Development Studies Faculty Publications   Development Studies Department

8-2015

The Capacity to be Content: Aspirations and Young Adult Catholics in Singapore

Jayeel Cornelio
Ateneo de Manila University, jcornelio@ateneo.edu

Recommended Citation

THE CAPACITY TO BE CONTENT:

Aspirations and Young Adult Catholics in Singapore

Jayeel Serrano Cornelio
Ateneo de Manila University
jcornelio@ateneo.edu

Abstract

Drawing from interviews with young adult Catholics in Singapore, this article discusses aspirations in terms of the capacity to be content. For my informants, the capacity to be content has three aspects: the pursuit of happiness, the questioning of Singapore's incessant drive for economic growth, and the neglect of those left-behind. Taken collectively, these nuances show that the aspirations of young adult Catholics are effectively a moral critique of the social and economic state of affairs in the city-state. The capacity to be content also informs these young adults' decision to be involved in welfare activities or even be employed in social work altogether. However, such moral critique's potential to contest the political status quo is tempered by the resounding opinion that religion and politics do not mix in Singapore. It is precisely by interrogating this tension between their aspirations and their views of the moral state of Singapore that this article is a contribution to this special issue on Christianity and the nation in Southeast Asia.

Keywords

About the Author

Jayeel Serrano Cornelio is the director of the Development Studies Program, Ateneo de Manila University and a member of the Board of the Philippine Sociological Society. In 2012-2014 he was a postdoctoral research fellow at the Max Planck Institute for the Study of Religious and Ethnic Diversity in Göttingen, Germany. He has published in the areas of religion, youth, education, and urban studies. He is the guest editor of the special double issue of *Philippine Studies: Historical and Ethnographic Viewpoints* (2014) dedicated to the study of Filipino Catholicism. With Khun Eng Kuah-Pearce, he is also guest editor of the special issue of the *Asian Journal of Social Science* (2015) on religious philanthropy in Asia. For his scholarship on popular religion in the Philippines, he recently received the 2015 Virginia A. Miralao Excellence in Research Award from the Philippine Social Science Council.

INTRODUCTION

On June 2, 2012, an estimated turnout of 600 people gathered at the Speakers' Corner at Hong Lim Park to commemorate the 25th anniversary of Operation Spectrum (Au "Hundreds Turn up at Rally against Arbitrary Detention"). In 1987, several Catholic leaders and lay were accused of organizing themselves to topple the government and detained without trial. Informed by liberation theology, their social activism was found suspicious by the government, which branded them as Marxist conspirators. As a result, some of them were detained for two or three years, only to be released without having been formally charged. What was perhaps even more painful for many Catholics was that Gregory Yong, then archbishop, eventually withdrew his support for the accused.

Organized by former detainees, the rally called for the abolition of the Internal Security Act (ISA), which for them was repeatedly used to arrest – without formal trial – individuals deemed threats to national security. They argued that the ISA had been abused to quash suspected political dissidents and thereby discourage protests in the name of social harmony (see Republic of Singapore). In the end, this ideology of social order has secured the long-lasting rule of the People's Action Party (PAP) in Singapore. Michael Barr makes the case that whether or not the Marxist conspiracy was real did not matter to Lee Kuan Yew, then Singapore's Prime Minister. He argues that Operation Spectrum was meant to set the precedent for an authoritarian rule that "would outlast his premiership" (360).

Interestingly, news leaked that prior to the 2012 rally, Nicholas Chia, the immediate past head of the Catholic Church in Singapore, allegedly sent the organizers a letter supporting the event and its message. But after having been summoned by government officials, Archbishop Chia sent a formal note to the organizers asking for the withdrawal of his initial letter. Lauding this decision was the government which commended the archbishop for recognizing the "complexity of our multi-racial, multireligious society, and the need to keep religion and politics separate" (Ministry of Home Affairs).

The incident has led many Catholic Singaporeans to turn to social media to express their dismay. To many, this was a bitter reminder of how the government clamped down on the Catholic Church to weaken the local impact of democratization around Asia in the 1980s (D. P. S. Goh). Many took Chia's decision, for one, as a repeat of the withdrawal of support by the Church for the accused Catholics in 1987. Waipang Au, who runs a well-read blog, has asserted therefore that "the church has a responsibility to atone for the wretched way it abandoned its own priests and lay workers 25 years ago" ("Lunch Menu a 4-Point Letter"). In many online forums, commentators have turned his critique on the government's take on

harmony. Many of them think that social harmony can only be upheld with truth, integrity and justice. Commentators have also bravely suggested that when none of these values are present, social unrest is to be expected.

These accounts show that even if they constitute only 7% of the Singaporean population (up from 5% in 2000), Catholics can still be perceived as a potential threat to the political regime (Department of Statistics, *Census of Population 2010* ; Department of Statistics, *Census of Population 2000*). It is not because they are religiously active and can therefore have other institutional loyalties. The perception of threat could very well emanate from the historically liberal slant of Catholicism in Singapore until it was effectively overrun by the massive growth of Pentecostalism since the 1980s (D. P. S. Goh). In addition, Catholicism has a record of political involvement around the world, notwithstanding its role in the democratization of neighboring Philippines (Youngblood).

As will be recounted below, the Catholic Church and even other Protestant denominations have been historically involved in various efforts at social justice (D. P. S. Goh). Taken suspiciously by the state, Christian churches and agencies have a record of organizing workers and the homeless in the country. In this sense, the participation of Catholics in the anti-ISA rally in 2012 may suggest that even if social activism may have been deafened by the loud prosperity gospel of Evangelical megachurches (Chong, "Megachurches in Singapore"), the liberal aspiration for social justice lingers on.

In this paper, however, I turn my attention to young adult Catholics and draw from my interviews with them to suggest that this liberal posture now takes on a different form. In contrast to the literature (see Chong, "Filling the Moral Void"; Mathews), my interest is neither in the institutional responses of the Church nor the organized activities of Catholic agencies in addressing social needs. By looking at their personal aspirations, it appears that the activism demonstrated by their Catholic peers above is rather isolated.

My informants, as will be seen, have an aspiration to be "happy", a word I repeatedly heard during the interviews. At the same time they question the merits of what they consider as Singapore's incessant drive for economic growth, which has "left behind" many others like the elderly and the working class. Taken together, these ideas unravel the aspirations of many young adult Catholics today in the form of their *capacity to be content*. In this manner, the article also shows that whereas the concept of aspiration has been typically discussed in the literature in the form of material achievements or social mobility, its local understanding can be substantively different (see Poole and Cooney).

But the potential of this aspiration to effectively contest the political status quo is limited. This is where they largely differ from historical depictions of Singapore's Catholic activist. Whereas Catholicism in Singapore is perceived by the state to be a potential threat to political order, my research with young adult Catholics shows that many of them would rather maintain the distinct line between politics and religion. In other words, their capacity to be personally content, while serving as a moral critique of Singaporean society today, also reinforces the state's desire to keep religion out of politics.

METHODOLOGY

This article draws from one-on-one interviews with young adult Catholics in Singapore, who are broadly in their 20s. In total, I interviewed 33 informants in 2012-2013. I note that the findings in this paper draw from a bigger project on Christianity, young adulthood, and aspirations in Singapore where I conducted more than 70 in-depth interviews with respondents from the Catholic Church, Evangelical megachurches, and traditional Protestant denominations. This paper focuses only on my Catholic respondents, a significant bloc of Christianity in Singapore that has been largely overlooked by recent studies. Ensuing publications will tackle the others and their aspirations.

