

January 2016

EXILES OF HETERONORMATIVITY: QUEER REPRODUCTION AND FEMALE SAME-SEX FAMILIES IN SINGAPORE

NUR ADLINA B. MAULOD

Purdue University

Follow this and additional works at: https://docs.lib.purdue.edu/open_access_dissertations

Recommended Citation

MAULOD, NUR ADLINA B., "EXILES OF HETERONORMATIVITY: QUEER REPRODUCTION AND FEMALE SAME-SEX FAMILIES IN SINGAPORE" (2016). *Open Access Dissertations*. 1261.
https://docs.lib.purdue.edu/open_access_dissertations/1261

This document has been made available through Purdue e-Pubs, a service of the Purdue University Libraries. Please contact epubs@purdue.edu for additional information.

**PURDUE UNIVERSITY
GRADUATE SCHOOL
Thesis/Dissertation Acceptance**

This is to certify that the thesis/dissertation prepared

By NUR 'ADLINA B MAULOD

Entitled

EXILES OF HETERONORMATIVITY: QUEER REPRODUCTION AND FEMALE SAME-SEX FAMILIES IN SINGAPORE

For the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

Is approved by the final examining committee:

EVELYN BLACKWOOD

Chair

BRIAN C. KELLY

LAURA C. ZANOTTI

MARTIN F. MANALANSAN

To the best of my knowledge and as understood by the student in the Thesis/Dissertation Agreement, Publication Delay, and Certification Disclaimer (Graduate School Form 32), this thesis/dissertation adheres to the provisions of Purdue University's "Policy of Integrity in Research" and the use of copyright material.

Approved by Major Professor(s): EVELYN BLACKWOOD

Approved by: MICHELE R. BUZON

Head of the Departmental Graduate Program

7/1/2016

Date

EXILES OF HETERONORMATIVITY:
QUEER REPRODUCTION AND FEMALE SAME-SEX FAMILIES IN SINGAPORE

A Dissertation
Submitted to the Faculty
of
Purdue University
by
Nur 'Adlina Maulod

In Partial Fulfillment of the
Requirements for the Degree
of
Doctor of Philosophy

August 2016
Purdue University
West Lafayette, Indiana

For my fourteen-year-old self. To a life beyond your wildest dreams.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

It takes a village to raise a child and nine months to birth a baby. This dissertation, a labor of both pleasure and pain, would not have been possible without the following individuals and organizations that got me to this anti-climax:

My advisor, Evelyn Blackwood, whose work on tombois and lesbi drew me out of my urban metropolis into the cornfields of Indiana. Although I hated the cornfields, I enjoyed all of our conversations and debates about sex, gender and power, most of which, have found its way into the pages of this non-magnum opus.

My committee members, Brian Kelly, Laura Zanotti and Martin Manalansan for keeping the faith that I will make it work and the helpful comments for future publications.

My parents and siblings for leaving me, literally, to my own devices knowing that is the only way I can actually get things done. The distance has been fundamental to completing this work and I appreciate the lack of questions asked.

Nurhaizatul Jamila Jamil, you have been my *semangat* and the reason why I uprooted myself 9500 miles away from home. I write our politics and dreams of bringing bodies back into theory in this ethnography.

My comrades: Vanessa Victoria, Kartini Omar and Yashira Johan for the hysterics, merriment and solidarity. Special mention goes to Raksha Mahtani and Marylyn Tan for all the copious amounts of reading and editing. You are both, possibly the only two humans in the universe to have read this dissertation in all its entirety: shitty drafts and otherwise.

I thank my dissertation wife, Elizabeth Joan Wirtz for all the passionate sleepless nights where we made sweet sweet love to our fucking ideas, or rather, the cross-pollination of humanitarian and reproductive ethics. Any next sentence would not be possible without your nurturance and companionship. To the world's best housemate, Sam Brown, for the cigarettes and evening chats, 1700hrs every weekday, not a minute less or more. Jonas Ecke, Amy Tevault,

Dan Polonsky, Pam Sari, Janice Lee and Mateusz Stochelski for being my chosen family away from home. I appreciate the patience and candor of Talin Lindsay, assisting me with my registration deadlines, dissertation formatting and other infinite requirements.

Most grad students live in poverty while completing their dissertation and I am not the exception. I thank the International Association for the Study of Sex, Culture and Society, Purdue Bilsland Dissertation Fellowship, Department of Anthropology, Purdue University, Division of Sociology at Nanyang Technological University and Early Childhood Development Agency, Singapore for giving me the privilege to hone my craft while keeping me above the poverty line.

Finally, to Aishah Kee, for being my muse and my happy place. Your *firasat* has kept us alive. The children, J and P, for the laughter, annoyance and crazy lessons in building a home and making an ethical life together.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
ABSTRACT.....	ix
CHAPTER 1. INTRODUCTION.....	1
1.1 Is It Legal?.....	1
1.2 Key Theoretical Themes of Research	5
1.3 Methods of Engagement	15
1.4 Problematizing "Singaporean Lesbians" and Female Same-Sex Relationships.....	20
1.5 Brief Contexts of Participants' Profile	22
CHAPTER 2. THE POLITICAL ECONOMY OF FAMILY IN SINGAPORE: RACE, GENDER AND SEXUALITY	31
2.1 Pre-Colonial Singapore and Singapore under British Colonial Rule (1819-1959).....	32
2.2 Gender, Sexuality and Kinship in Colonial Singapore	36
2.3 Political and Ideological State Dominance in Post-Independence Singapore	41
2.4 Contemporary State Paternalism and Differentiated Deservedness.....	47
2.5 LGBT Citizens as Exiles of Heteronormative Family	55
2.6 Uneven Circuits of Knowledge: Race, Class and the Queer Digital Divide.....	69
2.7 Conclusion.....	71
CHAPTER 3. MAYBE BABY? WHAT TO EXPECT WHEN YOU ARE [OR NOT] EXPECTING	73
3.1 Introduction	73
3.2 Divorced/Unwed Mothers: Unintended Pregnancies and Unexpected Motherhood	74
3.3 Female Fatherhood: Socialized Masculinities and Reproductive Capacities	86
3.4 Intended Motherhood: Reclaiming Sexuality and Reproductive Rights.....	97
3.5 Human Reproductive Technologies and State Biopower	99
3.6 Fertile Hopes and Futile Routes: Hybrid Technologies of Becoming Pregnant.....	107
3.7 Same-Sex Reproduction and Contact Zones of Kinship.....	122

CHAPTER 4.	SYMBOLIC INNOVATIONS OF KINSHIP IN FAMILIES OF CHOICE	126
4.1	What's So "Cool" about Same-Sex Families?	126
4.2	"Mummy, Mama and <i>Our</i> Baby"	129
4.3	Heteronormalization of Queer Kinship	134
4.4	Initiating New Kin into Family: Single Mothers and Butch Stepfathers	138
4.5	Significance of Kin Terms, Belonging and Legitimacy	151
4.6	Reconstituting "Blood" Kinship Through Shared Temporality, Home and Hearth	153
4.7	Cyber-Performance and Memorial of Kinship Affinity Ties	156
4.8	Conclusion	163
CHAPTER 5.	"PROPER" PARENTHOOD AT THE MATRIX OF HETERONORMATIVITY	165
5.1	Connecting Less Familiar Dots of Mothering	165
5.2	The "Good" Mother in Singapore	168
5.3	Disidentifications: Negotiating Sexuality in Motherhood	172
5.4	Queering Mother-Nature: Lesbian Motherhood and Disidentifications	186
5.5	Transgendering Mother/Fatherhood: The End of Normal?	190
5.6	Demystifying "Real" Maternal Bonds in Lesbian Families	199
5.7	Maternal Consumption and Sacrifice: The "Gift" of Raising Children	202
5.8	Mothering and Politics of Respectability	208
5.9	Conclusion	212
CHAPTER 6.	EGALITARIANISM, FAMILY POWER AND GENDERED DOMESTICITIES	214
6.1	Distribution of Power at Home	214
6.2	Practical Egalitarianism in Middle-Class Lesbian Households	218
6.3	Family Power and Insecurity in Heterogendered Cohabiting Malay Households	226
6.4	Configurations of Gender and Power in Malay Single-Parent Households	235
6.5	Kinship Hierarchies Between "Blood" Families and Chosen Partners	242
6.6	Are Female Same-Sex Households Free From Patriarchal Inequalities?	250
CHAPTER 7.	THE TROUBLE WITH NORMAL AND SAME-SEX FUTURES OF BELONGING	255
7.1	Recapitulating Sites of Radical Possibilities	256
7.2	Politics of Recognition and Belonging: Differentiated Needs for Family	262

7.3 The Way Forward: Ruminations of Family-Based Rights and Strategies	271
LIST OF REFERENCES	276
VITA	298

LIST OF TABLES

	Page
Table 1. Description of Participants (Self-Report)	24
Table 2. Summary of Butch-Feminine Roles in Singapore	65

ABSTRACT

Maulod, Nur 'Adlina. PhD, Purdue University, August 2016. *Exiles of Heteronormativity: Queer Reproduction and Female Same-Sex Families in Singapore*. Major Professor: Evelyn Blackwood

In Singapore, same-sex desires and practices are treated as antithetical to the Family. This dissertation challenges the rhetorical monolith of the traditional family by documenting intimate stories of alternative reproduction from the experiences of female citizens who have been treated as exiles of heteronormative kinship.

My ethnographic research delves into the rich narratives of fourteen Singaporean Malay and Chinese queer and cisgender women and five Malay masculine-identified female-bodied (butch) individuals who are presently co-parenting, planning to have children or have raised children with a same-sex partner. I explore how participants acquire children and construct forms of relatedness in a country where homosexuality has yet to be decriminalized and social reproductive policies heavily restrict citizens, especially women, from pursuing non-traditional paths to family, that the state defines as being legally married, and raising children in a stable family unit.

I found three distinct patterns of alternative reproduction among my research participants: a) Heterogendered families of working-class masculine-identified Malay butch fathers who partner with feminine, and often, heterosexual-identified unwed or divorced mothers, b) Middle-class Chinese lesbian co-mothers who acquire motherhood through Assisted Reproduction Technologies (ART) and c) Malay and Chinese lesbian/bisexual women who are either raising or planning to raise biological children in single-mother households.

Participants' diverse routes to achieving parenthood suggest the significance of race, class as well as gendered sexual subjectivities in assembling particular "chosen" family forms. This dissertation intervenes in contemporary queer scholarship on lesbian-led households which tends to focus on sexuality as the primary mode of organizing non-normative family life. I demonstrate how same-sex families experience multiple and intersectional forms of reproductive

marginalization that is not only specific to sexuality. Their diverse social locations reveal complex practices of heteronormative power and social exclusions in Singapore.

Participants' intimate narratives of reproduction and same-sex family forms raise intriguing questions about structures of compulsory heterosexuality and maternity in Singapore. In this dissertation, I introduce the framework of 'gendered reproductive habitus' to examine individuals' socialized dispositions pertaining to desiring, conceiving, birthing and caregiving of children. Participants, in taking into consideration the cultural and personal stakes of raising children with a same-sex partner, enact particular tacit or explicit alternative kinship strategies in becoming a mother/father while. I analyse the ways in which their gendered reproductive habitus reinforces stratified forms of reproduction, corresponding to intertwining inequalities of race, class, gender and sexuality. How do participants consolidate their same-sex family desires with the misalignment of gender and family norms? My research examines the elasticity of participants' gendered reproductive habitus evidenced through the ways in which they re-traditionalize kinship structures despite varying strategies of conformity to or transformation of these norms.

How same-sex partners and 'blood' relatives distribute domestic labor and manage finances highlight particular arrangements of family power. I explore how class and gender differentials between partners and their natal households are crucial to the production of domestic inequalities. Participants' household practices and dynamics of family power further explicates the vulnerability of single-mother daughters and non-biological parents in non-legally recognized families. Are female-headed households, in the absence of male husbands, free from patriarchy and male privilege? Do participants' non-normative practices of parenthood as lesbian mothers or female fathers disrupt the gender stability of male-father and female-mother to signify the end of 'normal' families?

By connecting both structural and practical enactments of family and the household, my dissertation explores the manifest affect of discursive heteronormative power to intimate sensibilities of belonging. To what extent does gendered social policies and norms (re)produce vulnerabilities based on monolithic ideas of acceptable families and proper motherhood? I examine the material implications of queering heteronormativity by asking how research participants view their sense of self-worth as members of Singapore society. Through my emphasis on non-normative family diversity, this dissertation hopes to sharpen rights-based strategies for family inclusion and equal citizenship entitlements by recognizing all routes and desires for family as equally legitimate.

CHAPTER 1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Is It Legal?

The school we have toured so far have been progressive and open to the idea of having the child of same-sex parents attend the school. Until yesterday. During the tour of a small kindergarten yesterday, we were asked by one of the teachers, ‘*Is it legal?*’ I know she did not mean it with malice. By her own admission, we were the first “single-sex” (she really means ‘same-sex’) parents she had encountered. She kept saying it was their first time and they would need to seek advice from MOE (Ministry of Education). This incident reminded me that while we have been fortunate to meet understanding and progressive people on our journey so far, there is still much work to be done as there is a large portion of the population who have no idea that same-sex parents do exist in Singapore and our children need to attend pre-school as well. As long as 377A remains on the books, people still see LGBT couples as illegal and in turn this mindset spills over to LGBT families as well. (Liv, “Is it Legal”, October 14, 2015).

