Neoliberal Morality in Singapore

How family policies make state and society

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In the process of interviewing people for this project, it gradually dawned on me that the very trajectories of conversations reveal how the paradoxes of state rule in Singapore become common sense. People spent a good part of our conversations complaining about the hoops they had to jump through, lamenting the abnormality of Singaporeans' ties to the state, and talking sociologically about the state's contradictions. Then, having gotten all this off their chests, they informed me that things *have* to be so. According to my respondents, the state is doing what it can. Singapore has to be this way; there is no alternative.

The paradoxes I painted from a macro perspective in Chapters 1 and 2—of a state at once interventionist and resolutely anti-welfare, calling for the protection of tradition on one side while acting in ways to undermine tradition on the other—are resolved. *How* does this happen—how does a state that embodies profound contradictions come to be seen by its citizens as a limited agent doing its best? Why is it the "failures" to reverse demographic trends toward delayed marriage and low fertility are not accompanied by outright rejections of the state's attempts at shaping the familial? This is the set of puzzles at the core of this book. And I have argued that the answers lie in the practices, norms, and values generated through people's concrete negotiations of family policies. Despite their failures in altering demographic trends toward delayed marriage and low fertility, family policies are the site where both state and society take on form and content, in ways that render state paradoxes natural and indeed inevitable. In this final chapter, I turn to discussing the implications of neoliberal morality. I argue that it is a good check on the most destructive tendencies within neoliberalism, but that it sets important limits to the development of citizenship, and is itself constrained by changing demographic pressures.

Singapore exists as an entity in a world that increasingly takes for granted neoliberal logic: privatize industries, set low tax rates, limit social spending in favor of individual responsibility. With the global financial crises of the late 2000s, even those states that are historically regarded as "welfare states" have moved toward "austerity measures" aimed at cutting back social spending. In this context, the Singapore state has embraced neoliberal ideology in significant ways—embracing the claim that markets can and should be free, that economic growth and competitiveness is and should be the central goal of a nation, and that

citizens' access to necessary goods ought to be dependent on their economic productivity. In practice, however, the Singapore state is not neoliberal insofar as it maintains direct control on or tight regulation over many key industries and services. Although it is very reluctant to provide direct assistance, it is also not entirely devoid of a social support system: it is in fact highly interventionist and intimately involved in shaping public housing, education, healthcare, and public infrastructure; in economic policy, moreover, it is unabashed about influencing "market" forces such as prices of housing. Citizens of Singapore are acutely aware of all this. Interestingly, despite these twin and opposing faces of the state, ordinary Singaporeans believe strongly in the value of the free market, the importance of unfettered competition, and the "evils" of welfare in eroding personal responsibility. They hold these neoliberal values to be common sense *despite* everyday evidence of the state's strong involvement in shaping the economy.

As scholars have documented, neoliberalism has evolved out of different conditions and taken somewhat different forms in different places.[1] Moreover, neoliberalism as belief and practice is always at once economic, social, and political. In Jayasuriya's terms, its adoption implies "the creation of new forms of sociability that promote enterprising subjects and values" (2006: 237). Starting with "failed" family policies, this is indeed where this book has ended up. I have documented the process through which form and content are given to the Singapore case's particular adoption of neoliberalism; this entails both the state and how it rules *and*, very importantly, how Singaporeans think and behave as citizens in the neoliberal context. Unlike most existing accounts of neoliberalism and its manifestations in East and Southeast Asia, which tend to focus on state practices and discourses and macro-historical changes, I have elected to look at a realm that has received comparatively less attention—that of citizen subjects and their practices and orientations. In taking subjects' subjectivity seriously, the story that emerges is one that both corroborates with and yet complicates that told by scholars and critics of neoliberalism.