The snowball approach was adopted for this research. I contacted initial interviewees through the help of various networks and parishes, which was a deliberate effort to avoid favoring a particular Catholic demographic. Efforts were made too to accommodate Catholics of different social and economic backgrounds. As young adults, many of them have finished post-secondary education in Singapore and are now establishing their careers. But I made sure that the breadth of informants I had was wide based on ethnicity, career, the parishes they come from, and even their level of religious involvement.

My informants are predominantly Chinese but I made an effort to include Singaporeans of Indian, Eurasian, Malay, and even Chinese-Filipino descent. In context, 52.7% of Catholic Singaporeans are Chinese, 8.8% Indians, .6% Malays, and 19.5% from other races (Department of Statistics, *Census of Population 2010*). Several converts have also been interviewed although they seem to constitute only a fraction of the Catholic population. Roughly 1% of the Catholics surveyed in 2007 were undergoing the conversion rites, for example (Catholic Research Centre). Some of my informants are active in youth or young adult ministries but some others are sheer Sunday Mass attendees.

Hence, I met and interviewed Catholic informants with varying profiles in different locations around the city-state. Overall, the interviews have been rich

as my young adult informants also come from different fields such as education, charity, healthcare, engineering, finance, and various government agencies. I have, for example, interviewed a recent female psychology graduate in one of the private rooms of a local parish, which she could access as a member of their young adult community. Sometimes, the informants themselves were very hospitable. I interviewed a male engineer in his own flat in the western part of the island state. Most of the time though my interviews took place in local coffee shops after office hours. For example, I interviewed a 28-year-old male researcher working for a youth-related government agency in Jurong East's library cafe.

Given its research design, the paper does not claim generalizability with regard to its conclusions. Nevertheless, these findings are helpful in nuancing the diverse experiences of young adult Catholics, a segment which, while a minority, is significant in Singaporean society. For one, young adult Singaporeans belong to a generation that has benefited from universal access to education and the general affluence of the economy (Ng). By growing up in the 1990s and 2000s, they did not undergo the social transformations that their parents did in terms of housing, public infrastructure, and the nature of governance itself. Their overall wellbeing has also been supported by the sustained growth in Singapore's Human Development Index since 1990, placing the country 18th out of 187 (UNDP). This novel generational context has implications on their aspirations for themselves and their society. A recent study, for example, shows that secondary school students, depending on the quality of their education, can already articulate critical perspectives toward democratic participation in Singapore (Ho, Sim and Alviar-Martin). In other East Asian economies, this interest in the aspirations and "life-making" strategies of young people is an emerging area of inquiry for the social sciences (Anagnost, Arai and Ren 2). Secondly, Christianity is implicated in the social mobility of young adult Singaporeans. It is worth noting, for example, that the remarkable conversions to Christianity, especially among the English-educated Chinese, are explained by the rationality and relevance of the religion to their lives (C. K. Tong). Apart from this intellectual appeal, Christianity in Singapore "shares many social characteristics with cosmopolitanism" such as the ability to speak English, be globally connected through religious networks, and living in private properties (R. B. H. Goh 11). It is notable that almost 60% of Catholic Singaporeans are in professional, executive, and administrative occupations (Catholic Research Centre). Finally, young adult Catholics are an interesting demographic to consider in terms of their religiosity. Catholics in Singapore are generally religious, with 80.5% of the population attending Mass every weekend (Catholic Research Centre). Although still considerably high, the lowest percentage (72.5%) is among those in their 20s when compared to other age groups.[2] At the same time, this same age group would show that religion has a strong influence on personal life, with more than 77% disagreeing with the statement "I think Christ's teachings/religion do

not influence my day to day decisions" (Catholic Research Centre 34). In other words, although they may not be as collectively present in church as the other age groups, they are not necessarily withdrawing from Catholicism. In fact, as will be seen below, their understanding of Catholic faith mainly informs their aspirations. Overall, the interest in young adult Catholics is called for. Research on Christianity in Singapore, however, is mainly on Protestants and Evangelical megachurches whose growth in recent decades has been dramatic (Chong and Hui; D. P. S. Goh; C. K. Tong; J. K. C. Tong; Cornelio, "New Paradigm Christianity and Commitment-Formation"; Chong, "Megachurches in Singapore").

CHRISTIANITY, STATE, AND ASPIRATIONS IN SINGAPORE

In this section I spell out the various ways in which Christianity can be characterized as articulating or expressing its aspirations in Singapore. These are the wider Christian contexts to which my informants are exposed. Much of the literature draws from institutional action and the participation of Christian churches or organizations in public life. These aspirations are one way or another in relation to social change or causes. As Bunnell and Goh (1) put it, religion has the potential – through rituals, narratives, and symbols – to carry out "transformative performances of social aspirations, creativity and energy."[3] In Singapore, Christianity has articulated its aspirations in at least three ways: as a socially progressive institution, as a strategic partner of the government, and as moral conscience. I discuss these one at a time.

Daniel Goh's account of liberal Christianity in the decades following the independence of Singapore traces the trajectory of social activism heavily informed by liberation theology. Whereas contemporary Christianity in Singapore is characterized by the spectacular growth of Evangelical megachurches known for effectively marketing religious experience (J. K. C. Tong), many Protestant and Catholic organizations in the 1970s and 1980s were concerned with issues of social justice. Organizations such as Singapore Industrial Mission, the Christian Conference of Asia, and Young Christian Workers focused on hunger and human rights issues and even organized students and workers for social campaigns and theological reflection. Challenging the state's discourse of economic growth, "social Christianity" articulated its aspiration by imagining "a suffering and hoping Asia supplanting the developmental covenant of the nation" (D. P. S. Goh 74)."[4]

The state found this vision of a transnational working class threatening especially in view of communist insurgency and democratization in neighboring countries. In response, the state forcibly closed down many of these Christian organizations, expelling even the international ones. As recounted above, the state's response to social Christianity became most decisive when activists were arrested and detained

for conniving with communists to topple the government in the 1980s. In a manner that is still felt today, the purported Marxist conspiracy has set the precedent that has largely kept religious organizations from crossing the line with the government.

This situation poses a dilemma for Christianity, a religion with an expansionist ethos. The drive for growth especially for Evangelical churches may directly challenge the Maintenance of Religious Harmony Act (MRHA), as other religions may be offended by active proselytization.[5] In response, the strategy of contemporary Christian churches has been to engender a "flexible identity" (R. B. H. Goh 14). At one level, many churches are seeing a bigger role at evangelism around Southeast Asia. Singapore in this sense has become a center for the training and support of missionaries around the region. At another level, many churches are forming their own social arms involved in addressing the needs of the marginalized in Singapore such as the elderly, out-of-school youth, and people with special needs. By being flexible, Christian churches are able to recast their identity as socially relevant institutions that aspire for the betterment of Singaporean society. Like many Buddhist welfare organizations, they have become strategic partners of the state particularly in the delivery of welfare services that the government is not immediately keen to provide given its workfare policy (Poh; Kuah-Pearce). In this sense, the Singapore state practices "accommodative secularism" (Thio 43).

Other studies see contemporary Christianity essentially as the conscience of the state. In recent years, many Christian organizations have become worried about what they see as the moral decay of Singaporean society over such matters as sexuality and gambling, for example. This turn to personal morality is arguably a far cry from the social activism of churches in the 70s and 80s. Perhaps this is another palpable consequence of the clampdown on Christianity. But at the same time, reinforcing the moral panic is the state's perceived willingness to entertain morally controversial decisions in the name of economic growth. With the establishment of two integrated resorts with gambling as the main business (Marina Bay Sands and Resorts World Sentosa), for example, many Christian churches have accused the state as having lost its moral compass (Mathews).

