary, macro-level agents whose actions 'impact' on entire societies.[17] Although there is increasing attention to individual agents' creativity and 'resistances' to macro-forces, the framework situates their actions as outcomes of, or responses to, rather than constitutive of change. Perhaps this is simply empirically true, but, before concluding this, we need to shift the lens so that analysing 'the everyday' does not mean only looking for 'resistance'. The prevailing influence of a 'strong state, weak society' framework points to this as the only logical approach; taking state and society as distinct, known and stable entities, we have little choice but to look only for the gaps and failures in state rule. If, on the other hand, we begin as more recent ethnographic work on the state does (Hansen & Stepputat, 2001; Rao & Walton, 2004; Steinmetz, 1999), with a curiosity about how various agents of change inform each other, this paves the way for empirical work that has the potential to explain the full range of factors that shape social change – including changing conceptions of 'family' – and account for the 'puzzles' of persistently undemocratic regimes and 'failures' of development projects in truly delivering.

Finally, I hope findings from this article suggest that conceptions of social order (or lack thereof) – so often focused on state repression and negation – should be broadened to include sites of production. This is twofold: first, it suggests that beyond looking for individual-level 'resistance', more efforts have to be made to conceptualize collective production of meanings and practices, and how this leads to or fails to lead to shared national identities. Second, it also means taking into account sites not normally seen as being important to understandings of political economy and state power. The site of 'the family' – embodying so much of the theoretical baggage I have suggested – should prove a particularly fruitful site for research.

Notes

1 This was the state's slogan beginning in the late 1980s. Though no longer featured prominently in pro-natal campaigns, the phrase embodies the main message the state wants to convey: three or more children is ideal, but only for those families who are financially able.

2 This section draws from Bloodworth (1986), Drysdale (1984), Harper (1998, 2001), Hill and Lian (1995), Hong and Huang (2008), Huang (2006), Lam and Tan (1999), Lau (1998), Mauzy and Milne (2002), Sopiee (1974), Salaff (1988), Tan and Jomo (2001), Turnbull (1977).

3 Marriage as a precondition for childbearing is a cultural norm perpetuated by state policies, as will become clear later in this article. Non- or delayed marriage is thus tightly linked to fertility rates.

4 The interviews took place between 2003 and 2004. My respondents consisted of: thirty-six women and twenty-four men; forty-three ethnic Chinese, thirteen Malays, three Indians and one person identified as 'Other'. This breakdown of Singaporeans into Chinese, Malay, Indian and Other reflects the official ethno-racial categories recognized and (re)produced by the Singapore state. Singapore's Citizen/Permanent Resident population (3.68 million in 2007, not including about 1 million non-Residents)

is made up by roughly 75 per cent Chinese, 14 per cent Malays, 9 per cent Indians and 2 per cent Other (Singapore Department of Statistics, 2007a).

5 The word '*lah*' at the end of a phrase or sentence connotes taken-for-grantedness – that the subject at hand is what it is and is naturally so.

6 All names are pseudonyms.

7 In 2000, 81 per cent of women and 82 per cent of men between ages 25 and 34 had at least secondary school education (Singapore Department of Statistics, 2000). In 1970, the labour force participation rate was 81 per cent for men and 28 per cent for women (Singapore Department of Statistics, 2005). By 2004, this had shifted to 76 per cent for men and 51 per cent for women (Singapore Department of Statistics, 2007b). The rate of participation is closer when we compare only single men and women: in 1997, 66 per cent of single women and 67 per cent of single men were in the formal workforce (Singapore Department of Statistics, 1998). Dual-career couples increased from 27 per cent of married couples in 1980, to 44 per cent in 2005 (Singapore Department of Statistics, 2006b).

8 For details, refer to Teo (2009, p. 543).

9 To claim the various kinds of tax relief, one must be married, divorced or widowed. The criterion is meant to convey the state's position that marriage is central to family formation. Single mothers will receive assistance only insofar as their single status is not 'by choice'.

10 The website of the Internal Revenue Authority of Singapore states: 'Foreign maid levy relief is a relief to encourage *married women* to remain in the workforce and also encourage procreation' (Internal Revenue Authority of Singapore, 2009, emphasis in original). Employers of foreign domestic workers have to pay a tax ('levy') of S$265 (normal) or S$170 (concession). Concession rates are offered to households where care-givers are presumably absolutely necessary, i.e. where there are children below age 12; adults above age 65; or family members with disabilities.

11 I argue elsewhere that reforms of migration policies for foreign domestic workers are limited precisely by the state's desire to protect a particular form of family in Singapore (Teo & Piper, 2009).