On one hand, the overall claims are very similar: the production of increasingly sophisticated tools of governance produce self-governing subjects with sensibilities suited to neoliberalism. On the other, the book reveals that critics may have both *underestimated* the strength and depth of neoliberalism as belief system and yet also *overestimated* the coherence of neoliberal subjectivity. In other words, from a big picture sort of position, my claims are not so different: neoliberalism, rather than obliterating the role of the state, has made possible new spaces and modes of governing.[2] However, because subjects' subjectivities are the locus of my empirical investigation, my conclusions about neoliberalism as *cultural* entity are radically different.

Rather than abstracting from observations of neoliberal governance the production of coherent neoliberal subjects, I interrogate the process by which this happens and thereby excavate what subjects look like and how they are constituted. And what I found was that the "culture" of neoliberalism—if that is what we might call the norms, habits, values, and belief systems accompanying and

shaping the pursuit of particular forms of economic development—is both *profound and yet "thin."* Singaporeans hold strongly to the idea that "traditions," "family values," and "economic growth" matter and these motivate them to work and "do" family in specific ways. This is despite the fact, for example, that said traditions reflect relatively recent trends and they find it difficult to articulate their roots and rationales. What keeps this "culture" thriving is in fact its continual practice as well as invocation: the beliefs and norms are actively practiced on a daily basis as a result of state policy; the various tropes are *continually* generated and rendered common sense through the multiple points of interaction between state and society and among Singaporeans. The neoliberal subject, in other words, is not as coherent and deep as implied when analyses are focused on state technologies of governance rather than subjectivities. Indeed, what is apparent from this study is that subjectivities are better understood as being continually in production rather than static.

On the other hand, however, there are *moral* dimensions to neoliberalism that need to be taken seriously. This implies that neoliberal subjectivities go rather beyond neoliberalist values. This is morality in the Durkheimian sense: signifying the ties that bind people together whether or not they are conscious of it, as well as the notion that people are bound by a system of normative ethics. What I call neoliberal morality encompasses shared worldviews and practices that are powerful insofar as they are exercised repeatedly and predictably by Singaporeans as Singaporeans; what is "moral," in other words, goes well beyond *individual* values, orientations, or subjectivities. Speaking of values, the earlier point has to be reiterated: my research shows that contrary to popular understandings of "the moral" as involving deep convictions and timeless belief systems—"traditions"—morals can be quite powerful even when thinly articulated and recently generated. Often, it is not that deep moral beliefs drive behaviors but that practices—compelled by institutions and widely adopted—shape belief systems.[3]

Neoliberal morality, then, is a theory that describes not only what the Singapore state and Singaporeans *are* but their ongoing relationships and the *processes* that generate their characteristics. It points to subjectivity as work in progress rather than foregone conclusion, and it shows that the assumptions and common sense of neoliberalism as ideology has taken on some very specific forms that reaffirm the importance of nationalist identity and certain mutual obligations between state and society. The adoption of neoliberalism in Singapore, therefore, is far from an amoral one.

Neoliberal morality implies subjects more unstable and in flux than one would expect given most scholarship on governmentality, and yet also more wedded to neoliberalism in their very constitutions. Given these claims, it follows that one must ask: what are the broader implications for contemporary citizenship in Singapore and elsewhere? In the rest of this chapter, I explore the issue of what citizens and citizenship are and should be.

The problem of citizenship

In recent years, scholars have written passionately about the devastating effects neoliberalism has had on people's everyday lives and on the future of the world's societies. American scholars of progressive leanings have been especially concerned and outraged. They have argued that neoliberalism has led to massive inequalities within American society that are not only economic but social and political. Somers (2008) and Wacquant (2009)—the former drawing on the example of Hurricane Katrina and the latter on the American penal system—have separately argued that the "rights" and "freedoms" to pursue individual wealth have essentially left huge segments of the American population without the basic trappings of citizenship. They describe a situation where those who cannot—for one systematic reason or another—fulfill the requirements of ideal productive neoliberal subject are left at the margins materially as well as symbolically; these are spaces where human dignity is scarce and there is little to no opportunity for the "free" pursuit of American dreams. Lest we think this is a problem for a small minority, even those who are ostensibly productive citizens increasingly find that they have to cobble together solutions to all of their problems—from adequate education for their children, to decent healthcare for themselves and their families. As Wendy Brown (2006: 704) puts it, neoliberalism has converted:

> every political and social problem into market terms … individual problems with market solutions. … Privatization as a value and practice penetrates deep into the culture and the citizen-subject. If we have a problem, we look to a product to solve it; indeed, a good deal of our lives is devoted to researching, sharing, procuring, and upgrading these solutions.