Underpinning this is the general view that the state has increasingly relaxed its preoccupation with other moral issues. In the wake of its independence, the Singapore state, as Chong shows ("Filling the Moral Void"), was very strict and morally conservative over sexual discipline concerning pornography, for example. It was important at that time to assert the state's traditional values such as "the nuclear family unit" and the "generally patriarchal structures" which the state feared Western individualism would undermine (Chong, "Filling the Moral Void" 572). In recent years, the discourse and actions of the state suggest a relaxation of such conservatism, as signaled by the legal hiring of homosexuals in civil service,

for example, or the statements of ministers that the repeal of the law criminalizing sexual acts between men[6] should be left to public debate (Chong, "Filling the Moral Void"; Mathews). In response to these issues, prominent churches and religious organizations like the National Council of Churches in Singapore (NCCS) have expressed their opinion against what they see as society's moral decline. In other words, the aspiration has been to uphold Singapore's moral integrity. However, to avoid being seen as crossing the political line, religious institutions have presented themselves as "concerned citizens" offering "constructive help" (Mathews 61-62).[7]

In each of these cases, Christian organizations have shown that in contrast to the fear that they may disrupt social order, they have become strategic in recasting their role in Singapore society as a moral conscience or a strategic partner in welfare service, for example. I have suggested that apart from being strategic to justify their social relevance in Singapore, their actions also articulate their aspiration for Singapore society with regard to its moral decay or concern for the marginalized.

All these aspirations, however, are articulated in the framework of institutional Christianity in the form of Christian organizations, churches, or religious leaders themselves. This angle is important if, as the studies above show, the main interest is in how religious institutions have negotiated or even asserted their place in Singaporean society (see Chong, "Filling the Moral Void"). Aspirations, however, are not the monopoly of institutions. They may also be articulated in less pronounced ways by religious actors whose views may not necessarily coincide with the actions and statements of church leaders, for example. The literature above has been generally silent concerning the aspirations of ordinary believers.

YOUNG ADULT CATHOLICS AND THE CAPACITY TO BE CONTENT

During my interviews I asked my informants questions on what they thought were Singapore's biggest problems, their own aspirations for society, and what the Catholic Church can do in fulfilling these aspirations. In this sense, I approached aspirations, which are future-oriented imaginings, in terms of subjective ideas or yearnings as to how Singapore can be a better place. These are personal aspirations in relation to society.

To ask these questions about society is how I am appropriating Arjun Appadurai's (67) view that aspirations are ultimately about "the good life, about health and happiness," which are essentially future-oriented ideas informed by socially shared values. But these ideas are clearly about the self, often inflected with notions of social mobility. Hence, the practical interest in the literature is in widening the poor's capacity to aspire through expanded life opportunities (Ray; Brown; see also Nathan). Capacity denotes the dispositions of groups of people to

imagine and navigate the future relative to "real-world conjectures and refutations" (Appadurai 69). In other words, the capacity to aspire is both a disposition and navigational skill given limitations and opportunities. Finally, my interest in subjective aspirations is different too from some recent studies that have focused on the public manifestations of aspirations in the form of rituals, performance, and urban planning, which may be driven by organized individuals or the state itself (Bunnell and Goh; van der Veer; see also Cornelio, "Global and Religious").

In my interviews, what has surfaced is that instead of aspiring to achieve prosperity or greater economic affluence, the aspirations of my informants is for Singapore to simply be content or satisfied with life. In other words, the capacity is not to achieve but to be content. Such capacity to be content has three dimensions: economic, personal happiness, and the concern for those that have been "left behind," a phrase I heard repeatedly. Overall, this capacity to be content among my informants stands in contrast to notions of social mobility and also the activist tone of moral militancy and clamor for social justice of Christian institutions discussed in the literature.

On economic growth

For a city-state that has prided itself as an economic miracle and one of the most globalized economies in the world ("Singapore Ranked Third Most Globalized Economy"), I find it intriguing that many of my informants problematize the fetish for economic growth in Singapore. More intriguing are these statements because they come from young adults in considerably lucrative careers.

Martin, 29, is a project engineer at Singapore Power who went to reputable schools in the country. Dressed casually and clearly from work, Martin introduces himself as he meets me at the façade of Novena Church. We settle for a table at the end of the hallway, avoiding the flux and noise of evening Mass attendees. Martin describes himself as a "pragmatic" individual, having chosen his engineering degree well and planning promptly for his wedding next year. He also believes that "progressive" values concerning abortion and gay rights need to be taken "pragmatically" with respect to the values of the majority. He backs down, however, when I ask him about how Singapore can be a better society: "Maybe the government can be less pragmatic sometimes. Maybe it's time to think about welfare some more…I'm not saying that we totally become a welfare state and give up on economy. I'm saying that sometimes, if we cannot hit 4% growth, let's just take 2%. It doesn't matter." Martin then carries on to explain that welfare should not be treated as an expenditure that can arrest the sustained growth of the economy.

"Of course it's good to have a lot of money, but if all you need is, say, SGD 5,000 for a functional family – or country for that matter – then just live with SGD 5,000."

In a section above, I mentioned that Singapore's workfare policy is a conscious move against European welfarism for fear of dependency (Thio). For Martin and many other informants, this move has led the state to overlook the fact that there are other sectors in society that need to be addressed, for which they appeal to the Catholic Church instead. This concern for the marginalized will be tackled in the next section. For now, what needs to be highlighted is this apparent discontent over what my informants perceive as the state's fetish for economic growth. Indeed, this is what Lin, 26, admits to me. A female charity worker for people with special needs, Lin believes that "we're placing too much emphasis on growth and having the best. We have a lot of things which our neighboring countries don't have."

The views of my informants concerning Singapore's obsession with economic growth is not without basis. Success defines the very identity or "self-scripting" of Singapore as a city-state that began without any natural resources to bank on (Chua 31). For a state that started out as a survivalist in the 1960s, it is no wonder that Singapore is now perceived as model for many emerging economies in Asia. Now that Singapore has become very successful, the state is compelled to continuously re-imagine its future (Ban). The result is that the state is in a mode of "perpetual renovation" of its national identities (Chong, "Fluid Nation" 504). Indeed, to be a global city in terms of technology, finance, and education is now the ambition of Singapore, in a manner that figuratively expands the horizon of the small island (Sidhu, Ho and Yeoh; Ban).

However, this emphasis on economic growth is problematic for my informants for various reasons. Lin carries on to explain that the danger of this emphasis lies in affecting the mindset of Singaporeans. For her, Singaporeans merely want "more and more and more, and will never be satisfied. As a result, other things are being sacrificed like relationships and family ties." Lin then points out that Singapore society may "break down" as family and marriage are being "sacrificed," thus "a lot of children are getting hurt." The welfare of children clearly matters to Lin as she regularly interacts with special education students. Kristoffer, who works for a polytechnic institute, tells me, too, that in spite of the service-learning component his office is introducing for character formation, "I am still cautious… because at the end of the day Singapore's policies are still very economic. As long as people focus on money, all our efforts will be overridden as our students will just want to acquire more money."

