

# Family and Social Policy in Singapore

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## ABSTRACT

*Family relationships are potent in the live of Singaporeans. The writer seeks to examine some of the trends in the patterns of the family in relations to current population policy. Family planning programme that was introduced may lead Singapore towards a chronic shortage of family labour for such tasks as care for the invalid, especially care for the very old. To have the multi-generation family living under one roof or nearby will be helpful, but when families are small and women are at work this suggestion will not ensure that all the needs of the old and disabled can be met on a household labour basis.*

## ABSTRAK

*Hubungan kekeluargaan sangat penting dalam masyarakat Singapura. Sehubungan dengan ini penulis cuba melihat trend dalam pola kekeluargaan dan hubungannya dengan dasar kependudukan. Program perancangan keluarga yang diperkenalkan mungkin menimbulkan implikasi yang kronis dimana Singapura akan menghadapi masalah kekurangan tenaga untuk menjaga golongan yang tidak berdaya, khususnya orang tua. Usaha menggalkan beberapa generasi tinggal bersama dalam satu rumahtangga atau tinggal berhampiran mungkin sangat berguna tapi apabila kebanyakan wanita dalam keluarga keluar bekerja, saranan itu tidak dapat memastikan golongan yang tidak berdaya tadi dijaga oleh keluarga.*

## INTRODUCTION

This paper seeks to examine some of the trends in the patterns of family composition and, more tentatively, in the patterns of family reciprocity in present day Singapore. It seeks to look at 1) the interface between these trends and some aspects of current policy, and 2) the implications of these trends for future policy formulation.

Individuals normally belong in family groups. Even in western societies, where it is common to find single person households, much research evidence shows such persons as active in reciprocal relationships with

others whom they identify as belonging to the same family network (Townsend 1963 : 49). The lone migrant worker is, typically, temporarily absent from a domestic group whose economic well being is a prime motivating factor in his migration, to which he remits earnings, and to which he plans to return. General observation and recent research confirm that family relationships are potent in the lives of Singaporeans (Wong and Kuo 1979).

This paper is not in any sense an attempt to examine the elusive concept of family policy (Kammerman and Kahn 1978 : 476), even if one accepts that there can be any such thing (Steiner 1981 : 214). Government policies in all fields are strategies related to, and involving people, and people belong to families. An inter-working between public policy and family is therefore inescapable. Policies conceived of as dissociated from family institutions may have uncovenanted side effects which make significant impact on family life.

### HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT

As a phenomenon of any significance, the family in Singapore has a history which is rather short. Until the 1930s the bachelor immigrant dormitory was a more typical Singapore domestic group than was the family household. In the nineteenth century for the immigrant ethnic groups "marriage and the family... were largely matters pertaining to the homeland rather than to their life overseas" (Freedman 1962 : 70). The first Census of Population carried out in 1871 showed sex ratio in the Chinese and Indian communities of over 6,300 and over 4,800 men per thousand women. Only in 1931 did the Chinese ratio drop to below 2,000 and in the 1957 Census the Indian ratio is shown as still nearly 2,300.

Where previously marriage had been the luxury of the business class, by the second decade of this century the pattern of family living was becoming more common (Chin 1848). Lower income men were beginning to bring wives from China, a practice which was leading to the subdivision of city properties into cubicles and to serious overcrowding in tenement housing (Housing Commission 1918).

Even with this trend, right up until the end of the second decade of this century Singapore's demography was characterised by the macabre phenomenon of "negative natural increase". Between 1901 and 1911 deaths outnumbered births by 60,000, and even in the 1911 - 21, intercensal, by 36,000 (Saw 1980 : 13). Nevertheless, the population increased in this twenty year period by over 190,000, a result of massive net in-migration (mainly of unaccompanied men) which served to outweigh the consequences of low birth rates and high mortality.

During the 1920s natural increase became positive (+18,000) (Kammerman and Kahn 1978) and in the 1931 - 1947 intercensal, natural

increase figures were over 178,000. The sizeable immigration of wives had brought with them the pronatalism of their peasant origins to a setting where even before World War II, public health was already relatively advanced and death rates comparatively low (Saw 1970: 88).