Neoliberalism, from these perspectives, has left some American citizens with neither individual rights nor collective welfare (in its broad definition of well-being), and most with some formal rights but very limited collective welfare. Public infrastructure, healthcare, education, security during involuntary unemployment—these scholars see the American state as failing citizens in each of these elements. For them, the state has in fact become very big, but not in ways that improve the lives of most ordinary Americans. Importantly, in tolerating, nay encouraging, the naturalness of inequality and the ethos of every person for themselves, neoliberalism has corroded "perceptions of what we owe each other as fellow humans" (Somers 2008: 2) and rendered natural a political culture wherein people hold "an abject, unemancipatory, and anti-egalitarian subjective orientation" (Brown 2006: 703). For scholars like Somers and Brown, one of America's major problems in contemporary times is the lack of social bonds between society and the state as well as among citizens. Democracy as "reciprocal but nonequivalent rights and obligations between equal citizens" (Somers 2008: 69) has become a distant dream. In other words, the dominance of neoliberal ideology and practice has shaped not just the economic realm; it has had profound negative implications for political thinking and practice.

What of neoliberalism in Singapore?

The view of America presented above represents a particularly strong indictment of the pitfalls of neoliberalism, as well as an especially stark view of contemporary American political economy. It is obviously not without controversy. I think, nonetheless, that it is an important and interesting perspective of an ideal type against which we can compare other cases. Even if the situation in the U.S. is not as extreme as argued by these analysts, neoliberalism in its theorized, ideal form *does* seem to suggest the waning of the state in welfare provisions and a consequent downgrading in importance, if not outright destruction, of ideals around social bonds and contracts. Taking this rendition of the U.S. as an ideal type, we can begin thinking about how countries such as Singapore have adopted neoliberalism.

On the road of global neoliberal hegemony, Singapore seems to be traveling on a different path than the U.S. As in the U.S., there *is* growing inequality—both observable through indicators like the Gini coefficient[4] and palpable in the bifurcated spaces of consumption within the city. As we have seen in this book, there is a comparable ethos within Singapore society about the fundamental importance of market competition and individual hard work, and a similar skepticism about state welfare.

On the Singapore state's orientation toward and societal norms around the issues of inequality, however, there are important differences. Unlike in the U.S., where the public systems of healthcare and education have seen severe cutbacks, in Singapore there is significant, albeit conditional and individualized, access to relatively good-quality social goods and services. Direct spending on poverty alleviation and other forms of social assistance *is* very low—Asher and Nandy point out: "In 2005, out of a total population of 4.3 million, there were only 2,772 persons receiving public assistance, 86 per cent of whom were old and destitute" (2008: 55). Indeed, the Singapore case is often discussed in tandem with other Southeast Asian and East Asian cases, and all are seen as examples where state spending is inadequate and families bear too much of the burden (Aspalter 2006; Croissant 2004; Holliday 2000). Moreover, access to public housing, healthcare, and education are heavily dependent upon employment and the quality of goods/services one is able to access varies by one's ability to pay. In other words, although "public," none of these things come across as entitlements or rights and there is significant differentiation *within* the various public systems. Public flats, for example, could be smaller than 400 square feet or up to 1,600 square feet; their range in price spans hundreds of thousands. Nonetheless, despite rising costs and individualized payment structures (we have seen, for example, that people *buy* public housing), most Singaporeans do have access to at least basic and decent housing, public education, and adequate healthcare services; a look around the island also reveals nicely paved roads, well-maintained public buses, trains, and buildings and, for a city, rather lovely trees. Although access to public goods is not automatic and instead heavily dependent on one's capacity to generate income and pay, the cheapest possibilities are universally available and the baseline provisions are relatively good. We do not see, and are nowhere near witnessing,

the sort of retreat from public services by the American middle-class Brown talks about. There is practically no homelessness, and we do not hear stories of public schools with insufficient funds to hire teachers or purchase supplies. Although there *is* inequality and it is rising, the outcome has not been the abandonment of the public system.