For my other informants, the state's drive for economic growth is behind the many other social problems of Singapore such as higher cost of living and the

influx of many foreigners. These are issues that have been repeatedly raised by my informants and reinforced in the media as well (see Snodgrass). Leila, 25, works for one of the offices of the Archdiocese in Singapore. She explains to me that while Singaporeans are taught to be competitive in the labor market, she and many of her friends merely want to "keep a decent, comfortable life, yet we really have to work quite hard." Her work has exposed her to concrete cases of "people making ends meet" such as the elderly and working class breadwinners. More importantly, this is a personal concern for her as she is getting married very soon. Furthermore, the drive for economic growth and be a global city explains Singapore's dependence on foreign workers. This situation poses a policy dilemma in that the influx of foreigners has challenged the state's desire to foster a sense of nationalism among its own citizens (Chong, "Fluid Nation"). The situation became more acute in early 2013 when the government released a highly controversial White Paper spelling out its goal of increasing its population to 6.9 million by 2030 by welcoming more immigrants to fill in various needs (Hodal). Online and offline, protests have been staged against the said White Paper and my informants have also expressed their opinions about having "too many foreigners" in Singapore. While the motivation for immigration in Singapore is economic, my informants have repeatedly pointed to the feelings of locals. Corinna, 29, was a secondary school teacher before deciding to become a PhD student in psychology at a local university: "Sometimes when I go out, I'd be surrounded by non-Singaporeans on the MRT...and I'd be wondering, like, am I really in Singapore?...I don't think it's an issue that foreigners are coming to work here but I think there should be a limit." I press Corinna to explain this. She responds by problematizing the rhetoric of the state: "You can argue that Singapore is an immigrant society but you have second or third generation locals who do not feel that they are immigrants anymore. To think that the government wants Singaporeans to feel like they belong in Singapore and to love and take care of the country."

On Singapore's left-behind

My interviewees have also repeatedly mentioned their concern for those who have been "left behind" by Singapore's relentless drive for economic growth. This is a point that came alongside their aspirations that Singapore – its state and citizens – should rethink the drive for the greater acquisition of wealth. As seen above, some of my informants have already mentioned the unintended consequence of leaving people behind. In this sense, the concern for the marginalized is the other side of the coin that problematizes Singapore's economic drive.

Here I suggest that this social awareness and concern is a relevant aspect of the capacity to be content. In contrast to the drive to be competitive and successful

in Singapore, to be content compels my informants to see whether anyone else is falling behind. On several occasions, young adult Catholics would talk about a range of cases of marginalization from the elderly who still work at hawkers' centers to struggling families living in dismal conditions seemingly unimaginable in Singapore. While many of these narratives are based on their observations, many others are also drawn from personal experience. Philip, one of my first interviewees, leads a Catholic youth organization involved in social service. He recounts that some years ago, he and his friends visited an estate of one-room rental flats for the elderly where they saw "a lot who could not even speak English. Only their Chinese dialects like Hokkien and Teochew. For a lot of them, they are sort of just waiting to die because there's nothing they can turn to…We realized maybe they had fallings-out with their families years ago and now their children have forgotten them also."

In another interview, Jacklyn, 28, recounts one case she had to face in her present job dealing with different schools. One student was harshly sanctioned for tardiness without the school conducting proper investigation. She soon found out that the child's mother, who is the breadwinner of the family, has to care for her sick husband and mother as well. The boy is then left to fend for himself but because of the scolding, Jacklyn says he is now traumatized and might "fall through the cracks" for fear of going back to school. The mother earns only SGD 1,000 a month, an impossible wage given Singapore's cost of living.

Much of the sentiments above resonate with recent findings concerning inequality in Singapore. In the past decade alone, the gini coefficient rose to a staggering .48 (Hui). In fact, wages for low-paying jobs have even diminished while cost of living in Singapore has dramatically increased. Arguing for minimum wage, Hui notes that Singapore's reliance on foreign workers has led to wage depression and the inability of low-wage workers to cope with risings costs. Indeed, many of my informants have pointed to the influx of foreigners in Singapore as a major problem. As Leila puts it in a seemingly helpless tone, Singapore "is getting more and more crowded." Some of them have complained about mundane irritations such as different accents and languages they hear on the MRT. But others have personally experienced being at a disadvantage. Philip shares with me that as a polytechnic graduate, he was expecting an already dismal salary. But because of competition with foreigners, he realized that companies would offer him an even lower rate. He then admits that "those who have just finished their diploma in poly going out to work are getting a bit disillusioned."

Contrary, however, to discussions on the internet (see G. Goh), the responsibility for inequality in Singapore is not being laid on foreigners only. I picked this up when I met another polytechnic graduate, Derrick, 27, who works as a safety officer for a construction company. He explains that the state has "moved away from

addressing the basic needs of people" and that it has fostered "a mentality that if you're smart, then only you get a good job…They've left too many people behind who feel inadequate about themselves." I then ask Derrick whether he himself has experienced being left behind. Putting down his Subway burger, Derrick admits to me that "well, I never liked studying. I tried my best but never got good grades. Today I do get by so I'll say I'm one who's trying to catch the bus…I'm trying to get on it by getting at least a stable job…I'm not aiming for a car or a condominium, just my basic needs." Having decided to propose to his girlfriend, Derrick shares he needs to have a career plan to support his family.

The discussion so far begs two important questions. First, what are the boundaries of this social concern? In the illustrations above, the concern seems to be mainly for Singaporeans left behind by the system like the elderly, orphans, and working class families. But does the concern for the "left behind" also include migrant workers? The picture is not entirely clear. On one hand, as mentioned above, some of my informants are critical of foreigners in Singapore insofar as they are perceived to dominate the place with implications on the use of public utility and overall quality of life. For some informants, it is an economic issue but for some others, the influx of migrant workers is an affront to their cultural and national integrity. On the other hand, there are also parish-based ministries dealing with the condition of migrant workers like domestic helpers and construction workers. There are young adults involved in these affairs and some of them have expressed their reservations about recent anti-foreigner sentiments. As I walked him to his bus stop, Kristoffer, for example, has suggested that these sentiments are very "selfish" in not realizing that these foreigners are also in need. I also have other informants who disagree with the harsh sanctions on bus drivers from China who not too long ago staged a strike to protest their working conditions in Singapore (see Neisloss).

Second, to what extent are Catholic Singaporeans directly involved in social action. In the course of my fieldwork, I came across many informants who have been involved in various activities or organizations dealing with the marginalized in Singapore. Some of my informants, like Philip, are also serving as leaders in these communities. In a way, being involved is not difficult to accomplish in Singapore as there are various volunteer welfare organizations that may also be in partnership with religious institutions (see Lai). The Archdiocese has a vast network of lay groups and apostolates that are socially engaged. Only 47.8% of Catholic Singaporeans, however are involved in "Church activities, ministries or service" (Catholic Research Centre 19). In context, the volunteerism rate of young people in Singapore (15 to 24 years old) is relatively lower at 36% (National Youth Council).

On happiness (or the lack thereof)

To escape the heat of the afternoon sun, Cherie and I agree to head straight for the McDonald's nearby as soon as we meet at Bukit Gombak MRT station. Upon seeing her, I immediately know that Cherie could perhaps be one of the most enthusiastic interviewees I have met in Singapore. Typically, it would take me some time to establish rapport before my interviewee opens up. Indeed, as soon as we find a relatively quiet corner, Cherie, dressed in a white blouse, readily shares her life story with me – including considerably private accounts of her life growing up in Singapore. This seems natural given Cherie's career in financial consultancy. For her, it is after all about "building long-term relationships." Her personality has surely brought her a long way. Only in her late 20s, she was recently awarded as one of the top consultants of the year in the country.