12 There is a huge immigrant population in Singapore, roughly 21 per cent of the total population in 2007. Migrants are divided into categories by occupation/income/education and given vastly different privileges by the state. Only women from certain countries are allowed to work in the category known as 'foreign domestic workers'. Most are from the Philippines, followed by Indonesia and then minorities from Bangladesh, Sri Lanka and Thailand. The wealth disparity between Singapore and these countries makes possible this flow of migrant labour. Consciousness of this uneven development, coupled with minimal formal protections, shape attitudes and behaviours towards workers – often in racialized and negative terms.

13 PuruShotam (1998) argues that Singapore women are particularly disciplined by the state precisely through the rhetoric of a middle-class family ideal.

14 Stivens (2006) uncovers a very similar discourse in Malaysia.

15 See, for example, Amsden (1989), Evans (1995), Haggard (1990), Johnson (1982) and Wade (1990).

16 See, for example, Robison and Goodman (1996).

17 Hart (2001) critiques this 'impact model' of development scholarship.

References

Amsden, A. H. (1989). *Asia's next giant: South Korea and late industrialization*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Bloodworth, D. (1986). *The tiger and the Trojan horse*. Singapore: Times Books International.

Castells, M., Goh, L., & **Kwok, R. Y.-W.** (1990). *The Shek Kip Mei syndrome: Economic development and public housing in Hong Kong and Singapore*. London: Pion.

Chan, A. (2001). *Singapore's changing age structure and the policy implications for financial security, employment, living arrangements and health care*. Singapore: Asian MetaCentre for Population and Sustainable Development Analysis.

Chan, J. S. (2000). The status of women in a patriarchal state: The case of Singapore. In L. P. Edwards & M. Roces (Eds.), *Women in Asia: Tradition, modernity and globalisation* (pp. 39–58). St. Leonards, NSW: Allen & Unwin.

Chua, B. H. (1995). *Communitarian ideology and democracy in Singapore*. London and New York: Routledge.

Chua, B. H. (1997). *Political legitimacy and housing: Stakeholding in Singapore*. London and New York: Routledge.

Chua, B. H. (2004). Communitarianism without competitive politics in Singapore. In B. H. Chua (Ed.), *Communitarian politics in Asia* (pp. 78–101). London and New York: RoutledgeCurzon.

Chua, B. H. (2005). Welfare developmentalism in Singapore and Malaysia. In H.-J. Kwon (Ed.), *Transforming the developmental welfare state in East Asia* (pp. 98–117). London: Palgrave Macmillan.

Drysdale, J. (1984). *Singapore: The struggle for success*. Singapore: Times Books International.

Edidin, P. (2004, February 8). Word for word/Singapore swingers: Romance, the patriotic duty of procreation and the fate of nations. *The New York Times*, p. 47.

Evans, P. B. (1995). *Embedded autonomy: States and industrial transformation*. Princeton NJ: Princeton University Press.

Foucault, M. (1995). *Discipline and punish: The birth of the prison*. New York: Vintage Books.

Foucault, M., Burchell, G., Gordon, C., & **Miller, P.** (1991). *The Foucault effect: Studies in governmentality with two lectures by and an interview with Michel Foucault*. London: Harvester Wheatsheaf.

Gordon, L. (Ed.) (1990). *Women, the state, and welfare*. Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press.

Haggard, S. (1990). *Pathways from the periphery: The politics of growth in the newly industrializing countries*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press.

Hansen, T. B. & **Stepputat, F.** (Eds.) (2001). *States of imagination: Ethnographic explorations of the postcolonial state*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.

Harper, T. N. (1998). *The end of empire and the making of Malaya*. New York: Cambridge University Press.

Harper, T. N. (2001). Lim Chin Siong and the 'Singapore Story'. In J. Q. Tan & K. S. Jomo (Eds.), *Comet in our sky: Lim Chin Siong in history* (pp. 3–55). Selangor Darul Ehsan: Insan.

Hart, G. P. (2001). Development critiques in the 1990s: Culs de sac and promising paths. *Progress in Human Geography, V25*, 649–58.

Heng, G. & **Devan, J.** (1995). State fatherhood: The politics of nationalism, sexuality, and race in Singapore. In A. Ong & M. G. Peletz (Eds.), *Bewitching women, pious men: Gender and body politics in Southeast Asia* (pp. 195–215). Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.

Hill, M. & **Lian, K. F.** (1995). *The politics of nation building and citizenship in Singapore*. London and New York: Routledge.

Hong, L. & **Huang, J.** (2008). *The scripting of a national history: Singapore and its pasts*. Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press.

Huang, J. (2006). Positioning the student political activism of Singapore: Articulation, contestation and omission. *Inter-Asia Cultural Studies, 7*, 403–30.

Internal Revenue Authority of Singapore (2009). Official website. http://iras.gov.sg/.

Johnson, C. A. (1982). *MITI and the Japanese miracle: The growth of industrial policy, 1925–1975*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.