After the Japanese period, the returning colonial government brought with it the life-preserving wonders of the post-war pharmacopoeia. These proceeded to administer to a population still adhering to the pro-natalist values which had proved so functional when life had been, if not nasty or brutish, nonetheless, all too often lamentably short. In the ten years 1947–57 Singapore's population rose by almost 65% (Singapore 1957: 43) or, in absolute terms, by more than half a million, of which 396,000 represented natural increase. Alarming as was this 65%, a breakdown of the ten year period showed that peaks had been passed and gently downward trends established. From a crude birth rate of 47.2 in 1949 there was a drop to 42.7 by 1957. Crude natural increase was highest in 1954 at 37.1 and there after dropped almost steadily, as did the annual growth rate from a high of 5.7 in 1953 (Saw 1980: 16). Nonetheless had the 1960 growth rate been maintained Singapore's population would have touched 3.4 million by 1982 (Housing and Development Board 1965: 30).

### FAMILY PLANNING

In the 1930s, when birth rates were already high, (Saw 1970: 71) westernised civic groups were recommending the establishment of birth control clinics (Saw 1980: 31). Only in 1949 were family planning services actually offered, somewhat cautiously, in infant welfare clinics – at only three locations and only a one session per week basis. At that time, vocal sections of the population were strongly opposed to any public provision of contraceptive advice or technology. Local Catholic and Muslim views were aired repeatedly and with feeling in the correspondence columns of the local press. Rather than expand the meagre provision in public clinics, the colonial government found it expedient to provide steadily increasing subvention support (Saw 1980: 51) for a voluntary Family Planning Association (FPA) which was launched on a modest scale in 1949.

As stated earlier, the year 1949 also saw the peak crude birth rate of 47.2. In that year the FPA served a clientele of 600 from 7 clinics. By 1959 the Association provided for well over 34,000 attendances by 15,000 patients at 27 clinics: the crude birth rate had fallen by then to 39.4 after a decade of at first irregular and then of steady decline (Saw 1980: 15).

It may seem reasonable to infer that the work of the FPA was decisive in this trend. It could be said that there was little evidence in the 1950s of the economic take-off or of the overall national or social development which are claimed to be factors to which populations respond by limiting their fertility.

It was a decade in which the entrepot economy was proving progressively less able to provide employment for the large cohorts born from the late 1920s onwards. Tension and anxiety about employment were common place (Singapore 1957: 175). For example endemic political industrial unrest, centred round the small private bus companies, was seen as related to these being among the very few major sources of employment for young people leaving the Chinese junior middle schools. Perhaps the society escaped even more serious disorders because of the population's genius for subsistence-level entrepreneurship (Freedman 1959) along with the colonial government's strategy of combining a strictly administered cash relief scheme<sup>1</sup> with a *de facto* *laissez faire* stance on many marginally illegal economic activities<sup>2</sup>.

The housing situation was equally unpromising. Densities in the old city shop house area were around 1,000 persons per acre (Housing and Development Board 1965). The squalor of city tenements and city fringe shanty towns deteriorated proportionately with population increase (Kaye 1960; Goh 1956: 81). The colonial public housing programme lacked both funds and clear objectives<sup>3</sup>. Rejecting the strategy of 'transition housing' this programme did no more than nibble at the problems of the lower middle class and made virtually no impact on the housing conditions of the poor<sup>4</sup>. However these were not the only factors at work, and the impact of local conditions depended also on subjective viewpoints. The population included well over half a million people (35.7% of the total) who were foreign born and the majority of whom viewed colonial Singapore from the perspective of past experiences in societies which had been much more unstable, in both economic and political terms (Wharton 1963).

The 1949 Revolution in China politicised a vociferous young minority in Singapore who complicated the problems of the 1950s. It is arguable that for an apolitical majority much of the propaganda and some of the realities of the Revolution contributed to morale and to self-respect,<sup>5</sup> and thereby strengthened coping capacity in the face of economic insecurity and of residential overcrowding and squalor.

Observers commonly noted the apparent high among Singapore's slum population in the 1950s. Apart from the special case of Secret Societies, levels of interpersonal and of domestic violence were low. Within the confines of the cubicle and the limitations of low income, standards of housekeeping and of child care were high<sup>6</sup>. Indeed, perhaps a major contributory factor to the beginnings of planned fertility in the 1950s was the attitude of the population to schooling in general, and to schooling for girls in particular (Stokes 1962).

A local University team undertook household surveys in slum areas representing different language groups for the Singapore Master Plan in

1953<sup>7</sup>. One hypothesis was that boys would be receiving preferential treatment in relation to schooling.

In so far as primary education was concerned this was generally not so. Typically families were either failing to educate their children altogether or else all children, girls as well as boys were being sent to school. The sad exception was the oldest girl who, in a significant number of families, was being kept at home to cope with the care of younger children. In the sample there were very few children receiving secondary education; consequently no significant conclusions regarding differential treatment of the sexes could be drawn. The small number derived both from the age structure of families visited and also from lack of economic capacity to continue educating children of secondary school age (Goh 1956: 131).