But it has been an arduous journey for Cherie. When she was much younger, she experienced working as an outdoor sales promoter, a factory worker, and finally as a cleaner in a hawkers' center where she felt "very sad every time I look at the uncles and aunties." She admits that she did not grow up in an affluent family but is thoroughly proud of her father who gave up an opportunity to work abroad so as not to be away from the family. In the end, her father became an electrician, earning only a meager wage. "You know how when we are young we like to compare with our friends? When I went home and told this to my father, he actually scolded me." She found his sacrifices thoroughly endearing but it was his terminal illness that drove a lesson home for her:

> When I went to the ATM to withdraw money I saw that I was only left with SGD 33.00. And I had to give money to my parents and the worst thing is that I had to act like nothing happened. Otherwise they would have been worried. I then realized that fathers, no matter how poor they are, they won't say anything. They can give and give but we won't know because we don't see. Last time I thought my father was useless because I didn't see him doing any housework, but through my experience I saw that, woah, he had a tough job.

So in spite of the recent success in her career, Cherie has learnt to appreciate relationships more than money. She insists that "I don't want my family to be worse off when I pass away." But this insistence comes with a personal caveat: "Before I came to this job, I was telling myself and my boss that I did not want to be seen as being materialistic. Because in this line, people are materialistic and money-driven. I don't want that. I don't want that at all." Cherie then admits to me that all this is because of her family. It is unfortunate that her father soon passed away.

Cherie's view of materialism then informs her critical attitude towards the economic drive of the State. "I guess the government is only working towards money. You see like how sudden they can build the integrated resorts…They are not listening enough to people and there have been so many studies that these will increase social problems – especially with those with families in Singapore." Cherie here refers to the controversial integrated resorts that were resisted by many Singaporeans, especially conservative Christians (see Mathews). In the end these projects – Manila Bay Sands and Resorts World Sentosa – have proceeded and are now important landmarks of Singapore's fast-changing cityscape. Cherie concludes: "So yeah, there's a lot of unhappiness especially among people who care for the society."

This seeming pervasiveness of "unhappiness" among Singaporeans has been repeatedly raised by my informants. In a way, this observation is not surprising given the contemporary concerns of many Singaporeans over housing, cost of living, and palpable overcrowding in public places, issues which became prominent during the 2011 General Election. Tambyah and Tan are therefore right in saying that these issues undercut the overall happiness of Singaporeans given the city-state's other economic achievements. I would, however, suggest that these findings by Tambyah and Tan are specific bread-and-butter irritations not to happiness per se but to the general quality of life in Singapore. In many studies concerning happiness, quantitative indicators have typically dealt with well-being, for example (see Selin and Davey). These are irritations insofar as the state has established its authority and credibility not just through authoritarianism but also the successful delivery of social and physical infrastructure that the population has enjoyed and continues to expect from the state. After all, success is inscribed in the very core of the state's identity (Chua).

In contrast, my research surfaces more fundamental and enduring conditions that have left my young adult informants thinking seriously about their own happiness. Cherie's account above demonstrates its potent source: the ongoing economic drive of Singapore. The state's economic drive, as mentioned above, has become a compelling narrative even for Singaporeans to fashion their own successes. Instrumental here has been the championing of meritocracy and success, ideas I will revisit later (K. P. Tan; Chua). I ask Corinna, 29, about the importance of the 5Cs in her life. The 5Cs represent what was considered the Singapore Dream especially in the 1990s: cash, credit card, car, condominium, and country club membership ("Singapore's Sm Goh Reinvents 'Singapore Dream'"). Having worked as a schoolteacher for five years, Corinna, 29, points out that "it's not that these are not important, but they should not consume me to the extent that I lose sight of what it is that makes me happy." Is she then happy? "Yes, I get to do what I want to do, so I am living without any regrets." Leilah's disappointment with her friends

from junior college confirms this: "It's sad when I ask them if they are happy…They will be like, 'oh we just got our flat and we'll be getting married in two years, and we can sell the flat again after five years to move to a bigger one.' And I'm like, 'but are you happy? What do you want to do with your life?'" Leilah now works for one of the agencies of the Archdiocese, helping out in the religious formation of young Catholics. I have also interviewed many others who are employed in the field of social work, charity, and welfare in Singapore. Many of them agree that while they know that they will not be considered successful, they are "happy" to be where they are.

These accounts are arguably directly implicated in the previous two sections. In a way, the aspiration to be happy can be considered the core of the capacity to be content. In being critical of Singapore's drive for economic growth and the perceived neglect of the marginalized, my informants are also saying that being personally happy is what is being taken for granted by many Singaporeans. From Corinna's accounts and the many others above, the contours of the aspiration for happiness among my informants is readily discernible: the centrality of family and relationships and the opportunity to lead a meaningful life. In other words, being happy is not only about being surrounded by friends or the quality of life in terms of welfare or their health, ideals characterized as happiness in a recent study on youth in England (Savage et al.).

THE CAPACITY TO BE CONTENT AS MORAL CRITIQUE

The aspiration to be happy coupled with a critical view of Singapore's economic drive and concern for the left-behind can be collectively considered as my informants' capacity to be content. To be content, for many of them, is about finding satisfaction with what one already has and where one is while questioning what they consider as the mindless pursuit of affluence, as exhibited by the state and even some of their own peers. In this sense, the capacity to be content is at once about themselves and also society at large. Here, it is quite revealing that their aspiration is not simply about having a "successful career" or earning "lots of money," life goals considered "very important" by Singaporean youth (15 – 19 years old) (National Youth Council 11). These findings tend to be in contrast too to some recent studies on Protestant Christianity in Singapore. A recent survey shows that megachurch Christians overwhelmingly value money and material blessings (Chong and Hui).[8] While financial stability and other bread-and-butter concerns may also crop up in the interviews, my informants have more readily and openly raised the points above and followed through with personal stories and explanations why being content matters. In fact, some of them have also resisted what they perceive as the prosperity orientation of megachurches. Without restraint, Corinna even thinks that some of these churches are "money-making enterprises."

Moral critique

The capacity to be content, of course, does not mean that they have abandoned any ambition to become successful in their respective careers. As the narratives above show, they are employed in various industries, some more lucrative than the others. Many of them are also involved as volunteers in parish-based or community organizations, while others are employed in social work. The common denominator among my informants is that the capacity to be content is an aspiration that characterizes the good - or ethical - life given what they are seeing in Singapore society today. Whereas aspirations are orientations that allow individuals to navigate their future, they are ultimately about "ethical and metaphysical ideas" (Appadurai 67). This underpinning is also implicit in Nathan's point that aspiration is "a higher-order concept" that must orient individuals' capabilities and needs (40).

In this sense, the aspiration to be content is an ethical critique of what many of my informants see as Singapore's general drift. That it is a critique is well articulated by the young adults. Martin, an engineer who went to top schools in Singapore, offers interesting reflections that are at once emotional and insightful: "Old people fall through the cracks. The less fortunate fall through the cracks. Those that are not productive to society fall through the cracks. The greatest strength of Singapore, which is its economy, is also its greatest weakness…It makes me sad." Explaining himself, Martin mentions the everyday realities in Singapore that other people, for him, may be taking for granted. "You go to the coffee shop, you see old women cleaning tables…You go to Tiong Bahru and you see one-room flats with an old couple…waiting to die. No one to support them…I really sometimes question why we as an advanced country, still have these situations."

Such reflections among my young adult Catholic informants seem to resonate with the increasingly loud sentiments against elitism especially among the marginalized in Singapore. For Kenneth Paul Tan, the value of meritocracy, which guided the selection of government leaders and rewarded educational achievements, has evolved into a brand of elitism that has engendered a class of Singaporeans perceived to be oblivious to the "losers" who have become "more skeptical about their own prospects for upward mobility" (273).