Perhaps more significantly, the tone of political culture does not reveal the same sort of alienation and eroding of notions around society's greater good. Although there is skepticism over welfare, this coexists with a relatively strong sense, *both* among citizens and the state itself, that the state has to do what is "right." We saw in earlier chapters that Singaporeans spoke frequently about the state trying to do what is best, having the interests of Singapore at heart, and that this was an important part of their imaginings of a legitimate state. Moreover, in the public discourse, the perspective of what is right or best includes ensuring that Singaporeans receive some material and symbolic protection against the perils of global competition. The social goods that Singaporeans have access to—housing and education in particular—are regularly invoked by citizens as things that must be protected from the tyranny of rising prices in a "competitive city" and from encroachment by the increasing number of new migrants. Singapore's PAP state has consistently claimed that it is responsible not just for bringing about economic success but that it has done it in ways respectful to and drawing on tradition and culture; Singapore's development, then, is construed as *better* than other success stories precisely because it is development that has not come at a high cultural price. In fact, the PAP government takes pains to come across as a caring state. We see from my respondents' articulations of their expectations of the state that they, in turn, hold the state accountable for achieving not just high growth and improvements in GDP, but some notion of the greater good.

As I have shown in this book, these are not vague imaginations, and they are not just isolated individual opinions. Insofar as neoliberal morality is produced in collective practices and insofar as neoliberal morality is *shared* reality, common sense, then it is precisely this neoliberal morality that seems to have the capacity to check a state's pursuit of neoliberalist policies: the shared values and concrete everyday binds among Singaporeans, and between citizens and the state, and the importance people place on notions of "economic competitiveness," "greater good," and "good values," fuels a vision of society and nationhood that tolerates inequality but *also* holds accountable the state as upholders of some moral good beyond market fundamentalism.

Neoliberalism as practiced in Singapore, then, manages to combine seemingly opposing logics: intense individualism and competition on the one side, and a peculiar manifestation of collective well-being on the other. I have argued that the Singapore state is better understood as an aggressive modernizer than a genuine protector of traditions. Yet, what it has done in the realm of family policies cannot be seen as window dressing, mere rhetoric. Its intentions were to reverse demographic trends; in that, it has failed. But the latent consequences of the policies have been to compel Singaporeans' relationships to one another and to the state, and to carve out their sensibilities around family, state, the economy, and

Singaporean-ness—in ways that appear not only to uphold the naturalness of neoliberal logic, but also, oddly enough, to check the worst tendencies of neoliberalism.

Does all of this imply that Singapore is a model to emulate? That, in the age of neoliberal hegemony, it is a good model that citizens should fight for? There is obviously no absolute yes or no answer. However, I point to two sets of ways to contemplate these questions, the first centering on what makes citizenship and the second on the sustainability and limitations of neoliberal morality.