In the tight employment situation of the 1950s, even with the coveted Cambridge School Leaving Certificate, teenagers often had problems in finding a job. This caused painful conflict with parents who had unrealistic faith that secondary education ensured well paid employment<sup>8</sup>. At the macro level the widespread of this mistaken belief could have been functional. If the channels of advancement for children (and consequently of the family) are seen as open through education, and this education involves a delay in the child's becoming an earner, then planning to benefit will involve a budgetting that includes fertility limitation.

From 1949 right through to internal self-government in 1959 the manifest agenda of family planning in Singapore was maternal and child health and the protection of family living standards through spaced and planned births (Saw 1980: 33). For some service providers this approach was undoubtedly a matter of conviction; for others it was a failure to grasp the macro implications of the birth boom which was only just beginning to show a downward trend.

Even before the compulsory registration of all marriages in 1961, the age of primiparity was available from birth registration. From this was drawn evidence that by the late 1950s the average age of marriage for women was relatively high: in the early twenties rather than in mid-teens as typical of much of the developing world.

This provided one of the few propitious signs on the otherwise daunting demographic landscape which confronted the newly independent government of Singapore in 1959<sup>9</sup>. This government was burdened with a mandate to provide employment and social services for a population in which the 0 – 14 age group had increased by 84% in a decade, in which over 50% of the population was below the age of 19 and into which 62,500 babies were born the year it took office (Singapore 1980). Within a few years, cohorts of 40,000 per annum (and increasing annually) would be entering a labour market in which "unemployment was already heavy" (Singapore 1970).

## DECLINING GENERAL FERTILITY

From the viewpoint of planning an equally daunting prospect was the future general fertility rate, already looming on the horizon: the number of women in the child-bearing age range would be approaching half a million by the end of the first decade of independence. The 1959 General Fertility Rate of 206.9 per thousand would have meant over 100,000 births in 1970. In fact just under 46,000 were born that year, when the GFR had dropped to 100.7. By 1980 it had dropped to 64.2. (Singapore 1980: 7).

This drop is generally attributed to specific population policy measures, with the coming into force of the Singapore Family Planning & Population Board Act in January 1966, of the Abortion Act in January 1970, the Voluntary Sterilization Act in March 1970, followed by the announcement of an anti-natalist package of incentives and disincentives in late 1972. These measures discriminated against children of third and higher birth order, but only applied to children born more than ten months after the announcement.

Almost certainly the steep decline in fertility from the mid 1960s was related to social forces more complex than any one policy area, effective through the family planning policies and programmes undoubtedly were and have continued to be.

The circumstances of 1964 – 65 are an interesting case in point. The General Fertility Rate of 1965 registered a decline of 13.5 below that of 1964, the steepest decline recorded up to that date. This was before the launching of the Family Planning & Population Board at the beginning of 1966. The question, to which no definitive answer can be given, is which circumstances other than government population programmes can be identified as causative in this sharp decline.

In February 1964 the Housing and Development Board announced the Home Ownership Scheme, bringing the prospect of owning property to the whole sections of the population for whom this had never before been a realistic aspiration. However, in economic terms 1964 “was a particularly bad year...” Gross Domestic Product for the year showed the least increase of the decade a mere 0.5 per cent (Singapore 1964). Indeed in 1964 the number of households on Public Assistance (cash relief) reached an all time high of 27,000 (Saw 1980: 46). This had been offered at the clinics from 1961 but was acceptable to only a very small percentage of patients until a sudden rise in popularity in 1964 when 20.2% chose this method. Hope, despair, the pill: there is little basis for apportioning the contribution of each to a marked change in fertility behaviour.

## FEMALE LABOUR FORCE

One undeniable consequence of the staged anti-natalist policies following 1966 was a greatly heightened public awareness of family size as a compo-

ment not only in family wellbeing but also in the nation's capacity to provide for its citizens. However the anti-natalist "incentives and disincentives" policy package of 1973 could not have been accepted with such apparent consensus had not other factors at work in the 1970s favoured the small family model.