In her blog post above, Olivia Tan summarized her experiences in finding a preschool for her daughter Zoey who was conceived via artificial insemination with her wife, Irene Oh. While searching for an affordable pre-school is a difficult challenge for all parents in Singapore due to limited vacancies in child-care centers, Olivia and Irene’s experience highlights how public stigmatization toward non-traditional family structures further exacerbates the obstacles same-sex parents have to go through in order to enroll their children in school.

A few months prior, another Singaporean same-sex parent, Weiling, had posted on her Facebook status about a bullying incident involving her 7-year-old son who was held in a chokehold by another boy during his art enrichment class. In self-defense, her son bit and kicked the boy. Weiling describes the events preceding the fight:

The boy, R, had asked him if he knew what gay meant. My child said, “Yes, two men loving each other.” R then tells him he is wrong and it means weird and disgusting and that gays have to go to the police.

Weiling and her partner, Muk Yin, reported the incident and the traumatic effect it had on her son to school officials who laughed and “dismissively” suggested that they were describing a scene of “unrealistic chaos”. Weiling posted as her Facebook status, “Many of us aren’t broken, but the

law breaks us from birth. 377A continues to tell LGBT children that they are wrong and undeserving of recognition, protection or inclusion.”

Government leaders in Singapore position the family as “the basic unit of society” defined further as “one man, one woman, marrying, having children and bringing up children within the framework of a stable family unit” (Lee, 2007). By reiterating this definition, the government has largely dismissed same-sex couples’ desires to share a home and raise a family—practices that have been taken-for-granted as “natural life paths” for heterosexual Singaporeans (Teo, 2011:4).

Through the retention of Penal Code 377A, the state continues to criminalize same-sex acts as an “unnatural” sex offence, claiming that its repeal would cause a breakdown of so-called traditional Asian family values. Despite the authorities’ claim that this law is symbolic and will not be enforced, the anecdotes above reinforce how the continued existence of 377A perpetuates the social exclusion of LGBT Singaporeans and their families.

At the same time, Singapore’s influential role as a global financial center subjects the state to the pressures of global corporations such as Google, Barclays and Goldman-Sachs, who are vocal in their demands for LGBT inclusion and same-sex marriage equality. These tensions have produced ambivalence and opened up unprecedented public debates on what it means to love and be legitimized as family in Singapore.

The Singaporean ideology of family shapes the genesis of my dissertation research because what the Singapore state defines as a “proper” family nucleus has strong bearing on families getting access to public goods and services such as housing, reproduction, tax relief, financial assistance and education. Families who adhere to heterosexual forms of marriage, stay married, and have children living under one roof are “acceptable” families who are seen as “deserving” of resources that guarantee their social security and mobility, while those who are seen as not having a “proper” family nucleus are excluded from these privileges.

In a country that positions same-sex desires and practices as being “anti-family”, this dissertation attempts to challenge the rhetorical monolith of the heteronormative family by presenting both historical and participants’ narratives about family and reproduction that challenges and departs from conventional forms of kinship or ‘natural life paths’ of family as it has been understood in Singapore. My ethnographic research follows the stories of fourteen Malay and Chinese queer and cisgender women and five Malay masculine-identified female-bodied (butch) individuals, who by virtue of their class positions and/or non-normative sexual and

gender subjectivities and practices, have been treated as exiles of heteronormative kinship in Singapore.

My dissertation first explores how the colonial and post-independent states control and manage the population through the family, as what Foucault terms the “instrument for the government of the population” (1991: 100). I analyze the state’s technologies of discipline in terms of race, gender and sexuality to deconstruct the political rationalities underpinning ideologies of the ‘proper’ and traditional Asian family. I propose that a productive way to question monolithic discourse of the family in Singapore is to destabilize it from its take-for-granted naturalized assumptions of kinship as de facto heterosexual and procreative. My historical section will demonstrate evidence of family diversity to highlight how nuclear marital family units were not always the norm in Singapore, and not traditionally and specifically ‘Asian’ in their origins. In tracing the production of heteronormative ideologies in Singapore, I attempt to connect historical and contemporary discourses by examining how research participants engage cultural ideologies of family and ‘proper’ motherhood in their everyday practices of alternative kinship.

Second, I will draw upon feminist contributions to the study of kinship that have been crucial in challenging the constitutive power and naturalization of family based on primordial biological facts (Strathern, 1992; Yanagisako and Collier, 1994). I explore how interpretations of social and biological aspects of kinship are culturally specific and contingent by asking participants how they become family, and what “family” means to those who claim they have or desire them. In this regard, my research seeks to understand how participants define and construct notions of relatedness (Carsten, 2000). What compels two female partners to have and raise children together and how do they construct affinity ties in an environment that dares not speak of nor recognize their love? How significant is biology to non-traditional forms of same-sex kinship, are blood relations thicker than water?

Third, as will be discussed in my chapters, not all participants express having same-sex desires toward women or identify completely as ‘women’ in spite of their same-sex practices. In this regard, their diverse subject positions offer an intervention to current scholarship on “chosen” (Weston, 1991) lesbian-led households that predominantly focuses on female same-sex partners who identify as lesbian and who organize their kinship practices based predominantly around their sexuality. I emphasize the diversity of alternative and/or same-sex kinship practices of my participants by identifying three distinct patterns of reproduction: the heterogendered families of working-class masculine-identified Malay butch fathers who partner with feminine, and often,

heterosexual-identified unwed or divorced mothers, middle-class Chinese lesbian co-mothers who acquire motherhood through Assisted Reproduction Technologies (ART) and Malay and Chinese lesbian/bisexual women who are presently or planning to raise biological children as single-parents. Through a focus on intersectionality and subjectivity, I tease apart the factors that are salient to my participants' performances of sexuality, gender and family in order to address the specificities of their social exclusions as reflected through their innovative kinship practices within a heteronormative landscape. I explore how assemblages of non-traditional family forms are the outcomes of participants' mediation of economic, social and cultural capitals that they have acquired through their life experiences.

Fourth, participants' intimate narratives of reproduction and same-sex family forms raise intriguing questions about structures of compulsory heterosexuality and maternity in Singapore. Based on my research, I consolidated Bourdieu's (1987; 1990) habitus, Berlant and Warner's (1998) theorization of heteronormativity and Rich's (1980) concept of compulsory heterosexuality, into the framework of 'gendered reproductive habitus' that I will engage in my dissertation chapters. I explore participants' perceptions of their gendered reproductive habitus, which I define as the individual's socialized dispositions pertaining to desiring, conceiving, birthing and caregiving of children. I deploy the analytic of gendered reproductive habitus to examine the significance of gender, sexuality, race and class observed through ways in which participants, based on their subject positions, enact particular tacit or explicit alternative kinship strategies in becoming a mother/father while taking into consideration the cultural and personal stakes of raising children with a same-sex partner. Through their narratives, I explore the ways in which a gendered reproductive habitus reinforces stratified forms of reproduction (Colen, 1986).

Fifth, in my focus on reproduction and parenting, my dissertation problematizes biocentric associations of motherhood to the category of woman by deconstructing the gender and sexual normativity of maternalism onto female-bodied individuals. By contextualizing parenthood through intersectional matrices of gender, race, class and sexuality and also able-bodiedness, my research attempts to provide a critical analysis of the diverse ways in which participants experience and engage in relational practices of mothering and fathering. I challenge the cultural expectation of intensive mothering onto women by drawing attention to participants' subjective interpretation of maternal competence. How do their practical engagements reflect unequal gendered and racialized discourses of being a father or mother in Singapore? I explore participants' non-normative practices of parenthood in order to theorize the possibilities of disrupting the gender stability of male-father and female-mother.

Finally, my dissertation explores the extent to which heteronormativity is gendered in Singapore by examining the division of labor in cohabitating female same-sex households or for partners who live separately, with their kin networks. I analyze domestic practices to demonstrate the significance of both gender and class relations that advance one's family power and legitimizes one's position in the family (Kranichfield, 1987). What are the attributes that participants recognize as crucial to secure family power? My objective, in asking these questions, is to challenge the dominance of androcentric analysis of economic-domestic binaries of power and question the importance of traditional gender models of men/provider and women/caregiver in participants' everyday organization of house-holding. Additionally, are female-headed households, in the absence of male husbands, free from patriarchy and male privilege?

By connecting both structural and practical enactments of family and the household, my dissertation explores how gendered social policies (re)produce particular ideas of proper families and motherhood. I aim to understand how normative ideals of gender and sexuality get taken up through one's subject position and manifest in participants' intimate and domestic life. I seek to discover the material implications of queering heteronormativity by asking how research participants view their sense of self-worth and belonging as members of Singapore society. In this regard, even though my research participants may share intersecting communities of fate as exiles of heteronormative kinship, my dissertation attempts to show that any political and cultural claims for family equality and inclusivity require a precise examination of participants' subject position and experiences of marginalization. Through my emphasis on non-normative family diversity, this dissertation hopes to sharpen rights-based strategies for family inclusion and equal citizenship entitlements. Every performance of kinship is a strategy of survival for same-sex partners, and reflects particular circumstances of their lived environments.

1.2 Key Theoretical Themes of Research

1.2.1 Symbolic Innovations of Family

A fundamental insight that has emerged from feminist anthropological interrogations of kinship is that the cultural meanings implicated through the ideology of "family" can and will differ according to contingencies of individual and structural circumstances, identities and the intention to pursue these forms (Strathern, 1992; Carsten, 2004; Lewin, 1995). Strathern (1992) argues that kinship should not be assumed simply through biological relations and emphasizes

that the defense of natural kinship reveals a symbolic construction, a microcosm of the relationship between nature, society and meaning. Emerging out of this feminist deconstruction of kinship is the interrogation of kinship as performative – one that focuses on practices and processes and their relationship to power (Carsten, 2000). Carsten (1995), for instance, introduced the concept of “relatedness” where the processes through which people become family, to move beyond a simplistic understanding of procreation and legal marriage as the basis of kin relations. Carsten’s concept is useful because it effaces the distinction between “real” and “fictive” kin by emphasizing the processes that socialize people into being and belonging as family.

Similarly, Mamo (2007) challenges traditional practices of affinal ties through marriage by enhancing the concept of relatedness more specifically through her concept of “affinity ties”. For Mamo, the practice of affinity ties becomes a kinship device that US lesbians in her research create in order to forge connection and belonging especially in cultures that devalue queer lives. In this regard, the performative aspect of affinal ties emphasizes the importance of “kin work” that di Leonardo (1987) posits as the conception, maintenance and nurturing of family relations that structures participants’ sense of belonging and relatedness within their kin networks.

Additionally, the idea of “choice” in assembling particular kinship forms is central to this dissertation. I draw upon Weston (1991) who asserts that gay and lesbian families do not have to be positioned in terms of resistance or conformity to biological or legal definitions of “family” produced through hegemonic norms. Instead, Weston proposes that these same-sex families be understood as “chosen” families. Queer families share households based on a diverse range of intimate, social, economic, erotic and biological relations. By emphasizing an element of choice, the diversity of non-traditional families can be better emphasized and appreciated. In this regard, I found Weston’s concept of chosen families particularly helpful to my analysis as it de-centers legal and institutional definitions of family to the level of praxis, by privileging the experiences and practices of queer families as members define them.

In line with these insights, I investigate how same-sex female partners appropriate and consolidate cultural norms of relatedness to “kin” otherwise unrelated children and the strategies they adopt to legitimize family members whose labor of love may not be culturally sanctioned in real life. I examine how participants utilize new and old technologies of kinship and reproduction to create affinity ties to each other. In teasing the relationship between substance and code of kinship as Schneider (1984) posits, my dissertation further challenges the procreative and biological assumptions to kinship. In this regard, Carsten’s (1995) concept of biology as a malleable concept is particularly helpful in addressing the ways in which the symbolic role of

biology, for example, “shared blood” can be reconfigured through practices such as shared residence and consumption in the non-traditional same-sex family practices of my participants. The flexible notion of shared blood through active kin work of sustenance, nourishment, nurturance and co-residence reflects particular choices that participants engage in within their kin networks.

For Weston (1991), the nature/culture split that was used to distinguish between true or “blood” kin versus fictive kin no longer holds. Using the notion of choice, she demonstrated that kinship strategies reveal on-going practices of sociality and boundary making, where the presupposed durability of ‘blood is thicker than water’ is problematized across various cultural contexts and histories. While I conceptually agree with Weston that all forms of kinship, whether biological or chosen, are equally legitimate, I ask whether the nature/culture split is relevant to the experiences of my research participants. I explore, as well, how participants define the boundaries of ‘family’ if the option to live with their chosen family is not materially or culturally possible.

Additionally, Sahlins posits that the core integrity of kinship is based on a practical recognition of a mutuality of being and intersubjective belonging between people who are intrinsic to each other’s existence (2011: 4). Working with the notion of kinship as intersubjective, a central aspect of my research examines the gendered sexual subjectivities of female same-sex partners and how it informs and shapes the distribution of power within their households and among “blood” kin networks. Do partners possess equal autonomy and decision-making power in determining the outcomes for their same-sex family? How is power distributed between same-sex partners and with other biological family members in the household?