What makes a citizen: culture as constraint

Chua Beng Huat, in an essay titled "Singapore as Model," discusses the various ways in which other countries and cities have in fact already looked to the Singapore success story for their developmental lessons (Chua 2008). From Britain to Qatar, Dalian to Bangalore, governments have studied Singapore's Central Provident Fund system, its national airline, its electronic road pricing system, its public housing, and more (ibid: 17). Chua argues that beyond the particular politico-historical conditions that have accompanied Singapore's propulsion to its current economic status, it would ultimately be most difficult to replicate "the ideological consensus generated by a common apprehension towards collective 'survival'" (2008: 21). In his view, what sustains Singapore's "competent, efficient, financially non-corrupt, less-than-democratic" PAP state is this rather peculiar ideological consensus among Singaporeans. I agree with Chua that the sustainability of the Singapore state's particular orientation toward development is dependent on some level of ideological consensus. I would add that on an everyday level, the consensus does not in fact have to be "deep" (as his notion of survivalist mentality suggests); indeed, I have shown in this book that what is especially interesting and relatively understudied about the Singapore case is the extent to which consensus has been *institutionalized* through practices that are *not* always explicitly ideological.

Beyond the question of whether the Singapore model can be replicated, however, we must also ask: *should* it? What are the pitfalls of neoliberal morality for the very development of citizenship?

Unlike in the U.S., it is impossible to articulate a critique on the Singapore case from the vantage point that neoliberalism has led to the erosion of democratic culture, since there was not one to begin with. What is possible, however, is to examine the political culture Singapore has against ideal notions of political culture under democratic citizenship, wherein equality between citizens is valued, and citizens have effective channels for cultivating collective grievances *vis-à-vis* their representative, the state.

What are the characteristics of contemporary political culture in Singapore? Neoliberal morality not only articulates a vision of appropriate state roles, but is also that which links Singaporeans together through shared realities. As I have shown in Chapters 4 and 5, however, there are important limits to the production of a sense of collectivity. Despite shared realities and common sense around issues

to do with marriage, housing, child, and elderly care, Singaporeans have limited avenues for understanding what their fellow Singaporeans' broader grievances are, and fewer yet for feeling like they might articulate *collective* grievances against the state.

Souchou Yao gives a vivid account of the coming together of *men* in coffee shops to "talk cock"—to poke holes at state policy, to be sarcastic about and dramatize the faults of particular leaders, and to generally air grumblings they have of living under a state that holds so much control over them (Yao 2007). He points to these gatherings as politics, but emphasizes: "An event of the everyday, it is a kind of politics without form, a freewheeling account of state power without thought" (2007: 131). Within Yao's account, although he does not himself make this explicit, we see that "talking cock" is a gendered activity: it is primarily men involved in this culture of criticizing a state and leaders who have, in their strong grip over their lives, perhaps emasculated them. It is indeed also an activity with class overtones: the men he describes as being involved in sitting around in the evenings in neighborhood *kopitiam* (coffee shops, but without the chi-chi trappings of Starbucks) are typically people involved in more blue-collar work (though retirees with more varied career histories are also important in this scene), and who have some shared interests grounded in their material circumstances. Yao, then, describes scenes full of political meaning and potential—gendered identities! Class alliances!—yet one that remains largely circumscribed in time and space.

Although Yao reveals an interesting and important subculture, then, his argument in the end suggests that such spaces of resistance cannot and do not amount to much. Yao's example illustrates that there *are* certain freedoms of expression and counterstate discourse in everyday Singapore. In fact, spending just an hour or so on the Internet, one easily finds numerous instances of similar "talking cock" online. Yet, there is still a strong sense that collective action of the political sort is rare and somehow unnatural.

In this book, I have argued that the identities around which collective action tends to coalesce in other countries—class, gender, ethnicity, and race—have been "disarmed" in Singapore as possible spaces for people to formulate shared interests. This has happened at least partially because of the symbolic and material significance attached to the familial and to a vague but nonetheless important notion of "tradition." The reification of a particular sort of family serves as a stand-in for a more public orientation toward everyday life; it prevents the formation of a political culture wherein there is greater and more overtly political orientations among citizens, and more political state-society engagement.

Although the notion of a "greater good" is important for Singaporeans, then, its definition is shaped far more by the state than by citizens. To the extent that society has capacity to limit the state's neoliberalism, it is a capacity that is broad and abstract rather than narrow and concrete. The "morality" that holds the state accountable to people is one that comes with rather thin structural pillars; in other words, because formal rights and legitimate institutional channels for dissent are circumscribed, Singaporeans are highly dependent on the state to "do the right

thing" out of its own volition. In this regard, in the dance that is state-society relations, the state is the agent making all the major moves.