In the end, the capacity to be content – the aspiration for happiness and the care of the left-behind – is in itself a critique of the state of affairs in Singapore. Admittedly, at one level, it is an individual disposition informed by their Catholic socialization. For example, Jacklyn, 28, discloses that "my faith really shapes my values a lot. Sometimes I feel like an outsider because my Christian values really contradict the world. In my previous company, they were always 'we need more profit.'" This is not surprising since 86.2% of Catholics (20-29 years old) agree or

strongly agree that "religion plays a key role in most aspects of my life" (Catholic Research Centre 36). It is of course possible that these aspirations are informed by various discourses such as other religious thought (including Buddhism), ideologies of opposition parties, secularism, and even liberal education. But it matters that Catholicism is a minority religion in Singapore, which could explain the strong sense of identity among its followers. This affinity is reflected in my informants' narratives especially when they consider the influence of their faith on their own values.

But at another level, the capacity to be content is not only a personal aspiration. One can see that as a moral critique, the capacity to be content has subtle resonances with the Catholic Church's drive for social justice before Operation Spectrum (see introduction above). Social Christianity, as Goh characterizes churches in the '70s and '80s, organized the marginalized especially in emerging industrial areas in Singapore. Their social and pastoral efforts manifested their major concern for the suffering in Singapore, namely the working class, foreign workers, and the poor. By highlighting their conditions of suffering, they effectively challenged "the dominant national narrative and developmental ethos" of the state (D. P. S. Goh 58).

The limits of the capacity to be content

But such capacity has its limits. As a moral critique, the capacity to be content captures both the aspirations and sentiments of young adult Catholics concerning themselves and their society. But its potential to contest the political status quo that sets the state's economic agenda is tempered by my informants' views of the role of religion in the public sphere. As Shane, a sports nutritionist, curtly puts it, "religion and politics do not mix in Singapore." And some of my informants are aware of their own limitations in trying to effect change. While some would want the Catholic Church to be more vocal about political matters, they are the first to admit too that "even if you riot and voice out your concerns, it cannot change much." Kristoffer, a former youth coordinator in his parish, admits too that "the government has succeeded to keep us in our own sphere *lah*. We've not engaged society enough. We only chat about our own problems."

In this sense, the capacity to be content, while seemingly noble and laudable for contesting social excesses, misses out on the transformative potential of aspirations as "the human driving force for change" (Bunnell and Goh 1). Indeed, one of the lasting consequences of the clampdown on Catholic activists in the 1980s is that church leaders have consistently restrained their own ranks from making sensitive statements that could be used against them on grounds of stirring

political controversy (E. K. B. Tan). Recounted above, the circumstances involving Archbishop Chia and the anti-ISA rally in 2012 clearly demonstrate this.[9]

But perhaps part of the problem is not simply their acceptance of their political powerlessness but also the passive acceptance of the benefits of the status quo. Some of my informants have repeatedly mentioned the convenience of living in Singapore they believe other countries cannot match. Shane, who believes that religious organizations do not have a role to play in influencing Singapore politics, also confesses that he is "very proud of how safe it feels especially at night," a clear nod to the security mechanisms of the regime. Emilia, who works with the youth for a government unit, also tells me "I'm grateful that because there is such control, I'm living happily." She admits this to me after expressing her disappointment with how the government has intervened in the recent Archbishop Chia affair.

In view of these nuances, the potential of the capacity to be content to inform any lasting political change in Singapore is arrested. In other words, the state's economic drive and the political regime that has crippled the participation of religion in the public sphere, while fostering a critical attitude among young adult Catholics, has also cultivated their modes of passive acceptance of the status quo. In this sense, I argue that this hesitation is part and parcel of the capacity to be content. To be content where one is includes accepting one's political powerlessness in Singapore.

Potentially buttressing this view, I would suggest, is also how my informants understand their Catholic faith. I pick this up from Leilah who concedes "I don't know how much the church and Catholicism can help the whole of society. I think at most we can, you know, groom individuals who will one day make the change." Here she mainly implies personal values. Parrying my question on politics, she also does not think that "we must vote for X just because the church told us so." Agreeing with Leila would be Emilia, who sees herself as "just a small individual" who cannot change "anything in particular." This is even more intriguing given that Emilia finished a degree in political science. When I ask her to explain her view, Emilia draws from "the Catholic virtue of being content...I mean, I did not choose where I want to be born and things like that, so whatever has been given to me, I will just be thankful and live with it, you know?"

To me, the Catholic difference becomes more glaring in view of the apparent militancy of other (Protestant) Christian churches that have been vocal in serving as the moral conscience of the state (see Mathews). As discussed above, many Christian churches and their leaders have officially expressed their objections to such issues as homosexuality and the feminist agenda of AWARE (see above). The aspiration of these institutions has been to uphold the moral integrity of society which, they believe, the state has also been willing to compromise especially if

decisions are justified with economic benefits (Chong, "Filling the Moral Void"). The controversial approval of the integrated resorts and their casinos is a major case in point.

CONCLUSION

This article has drawn on the views of young adult Catholics in Singapore concerning their aspirations. In doing so, the paper has broadly addressed two areas of research. First, the aspirations of my informants demonstrate that they do not have to be about achievements or social mobility, as is often discussed in the literature on aspiration and on Singaporean society in general. Indeed, the capacity to be content is about themselves as it is about Singapore insofar as it is a moral critique of the state's incessant economic drive which to them has an effect on people's overall happiness. Put differently, in contrast to aspirations inflected with social mobility, the capacity to be content in fact questions the seemingly relentless drive for economic expansion by the Singapore state. For many of my informants, this has led to current social issues that include overcrowding (which has rendered the migrant worker as a glaring threat), the willingness of the state to compromise its morality (welcoming gambling as an enterprise), the disregard for the marginalized (workfare policy), and the drive for wealth acquisition among the population (that has fostered pervasive unhappiness).

Second, investigating the aspirations of young adult Catholics offers a counterpoint to the extensive studies on Christianity in Singapore. Much of the attention, for example, has been given to institutional forms of Christianity and their official responses to pressing issues in the city-state. From these studies, Christianity is seen as either having historically taken a liberal posture to uphold the dignity of the marginalized or serving as the moral conscience of the state in recent years. Such institutional acts demonstrate the aspirations of Christianity in Singapore. My research, however, locates itself in the subjective aspirations of young adult Catholics.

This research raises a few questions concerning young adult Catholics and aspirations. I mentioned at the onset, for one, that having been born in the 1980s and 1990s, their generation has benefited largely from the general increase in the affluence of the economy and citizens. Chong has rightly suggested that the state can no longer expect its population, especially the young who are increasingly exposed to cosmopolitan values and other sources of news, to be completely passive to the political situation in Singapore ("Introduction"). This is perhaps a valid statement to make in the light of recent elections that have seen opposition parties take seats in the parliament.

But perhaps what needs to be considered, too, is to what extent highly educated young adults can drive such changes. My informants, many of whom come from the middle-class, are expected to care about security and order which some of them believe can be preserved, as their nuances above show, if religion is kept away from the public sphere. I have therefore argued above that the other side of the capacity to be content, for all its noble desires, is about accepting the current political order. Here, I agree that this attitude can be emanating from their middle-class location. Indeed, judging by their real estate properties and occupations, Catholics in Singapore are by and large from affluent backgrounds (Catholic Research Centre). To test this proposition, the importance and influence of socio-economic status must be probed in greater detail in future research.