1.2.2 Gendered Reproductive Habitus and Practical Enactment of Gender and Sexuality

For my analytical framework, I employ two concepts, ‘gendered reproductive habitus’ and ‘practical enactment’, to explore the dynamic relationship between heteronormative structures and participants’ subject positions. I draw my understanding of ‘gendered reproductive habitus’ by incorporating concepts of heteronormativity and compulsory heterosexuality to Bourdieu’s theorization of habitus and social field. I found Berlant and Warner’s (1998) definition of heteronormativity particularly useful as a complementary framework to compulsory heterosexuality in encapsulating the dynamic and productive relationship between power, privilege and participants’ reproductive choices. They state:

By heteronormativity we mean the institutions, structures of understanding, and practical orientations that make heterosexuality seem not only coherent—that is, organized as a sexuality—but also privileged. Its coherence is always provisional, and its privilege can take several (sometimes contradictory) forms: unmarked, as the basic idiom of the personal and the social; or marked as a natural state; or projected as an ideal or moral accomplishment. It consists less of norms that could be summarized as a body of doctrine than of a sense of rightness produced in contradictory manifestations—often unconscious, immanent to practice or to institutions. Contexts that have little visible relation to sex practice, such as life narrative and generational identity, can be heteronormative in this sense, while in other contexts sex between men and women might *not* be heteronormative. Heteronormativity is thus a concept distinct from heterosexuality. (Berlant and Warner, 1998: 548)

Berlant and Warner’s definition of heteronormativity describes how social institutions and cultural ideologies reinforce the presumption of heterosexuality as a primordial natural state of being, and consequently, gender and sex as natural binaries. What I find particularly important in their concept is the attention given to privileged constructions of heterosexuality, which they argue are contextual, and therefore provisional and contradictory. While Berlant and Warner posit that heteronormativity is distinct from heterosexuality, I utilize Rich’s understanding of compulsory heterosexuality to strengthen my analysis of heteronormativity because it more forcefully reflects unequal reproductive hierarchies that female-bodied individuals are subjected to in Singapore.

In formulating the operationalization of a gendered reproductive habitus in Singapore’s context, I strategically use Bourdieu’s terminology of “social field” (1990) to conceptualize reproduction as a social field inscribed with particular conventions and codes that have been distributed unevenly among “players” whose dispositions, based on their social location, resources and proximity to heterosexual norms, may conserve or transform structuring dispositions, or habitus of reproduction. Bourdieu (1977) defines habitus as the durable deposition of societal structures that have been internalized through an individual or group’s embodied dispositions. Incorporating Rich’s theory of compulsory heterosexuality in the site of reproduction, I will explicate in my analysis how heteronormativity is unequally inflected through a gendered reproductive habitus, which I define as dispositions and embodied orientations pertaining to the desiring, conceiving, birthing and caregiving of children. To what extent does gendered reproductive habitus structure my participants’ interpretive engagement with non-normative practices or assisted technologies of reproduction? In what ways does it produce differentiated reproductive strategies, effects and outcomes?

Berlant and Warner's understanding of heteronormativity is less about heterosexuality as an indoctrinated homogenous norm, as posited by Rich, but a practical sense of rightness that has been institutionalized, albeit in contradictory manifestations. To anchor the heteronormative affect of "rightness", I find it helpful to utilize the concept of "practical enactment" to understand the ways in which my participants experience and express their subject positions within a stratified reproductive social field of Singapore. Blackwood's (2010: 23) discussion on 'practical enactment' draws upon Moore's (1994) emphasis of enactment as a meaningful process that affirms one's sense of rightness and belonging to a particular subject position, for example, being a lesbian mother. Similarly, Bourdieu (1990) also states that subjects' sense of efficacy is derived through the acquisition of a 'practical sense' of reality located in the mastery of common dispositions, or 'doxa', the force of which discursively produces normative social categories.

Cultural competence, or efficacy, is achieved if one adheres to culturally defined models of propriety. But, what happens when one's practical enactment is not aligned to the gendered reproductive habitus which they have internalized and been subjected to, such as when a woman decides to have children without being married to a man? How do individuals who enact non-normative subject positions demonstrate competence or gain rewards that are associated with normativity?

1.2.3 Rethinking Heteronormative Power: From Discrimination to Differentiation

Heteronormativity, as a concept, refers to institutions, structures, and practices that normalize dominant forms of heterosexuality as universal and morally righteous. In this dissertation, I focus on the way Singapore marshals heteronormativity through stratified reproductive policies that produce inequalities along the lines of race, class, gender, marital status, nationality and so forth. Sexuality, although important, is only one part of this larger enactment of power.

The seemingly innocuous question, "is it legal?" posed to Olivia in the opening of this chapter hints at stratified reproduction. I borrow the term from Colen (1995) to refer to the power relations by which certain categories of people are encouraged to nurture and reproduce, while others are penalized. Homosexuals may be treated as exiles from the proper and acceptable family in Singapore, but not all heterosexuals are accorded equivalent treatment as proper citizen-subjects. The state, for instance, designates disproportionate responsibilities of domesticity and motherhood to women (Heng and Devan, 1995; Teo, 2015; Purushotam, 1998), which means that

family norms do not only discriminate the homosexual from the heterosexual. In her research, Teo (2015) demonstrates the Singapore state's practice of "differentiated deservedness" as an ideological mechanism of social control by looking at how norms differentiate and reward the good mother, the disciplined worker, the filial daughter and the self-reliant family in Singapore. These are the heterosexual women that state leaders tout as crucial to the economic progress of the nation.

Following her observation, I propose that a critical queer approach to studying same-sex families in Singapore should move beyond a homosexual-heterosexual binary to focus on the heteronormative operations of the state. This move requires thinking about heteronormativity beyond the disciplining of sexuality through discrimination and instead focus on the state's production of "differentiated deservedness" based on participants' proximity to ideal norms of family and citizenship. My research on female same-sex families in Singapore is therefore not just a narrative about lesbian sexuality and reproduction. Because I argue that the state's attempt to regulate female sexuality is centrally about class, race and economic productivity, the overarching theme of this dissertation is the importance of not of race, class and gender in shaping participants' ability to navigate heteronormative norms through their alternative practices of kinship.

1.2.4 Configuring Female Same-Sex Sexualities: From Identity to Subjectivity

My theoretical approach to the study of female same-sex sexualities has been shaped by feminist and transnational queer scholarship in anthropology in the following ways. First, I constituting the gendered categories of "man" and "woman" as forms of situated and embodied knowledge as practitioners negotiate gender regimes to produce their queer sensibilities (Moore, 1994; Blackwood and Wieringa, 2007;). Second, I attend to the transnational plurality of queer subjectivities by giving precision to agents' meaningful appropriation of Western categories of lesbian, bisexual and transgender as informed through their social location (Manalansan, 2003; Grewal and Kaplan, 2001). Third, I engage in the refusal to conceptualize erotic female same-sex practices as either a form of patriarchal replication, resistance or submission (Mahmood, 2004; Weston, 1991; Blackwood, 2010). Fourth, I interpret the same-sex practices of my participants against a Eurocentric understanding of sexuality as a fixed, autonomous and defining aspect of a queer self that obscures other intersecting matrices of race, class, gender and religion that equally inform one's subject position (Manderson and Jolly, 1997).

Considering the above, the burgeoning scholarship on lesbian family formation in the US tends to sample and include participants who self-identify as lesbian. As a result, sexual identity becomes a static category in analyses of same-sex families (Moore, 2011; Mamo, 2007; Pelka, 2010). In this regard, my intervention into the study of “lesbian families” focuses on participants’ acquisition of same-sex kinship based on practice rather than one organized primarily around a fixed and gendered sexual identity.

The use of the term “queer” has been particularly productive for some scholars to counter the assumption that Western LGBT categories have similar relevance in other parts of the world (Boellstorff, 2005; Manalansan, 2003; Blackwood, 2010). Similarly, I use ‘queer’ because of the diverse experiences of participants, who may not all identify as “lesbian” or “woman” despite engaging in female same-sex relationships. In doing so, I focus on participants’ non-normative practices but do not impose a queer identity onto those who do not organize their lives around particular or fixed sexual identities. Individuals construct a personal and sexual subjectivity based not just on sexual orientation and gender but also through other experiences that make up their being-in-the-world such as race, ethnicity and class.

Because individuals construct a personal and sexual subjectivity based not just on sexual orientation and gender but also through their experiences of race, ethnicity and class, I found import in Strathern’s (1988) concept of the “dividual self”. Strathern’s “dividual” is conceptualized as a node within intricate networks of social relations where one’s gender, social status, sexuality, family and ethnicity are all aspects of an ongoing construction of a malleable self. In this regard, I prefer to use the term subjectivity instead of identity to emphasize, as Alcoff suggests, the dynamic processes and reflexive agency of individuals as they engage in knowledge about who they are in the world through understanding their social positions, embodiment, practices and relations and interactions with others around them (2006: 93).

While any term is laden with theoretical and empirical problems, I use subjectivity because it emphasizes the malleability of identity categories and the fluidity of those who move in and out of particular gender and sexual identities. As I will continually emphasize throughout this dissertation, the self is fragmented and multiply shapes one’s subjectivity where each identity is intricately connected to others even while some identities are more salient than others.

Additionally, I found Munoz’s (1999) discussion of disidentification particularly useful in terms of addressing the complexities of minoritarian subjects who may not express an explicit desire to identify or counter-identify with dominant heteronormative categories. His concept of

disidentification looks at subjectivity beyond a working for or against principle; rather, to capture nuances in which people find meaning in working in and on dominant ideologies.

In this manner and throughout my dissertation, I view class, race, gender and sexuality as equally dynamic and multiply located processes (Hall, 1996; Collins, 2000) that mutually constitute one's sense of self and experiences instead of taking them as structural effects that produce particular actions. My research attempts to foreground how cultural and institutional processes, as well as embodied knowledge, simultaneously produces one's gendered reproductive habitus. To look at subjectivity, or in the context of my dissertation, participants' gendered reproductive habitus, as merely the consequence of structural hierarchies, behavior and actions negates multifaceted notions of power and the complexities of individual lives, as well as their relationships to structures and those around them.

1.2.5 Intersectional Experiences of Power and Agency

Hall (1996) argues that identities are never unified but are fragmented and multiply constructed. Hall's theorization of identity further reinforces my analytical preference for subjectivity, rather than identity. In this regard, I draw upon the understanding that individuals occupy multiple subject positions in relation to power, which is also multiply constituted. Collins (2000) deploys the idea of a matrix of domination to strengthen her argument that the social position of minority Black women compels researchers to view and explore avenues where systems of inequality converge and intersect. Collins's black feminist epistemology has been useful to my research allowing me to capture, analytically, how my participants' experiences and practical enactments of gender, sexuality and kinship are shaped by intersecting systems of oppression and power relations that produces particular norms.

In this dissertation, I draw connections between the lived experiences of participants who may otherwise seem to be distinct from each other. For example, what do middle-class Chinese lesbian mothers have in common with unwedded Malay mothers? By teasing out complex comparisons, I am using a practice-centered approach to intersectionality (McCall, 2005; Yuval-Davis, 2008) to examine the varied interplay of different contexts of domination co-shaping the everyday lives of participants. In this regard, I view categories of race, class, gender and sexuality as dynamic, relational and interactional, instead of static. In looking at how participants move in and out of particular subject positions through their performances of kin work, I explore the contingent and cultural processes that organize heteronormative norms of gender and sexuality.

This analytical approach identifies which sites of domination are more salient for some participants and not others. It also informs how the matrices of heteronormative power manifests onto participants' practical enactments of mother/fatherhood, reproduction and kinship.

Queer theorists (Halberstam, 2005; Butler, 2002; Edelman, 2004) have argued that there is nothing essentially radical or unique to chosen families among gays and lesbians, since it is also present in heterosexual arrangements and tend to reproduce heteronormative structures of inequality. Instead of asking whether same-sex family forms assimilate or subvert heteronormativity, I focus on how family meanings are assembled and translated into concrete everyday practices of domestic and queer life among my research participants. Using an intersectional approach to power enables me to move beyond binary configurations of agency as either assimilation to or radicalization of heteronormative norms, without losing sensitivity to experiences of multiple inequalities and exclusion.

I deploy Bourdieu's concept of 'habitus' (1990) to explain how practices of gender and reproduction are not always conscious forms of enactment, especially if one's disposition is aligned with the habitus of their social fields. Normative categories, for example, being a feminine heterosexual woman, gain traction through conformity, and through constant reiteration, eventually congeal into a practical sense of reality for the subject. In this regard, habitus is the outcome of particular socialized dispositions to norms, and may produce different forms of enactment based on one's subject positions. The 'habitus' produces the individual's interpretive horizons, shaping their understanding of what is, in terms of choices, possible or not, within their cultural locus. In my dissertation, I explore the means by which research participants have been channeled to think, rationalize and act in particular ways that correspond to the logic of their gendered reproductive habitus. I explore the possibilities in which participants can alter their dispositions or transform their habitus to accommodate new and alternative forms of kinship.

For Foucault (1991: 102-3), governmentality is about asking subjects to monitor their comportment by measuring themselves against the norm as a way to produce self-disciplined and self-regulated citizens. Additionally, Foucault's concept of power as productive sharpens my observations of agency evidenced through a reconciliation of norms. He describes how disciplinary practices produce "docile bodies" as the object and locus of power through the ways in which they have been manipulated, shaped and trained. Thus, the "docile" individual, as with Bourdieu's well-habituated person, who occupies a normative position exudes cultural competence. Unlike Bourdieu, Foucault argues further for the productivity of normative categories where conformity to norms can also be rewarding and pleasurable for social agents.