The mid 1970's young woman was educated, and the mid 1970's economy offered her a wide selection of opportunities for earning, and ample attractive opportunities for the exercise of spending power. From the late 1960s the Housing & Development Board had dropped the minimum size of household eligible to apply for a flat from five to two persons (Housing and Development Board 1967) and young people could get their names on the waiting list as soon as they became engaged. The reasonable price of subsidised housing provided even the low earning young couple with material aspirations to compete with offspring as budget items. This availability of low cost housing encouraged splintering of the extended family: by it also removed the young family from both control of pro-natalist elders and the convenience of co-resident grandparents to provide substitute by care for the working young mother.

Policies which appear to operate at far removed from the family circle have a tendency to make waves that ripple on into the domestic pool. National strategies for economic growth have brought macro benefits of high GNP but have landed Singapore with the pressing micro question of who should be minding the baby. In the 1980s the largest cohorts of the boom babies reach family forming years: even with low fertility rates there will be plenty of babies to mind until well into the 1990s.

By 1980 for females over 15 years the labour force participation rate was 44.3%. In this case an overall rate masks the facts of the situation. In the 20 – 24 years age group 79% of women are working, but the participation rate falls sharply to 59.5% among the 25 – 29 years age group and continues downwards so that only 35.3% of those 40 – 44 years and 27% of women 45 – 49 years are still economically active.

This trend has been taken as an indication of things to come and much public concern has been expressed about the loss to the workforce anticipated in future. However, it needs to be borne in mind that attractive and plentiful employment for women opened up only from the early 1970's<sup>10</sup>. Women who were forty in 1980 and many of those who were thirty-five were already married before the trend for women to work was so firmly established. Their labour force participation rate cannot be used to predict the labour force behaviour of the cohorts who have experienced the advantages of economic independence before marriage.

Studies have shown that women who do give up working do so more because of problems of child care rather than for any other reason. Wong and Kuo's study of kinship networks (Wong and Kuo 1979: 17 – 39). showed only a minority of kin contacts were with the purpose of exchang-

ing services. Had their sample comprised only families with small children the outcome might have been different. Certainly studies that have been made of working mother's child care arrangements show family members as the preferred care givers when the mother is at work, 64.3% in one study and 68.4% range of child care arrangements that are on offer to Singapore families. The Trade Union movement and the YWCA run a network of care centres in which a great deal of emphasis has been placed on child development and quality of care. The Ministry of Social Affairs operates a "family matching" service which will put a working mother in touch with a housewife care giver, in her own neighbourhood, who has been selected and given orientation by the Ministry staff. A start has also been made to encourage firms to run creches on the premises: so far only one large concern has been announced as providing this service. In terms of cost, reliability and convenience, the family is likely to remain the preferred means of meeting the child's needs while the mother is at work.

The need for proximity to the grandmother is a pull factor keeping young couples close to the parental home: other factors have tended to shake them loose and the nuclear family household is so general that grave concern has been expressed in Ministerial speeches regarding the care of the aged in the years to come.

The availability of flats for purchase by young couples has already been referred to. From 1973 the incentive to buy was further strengthened: a flat owner was permitted to sell his property, after five years of ownership, on the open market, making what profit he could, provided the purchaser fulfilled the conditions of citizenship and income category required to qualify for an HDE flat. 1973 was the climax year of a major boom in the Singapore property market; whether because of this, or because of the potential for profit in future resale, applications to purchase rose from 27,000 in 1972 to 46,000 in 1973/74.<sup>11</sup>

This was just one more incentive to flat ownership, the utilisation of Central Provident Fund balances for purchase having been permitted since 1968, which had led to a rise of over 200% in application to purchase in one year (Chua and Ho 1975: 66–69). The terms on which cash tied up, in a form one cannot otherwise touch until age 55, can be converted into a maxi durable good, guaranteed to rise in value, make the flat an obvious investment on marriage. To plan to remain in the parental home after marriage in the face of this opportunity would be economically irrational.

Flat ownership is one thing, establishing a truly independent household is another. The treasured flat is the young couple's very own territory, it is both nest and nestegg, the symbol of their modernness and of their independence. It is their stake-out as fully fledged and upstanding members of the "Singapore Club": but the taking of meals and the minding of babies may remain part of life 'round at my mother's place', sometimes for years on end.



This commonly recognised pattern of family behaviour has yet to be thoroughly researched. The social and policy implications of any future tendency to increase or reduce the period of partial membership of the parental home could be far reaching indeed.

### GROWTH OF MULTI-GENERATION FAMILY

As part of a policy to encourage the three generation family pattern, from 1982 the Housing and Development Board has given most attractive priorities on the waiting list to multi-generation families who apply to be housed in a single flat. Some who are about to marry will find it advantageous to plan to live with parents after marriage in order that the family may benefit under this scheme.