Jolly, M. & **Ram, K.** (Eds.) (2001). *Borders of being: Citizenship, fertility, and sexuality in Asia and the Pacific*. Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press.

Jones, G. W. (2004). Not 'when to marry' but 'whether to marry': The changing context of marriage decisions in East and Southeast Asia. In G. W. Jones & K. Ramdas (Eds.), *(Un)tying the knot: Ideal and reality in Asian marriage* (pp. 3–56). Singapore: Singapore University Press.

Jones, G. W. (2007). Delayed marriage and very low fertility in Pacific Asia. *Population and Development Review*, *33*(September), 453–78.

Jones, G. & **Leete, R.** (2002). Asia's family planning programs as low fertility is attained. *Studies in Family Planning*, *33*(March), 114–26.

Jones, G. W., **Straughan, P. T.**, & **Chan, A.** (2008a). Very low fertility in Pacific Asian countries: Causes and policy responses. In G. W. Jones, P. T. Straughan, & A. Chan (Eds.), *Ultra-low fertility in Pacific Asia: Trends, causes and policy issues* (pp. 1–22). Abingdon and New York: Routledge.

Jones, G. W., **Straughan, P. T.**, & **Chan, A.** (Eds.) (2008b). *Ultra-low fertility in Pacific Asia: Trends, causes and policy issues*. Abingdon and New York: Routledge.

Kligman, G. (1998). *The politics of duplicity: Controlling reproduction in Ceausescu's Romania*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.

Kurlantzick, J. (2001). Love, Singaporean style. *The Atlantic Monthly*, *288*(July/August), 42–3.

Lam, P. E. & **Tan, K.** (1999). *Lee's lieutenants: Singapore's old guard*. St. Leonards, NSW: Allen & Unwin.

Lau, A. (1998). *A moment of anguish: Singapore in Malaysia and the politics of disengagement*. Singapore: Times Academic Press.

Lee, K. Y. (1983). *National Day rally speech*. Singapore:

Lee, W. K. M. (1999). Economic and social implications of aging in Singapore. *Journal of Aging and Social Policy*, *10*, 73–92.

Leete, R. (1994). The continuing flight from marriage and parenthood among the overseas Chinese in East and Southeast Asia: Dimensions and implications. *Population and Development Review*, *20*, 811–29.

Low, L. & **Aw, T. C.** (1998). *Housing a healthy, educated and wealthy nation through the CPF*. Singapore: Times Academic Press.

Lyons, L. (1998). The 'graduate woman' phenomenon: Changing constructions of the family in Singapore. *Sojourn*, *13*, 309–27.

Mauzy, D. K. & **Milne, R. S.** (2002). *Singapore politics under the People's Action Party*. London and New York: Routledge.

McDonald, P. (2008). Explanations of low fertility in East Asia. In G. W. Jones, P. T. Straughan, & A. Chan (Eds.), *Ultra-low fertility in Pacific Asia: Trends, causes and policy issues* (pp. 23–39). Abingdon and New York: Routledge.

Ministry of Community Development and Sports (2003). Official website. Retrieved from www.mcys.gov.sg.

Ministry of Community Development Youth and Sports (2008). *Marriage and parenthood study 2007*. Singapore: Ministry of Community Development, Youth and Sports.

O'Connor, J. S., Orloff, A. S., & **Shaver, S.** (1999). *States, markets, families: Gender, liberalism, and social policy in Australia, Canada, Great Britain, and the United States*. Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press.

Paxson, H. (2004). *Making modern mothers: Ethics and family planning in urban Greece*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.

Pereira, A. A. (2006). Singapore's family values: Do they explain low fertility? *Asia-Pacific Population Journal*, *21*, 65–84.

PuruShotam, N. (1998). Between compliance and resistance: Women and the middle-class way of life in Singapore. In M. Stivens & K. Sen (Eds.), *Gender and power in affluent Asia* (pp. 127–66). London and New York: Routledge.

Pyle, J. L. (2001). Women, the family, and economic restructuring: The Singapore model? In G. Rodan (Ed.), *Singapore* (pp. 479–87). Aldershot and Burlington, VT: Ashgate.