In *The Great Transformation*, Karl Polanyi (1957) postulates that when markets wreak havoc on social life, society will rise up in a "double movement" to push for social protections. Neoliberalism—in its multiple forms, of different gradations—has led to massive inequalities all over the world. And we have seen, both within the so-called First and Third Worlds, the rise of social movements that seem to be evidence of Polanyian counter-movements. And though social movements have not always been successful nor productive, they have had important effects in shifting certain rules of the game.[5]

Social movements, and more broadly, a vibrant and independent civil society sector, have important place in the world's history as platforms for articulating alternative visions of societies. In this regard, there is clearly a sociopolitical void in the Singapore case.

Neoliberal morality turns out to be, at once, what binds people together, what checks the state's pursuit of neoliberalism, but also that which sets important limits to Singaporeans' capacity to be active citizens who participate in collective action to draw out the content of the "greater good." Despite variations from the U.S. case, then, we find convergence in the fact that neoliberal norms about the primacy of individual (familial) interests and market logic embedded in state-society exchanges have adverse effects on democratic ideals about collective action and decision-making. In addition, while the memory of democratic times sustain a minority but important group of intellectuals and activists in the U.S. in their efforts to challenge neoliberal hegemony, no such tradition exists in the Singapore case from which to launch similar challenges. In thinking about the extent to which Singapore can be a good model, then, one needs to consider what sort of political culture qua citizenship the system is breeding.

Going beyond the issue of overt political participation and engagement, I also present a second set of issues to consider: is neoliberal morality sustainable? And will it maintain its status as that which sets limits to the more destructive tendencies of neoliberalism?

Can neoliberal morality sustain? Are "good values" enough?

Now the questions we must ask are these: Are the ties that bind Singaporeans to each other and to the state, their shared values around the familial and national good, sufficient for maintaining the particular version of neoliberalism and checking the destructive tendencies of neoliberal logic? Further empirical study is obviously necessary to fully sustain the scenarios I present below. Nonetheless, I suggest that insofar as the production of neoliberal morality is currently built on idealized forms of the familial, then the increasing contradictions between ideals and practice will alter the dynamics of societal and state-society relations.

At the center of neoliberal morality in Singapore lies a narrow and rigid view of the familial. The state's deep commitment to this vision is unwavering; this seems likely to undercut the strength of neoliberal morality. Here, we may need

to take a closer look at the state's "failures" in altering marriage and childbearing behaviors. Increasingly, we are seeing the idealized family becoming more difficult for Singaporeans to perform. Parts of their collective practices will continue to be shaped heavily by the state: housing after marriage, and childbearing after housing-marriage, for instance, are likely to remain normative patterns for those getting married. But judging from what demographers tell us, there will be increasing numbers of people delaying or avoiding marriage altogether. And the rigidity of the idealized *gendered* family through public policy is at least one barrier to reversing these trends. To ensure the continued growth of its workforce, the Singapore state has already aggressively encouraged immigration as a solution to low fertility. We are starting to see, in 2010, that this is making Singaporeans more skeptical of the state's sincerity in safeguarding *their* well-being. The large number of immigrants, including new citizens, in the city these past few years has riled up a host of anti-immigrant sentiments and calls on the state to protect the interests of "real" Singaporeans.[6] Although growing inequality is by no means caused by immigrants, the everyday experience of struggle in a palpably wealthy society seems to have generated greater skepticism about the state's commitment to the greater good of *all* Singaporeans. In essence, that pronatalist policies have failed to create the conditions for people—particularly women—to put into practice their desires for marriage and children; the centrality the state has placed on continual economic growth; and the consequent aggressive turn to immigration as solution, have generated important tensions in state-society relations. It is questionable, then, given the increasing rift between the idealized forms and the realities, if the delicate balance of embracing individualism and competition with some notion of greater good can be maintained.