Further, if power produces the individual subject, Foucault highlights also the paradox of subjectivation (Butler, 1993), where the processes and conditions that precisely secures a subject's subordination are also means by which she becomes a self-conscious identity and agent. Foucault's concept of subjectivation explains how those who take up non-normative subject positions may find their altercations rewarding, even if their practices have been devalued or stigmatized. Even though subjects do not precede power relations, their positions are derived and produced through intersecting relations of power, which subsequently generate multiple possibilities (or limitations)—for example, to present as a 'normal' mother in spite of being in a same-sex relationship, or to assert a lesbian identity as a mother.

In the 2015 special issue of *Differences*, editors Wiegman and Wilson critiqued queer theory's privileged narrative in terms of a "politics of oppositionality" and position of "antinormativity" (2015: 12). They argue that developments in the queer theory have been motivated by a mistaken premise of norms as violent and homogenous and which places emphasis on queer resistance or unsettling of norms. On the contrary, contributors to the special issue argue that norms are inherently heterogenous, pluralistic and playful (ibid.: 17). Responding to these critiques, Duggan (2015) argues that Wiegman and Wilson's selective and privileged analysis of norms and normativity, and consequently, of antinormativity, ignores processes of racialization, class inequalities and imperialism that shapes particular queer politics and practices as contingent. Following Duggan, my examination of queer subjectivity, practices and politics departs from a binary opposition to dominant nuclear family norms and instead, maps the complexity of changing historical and social relations that produces particular ways of thinking about race, sex and gender. In this regard, the notion of habitus and governmentality becomes a productive way to think about embodied agency in terms of subjects' complex aspirations for inclusion by focusing on shifting and diverse relations of meaning rather than a dyadic opposition to dominant norms.

I look at how individuals situate themselves in relation to categories and practices of motherhood and fatherhood to produce what I call their symbolic innovations of kinship. I explore how participants' gendered sexual subjectivities become crucial determinants of the parenting roles that they engage in and how this can simultaneously reaffirm, challenge or transform their gendered reproductive habitus. What kinds of cultural ideologies do participants draw upon in being a parent? What is the potential for same-sex parenthood to produce a radical transformation of rather stable gender categories of woman/mother and man/father? Further, how does identifying as a queer parent and/or raising children with a same-sex partner complicate

cultural discourses of compulsory heterosexuality and maternity? Further, if queerness is not always about radicalization of norms, then what does queer reproduction in relation to heteronormativity represent and addresses?

1.3 Methods of Engagement

1.3.1 A Decade of Possibilities

My interest in studying queer female headed-households and alternative kinship among same-sex partners largely intersects with my personal and academic biography. I first entered the LGBT research “field” in Singapore while conducting my Honors undergraduate thesis in 2006. Then, my interest was to examine Malay butches’ (female-bodied individuals who identify as men) negotiations in reconciling their Islamic faith with their queer masculine sexual subjectivity. In listening to the life histories of Malay butches, I was also, as a masculine-identified Singaporean Muslim myself, looking for a shared community of faith with people of similar dispositions and inclinations. I met three of the butches, who have become a part of my life. Their narratives have appeared in my MA research (2011-2013) which explored queer female ethnic social networks in Singapore. Their stories and life events have consistently shaped the way I think about gender and sexual subjectivities among Malay Muslims in Singapore and eventually contributed to the genesis of this dissertation on same-sex families and reproduction.

A decade ago, as an eager undergraduate researcher and despite being confident of my queer masculine self-hood, I did not think it was possible to have a reproductive future, that included a long-term relationship, marriage and children. These futures have been taken-for-granted as ‘natural life paths’ for most of my heterosexual peers. However, my earlier fieldwork introduced me to a world of possibilities of female fatherhood. The three Malay butches Jo, Yam and Shiq, had become romantically involved with feminine and heterosexual-identified Malay single-mothers. I remembered being amazed by their accounts of fatherhood and shared their sorrows when these partners had left them to marry cisgender males, whom these butches often referred to as “real” men.

In 2012, I met and fell in love with a heterosexually-identified woman who has two young children. As soon as my same-sex relationship and co-parenting role became publicly visible through pictures that I had posted on Facebook, I started receiving private messages from queer and working-class Malay friends who were excited to introduce me to other same-sex

parents or share their same-sex family experiences. I realized then, that Malay same-sex families were around me, but they had been invisible until I became a female father myself.

I had initially set my research parameters to only look at the kinship practices of working-class Malay female partners since these were the alternative families that I knew. Although I come from a rather privileged upper class background, my queer female social networks were predominantly working-class Malays because they were the people I had first met and cruised at ‘straight’ clubs and had formed friendships with. These friends did not attend any lesbian events organized by larger queer communities in Singapore, apart from lesbian clubs. They interacted in predominantly racially-segregated patterns, apart from non-Malays. Thus, my queer social networks corresponded with theirs, despite having the social and cultural capital to access larger lesbian networks that were predominantly upper middle-class Chinese and university-educated. I drew most of my Malay participants (9) from my earlier social network.

My involvement with Chinese lesbian co-mothers was completely happenstance. A month after I started fieldwork in Singapore, I was handed a flyer seeking same-sex parents at the annual Pride Picnic. That day, I met my key Chinese informants Olivia and Irene who later organized the first same-sex parenting workshop for prospective gay and lesbian parents. I encountered two other Chinese and Malay research participants at this workshop and met another Chinese lesbian couple at a birthday party that Olivia and Irene had thrown for their daughter. I gathered a total of six research participants from this social network. I met the remaining four Malay Muslim participants through a queer support group for Muslim women that I co-formed.

My field encounters in these three separate networks of Malay Muslim working-class butches, Chinese lesbian/bisexual co-mothers, and queer Malay Muslim women reveal distinct patterns of same-sex kinship, reproductive strategies, parenting practices and gendered sexual subjectivities. These patterns coalesce around intersecting differences of education and income levels, race/religiosity, gender identity and sexual orientation. The stories that I tell in my dissertation explore the varying routes to love and family shaped by participants’ subject positions. I pay particular attention to stories of how they navigate across culturally-defined spaces, homes, national borders, and technologies, which produce possibilities of ‘family’—or, for some, the limitations of being “queer”. I examined how the identities and categories they occupy change according to different institutional and social contexts, structures and actors. All of them yearn for belonging in wider society, some more explicitly than others, and the scales of legitimacy that they evoke differ according to their personal and social circumstances. In spite of their differences, the thread that binds all of their stories together is the keen consciousness that

their existence as a same-sex family defies “traditional” family values in Singapore. This dissertation captures their efforts to negotiate being exiles of heteronormative kinship. I hope to accord similar justice to their joys, struggles and choices of becoming family in a country that penalizes same-sex desires.

1.3.2 Gathering Intimate Narratives

My methodological strategy is designed around optimal ways to explore the meaning participants attribute to their same-sex practices and performance of kinship. Plummer’s approach to intimate narratives informs my field methods. He defines it as “...a sensitizing concept which sets about analyzing a plurality of public discourses and stories about how to live the personal life...where we are confronted by an escalating series of choices and difficulties around intimacies” (2001: 238). The stories that were shared with me were primarily about “sexual participants’ choices and difficulties around dominant themes such as reproduction, social exclusion and parenthood. I gathered these stories over the course of two years (2013-2015) in Singapore, which is both the country of my citizenship and my field site. I use fictitious names for my research participant in order to protect their anonymity.

Although Singapore is comprised of 3 main racial groups and a diverse number of “other” minority groups, most studies tend to compare socioeconomic differences between Malays and Chinese because the “divide is ostensibly more salient today” (Lee, 2006). I similarly compare the ethnic Malays and Chinese to explore the significance of socio-economic class to reproductive strategies and kinship practices. Scholars such as Tang (2012) and Tan (2007) who have conducted ethnographic research on gays and lesbians in Singapore, tend to focus predominantly on the lives of Chinese queer activists because these individuals tend to be more articulate, vocal and visible within the Chinese-dominated local LGBT community.

I wanted to diverge from recruiting participants from a self-identified lesbian community to explore the queer lives of ethnic and/or working-class sexual minorities who are invisible in local queer scholarship but whose visibility in same-sex families was apparent to me in public places. Focusing on minority segments of the community allowed me to explore heteronormative matrices of power beyond a homosexual/heterosexual binary.

Since I had planned to go “off the queer grid”, I developed creative direct sampling methods to find suitable research participants who identified as lesbian/bisexual mothers or had raised/are raising children with same-sex female partners. From my previous research, I was

made aware that female same-sex families in the Malay community tend to resemble step-family arrangements. Thus, one of my strategies include scrolling through Facebook profiles of Malay butches within my personal network to reconnect with friends that I knew were co-parenting or are currently partnered with Malay single mothers.

Due to my co-parenting status, I was also invited to join the Rainbow Parents Support Group, which predominantly includes upper middle-class Chinese gay and lesbian parents or same-sex expatriate families. I had not intended on recruiting participants within this network to respect the privacy of same-sex parents and objectives of the group, which is to offer support in matters pertaining to raising children in Singapore. In self-introductions however, my identity as a PhD candidate studying same-sex families in Singapore was known to the group. Over the course of a year, I interacted regularly with five Chinese lesbian/bisexual mothers and one Malay Muslim bisexual mother in the group. We commented on each others' Facebook posts, and attended birthday parties, children's performances, playdates and queer events. Together with our children, we participated in a "read-in" against the National Library Board which had decided to pulp books with same-sex family themes.

I was able to recruit nine Malay masculine females and single mothers from my earlier research and social networks since we had already built trust and rapport. Given our history of friendship, interviews were formatted like 'catching-up' sessions. I included their partners' stories if the latter was present at our sessions. Within the queer Muslim women support group, I attended a session about marriage and family and found four participants who fit my recruitment criteria. They were eager to have their experiences documented for my research purposes. Separately, I came across a butch participant, Boi, while I was having a smoke-break at the university in which I was teaching in Singapore. I asked for her informed consent the moment she divulged that she has a biological son, and we ended up talking for three hours.

Apart from Boi, I spent a year in the field developing connections and trust with the participants before I requested their informed consent to begin my interviewing and conduct participant observation. Since participants were aware of my research objectives to examine same-sex family life, they gave me the permission to use the field notes that I had collected prior to getting their consent. For ethical considerations, I informed them of any material that I was retroactively using for my data. As a same-sex parent sharing similar struggles, I wanted to build a network where my participants and I could mutually count on each other when things get tough for our families. I wore multiple hats in the field: as a queer parent, a Malay Muslim transmasculine person, my past affiliations with Malay street corner gang members, an upper

middle-class cosmopolitan, a graduate student and educator, a civil servant, a social justice advocate and amateur spoken-word poet. I use these subject positions to my advantage, in terms of recruiting a diverse sample of 19 participants across the spectrum (see Table 1).

I conducted semi-structured and informal interviews. Some of the interviews were ad-hoc or “go-along” not by intentional design, but due to busy schedules, not to mention the fact that our children were not able to occupy themselves for very long. For these go-along interviews, I accompanied some of my participants as they ran personal errands, which was also the time when they were not at work or without children. The duration of the interview depended on my participants’ availability. It was also difficult to interview one partner at a time or both at once. In this regard, some interviews were conducted with the less busy partner and I would follow up with the other partner through other means of communication. Interviews were conducted at cafes or in their homes and ranged from four hours in one sitting to multiple 1 hour-long interviews. For the two years that I was in the field, my data was not restricted to temporal parameters of interviews and participant observation spaces. As and when a topic emerged as relevant to my research I would seek my participants’ permission to use it, after clarifying how it would be important to my findings. When allocating time for subsequent follow-up interview sessions became difficult between the participants and I, we engaged in other forms of electronic and mobile communication such as Skype, WhatsApp and Facebook Messenger to interact with each other. This method has been useful to gather information to “thicken” up some of the stories that we shared and to also fill up missing gaps of knowledge.

In these interview sessions, I asked background questions such as ethnicity, household income, occupation, education background, age, to determine their demographic profile. I delved further when we discussed their ‘sexual stories’ (Plummer, 1995) to explore how they came to understand and take up particular gendered sexual subjectivities and practices. Depending on their family arrangement, I asked how they conceived children, what their parenting roles were, and how they divided domestic tasks at home. I inquired about their personal journeys to parenthood, whether they had had to reorganize their lives upon having children or entering same-sex relationships with partners, meanings of mother/fatherhood, how they came to define each other and their children as family, and the future they aspire to have.

I enriched my data with participant observation at family gatherings and friendly meet-ups where I took notes about the gender presentation of same-sex partners and the gender role-behavior that they engaged in. I looked at participants’ body language and gestures as they detailed their past same-sex family experiences or current family plans. These forms of non-

verbal cues have been useful in helping me grasp their emotional states to understand how particular forms of social exclusions or family inequalities have affected their well-being. I observed the kin terms that partners and children used and paid particular attention to the ways in which non-biological parents and children regard and relate to each other.

I also utilized social media platforms such as Facebook and Instagram to analyze participants' everyday and public representations of 'family', that they have circulated within their personal networks. I examine the texts that anchor and describe the photographic images to explore how participants "kin" each other and the types of gender presentation or kin terms they used in describing their familial practices and roles. In doing so, I am able to look at strategic identity practices—how interlocutors 'invent' and mediate their presentation of selves, family forms and relationships to their respective audiences. Online family photographs are not simply a repository of personal and family memories; they demonstrate practical performances of kinship, for example, the decision to include or exclude particular individuals indicates whom people perceive as belonging to a family.