Above I also mentioned that some of my informants are drawing from their Catholic faith to articulate their capacity to be content. This disposition has also included acceptance of the political status quo, which seemingly runs counter to their critical attitude toward the Singapore state's economic drive and perceived neglect of the left-behind. There is a caveat, however. Inasmuch as the Church is perennially perceived by the state as a compelling threat to political order, as in the case of the recent Archbishop Chia affair, many of my informants do not see any greater role for the Catholic Church in the public sphere. In this case, the vocal sentiments from many Catholics against Chia's perceived withdrawal of support for the anti-ISA rally in 2012 may not necessarily reflect general feelings, at least on the part of my informants. The pervasiveness of such views especially across different generations of Catholics needs to be studied. To me, the pastoral intent of the recent survey administered by the Catholic Church in Singapore can be even more effective if political views and aspirations are also included (Catholic Research Centre; Williams).

I do not deny that the capacity to be content is an aspiration that serves not simply as a moral critique, but also a potential driving force for many of them to be involved in welfare or other forms of depoliticized social engagement. What this also means, however, is that the capacity to be content, inasmuch as it is a moral critique of society, is in itself a highly privatized - or depoliticized - religious development. After all, being happy is about valuing family and relationships and pursuing meaningful lives. Given Singapore's politics and brand of secularism, this individualistic attitude is very much welcome (E. K. B. Tan).

Notes

1. I am thankful to the Singapore Pastoral Institute (now the Office for the New Evangelisation), the Society of Jesus in Singapore, and the Asia Research Institute for their institutional support during my fieldwork in 2013 – 2014. Some preliminary findings were presented at a public lecture I delivered at the School of Social Sciences, Universiti Malaysia Sabah and at a seminar at the Max Planck Institute for the Study of Religious and Ethnic Diversity in Göttingen, Germany. I am thankful to my colleagues for their very helpful feedback.

2. A similar trend is reflected in a longitudinal study involving Catholic young adults in the US see Christian Smith and Patricia Snell, *Souls in Transition: The Religious and Spiritual Lives of Emerging Adults*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009.

3. Such institutionally expressed aspirations are not unique to Christianity. See, for example, Khun Eng Kuah-Pearce, "Delivering Welfare Services in Singapore: A Strategic Partnership between Buddhism and the State." *Religious Diversity in Singapore*. Ed. Ah Eng Lai. Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies and Institute of Policy Studies, 2008 for an account of socially engaged Buddhism. See also Jayeel Serrano Cornelio, "The Nationalization of Religion: Cultural Performances and the Youth of Soka Singapore," *MMG Working Paper Series* 13.17 (2013).

4. For a comparative take, see Jin-heon Jung, "Some Tears of Religious Aspiration: Dynamics of Korean Suffering in Post-War Seoul, South Korea," *MMG Working Paper* 12.19 (2012) for its discussion on suffering and the social activism of *minjung* (grassroots) theology under military rule in South Korea in the 1980s. Many Christian churches were driven by the aspiration to see "political democratization, social justice, and human rights" (Jung 29).

5. The Singapore state has largely viewed religious diversity as a potential threat in itself especially in light of racial conflicts in the history of the nation. From the vantage point of the state, therefore, religions are entities that potentially breed "overarching fear and vulnerability "that necessitate 'close scrutiny, interventionist surveillance, and ultra-sensitivity to perceived threats'" (E.K.B. Tan, "Keeping God in Place: The Management of Religion in Singapore" 59). As a result, legislation like the Maintenance of Religious Harmony Act (MRHA) and the Internal Security Act (ISA) have been promulgated and used to counter perceived insurgency and extremism.

6. Section 377A of the Penal Code of Singapore

7. The strategies, however, are not always perceived as such. The collective action of the members of the Church of Our Savior (COOS) to take over the Association of Women for Action and Research (AWARE), a women's rights group, became controversial as religion was accused of overstepping its boundaries with the state. Driven by a desire to correct what they thought was the organization's focus on "the promotion of homosexuality and lesbianism," the new AWARE officers soon had to step down due to increasing pressure from old members and even state ministers themselves (Chong, "Introduction" 2).

8. For example, compared to 55.4% of Anglicans and 62.1% of Methodists, 79.4% of megachurch Christians "agree" or "strongly agree" that money is important to them (Chong and Hui 69). Catholics are not included in their study. My next project will tackle the aspirations of young adult megachurch Christians.

9. Other religious organizations have recast their roles in society by partnering with the state in addressing welfare gaps, for example Kuah-Pearce, "Delivering Welfare Services in Singapore: A Strategic Partnership between Buddhism and the State." The unintended consequence of this is that religious entities become coopted or even "nationalized", a point made in Cornelio, "The Nationalization of Religion: Cultural Performances and the Youth of Soka Singapore."

Works Cited

Anagnost, Ann, Andrea Arai, and Hai Ren, eds. *Global Futures in East Asia: Youth, Nation, and the New Economy in Uncertain Times*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2013. Print

Appadurai, Arjun. "The Capacity to Aspire: Culture and the Terms of Recognition." *Culture and Public Action*. Eds. Rao, Vijayendra and Michael Walton. Stanford: Stanford UP, 2004. 59 - 84. Print

Au, Waipang. "Hundreds Turn up at Rally against Arbitrary Detention." *Yawning Bread*, 2 June 2012. Web. 12 Nov. 2013.

Au Waipang. "Lunch Menu a 4-point letter." *Yawning Bread*, 18 Sept. 2012. Web. 12 Nov. 2013.

Ban, Kah Choon. "Narrating Imagination." *Imagining Singapore*. Eds. Ban, Kah Choon, Anne Pakir and Chee Kiong Tong. 2nd ed. Singapore: Eastern UP, 2004. 1-15. Print.

Barr, Michael D. "Marxists in Singapore? Lee Kuan Yew's Campaign against Catholic Social Justic Activists in the 1980s." *Critical Asian Studies* 42.3 (2010): 335-62. Print.

Brown, Gavin. "Emotional Geographies of Young People's Aspirations for Adult Life." *Children's Geographies* 9.1 (2011): 7-22. Print.

Bunnell, Tim, and Daniel P. S. Goh. "Urban Aspirations and Asian Cosmopolitanisms." *Geoforum* 43 1 (2012): 1-3. Print.

Catholic Research Centre. *Catholic Census Report 2007: Archdiocese of Singapore*. Singapore: Catholic Research Centre, 2007. Print.

Chong, Terence. "Filling the Moral Void: The Christian Right in Singapore." *Journal of Contemporary Asia* 41.4 (2011): 566-83. Print.

---. "Fluid Nation: The Perpetual "Renovation" of Nation and National Identities in Singapore." *Management of Success: Singapore Revisited*. Ed. Terence Chong. Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 2010. 504-19. Print.

---. Introduction. *The Aware Sage: Civil Society and Public Morality in Singapore*. Ed. Chong, Terence. Singapore: NUS Press, 2011. 1 - 13. Print.

---. "Megachurches in Singapore: The Faith of an Emergent Middle Class." *Pacific Affairs* 88.2 (2015): 215-35. Print.

Chong, Terence, and Yew-Foong Hui. *Different under God: A Survey of Church-Going Protestants in Singapore*. Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 2013. Print.

Chua, Beng-Huat. "Singapore as Model: Planning Innovations, Knowledge Experts." *Worlding Cities: Asian Experiments and the Art of Being Global*. Eds. Ananya Roy and Aihwa Ong. Malden: Wiley-Blackwell, 2011. 29-54. Print.

Cornelio, Jayeel Serrano. "Global and Religious: Urban Aspirations and the Govenance of Religions in Metro Manila." *Handbook of Religion and the Asian City: Aspiration and Urbanization in the Twenty-First Century*. Ed. Peter .van der Veer. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2015. 69-88. Print.

---. "The Nationalization of Religion: Cultural Performances and the Youth of Soka Singapore." *MMG Working Paper Series* 13.17 (2013). Print.