Rational and detached family arithmetic would place parents with one child and grandparents with another, while two more team up with the parents and grandparents of their husband or wife. Even with this most calculating use of the scheme, (which assumes an almost random readiness to join up and to move), every child beyond the fourth would be forming, on marriage, a new nuclear household: and many Singaporeans now in their twenties come from families much larger than four. This demographic fact alone will maintain a high rate of new household formation until the next decade, even if all who are eligible make use of the scheme.

If this option proves popular in the long run, its greatest impact on household formation will come in the mid-1990s when the "two-is-enough" cohort reaches marrying age. In a theoretical model, if not in practice, new household formation could plummet down to zero (carrying down with it a building industry reeling under the shock). However, many couples of mature years are comfortably settled and, even on very favourable terms, may be reluctant to move to another area where they and a married child could obtain a larger flat.

Some who are eligible may be too cautious to apply. Opportunities for rich material gain provide irresistible temptations, and, not surprisingly, the penalties for breach of the rules of this attractive housing scheme are very severe. Should either family nucleus later leave the household to live elsewhere the flat must be forfeited. When tension arises in a multi-generation household reasonably good relationships are often restored when one component group hives off to form a household on their own. Multi-generation families housed under the new scheme will need to be very confident that members can get along reasonably well together over a very long term. The penalties for household fission will be so great that the usual cure for friction would, for these families, be as painful as the disease.

The new scheme is radical and challenging and constitutes a major policy measure to support extended family living. Only after some years

will it be possible to tell its impact on Singapore's family style. Some years ago the Housing and Development Board put forward another wise and humane plan; related households are allowed to move to be closer together by processes of joint balloting or of flat exchange. At first few availed themselves of the offer although the number of applicants later increased. The scheme did not lead to very large-scale applications and there are those who view this as a sign of family decline in the years ahead. Perhaps we do not need to be unduly depressed by this lack of response. Distances are not very great and Singaporeans most prudent and persistent in planning their own long-term well-being. Many of the "fussy applicants" who have been the bane of the HDS officer's life in the past may have been making sure on their own initiative that from the outset they would be housed at acceptable proximity to the family home. Indeed Wong and Kuo's study showed that 46% of the sample households were in the same or adjoining postal district as their next of kin (Wong and Kuo 1979: 26).

Singaporeans have grown accustomed to a standard of living far higher than the level of individual wages would seem to indicate. In part this reflects the ubiquity of the working wife: but even she does not explain what recent studies have shown, namely that something like one household in every four is supported by the earnings of four or more family members (Singapore n.d: 15). Unlike the young in western lands, Singapore's bachelor boys and girls do not usually leave the family home, and in recent years, the number of children reaching working age has been far higher than the number who have been marrying and moving out to set up their own independent conjugal households. In September 1982 the Housing and Development Board has announced measures which tend to limit the profit that can be made on resale, but still the flat remains a wise investment from the point of view of the newly married.

By the early 1990s those reaching marrying age will have been born in the years of declining births. Unless they stay back and retain at least a 'catering membership', the number leaving the parental household will outnumber the younger brothers and sisters attaining wage earning age. The halcyon era of household abundance based on the earnings of four, five, six or even unmarried children will, for most families, be over. Even with high growth rates it seems unlikely that individual real incomes could rise sufficiently to fill the gap.

Neither generation need feel the pinch if young couples make a general practice or retaining a long term non-resident membership of the parental home. Here they can all enjoy access at a level of consumer durables – super stereo, giant colour TV, plush washing machine – way beyond the scale that each couple could afford in their individual flats. The social benefits would be greater even than the material, in keeping the generations in constant touch for mutual help and support. Non-resident membership also allows for some compromise between the young husband

who wants to go on living with his mother and the young wife who is sure she wants a home of her own. Wong and Kuo's study showed a "rather weak matricentric tendency": but some less formal studies of the value of the young have shown young men as anticipating in marriage the retention of stronger ties with the husband's family than young women anticipate tolerating. Singapore parents seem to be rearing their daughter to have different values from those they look forward to in the wife of their son.