1.4 Problematizing "Singaporean Lesbians" and Female Same-Sex Practices

In Singapore, the terms commonly used to describe female same-sex relationships and gender identities were Pure Lesbian (PL), Butch, Femme, Straight and Andro. These terms have been circulating within queer Malay and Chinese social networks since the late 90s. Although new terms such as "pansexual" and "genderqueer" have now entered the scene, terms used in the late 90s remain familiar to research participants who are in their 20s to early 40s. Each term conveys rather distinct physical representations of gender accompanied by specific erotic performances of desire. These gendered identity labels are important. Not only do they connote how one regards one's self as masculine or feminine, but they also signal gender preference in how masculine or feminine their female partners should be (Devan, 2010).

Pamela Devan (2010), who examined gendered lesbian subjectivities, posits that Singaporean lesbians have moved away from previously "more rigid" gender ideas that coalesce around binaries of masculine/feminine, active/passive and dominant/submissive. Meanwhile, Tang (2012: 93), who examines local lesbian identities, suggests that "the Singaporean lesbian, even as she pragmatically navigates within the heteronormative family, is not like her Indonesian female counterpart who sometimes marries heterosexually to appease her family, pursues same-sex relationships clandestinely or puts on hold her same-sex desires indefinitely".

My observations underscore the problems of defining who and what counts as a “Singaporean lesbian”. The profiles of my research participants offer a vastly different interpretation to the conclusions by Devan and Tang above. The experiences of Malay butch participants and their feminine partners were similar to the West Sumatran *Tombois* who identify as men and share a heterosexual relationship with their girlfriends (Blackwood, 2010). Chinese lesbian co-mothers mirror the more feminine-presenting androgynous “Pure Lesbians” of Hongkong (Lai, 2007) who do not subscribe to masculine/feminine gender roles in their relationships, while the Malay masculine-presenting Andro participants resemble the Bugis “Hunter” (Davies, 2007) who do not identify as men and are assertive in pursuing their desires for feminine women. Participants who do not subscribe to any particular gender/sexual preference label themselves as “genderqueer”, while bisexuals are those who are sexually attracted to both males and females.

What local scholars (see Tang, 2012; Devan, 2010) regard as “Singaporean lesbians” refers more specifically to the same-sex practices and desires of the predominantly middle-class Chinese women who already self-identify as lesbian. Most of their respondents are tertiary educated, tech-savvy, well-traveled, engaged in global and/or regional queer discourses and politics, and already integrated into queer social networks, participating in events supported by local LGBT groups.

In comparison, my friendships with working-class Malay butches, andros, and “Pure Lesbians” demonstrate how sexual subjectivities are not directly informed by burgeoning national queer movements or global LGBT discourses on the Internet but through friendships with other visibly queer individuals (see also Blackwood, 2010). For the masculine-identified and masculine-presenting Malay participants, their initial youth queer sensibilities in the 90s were facilitated by friendships with “Veteran” butches, who were slightly older than them and had had a lot of sexual experiences with women. However, tertiary-educated and upwardly-mobile Malay lesbians who are comfortably English-speaking tend to socialize in Chinese queer networks. These educated Malay lesbians tend to share similar views to their Chinese co-ethnics, as expressed in the works of Tang (2012) and Devan (2010).

For this dissertation, I refrain from using the term “lesbians” to describe all of my participants as a collective. As Halberstam (1998: 56-57) pointed out: sexual identities often refer to a specific set of pleasures such that the term “lesbian” becomes too expansive, or in the context of my research participants, too restrictive. Elsewhere, queer scholars have also argued that uncritical application of Western terms like ‘lesbian’ elides cross-cultural differences of female

same-sex practices, thus rendering these erotic relationships non-legible (King, 2002; Wieringa and Blackwood, 1999). At the same time, terms like butch, femme and lesbian circulate with ease within an urban population like Singapore where English is the *lingua franca*, so the challenge lies in teasing the friction from these global-local interactions.

1.5 Brief Contexts of Participants' Profile

I interviewed a total of 19 female research participants and have summarized their demographic information and brief descriptions in Table 1. This table demonstrates the diversity of my research sample in terms of ethnicity, gender identity and sexual orientation, coming-out to biological family, relationship status, number of children and how they achieved parenthood, types of household residence, occupation, and education and income levels. All of the information provided came from participants' self-descriptions. I list the cross-section of participants to introduce readers to the participants before I further expound on an intersectional analysis of their practices and subjectivities in my following chapters.

Age

The median age for female participants was 36 years old, which was age range that I had expected. A majority of the participants (12) were in their mid to late 30s, while a few were in the their early 40s. The youngest participant was 25 at the time of interview, and the oldest participant was 50. Age came up as an important factor during discussions on housing, fertility, marriage, and coming-out to family. It informs what participants imagine as possible within their particular age-contexts. There were also minor generational differences in terms of participants' awareness of contemporary queer identities but this differences had more to do with their class locations and familiarity with technology and social media, rather than age per se.

Race/ Ethnicity

Of the 19 participants, six of them self-identified as Chinese with one participant of Chinese and German descent. The remaining 13 self-identified as Malay-Muslims. Although some of the Malay participants indicated their mixed-heritage, for example, Malay-Chinese, they described an affinity to Malayness as Muslims in Singapore. In Singapore, the state uses "race" to differentiate the population rather than "ethnicity". The Malay race is also by default, ethnically Muslim. This ethnic-racial category has been in place since colonial administration. Malay participants express keen awareness toward the synonymy of being Malay and Muslim and their negotiations with gender and sexuality demonstrates varying degrees of their Islamic piety. Thus,

even though some of the Malay participants do not identify with any religion, they consider themselves Muslims due to a personal history of being raised in a Malay Muslim community in Singapore.

In contrast, some Chinese participants were raised in religious Buddhist-Taoist, Catholic and Christian families, yet none of them brought up religion in any of their discussions of sexuality, gender and family. This difference indicates how discussions of race necessarily include religiosity, especially for Malay participants, but less so for the Chinese women in my research.

Gender Presentation and Sexual Identities

In terms of gender identity, 12 Malay and Chinese participants from a variety of socioeconomic backgrounds self-identify as women. These women vary in terms of gender presentation and sexual orientation. Five of them described themselves as “androgynous” because they claim an interest in gender-blending a mixture of masculinity, while still taking on a partial feminine subjectivity. They resist conformity to the feminine aesthetic, such as having long hair, wearing dresses or make up. In this group, three identified as lesbians, and the other two as bisexual and queer.

The non-androgynous women expressed being comfortable with their femininity or desires to be feminine. Among these, two identified as bisexuals, another two as lesbian and pansexual. The other five, who were also working-class Malay women, identified as ‘straight’ or heterosexual feminine women. In my research, I refer to straight women as ‘cisgender’ because they consistently perceived their gender identity as normatively aligned with the gender they were assigned at birth, despite being in same-sex relationships at the time of the interview.

These disparities highlight how the term “lesbian”, to refer to same-sex practices between two women, is inadequate as a collective term to represent the rich diverse sexualities that my participants described. Participants who identified as ‘queer’ and ‘pansexual’ women, for example, were attracted to personalities instead of gender. They regard their sexuality and gender as “non-binary” by refusing to categorize themselves as either masculine or feminine or attracted to men or women or individuals who are specifically masculine or feminine.

Seven out the 19 participants were either masculine-identified or masculine-presenting females, depending on whether they prefer to be seen as men (“butch”) or tomboys (“Andro”). As they are all Malay Muslims, their understandings of the term “butch” and “andro” coheres with sex/gender regime of the Malay community. ‘Butch’, as it is commonly represented in the Malay community refers to female-bodied individuals who identify as men and are attracted to feminine

Table 1. Description of Participants (Self-Report)

NAME	AGE	RACE / ETHNICITY	GENDER PRESENTATION / SEXUAL IDENTITY	OUT TO FAMILY A=Accepted, R=Rejected	RELATIONSHIP STATUS	NO. OF CHILDREN / PARENT STATUS	ROUTE TO PARENTHOOD *	TYPE OF HOUSEHOLD RESIDENCE ** I=Independent D=Dependent	OCCUPATION	CLASS CATEGORIES BASED ON ANNUAL HOUSEHOLD INCOME (SGD)**	EDUCATION LEVEL
Amal	25	Malay Muslim	Feminine Lesbian	YES (A)	Partner (Rafi)	1 [Bio-Mother]	via Hetero union (NC)	with relatives, 4 RM HDB [D]	Retail Manager	Working Class	GCE 'O' Levels
Badariah "Bad"	50	Malay Muslim	Androgynous Lesbian	YES (A)	Single	1 [Bio-Mother]	via Hetero Marriage (IVF)	with child, 3 RM HDB [I]	Trainer	Working Class	Diploma
Boi	35	Malay Muslim	Male-Identified Butch	YES (A)	Single	1 [Bio-Mother]	via Rape	with Mother, 3 RM HDB [I]	Security Supervisor	Working Class	Higher NITEC
Chia Jin (CJ)	31	Chinese	Androgynous Lesbian	YES (A)	Single	Planning	via ART	2 RM Private Condo [I]	PhD Candidate	Upper Middle Class	MA
Dewi	36	Malay Muslim	Feminine Bisexual	YES (R)	Separated (Donna)	1 [Bio-Mother]	via Hetero Marriage (NC)	with Aunt, 4 RM HDB [D]	Events Planner	Working Class	BA
Elisa	31	Swiss-German	Feminine Pansexual	YES (A)	Partner (Iris)	Planning	via Artificial Insemination	Co-habiting, 3 RM HDB [I]	Civil Servant (Education)	Middle Class	Post-grad Diploma
Fauziah	40	Malay Muslim	Feminine Heterosexual	NO	Partner (Shiq)	2 [Bio-Mother]	via Hetero Marriage/union (NC)	with children, 1 RM HDB Rental [I]	Shop Assistant	Working Poor	GCE 'O' Levels
Irene	30	Chinese	Androgynous Queer	YES (A)	Married (Olivia)	1 [Social Mother]	via Partner (ART)	Co-habiting, 3 RM HDB [I]	IT Software Engineer	Upper Middle Class	BA
Iris	38	Malay Muslim	Masculine-Presenting Andro	YES (R)	Partner (Eliza)	Planning	via Partner (ART)	Cohabiting [I], 3 RM HDB	Civil Servant (Education)	Middle Class	BA
Johanis "Jo"	32	Malay Muslim	Male-Identified Butch	YES (A)	Separated (Ayu)	3 [Step-Father]	via Single Mother (NC)	Co-habiting, 1 RM HDB Rental	Janitor	Working Poor	NITEC
Lina	25	Malay Muslim	Feminine Heterosexual	NO	Separated (Yam)	1 [Bio-Mother]	via Hetero Marriage (NC)	with Parents, 4 RM HDB [D]	Nurse	Working Class	Diploma
Muk Yin	44	Chinese	Androgynous Lesbian	YES (A)	Married (Wei Ling)	2 [Bio+Social Mother]	via Artificial Insemination	Co-habiting [I], 3 RM HDB (with Aunt)	Home Entrepreneur	Middle Class	BA
Olivia Chiong	35	Chinese Indonesian	Feminine Bisexual	YES (A)	Married (Irene)	1 [Bio-Mother]	via Artificial Insemination	Co-habiting, 3 RM HDB [I]	Events Manager	Upper Middle Class	BA
Rafi	39	Malay Muslim	Masculine-Presenting Andro	NO	Partner (Amal)	1 [God-Parent]	via Single Mother (NC)	with family, 4 RM HDB [D]	Admin Assistant	Working Class	GCE 'O' Levels
Shikin "Shiq"	34	Malay Muslim	Male-Identified Butch	NO	Partner (Fauziah)	2 [Step-father]	via Single Mother (NC)	with Parents, 4 RM HDB	Draftsman	Working Class	Diploma
Wei Ling	37	Chinese	Androgynous Bisexual	YES (A)	Married (Muk Yin)	2 [Bio+Social Mother]	via IVF	Co-habiting [I], 3 RM HDB (with Aunt)	Home Entrepreneur	Middle Class	BA
Yam	40	Malay Muslim	Male-Identified Butch	NO	Separated (Lina)	1 [Step-father]	via Divorced Mother (NC)	with Parents, 4 RM HDB [D]	Nurse Supervisor	Middle Class	BA
Zahara "Zara"	38	Malay Muslim	Feminine Heterosexual	YES (A)	Partner (Han)	2 [Bio-Mother]	via Hetero Marriage (NC)	Cohabiting [I], (with Mother), 3 RM HDB Rental	Image Consultant	Working Class	GCE 'O' Levels
Zainah "Zai"	41	Malay Muslim	Male-Identified Butch	YES (R)	Separated (Mona)	2 [Step-father]	via Divorced Mother (NC)	Co-habiting, 2 RM Private Condo [I]	Logistics	Working Class	GCE 'A' Levels

** NC: Natural Conception, ART: Assisted Reproductive Technology, AI: Artificial Insemination, IVF: In-Vitro Fertilization

* While in a Relationship with Partner

women. They perceived themselves as heterosexual men rather than lesbians. All five butch participants, as female-bodied men, do not desire or intend to transition or go through gender reassignment surgery. Some of them do not consider it necessary because they are already living as men and find it a waste of money, while the rest of them fear severe repercussions because of Islamic taboo toward body modification and/or rejection from families (see Maulod and Jamila, 2009).