Quah, S. R. (1994). *Family in Singapore: Sociological perspectives*. Singapore: Times Academic Press.
Quah, S. R. (2003). *Home and kin: Families in Asia*. Singapore: Marshall Cavendish-EUP.
Rao, V. & **Walton, M.** (Eds.) (2004). *Culture and public action*. Stanford, CA: Stanford Social Sciences.
Robison, R. & **Goodman, D. S.** (Eds.) (1996). *The new rich in Asia: Mobile phones, McDonalds and middle-class revolution*. London and New York: Routledge.
Salaff, J. W. (1988). *State and family in Singapore: Restructuring a developing society*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press.
Saw, S.-H. (2005). *Population policies and programmes in Singapore*. Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies.
Singapore Department of Statistics (1998). *Social progress of Singapore women: A statistical assessment*. Singapore: Department of Statistics, Ministry of Trade & Industry.
Singapore Department of Statistics (2000). *Census of population*. Singapore: Singapore Department of Statistics, Ministry of Trade & Industry.
Singapore Department of Statistics (2005). Labour force participation rate. Retrieved from http://www.singstat.gov.sg.
Singapore Department of Statistics (2006a). *Population trends 2006*. Singapore: Department of Statistics, Ministry of Trade & Industry.
Singapore Department of Statistics (2006b). *Trends in dual-career couples, 2006*. Occasional paper on income statistics. Singapore: Department of Statistics, Ministry of Trade & Industry.
Singapore Department of Statistics (2007a). *Population trends 2007*. Singapore: Department of Statistics, Ministry of Trade & Industry.
Singapore Department of Statistics (2007b). *Singapore in figures 2007*. Singapore: Department of Statistics, Ministry of Trade & Industry.
Singapore Department of Statistics (2008a). Key annual indicators. Retrieved from http://www.singstat.gov.sg/stats/keyind.html.
Singapore Department of Statistics (2008b). *Yearbook of statistics Singapore 2008*. Singapore: Department of Statistics, Ministry of Trade & Industry.
Soin, K. (1996). National policies: Their impact on women and the family. In Association of Women for Action and Research (Ed.), *The ties that bind: In search of the modern Singapore family* (pp. 190–208). Singapore: Armour.
Sopiee, M. N. (1974). *From Malayan Union to Singapore separation: Political unification in the Malaysia region: 1945–65*. Kuala Lumpur: Universiti Malaya.
Steinmetz, G. (Ed.) (1999). *State/culture: State-formation after the cultural turn*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press.
Stivens, M. (2006). 'Family values' and Islamic revival: Gender, rights and state moral projects in Malaysia. *Women's Studies International Forum*, *29*, 354–67.
Straughan, P. T., **Chan, A.**, & **Jones, G. W.** (2008). From population control to fertility promotion: A case study of family policies and fertility trends in Singapore. In G. W. Jones, P. T. Straughan, & A. Chan (Eds.), *Ultra-low fertility in Pacific Asia: Trends, causes and policy issues* (pp. 181–203). Abingdon and New York: Routledge.
Tan, J. Q. & **Jomo, K. S.** (Eds.) (2001). *Comet in our sky: Lim Chin Siong in history*. Selangor Darul Ehsan: Insan.
Tan, S. Y. (1998). *Private ownership of public housing in Singapore*. Singapore: Times Academic Press.
Teo, Y. Y. (2007). Inequality for the greater good: Gendered state rule and its consequences in Singapore. *Critical Asian Studies*, *39*, 423–45.
Teo, Y. (2009). Gender disarmed: How gendered policies produce gender-neutral politics in Singapore. *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society*, *34*, 533–58.
Teo, Y. & **Piper, N.** (2009). Foreigners in our homes: Linking migration and family policies in Singapore. *Population, Space and Place*, *15*(March–April), 147–59.

Turnbull, C. M. (1977). *A history of Singapore, 1819–1975*. Kuala Lumpur: Oxford University Press.
UN Statistics Division (2004). United Nations common database. Retrieved from http://unstats.un.org.
Wade, R. (1990). *Governing the market: Economic theory and the role of government in East Asian industrialization*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
Wong, A. K. & **Yeh, S. H. K.** (1985). *Housing a nation: 25 years of public housing in Singapore*. Singapore: Maruzen Asia for Housing & Development Board.
Wong, T. & **Yeoh, B. S. A.** (2003). *Fertility and the family: An overview of pro-natalist population policies in Singapore*. Singapore: Asian MetaCentre for Population and Sustainable Development Analysis.
Yap, M. T. (2008). Ultra-low fertility in Singapore: Some observations. In G. W. Jones, P. T. Straughan, & A. Chan (Eds.), *Ultra-low fertility in Pacific Asia: Trends, causes and policy issues* (pp. 160–80). Abingdon and New York: Routledge.

Youyenn Teo received her PhD in sociology from the University of California at Berkeley in 2005. She was a postdoctoral fellow from 2005 to 2007 at the Asia Research Institute, National University of Singapore, and is currently Assistant Professor in the Division of Sociology at the Nanyang Technological University, Singapore. She has published articles in *Critical Asian Studies*, *Signs* and *Population, Space and Place*. She is working on a book manuscript tentatively titled *Neoliberal morality in Singapore: How family policies make state and society.* Her current project focuses on the intersections between welfare policies and state ideals around the familial.