In Singapore strict anti-natalist policies have been essential for the long term care and management of a small island. By the mid 1990s, two will have been enough for something like twenty years and we will be moving towards a chronic shortage of family labour for such tasks as care of the invalid, and, more especially care of the very old. By the late 1990s it will be common for two old folk, who have survived to be 75 or 80, to have only two adult children: and these two will be well into middle life themselves and each have aging in-laws to worry about as well as old parents of their own. To have the multi-generation family under one roof or in nearby flats will be helpful, but when families are small and women are at work this proximity alone will not ensure that all the needs of the sick and the old can be met on a household labour basis. Community care is a world wide concept. At its worst it means dumping on families, more especially upon women, tasks which they cannot possibly fulfill adequately, and can undertake at all only at unreasonable cost to other aspects of their lives and to the time they should be devoting to the rest of the family. At its best community care is a tripartite approach to care in their own setting of the frail in body and mind; the state, the voluntary sector and the family each giving the kind of support which it is best able to provide and sharing what must be seen as a community problem and not totally as the responsibility of the individual family group.

Grandparents in their sixties are often still very useful contributors of family labour in child minding and other tasks. It is to those in their seventies and eighties that the most distressing deterioration of body and mind occurs. There will be a need for services far more comprehensive than anything we have today if the very old are to be cared for with dignity in their own homes. However, devoted and caring she may be, a home nurse visiting once a week will not be enough to see the small family through the ordeal of providing terminal care for the geriatrically ill.

From the very size of Singapore, the family is likely to remain strong, provided we see that it gets the help that it needs. In the West it has been spatial mobility much more than deteriorating family sentiment that has left the old alone and unvisited. Singapore is so small that it is only by emigrating that one gets beyond Sunday lunch distance from family and kin. Much is spoken about neglectful young people, and some there certainly are, always have been and always will be. But one cruel son or daughter-in-law is news, while a hundred devotedly scouring the town for

Dad's favourite black chicken soup are too uninteresting and commonplace to be reported. Fewer than 2% of Singaporeans over 60 years of age are in institutional care, many of these being old solitary immigrants or people whose physical or mental health is so poor that they require care too difficult for the average household to provide at home.

### CONCLUSION

Concepts used in current social research make scant provision for the various degrees of partial membership that young Singapore married couples retain in the parental home. Young and Willmott spoke of the research problems that arise when the actual patterns of domestic reciprocity involve "ramifications" (Young and Willmott 1970). The need for clear and unambiguous definitions of household is well appreciated, but by emphasising the common roof as an essential index we certainly list many as living in nuclear households when they are in fact engaging in much of the daily domestic interaction that marked the fully-fledged extended family of old. If we are to monitor the processes of Singapore family life in the decades ahead our Census takers and others engaged in social research will have to devise a definition of household more appropriate to the Singapore scene.

### NOTES

<sup>1</sup> Public Assistance as cash relief had been in operation since the return of the colonial government in 1945. Monthly allowances were very meagre – until 1959 \$23/- for a couple, with \$8/- for each child over 16 years, \$5/- for each below 16, up to a maximum of \$90/-.

<sup>2</sup> For example only sporadic efforts were made to enforce the law regulating hawking.

<sup>3</sup> The Singapore Improvement Trust had been set up in the 1920s, more to regulate such matters as provision of back lanes in housing plans.

<sup>4</sup> The Trust had built a small number of one room units prior to World War II, but in the post war years when the need for low cost housing was even more acute the policy of the Trust was to build 2, 3 and 4 room units.

<sup>5</sup> The post war status of China led to a status reversal between the China born and the Straits Chinese, the latter making efforts to 're-sinify', culturally but not politically. Public works parts of China from which immigrants had come led to some rise in levels of well-being. The cutting off of China as a centre for higher education for the Chinese educated led to the creation of Nanyang University of Singapore, a project which generated a degree of cultural euphoria even among the illiterate.

<sup>6</sup> Witnesses before the 1918 Housing Commission had noted already that in the squalor of the slums "people are sober and law abiding". Social workers who knew the slum areas in the 1950s were very conscious that they were working in "slums of hope" and not in "slums of despair".

<sup>7</sup> Staff and students of the Department of Social Work (then called Department of Social Studies). All data was handed over to the Master Plan Team: data referred to herein is from the personal recollection of the author who participated.

<sup>8</sup> Many such cases were referred to such organizations as the Social Welfare Department and the Singapore Children's Society for help and counselling (Personal recollection).

<sup>9</sup> Internal self government came in 1959. Full self government in 1965.

<sup>10</sup> Employment figures in the manufacturing sector rose from 25,000 in 1959, to 87,000 in 1969, to 245,000 in 1977.

<sup>11</sup> This figure actually represents January 1973 to March 1974, as the pattern of record keeping was changed from calendar to financial year. Even adjusted to twelve months it represents a rise of over 10,000 in one year.

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