As female-bodied men, butch participants may be included as ‘transgender’ as characterized by transgender scholars drawing upon US and European contexts. The broad usage of the term, as exemplified by Stryker (1994 in Blackwood, 2010: 4), is an “umbrella term that refers to all identities or practices that cross over, cut across, move between, or otherwise queer socially constructed sex/gender binaries.” In Singapore, however, the term “transgender” has been historically used to privilege gender non-conforming individuals who have been medically diagnosed as “gender dysphoric”, undergone hormone therapy or required sex reassignment surgery in order to change their sex (female to male) on all official records. Thus, Malay butch participants, in spite of their identity as men, do not consider themselves as transmen.

During my time in the field (2013-2015), the term ‘transgender’ as circulated among local LGBT activists and youths (18 to 25) shifted. “Transgender” now privileges the self-identifying practices of individuals who do not conform to the gender assigned at birth, instead of a medically-imposed category. Malay butch participants would now be regarded as trans men, because they perceived themselves to be female-bodied men and live socially as men. However, given that these butches are between 32 to 41 years old, they are more familiar with the term “butch” to describe their female masculinity and less familiar with or do not have access to ‘new’ terms like ‘transgender’ as are currently circulating within the local LGBT community.

Bearing the above in mind, I refer to butches with the pronoun “she” to highlight their empirical realities of being masculine through a female embodiment. Using terms like “ze” may not be relevant because masculine females do not see themselves as being gender neutral. The use of “he” erases the context of their struggles with gender and the complexities of their desires toward women which are simultaneously queer and also “heterosexual” if their erotic practices become subsumed under the performance of cisgender maleness. While it may be argued that the use of the pronoun “she” has the effect of misgendering one’s identity, I use it to accurately represent the reality for the masculine female participants in this research because they continue to use the pronoun “she” in their everyday lives but “he” in intimate circles of lovers and friends. Butches from Malay speaking families are less encumbered by pronouns since the Malay

language is gender-neutral- instead of ‘he’ or ‘she’, speakers would use *dia*. More importantly, I find that “she” underscores the agentive capacities of masculine female to separate masculinity from the performative hegemony of cis-male bodies, therefore undermining the naturalness of dominant gender regimes (see Halberstam, 1998).

Two Malay masculine-presenting females self-identified as ‘Andro’. The term ‘Andro’, while derivative of “androgynous”, differs from the understanding of androgyny as understood by the Chinese androgynous participants who had consistently self-identified as “women” in my research. Andros identify only partially as women and have at certain points of their younger lives, desired to be a boy. One of the participants, for example, mentioned that her breasts were too big to “pass off as butch” while another feels that a ‘butch’ identity was “too man” because she enjoys being a woman. “Andro” is a relatively new term that emerged from Singapore’s lesbian clubbing circuit in the early 2000s. It was inspired by the character Shane, from the US television series *The L Word*, who wears women’s pants and shirts with a masculine swagger. ‘Andro’ achieved more traction when a local lesbian Chinese-owned company started organizing beauty pageants for aspiring androgynous women in 2009. Andro, as used in the larger Singapore (Chinese) lesbian community, refers to lesbian women who prefer a masculine presentation and desires feminine women. Amongst the Malays, “Andro” is a non-conforming gender identity that often refers to fashionably dressed masculine females, who do not consistently identify as women. This cultural context justifies why I did not include Malay Andro participants in the same category as Chinese androgynous women.

Coming Out

In the past decade, anthropological studies on transnational sexualities have problematized the assumption of “coming out” as a common developmental process that queer people experience. These studies examine how notions of self-authenticity and sexual subjectivities may differ significantly across cultures despite apparent similarities in terms of same-sex desires (Cruz-Malave and Manalansan 2002; Blackwood, 2010; Boellstorff 2007). Instead of coming out, Wah-Shan Chou (2000) suggests “going home” as an alternative practice among Chinese gay men in Hong Kong who invite their partners to family events as “friends” to gain parental approval. By framing their sexual practices as platonic friendship, these gay men avoid confrontational encounters of coming out and are able to obtain familial acceptance for themselves and their romantic partners. Similarly, Chris Tan (2011) observed that the Singaporean Chinese gay men he interviewed preferred to “go home” instead of coming out. He

posits that for these gay men, they view their sense of self as intimately imbricated within webs of social and kin relations which provide them with nourishment and survival.

In the US and Europe, “coming out” corresponds to disclosing one’s non-conforming sexual or gender identity, which may or may not be relevant to my participants (see Weston, 1991; Tan, 2011). An outright question, “Are you out to your parents?”, using language adopted from global queer activists, may not make sense to participants who are not familiar with these discourses. Thus, I framed the question differently by asking, “Is your family aware of your sexuality/gender identity?”. For some, I based the question on the time-period in which they were co-parenting with female partners. I use the term “come out” only when participants had explicitly disclosed a same-sex sexuality to their family members. Additionally, mothers who identify as ‘straight’ while with same-sex partners do not come out as “lesbian” but rather, their coming out process involves disclosing their same-sex relationships.

A total of 14 out of 19 participants responded that their families are aware of their transgender identity, same-sex attraction toward women or their romantic involvement with a same-sex partner. Out of this 14, 10 participants had found acceptance from family members. Six Chinese women came out as “lesbian” to their parents and siblings, in their early to mid 20s, either while they were in university or when they had started working and for some, when they became involved in their first long-term same-sex relationship. Two Malay lesbians, one of whom is a 50-year-old Malay lesbian, came out to her son three weeks before our first interview, while for another 25-year-old, her parents had accepted her sexuality, but not her grandmother and aunt whom she currently resides. Two Malay butches whose parents and siblings had always related to them as female sons did not need to come out because their family had anticipated their attraction to women. Similarly, one Malay “straight” mother mentioned that her family members had already accepted her butch partner as her ‘husband’. In comparison, three Malay participants who came out as ‘lesbian’ and ‘bisexual’ to their parents and siblings were treated as outcasts in their family, disowned by siblings or threatened to be disowned by parents.

The remaining five Malay research participants preferred “going home” instead of coming out to parents. Their parents are not aware of their gendered sexual identities (for butches and andros) and/or their same-sex relationships (two ‘straight’ women). These participants would introduce their partners as ‘best friends’ to their family and were very careful not to give away any clues that indicated same-sex intimacies because they feared rejection from their parents and siblings. In later chapters, I will discuss further the ways in which family acceptance influences same-sex partners’ reproductive strategies and kinship practices.

Routes to Parenthood

Four lesbian/bisexual Chinese women had children with their same-sex partners via Assisted Reproductive Technology (ART). Three participants, one interracial Malay-Chinese couple and one Chinese lesbian, are planning to have children. Seven mothers had children from a previous heterosexual marriage or encounter. Three of these women are unwed mothers while the rest were divorced. Four butches became fathers through their relationships with unwed/divorced mothers while one andro identified as a godparent to her partners' child. Out of the 16 who are/were co-parenting, 10 are biological mothers with legal parental rights to their birth children while the remaining six do not have any legal parental rights.

Living Arrangements

In Singapore, where housing is a premium due to scarcity of land, many LGBT Singaporeans live in their natal homes or co-owned flats with their parents to maximize state subsidies for public housing (see also Tan, 2011). Children usually move out when they get married or reach a certain age (above 35 years) to be eligible to purchase subsidized public housing flats or if they have earned enough to buy their own private apartments, in which case they do not need to wait until age 35. Since rental prices are equally expensive, taking up one-third of a fresh college graduate's salary, most people end up living with their parents.

Out of 19 participants, only three participants owned the home they live in, another three co-owned a flat with their parents and six participants were renting. Of the 10 out of 16 same-sex couples who were co-parenting, were living together and shared a household while the remaining 6 were living separately with their respective biological families or relatives. For those who are afraid to come out, fearing eviction, home is at once a place of shelter and also a source of discomfort. Decisions to come out take into account particular risks: whether one would have a place to live, and be able to be financially independent and self-sustainable.

Socioeconomic Status and Class

In Singapore, and in official statistics, one's socio-economic status is typically measured through income level and type of home ownership (Tan, 2015). Tan (2015:8) suggests that the state prefers to use "income" rather than class to describe social stratification because it is perceived to be a politically neutral concept without forming class consciousness through other forms of interests. In the context of same-sex partners, socio-economic determinants based on home ownership provide a limited or inaccurate picture of research participants' class locations. This is because access to public housing is tied to one's ability to present a 'proper' family nucleus, or for singles, age (above 35 years old). In determining socio-economic status, I exclude

home ownership and base participants' social location through an aggregate of type of occupation, monthly household or personal income (for single-parent households), and education levels.

In terms of income, I categorized participants monthly household income into four broad categories¹ based on national income statistics. In 2014, the median household income in Singapore was S\$ 8,292. The median household income for Malay and Chinese participants was about S\$3,000 and S\$12,000 respectively. This means that the majority of the Malay participants occupy a lower socioeconomic status than Chinese participants. Breaking it down further based on household income, three out of the six Chinese participants were middle-class (between S\$ 5,000- \$10,000) and the other three were upper middle-class (above S\$ 12, 000). Out of the 13 Malay participants, 9 were working-class (\$2,000-\$4,000), two were middle-class and the remaining two were working poor (below \$2,000). Further, Tan's (2015) study reveals that Singaporeans perceive a household income of S\$ 6,000 as better than average. In this regard, the majority of Malay participants do not have access to a comfortable standard of living compared to their middle-class counterparts.

There is a direct correlation between participants' level of education and their class category. Eight out of nine participants with a least a university degree (Bachelors), were from the upper and upper middle-class category, two of whom were Malays and six were Chinese. The remaining degree holder was a working-class Malay participant who opted for a flexi-work scheme to have more personal time. Three working-class participants with at least a Polytechnic diploma earned much higher than their five other counterparts who only completed high school (GCE 'O' and 'A' Levels) or had a technical certificate. The type of occupation is also an important determinant of socioeconomic status, and corresponds to one's education qualification. Those with university degrees tend to have lucrative careers in the creative or IT industry or run their own business. In comparison, participants without at least a diploma were in the customer service sector or in blue-collar jobs, with limited career progression and low wages.

By examining participants' cross-section of education, occupation type and class category based on income, I gather that the strongest variable for socio-economic status is the individual's level of education. In this regard, I take participants' educational level as a strong indicator of their class. In the following chapters of my dissertation, I will extend my analysis of

¹ Tan (2011) uses six class categories based on household income: Lower Lower Class <S \$2000, Upper Lower S\$2000-4000, Lower Middle \$4000-8000, Middle Middle S\$ 8,000-12,000, Upper Middle, S\$ 12,000-20,000, Upper Class > S\$20,000

class further by examining class participants' acquisition of social capital (information and social networks), cultural capital (ethnicity, education levels, consumption patterns) and economic capital (income). The operation of these capitals taken together provides a holistic measure of participants' class that forms their interpretive horizons in terms of how they engage in parenthood, distribute domestic labor in their households or access alternative forms of reproduction.

Further, since participants' demographic profiles reveal huge class disparities between ethnic Malay and Chinese participants, this dissertation seeks to examine the significance of race and class in shaping particular same-sex family arrangements and reproductive strategies. In the following chapters, I discuss how Malays and Chinese are discursively positioned in relation to each other in Singapore's political economy and how the racialization of family and heteronormativity affects the kinship subjectivities of participants. Additionally, I compare how heteronormative gender norms are taken up by my diverse participants and the influence of religiosity, minoritarian subject positions and social networks in informing meaningful possibilities for alternative and 'chosen' family forms.

CHAPTER 2. THE POLITICAL ECONOMY OF FAMILY IN SINGAPORE: RACE, GENDER AND SEXUALITY

In this chapter, I examine the sociopolitical constructions of family in Singapore to investigate the emergence of ideologies about family, race and citizenship at the “conjunction of local and global histories, to place local populations in the larger currents of world history.” (Roseberry, 1989: 49). I look at how colonial and postcolonial governance manages the “population”, and constructs distinctive communities around particular notions of race, gender, sexuality and class. By positioning culture and history as intertwining processes of power, this chapter aims to demonstrate how differential access to power is crucial in the determination of control over knowledge production—that is, what Singaporeans should regard as the ideal family and/or citizen, achieved through the means of appropriating and representing an idea or inventing supposed traditions (see Gramsci, 1971). This political economic framework provides structural contexts of inequalities and “differentiated deservedness” (Teo, 2015), where it shapes particular reproductive outcomes and family practices of female same-sex households and families in my research. This chapter will shed light on how different communities in Singapore are differentially managed and governed based on their proximity to heteronormative norms of the nuclear family and to the global political economy. By examining both historical and contemporary racial and gendered hierarchies of citizenship and social exclusions, this chapter attempts to encapsulate unequal landscapes of care for particular families and communities in Singapore.