In the above instance, I am suggesting that people's connections to the state may be weakened, that their willingness to give the state the benefit of the doubt will be increasingly challenged by the frustrating gaps between ideals and feasible practices, as well as the turn toward immigration. I now raise a second issue: we may also wonder if the continual individualization of social problems will eventually alienate citizens from one another, and weaken the sense of shared responsibility for the weaker members of society. Here, the issue of care for the ageing is a good starting point for consideration. Shaped by public policies and discourse, Singaporeans will probably continue to *want to* "take care" of their ageing parents. Again, however, the demographic and economic trends signal to us that this ideal will become increasingly difficult to put into practice. As family size shrinks, and as income inequality grows, there will be more adult children who *want* to but are simply *unable* to support their ageing parents. The state itself obviously recognizes this and is working hard to reform, for example, the Central Provident Fund system in ways that would ensure greater individual independence. There has also been gradual expansion in direct support for the low income in the forms of rebates on utilities and transportation, as well as income supplements. In these changes, however, the state is insistent that Singapore must not be a welfare state, that public support should be the last resort, and that families are the "first line of defense." The bulk of its efforts seem directed at getting individuals to stay

in the workforce longer, to save for themselves, and to maintain "traditional family values."

I have argued in this book that there are important limits to Singaporeans' sociological imaginations, that when it comes to specific social problems, they favor solutions that stay within the realm of the individual family. As a Singaporean and a sociologist, I worry about these tendencies of both state and society toward individualizing what are in fact public problems and issues. The coexistence of the ethos of individual drive and strong competition and that of collective well-being is a balance. Will the balance shift increasingly to the former? If it does, will we see something closer to the American case, where the poor are demonized and seen as undeserving, where there are insurmountable gaps between the realities of those who have and those who do not? Even though people have not retreated from public services, we are already seeing, within healthcare, education, and housing, significant qualitative differences between those who can afford private hospitals and those who cannot; between those who have and do not have access to expensive private tuition for their kids outside of school, and between those in HDB flats and those in condominiums and "landed properties." As I have shown throughout this book, discourse is insufficient; it, alone, cannot solidify norms and practices. What I believe this implies is that a state *rhetorically* committed to some notion of collective good, but practically pushing for increasingly individualistic solutions, will ultimately end up reinforcing the norm that individual well-being trumps collective responsibilities. In such a scenario, problems of growing inequality and increasing deprivation among certain segments of the population depend too little on citizens' collective judgment of injustice and solidarity, and too heavily on the goodness of the ruling government.

Comparing the cases of the U.S. with Singapore, neoliberal morality seems important in checking the destructive tendencies of neoliberalism. I have suggested, however, that its sustainability is not to be taken for granted. Two characteristics of family policies—its increasing inability to produce conditions allowing for ideals and practice to coincide, and its tendencies toward individualizing social problems—may ultimately weaken the capacity of neoliberal morality in checking trends toward growing inequality and retreat from social responsibility.

Neoliberal morality describes the set of norms, values, and shared practices that have come about through people's everyday negotiations of family policies. It connects Singaporeans to each other and to the state through institutionalized mechanisms that are stable and predictable, and it also links them through shared belief systems. Embedded within the belief system are values that encourage competition and the centrality of economic growth; but there are also deeply held beliefs regarding the centrality of family in the process, and the sense that the state's primary role lies in balancing the twin challenges of protecting tradition while spearheading development. I have shown in this book that neoliberal morality is produced through institutions and people's dynamic interactions with rules, regulations, as well as with each other. I hope this book adds to understandings of what Singapore is, what makes it such a case of "success." More importantly,

I hope it also deepens appreciations of its failures and its limitations. I believe it is in understanding these that we can not only parse out a more comprehensive picture of a given case, but also begin to think about our collective futures and what we hope to see in them.