---. "New Paradigm Christianity and Commitment-Formation: The Case of Hope Filipino (Singapore)." *Religion and the Individual: Belief, Practice, Identity*. Ed. Abby Day. Aldershot: Ashgate, 2008. 65-77. Print.

Department of Statistics. *Census of Population 2000 Statistical Release 2: Education, Language and Religion*. Singapore: Ministry of Trade and Industry, 2001. Print.

---. *Census of Population 2010 Statistical Release 1: Demographic Characteristics, Education, Language and Religion*. Singapore: Ministry of Trade and Industry, 2011. Print.

Goh, Daniel P. S. "State and Social Christianity in Post-Colonial Singapore." *SOJOURN: Journal of Social Issues in Southeast Asia* 25.1 (2010): 54-89. Print.

Goh, Gilbert. "7 Reasons Why Singaporeans Are Becoming Dangerously Xenophobic." *Transitioning.org*, 2012. Web. 25 Nov. 2013.

Goh, Robbie B. H. "Christian Identities in Singapore: Religion, Race and Culture between State Controls and Transnational Flows." *Journal of Cultural Geography* 26.1 (2009): 1-23. Print.

Ho, Li-Ching, Jasmine B.-Y. Sim, and Theresa Alviar-Martin. "Interrogating Differentiated Citizenship Education: Students' Perceptions of Democracy, Rights and Governance in Two Singapore Schools." *Education, Citizenship and Social Justice* 6.3 (2011): 265-76. Print.

Hodal, Kate. "Singapore Protest: 'Unfamiliar Faces Are Crowding Our Land.'" *The Guardian*, 15 Feb. 2013. Web. 23 Nov. 2013.

Hui, Weng Tat. "Economic Growth and Inequality in Singapore: The Case for a Minimum Wage." *International Labour Review* 152.1 (2013): 107-23. Print.

Jung, Jin-heon. "Some Tears of Religious Aspiration: Dynamics of Korean Suffering in Post-War Seoul, South Korea." *MMG Working Paper* 12.19 (2012). Print.

Kuah-Pearce, Khun Eng. "Delivering Welfare Services in Singapore: A Strategic Partnership between Buddhism and the State." *Religious Diversity in Singapore*. Ed. Ah Eng Lai. Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies and Institute of Policy Studies, 2008. 505-523. Print.

Lai, Ah Eng, ed. *Religious Diversity in Singapore*. Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies and Institute of Policy Studies, 2008. Print.

Mathews, Mathew. "Christianity in Singapore: The Voice of Moral Conscience to the State." *Journal of Contemporary Religion* 24.1 (2009): 53-65. Print.

Ministry of Home Affairs. "MHA's Statement on Archbishop Nicholas Chia's Comments." *Ministry of Home Affairs*, 20 Sept. 2012. Web. 12 Nov. 2013.

Nathan, Dev. "Capabilities and Aspirations." *Economic and political weekly* 40.1 (2005): 36-40. Print.

Neisloss, Liz. "Chinese Bus Drivers Sentenced after Going on Strike in Singapore." *CNN*, 26 Feb. 2013. Web. 25 Nov. 2013.

Ng, Irene. "Intergenerational Income Mobility in Singapore." *The B.E. Journal of Economic Analysis and Policy* 7.2 (2007): 1-32. Print.

National Youth Council. *Youth Statistics in Brief 2012*. Singapore: National Youth Council, 2012. Print.

Penal Code. Republic of Singapore. Revised edition. *Singapore Statutes Online*, 2008. Web. 31 Aug. 2015.

Poh, Jacqueline. "Workfare: The Fourth Pillar of Social Security in Singapore." *Civil Service College Singapore*, 2007. Web. 18 June 2013.

Poole, Millicent E, and George H Cooney. "Orientations to the Future: A Comparison of Adolescents in Australia and Singapore." *Journal of Youth and Adolescence* 16.2 (1987): 129-51. Print.

Ray, Debraj. "Aspirations, Poverty and Economic Change." *Understanding Poverty*. Eds. Abhijit Vinayak Banerjee, Roland Bénabou and Dilip Mookherjee. Oxford: Oxford UP, 2002. 412-421. Print.

Republic of Singapore. "Internal Security Act." *Chapter 142*. Singapore, 1987. Print.

Savage, Sara B., et al. *Making Sense of Generation Y: The World View of 15- to 25-Year-Olds*. London: Church House, 2006. Print.

Selin, Helaine, and Gareth Davey. Introduction. *Happiness across Cultures: Views of Happiness and Quality of Life in Non-Western Cultures*. Eds. Helaine Selin and Gareth Davey. Dordrecht: Springer, 2012. 1-12. Print.

Sidhu, Ravinder, Kong Chong Ho, and Brenda Yeoh. "The Global Schoolhouse: Governing Singapore's Knowledge Economy Aspirations." *Higher Education in the Asia-Pacific: Strategic Responses to Globalization*. Eds. Simon Margison, Sarjit Kaur and Erlenawati Sawir. London: Springer, 2011. 255-71. Print.

"Singapore Ranked Third Most Globalized Economy." *Singapore Business Review*, 28 Feb 2012. Web. 22 Nov. 2013.

"Singapore's Sm Goh Reinvents 'Singapore Dream.'" *AsiaOne*, 2010. Web. 27 Nov. 2013

Smith, Christian, and Patricia Snell. *Souls in Transition: The Religious and Spiritual Lives of Emerging Adults*. Oxford: Oxford UP, 2009. Print

Snodgrass, Sharon. "The Closing of the Singapore Immigrant Mind." *The Establishment Post*, 17 Nov. 2013. Web. 23 Nov. 2013.

Tambyah, Siok Kuan, and Soo Jiuan Tan. "Singapore: A Happy State of Mind?" *Happiness across Cultures: Views of Happiness and Quality of Life in Non-Western Cultures*. Eds. Helaine Selin and Gareth Davey. Dordrecht: Springer, 2012. 121-35. Print.

Tan, Eugene K.B. "Keeping God in Place: The Management of Religion in Singapore." *Religious Diversity in Singapore*. Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies and Institute of Policy Studies, 2008. 55-82. Print.

Tan, Kenneth Paul. "The Transformation of Meritocracy." *Management of Success: Singapore Revisited*. Ed. Terence Chong. Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 2010. 272- 286. Print.

Thio, Li-ann. "The Cooperation of Religion and State in Singapore: A Compassionate Partnership in Service of Welfare." *The Review of Faith & International Affairs* 7.3 (2009): 33-45. Print.

Tong, Chee Kiong. *Rationalizing Religion: Religious Conversion, Revivalism and Competition in Singapore Society*. Leiden: Brill, 2007. Print.

Tong, Joy Kooi Chin. "Religious Experience of a Young Meagachurch Congregation in Singapore." *Mediating Faiths: Religion and Socio-Cultural Change in the Twenty-First Century*. Eds. Bailey, Michael and Guy Redden. Farnham: Ashgate, 2011. 159-174. Print.

UNDP. "Human Development Report 2013: Singapore." *Human Developments Report*, 2013. Web. 20 Nov. 2013.

van der Veer, Peter. "Urban Aspirations in Mumbai and Singapore." *Topographies of Faith: Religion in Urban Spaces*. Eds. Irene Becci, Marian Bunchardt and Jose Casanova. Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2013. 61-71. Print.

Williams, Rowan. *Faith in the Public Square*. London: Bloomsbury, 2012. Print

Youngblood, Robert. *Marcos against the Church: Economic Development and Political Repression in the Philippines*. Ithaca and London: Cornell UP, 1990. Print.