My historical perspective has been shaped by scholars like Acker (2004) who suggests that heteronormative and gender-neutral historical, global, regional and local processes are exclusionary to particular racial, gender and sexual minorities. Additionally, the lens through which I contextualize my research on female same-sex families in Singapore is informed by Glenn’s view that “race and gender have been simultaneously organizing principles and products of citizenship and labor” (2002: 236). To demonstrate this argument, I first look at historical patterns of racial and gender inequalities in Singapore across two main periods, colonial

Singapore (1819-1959) and Singapore under the governance of the People's Action Party (1965-present). In the former, I examine the colonial production of race and its affect on family life, sexuality and reproduction in the colony. In the latter period, I explore how colonial legacies of governance produce particular gendered and racialized social policies that differentially penalize and reward Singaporean women based on their position in labor production as well as in reproducing labor for the nation. Finally, I examine state-society relations in the construction of LGBT citizens as a threat to 'Asian' family values as well as the historical representation of "lesbians" in mainstream media. This chapter therefore aims to connect how historical discourses challenge taken-for-granted assumptions of class, family and heteronormativity in contemporary Singapore.

Brief Geography and Racial Demographics

Singapore is located on the southern tip of the Malay Peninsula in Southeast Asia, between the Indian Ocean and the South China Sea. With a land area of 277 square miles (roughly two-thirds the size of Los Angeles), Singapore has a high-density urban population of 5.535 million (Singapore Dept of Statistics, 2015a). Out of this, 3.375 million are Singapore citizens, while the rest are composed of permanent residents, migrants with temporary residency status and contract workers—demonstrating Singapore's global role in both hosting and contributing to transnational migrant flows. Ethnic Chinese form the dominant majority at 74.3% of the population while other ethnic compositions comprise 13.3% Malays and 9.1% Indians, with an additional 3.2% classified in the census as "others" who do not fit in the official racial groups—Chinese, Malay, Indian (Singapore Dept of Statistics, 2015b: 5). Unlike other ethnic-racial groups that tend to host a diversity of religious faiths among its members, the Malays in Singapore are synonymously Muslim.

The perception of Singapore as a Chinese-dominated city, for example, is a fairly recent trajectory that begun when Singapore seceded from Malaysia, and gained Independence in August 1965. Although the Chinese became the largest ethnic group between 1880s to the 1920s due to vast immigration from China, they did not, under colonial rule, predominate this period they way they have in Singapore's present (Hack, 2012).

2.1 Pre-Colonial Singapore and Singapore under British Colonial Rule (1819-1959)

In dominant historical narratives, the founding of Modern Singapore in 1819 has been attributed to the initiative of a British officer named Sir Thomas Stamford Raffles (Turnbull,

1977). When Raffles first arrived in 1819, he described Singapore as an inhospitable swampland, a tiger-infested jungle and a sleepy fishing village with only 1000 inhabitants, who were predominantly sea nomads (*Orang Laut*). Within a week, he signed the treaty with the local Malay chieftain to establish the British East India Company (EIC) trading post in Singapore, making it part of the Straits Settlement, and later, a crown colony known as British Malaya.

Raffles' impression of Singapore continues to be a popular narrative highlighting Singapore's prowess as a nation that transitioned from swampland to skyscraper metropolis (Leyl, 2015), despite contested historical evidence pointing to an already established Malay classical maritime port-city¹. However, the Malay history of Singapore has been peripheral to dominant narratives of Singapore because historians who were actively writing Singapore's history, and co-opted into Singapore's post-Independent nation-building process, tended to privilege the founding of modern Singapore with the arrival of British colonization beginning from 1819 (Hack, 2012). The selective historical amnesia (Tarling, 2012), demonstrates the marginalized position of Malays in both the colonial empire as well as in contemporary neoliberal Singapore.

2.1.1 Colonial Fantasies of Power and Promotion of Racial Ideologies

The success of Singapore as a trading post also attracted a diverse group of migrants and thus marked the inception of a multiracial society. By 1821, Singapore had become a cosmopolitan town with about 5000 inhabitants, comprising of 3000 Malays, more than 1000 Chinese and about 500 Arabs, Armenians, Bugis, Europeans, Eurasians, Indians and other regional ethnic groups (Turnbull, 1989: 5). The Chinese had become the largest ethnic community in 1827 (Turnbull, 1977: 36). By 1860, the Chinese had constituted 65% of the population and the Indians were the second largest followed by the Malays (Turnbull, 1989: 36-7).

European discourses on race contributed significantly to the constitution of a "Malay" racial identity, and by extension, a system of racial census classification based on biological

¹ Prior to the arrival of the British, Singapore's history began as a classical Malay port-city and archaeological evidence points to lively trade with China and other regions of the Malay Archipelago. The *Sejarah Melayu* (Malay Annals) attributes the founding of Singapore to Sang Nila Utama, a Palembang prince from the Sriwijaya Empire, landed in Temasek and renamed the island "Singapura". He established diplomatic and trading ties with China and was officially endorsed as the ruler of Singapore by an envoy of the emperor of China in 1320. In his time of rule, the annals described how "foreigners resorted in great numbers [to Singapore] so that the fame of the city and its greatness spread throughout the world" (in Turnbull, 1977: 3).

taxonomies of phenotype, physical statute and form, to account for diversity and difference within the archipelago (Hirschman, 1987). The promotion of racial thinking served to perpetuate colonial fantasies as a new conquering power over established monarchies in the region, to make Singapore the “navel of the Malay countries”, but it also produced rather enduring stereotypes distinguishing the Chinese, Malay and Indian communities in Singapore. The Chinese were seen as greedy but were very determined and industrious. Thus the British had an antagonistic but admirable regard for the Chinese. In contrast, Malays were described as unambitious, pleasure loving, idle and lazy while Indians were a source of cheap and docile labor especially prone to alcohol (Hirschman, 1986: 346).

At the level of the quotidian, colonial administrative policies such as the Malay Reservation Act, separate education systems for the Malays, Chinese and Indians, segregated residential areas and the Department of Chinese Affairs reinforced the influence of racial categories (Milner, 2012). The introduction of the Malay Reservation Act in 1913 recognizes the indigeneity of Malays to Malaya by allocating special areas for the flourishing of Malay cultural traditions and in constituting who is a “Malay”.² Ong (1987: 21) argues that the relationship between the Malays and British was that of “political gratitude and servitude” where the British claimed benevolence by promoting Malay cultural traditions while Malays were expected to repay this gesture by not pursuing political power.

Further, British officers observed that Malay village activities and subsistence, in contrast to other Chinese and Indian ethnic residences, were not structured by clock-time, and concluded that Malays were culturally backward and inherently lazy (Alatas, 1977). Alatas argues that the “myth of the lazy native” developed as a colonial response to Malay resistance to indentured and low-wage labor, and spoke of “merely a veiled resentment against Malay unwillingness to become a tool for enriching colonial planters” (1977: 81). The ideology of the lazy Malay and colonial fantasies to “protect” (via political dispossession) Malays from capitalist accumulation produced different regimes of power for the Malays, vis-à-vis other ethnic groups in Singapore.

² The Malay Reservations Enactment committee defined “Malay” as a “person belonging to any Malayan race who habitually speaks the Malay language or any Malay language and professes the Muslim religion” (in Ong, 1987: 20). Aihwa Ong, *Spirits of Resistance and Capitalist Discipline*

2.1.2 Divide-and-Rule: Colonial Management of Race

In 1822, to manage the burgeoning settlement made up of people with different ethnic affiliations, the British EIC came up with a divide-and-rule policy. For instance, the Jackson Town Plan segregates the population according to their language and ethnic practices as well as their position within a colonial division of labor (Lee, 2006: 35). Thus, the more marginal to the economy a community was perceived, the further isolated it was from the center. Chinese trading and Indian labor communities were “assigned river frontage near the commercial core” (Teo and Savage, 1991: 316-7). Europeans, affluent Eurasians and Arabs resided in or near central administration and commercial areas. In contrast, the Malays, who were structurally locked in as fishermen and farmers, or “nature’s gentlemen”, were relegated to the fringes of the Island, in remote coastal areas (for fishermen) and away from commercial centers in the northern regions of Singapore (Teo and Savage, 1991; Yeoh, 2003: 355).

Education, Mobility and Racially Segregated Social Networks

The lack of educational infrastructure reflected Eurocentric colonial attitudes towards local communities, whom they regarded as inferior to Europeans. Education was left to the initiative of each of the respective ethnic communities to provide members with elementary forms of schooling. In the villages, Malay masses underwent vernacular education, and were taught how to be farmers or fishermen together with a rudimentary form of Islamic education to depoliticize dissent (Shaharuddin, 1988). The lack of access to English-medium education hampered social mobility for local communities whose lessons were predominantly conducted in Chinese dialects or Malay. The expansion of British bureaucracy in 1867 increased the demand for English-speaking workers to occupy lucrative office positions (Gopinathan, 1991: 269).

Within a racially-segregated colonial division of labor, British Europeans thus monopolized upper echelons of civil service and administrative positions. Eurasians, as partially white, were perceived to be superior to local ethnics while anglophile Chinese Babas (descendants of intermarriages between elite Chinese men and Malay women) dominated extensive kin networks that made up Chinese commercial empires of the 1900s (Turnbull, 1989: 92). Chinese ethnic groups became mercantile elites (Lee, 2006: 71), and later progressed into banking, finance and secondary industries (Turnbull, 1989: 135).

Under the British administration, chances of social mobility for the Malays were hampered due to the following reasons: the British preferred Indian laborers who were predominantly convicts brought from other colonies because they were viewed as cheap and

docile laborers (Hirschman, 1986: 347). Indian and Chinese merchants preferred to hire within their ethnic kin networks for their businesses while Chinese clans and secret societies, which were connected to warehouse owners, controlled urban commercial centers in Singapore (Trocki, 1990: 43). While all local ethnic communities were excluded from these jobs due to the lack of English language competency, Malays were affected most significantly compared to other races (Roff, 1967: 26).

In this regard, structural dispossession, weak social networks and restricted social mobility have contributed to the marginalization of Malays in colonial Singapore. These racialized affects, however, emerged as durable evidence of the ways in which the perception of Malays as lazy, backward, unhealthy, and poor, has endured shifts in time, unlike the stereotypes of other Indian and Chinese co-ethnics.

2.2 Gender, Sexuality and Kinship in Colonial Singapore

2.2.1 Gender and Sexual Division of Labor

In addition to a racialized colonial division of labor, men and women within the various ethnic communities were also differentially regulated within a sexual division of labor. Since Chinese “coolie” labor was fundamental for commercial entrepot in the 1800s, massive Chinese immigration to Singapore mirrored typical “New World” demographics and by 1911, men had outnumbered women in Singapore by 8 to 1 (Levine, 2003). Male coolies were predominantly single, or had left their wives back home in China, causing an extremely skewed sex ratio. The abnormal sex-imbalance ratio, prostitution, and spread of sexually-transmitted diseases were causes of concern for colonial authorities, and prompted the enactment of particular social and reproductive policies surrounding sexual practices and family (Oswin, 2010).

A gendered division of labor was evident in Chinese labor migration patterns. Archival records show that while Chinese men came to Singapore to work as coolies, Chinese women who came to Singapore engaged in two distinctive forms of trade, either as sex workers or as *Samsui* women (between 1920s and 1940s) working in construction and industrial jobs as well as domestic servants (Levine, 2003).

The Chinese families that were already present in Singapore were elite Chinese Baba families. In these affluent families, women did not participate in market or informal economy, unlike their peasant female counterparts. While the man dominated political and economic

spheres, Baba women were tasked to care for domestic matters in the household. The gender division of labor in elite households thus resembled the public/domestic allocation of labor akin to families in the Victorian era (Freedman, 1962). In contrast, local Malay families predominated in the subsistence economy and domestic reproduction. Among the Malay peasant classes, women and men engaged in different field tasks. Men undertook heavier duties in the fields while women engaged in domestic and craft industries (Swettenham, 1948; Bauer cited in Ong, 1987). Village women were involved in the informal economy, taking on sewing, doing laundry and caregiving for children in richer households. Women who had traditional medicine training also offered midwifery services (Karim, 1984).

The labor practices of peasant and lower-class women in colonial Singapore problematizes the notion of universal subordination of women that assigns men to the public sphere, and women, to domestic roles in the household within the economy (Collier and Yanagisako, 1989). Within the colonial labor economy, Chinese *Samsui* women and village Malay women were already imbricated within global and local capital flows of the economy. Chinese *Samsui* women, who took an oath of celibacy by not marrying, acquired financial autonomy through wage labor—in comparison to elite women, whose domestic roles in the household actually relegated them to a lower economic position compared to their capitalist husbands. Similarly, village Malay women practiced a high degree of gender complementarity while performing economic and domestic tasks alongside Malay men (Ong, 1995). This historical evidence challenges the public/domestic distinction and women’s economic participation within a patriarchal sexual division of labor.

2.2.2 Introduction of 377A: Constructing “Proper” Family Life in the Colony

In this section, I explore the colonial implementation of Penal Code 377A that the contemporary Singapore state maintains as necessary for the preservation of “Asian” values and protecting the family. Evidence from colonial archives challenge any essentialization of “traditional Asian family” values that presents the nuclear family model as timeless and normal to Singaporeans.

Nuclear families were not the norm among majority of the Chinese in colonial Singapore. Conversely, plural marriage was widely practiced among upwardly mobile Chinese men and historical court evidence have shown that Chinese men in the colony may have taken on one or more concubines on top of having a wife. The proletarian Chinese immigrants who did not

possess credentials to marry upper-class Baba women turned to secret societies and clan membership as substitute for kin support networks (Freedman, 1962). The large numbers of unrestricted single Chinese male migration and abnormal sex-imbalance ratio created a brothel culture that colonial officers viewed as a moral and public health threat (Levine, 2003). In addition, *Samsui* women had practiced marriage resistance by pledging to remain virgins within their sworn sisterhood networks that originated in China (Topley, 1959). These women shared co-residence and participated in same-sex relations or domestic arrangements (ibid: 219).

For a majority period of their rule, the colonial administration was not particularly invested in governing or interfering in the intimate lives of the Straits' inhabitants because they viewed Asian sexual and family practices as "generally on a different plane to that of a European" (UK National Archives in Oswin, 2010: 133). However, from around 1910, scholars noted shifts in colonial policies from a narrow focus on economic production toward a wide approach to social reproduction (ibid). Previously, colonial officials had advocated for the necessity of female prostitution to serve the needs of bachelor coolie population (Manderson, 1996). However, coroner reports of anal syphilis demonstrating evidence of same-sex relations between Chinese males became a source of concern (Warren, 2003). The 1937 Straits Settlements Reports highlighted:

Widespread existence of male prostitution was discovered and reported to the government whose orders have been carried out...Sodomy is a penal offence; its danger to adolescents is obvious; obvious too, is the danger of blackmail, the demoralizing effect on disciplined forces and on a mixed community which looks to the government for wholesome governing.
(Straits Settlements, 1937: 835 in Oswin, 2010)

In 1938, the British colonial government referred to same-sex activity between males as forms of "beastliness", and in the same year, Section 377A was added to the penal code, which criminalizes all forms of penetrative and non-penetrative sexual acts between biological males. The gendered nature of 377A was apparent given that the law does not apply to same-sex relations between women, even though there had been documented evidence of sexual relations between *Samsui* women. This also demonstrates how men were targets of colonial discipline, while women were initially viewed as marginal to empire making.

Natalie Oswin (2010; 2014) argued that the set of initiatives to establish heteronormativity, such as the implementation of Penal Code 377A, was broadly aimed at correcting 'abnormal' population dynamics and 'backward' cultural practices. Thus, a coolie bachelor population and high demand for same-sex prostitution had deeply influenced particular

governance of proper sexuality. These initiatives were intended to introduce and regulate “proper” families among Chinese male migrants to curb the spread of sexually-transmitted diseases, rather than serve as a form of legislation against homosexuality in the same fashion that current state leaders are advocating in defense of nuclear family norms. Beginning in 1910 and continuing for the remainder of the colonial era, however, infant and maternal health took precedence and immigration policies accommodated family reunification and formation to reduce an imbalanced sex ratio.

2.2.3 Medicalization of Mothering: Maternal Reproduction in the Colony

Around 1910, local women and children, who were previously invisible to the colonial administration, became central to the empire for labor production. Policies changed from immigration as a *manpower* resource to social reproduction because it was cheaper to nurture a future labor force than to depend on the instability of immigration (Manderson, 1996: 213)³. The indoctrination of good and proper motherhood was introduced in this period because high infant mortality rates create loss of future generations of labor while women’s poor health affected the quality of generating human resource. Colonial medical officers surmised that the cause of infant deaths was due to the lack of appropriate education of health, sanitation and nutrition among local women (ibid). Thus, the responsibility for strategies to reduce infant mortality rate fell entirely onto women. The domestic lives of Straits inhabitants were subjected to surveillance as British officers entered their homes to supervise and educate mothers on proper care and feeding practices of infants.

Since Malay families were dominant in the early 1900s due to the large sex-imbalance ratio among Chinese, Malay mothers became the target of reproduction health surveillance, and the subject of improper motherhood. The shift from breast to bottle was fortified in the 1920s as doctors and nursing staff believed that the breast milk of Malay women, who made up the majority population of mothers at that time, was deficient due to their post-partum diet. Medical officers tended to pursue cultural reasons (backward Malay traditions and maternal practices) to explain poor infant nutritional health instead of attributing it to factors such as structural poverty, and lack of education and employment opportunities, that could alleviate poor living conditions

³ High death rates of adult males were a burden to the economy because a “dead or broken down coolie is of no practical use on any estate” (Gerrard in Manderson, 1996: 213).

for Malay women and their families. Further, the marketing successes of European milk companies like Nestle and Glaxo influenced mothers across ethnic groups and class to bottle-feed because of its associations with modernity, wealth and colonial superiority. Women also resorted to bottle-feeding to resolve struggles of balancing between childcare and feeding as they entered wage labor that did not provide nursery facilities or time-off for lactation. This evidence demonstrates that local women were already incorporated in the labor economy. Striving for a work-life balance was already a problem faced by women as early as the 1920s (Manderson, 1996: 215).

By the late 1920s, and for the remainder of colonial rule, women's bodies and their childcare practices became the object of "medical gaze" (Foucault, 1994), as infant welfare centers sought to impart contemporary European notions of competent mothering. Manderson (1996: 216) describes how these centers were "microcosms of the cultural world of biomedicine and spatial representations of the medical hierarchies of knowledge and control". A woman who entered the clinic would have to go through a reception room supervised by a European nurse before being passed over to the inner room of a medical doctor. Details of the infants and mother's child rearing practices were recorded so the doctor could observe the progress of the child. The medical gaze, institutionalized through these centers and home visits, dehumanizes women, as their bodies become possible targets of colonial manipulation. Women were treated with vitamins and tasked to feed their babies with artificial milk against their cultural practices of breastfeeding. They encountered appraisal and shame when their children were ill, overweight or underweight, or when their attendance at the center was irregular (Manderson, 1996). These clinical procedures, in imparting a structure of colonial instrumentality, reinforced Eurocentric ideals of competent mothering while viewing local maternity practices as inferior.

Gender prevails through social reproduction policies in the British Malaya. The extent to which public health education and infant welfare targeted women reflected their presumed primary role as nurturers and caregivers of their husbands and children. These policies extended to the education curriculum. Domestic Science was introduced to educate young girls on the fundamental practices of hygiene, nutrition and housekeeping in anticipation of their future roles and duties as wives and mothers in which "knowledge of cookery is much more useful than a knowledge of geometry" (Manderson, 1996: 225).

Colonial medical practices produced Eurocentric hierarchies of motherhood by classifying some maternal bodies as competent/deficient and mothers as proper/bad. All local mothers were viewed as prone to failure, more so Malay mothers than the Indians and Chinese.

Local hygiene standards in households were frequently described as “filthy” and health officers tend to define unhygienic practices as something that was innate, if not natural to Malays, Indians and Chinese inhabitants (Manderson, 1996: 237). The role of European health officials was to displace cultural habits with proper sanitary practices, where Europe was regarded as the benchmark for cleanliness and civilization. Published health reports imbricate race, class and personal behavior in accounts of what people do with their bodies. Individuals were constituted through generalized markers of “Malays”, “Chinese” and “Indians”.

Scholars like Manderson (1996) and Levine (2003) observe how medicine, as a cultural agent and force, was crucial as an instrument of colonial expansion. There were obvious political benefits gained from public health. For one, it permitted the extension of imperial control into people’s homes as the basis of intimate governance. Personal lives and private acts became objects of the medical gaze and matters for public scrutiny, whereby health-associated risks and high mortality rates justified state intervention and incursion into the intimate lives of colonial inhabitants. These technologies of discipline positioned Europe as the moral authority of imperial power, whereupon some of their ideals of maternal reproduction exerted influence onto gender ideologies in post-Independent Singapore.

2.3 Political and Ideological State Dominance in Post-Independence Singapore

Singapore’s traumatic exit from Malaysia on 9th August 1965 marked a crucial shift for the country’s political economy. After the Japanese Occupation (1942-45) and two decades of British withdrawal from Malaya, the People’s Action Party (PAP), the majority of whom are Chinese Baba elites, assumed political monopoly of Singapore. In the post-Independent era of governance, the PAP embarked on a “total social planning” scale, extending its regulation of the economy through education, language use, housing, transportation, media, public health and even intimate spheres of domestic life such as family planning and spousal choices (Clammer, 1998). They espoused principles of pragmatism toward securing economic growth. They exuded a paternalistic political compass (Heng and Devan, 1995), by intervening heavily in all spheres of public and domestic life, including the control of civil society and judiciary systems. The state’s political domination rests on their ability to control both economy and culture. In the following sections, I will discuss how the state maintains its legitimacy through particular practices of governance that shape the way citizens and residents think about race, class, social status, the family, gender and sexuality.

2.3.1 View from the State: Management of Race and Class

Since 1965, PAP leaders have espoused multiracialism and meritocracy as the foundation of Singapore's success to address poor colonial education infrastructure. Both ideologies of multiracialism and meritocracy and the supposed premise of equality of representation and opportunities have become a fundamental feature of everyday social reality for Singaporeans.

Disciplining Difference through Multiracialism

In Singapore, multiracialism is so institutionalized that a larger homogeneous sense of national belonging is discouraged (Chua, 1995). As an official policy, multiracialism adopts colonial discourses of race as a primordial and biological fact. It operates by simplifying and homogenizing the diversity of ethnic groups into a Chinese, Malay Indian, Others (CMIO) "quadrotomy" (Siddique, 1990: 36). Multiracialism assumes that "each group was a race with a distinctive and identifiable culture, language and to an extent possessed a common religious affiliation" (Lian, 2006: 229). The arithmetic CMIO racial grid, as a method of "disciplining of difference" (Purushotam, 1997), has become absorbed into the habitus of most Singaporeans, and precludes any form of class consciousness that would override or transcend ethnic ones (Clammer, 1998: 21).

Despite an assertion that each racial group will be treated equally, the PAP government has judiciously emphasized Chinese pre-eminence (Clammer, 1998: 155; Rahim, 1998). Since the 1980s, trends in social policy have been directed towards the intensification of Chinese domination in Singapore. This has been evident through the widespread promotion of Mandarin, establishment of Chinese Special Assistance Plan (SAP) schools, adopting Confucianism as a civic religion, and reproductive policies aimed at suppressing birth rates of non-Chinese and lenient migration rules towards mainland and diaspora Chinese immigrants (Rahim, 1998; Heng and Devan 1995). These developments implied that Chinese cultural values were prioritized over that of other ethnic groups' (Gopinathan, 1980). The state has justified the sinicization of Singapore as a necessary means to capitalize on a burgeoning Chinese global economy.

Multiracialism in Singapore functions also as a tool for disempowerment, by positioning any argument for racial rights by a particular racial or ethnic group as a practice of exceptionalism (Chua, 1998). The ideological practice of multiracialism based on equal representation has translated into the national "self-help" policy. Political elites strongly believe that ethnic-based self-help groups are best suited to solve social issues of their respective

communities because only cultural members have the sensitivities, language competencies and shared symbolic worlds to empathize with and resolve the problem at hand (Purushotam, 1998).

Debates on race get sidelined in the political sphere while still accorded a high visibility in the cultural sphere (ibid, 36). Simply put, the state avoids or silences discussions on racial inequalities but will encourage the promotion of race through a discussion about heritage, ethnic foodways and “invented” festivals such as “Racial Harmony Day”. Multiculturalism functions also as an instrument of social control delineating boundaries of racial groups in the name of larger public good and harmony (Chua, 1998; Goh, 2009; Goh & Holden, 2009). It fetishizes social and structural inequalities in terms of access to education and occupational opportunities for ethnic minorities (Chua, 1998).

Meritocracy and the Logic of Class

The government promotes a system of meritocracy, in tandem with multiracialism, based on the assumption that Singaporeans, regardless of ethnic or social background, possess the means for social advancement through their own achievements, merit and diligence (Betts, 1975: 139). Education is viewed as a social leveraging tool in enhancing one’s status attainment, social mobility, and engine for economic growth (Stimpfl, 1998).

In the past decade, PAP leaders have been concerned with rising income inequality.⁴ In 2010, the median household income for Malays was \$3844 compared to \$5100 for Chinese and \$5370 for Indians (Dept of Statistics Singapore, 2010a: 12). Malays in Singapore are disproportionately represented in low-income brackets, but have the largest proportion of employed households within this stratum. The government uses meritocracy as an ideology to justify Malay underdevelopment as a result of low educational attainment, since the Chinese and Indians who have higher educational qualifications have higher levels of social mobility. However, statistical evidence has shown that income inequality between Chinese and Malays in Singapore has not been a historical constant. Malay incomes, prior to Independence were relatively on par with local Chinese wages, with local-born Malays performing economically better than Chinese immigrants (Lee, 2006: 176).

In Singapore, although race and class share a complex intertwining relationship, state leaders attribute social and economic disparities among Singaporeans as the product of race while class differences are rarely spoken of (Rahim, 1998). In public discourse, “class” is synonymous

⁴ In 2014, Singapore’s Gini coefficient for income at 0.478 is one of the widest among developed countries, which indicates a burgeoning divide in terms of upward mobility between the rich and the poor in the city-state.

with “socio-economic status” derived through indices such as income, education and occupation. In everyday spaces of social interaction however, it is common to hear Singaporeans assign “class” to particular racial groups. For example, the Malays have been expected to “hold menial and low status jobs, be poorly educated, lack motivation, not be particularly intelligent, prone to having large families, drug addiction and divorce” compared to the relatively successful Chinese majority (Rahim 1998:57). Through public discourse on poverty and welfare, the state continually reinforces the stereotype of Malays as lazy, academically inferior and spendthrift compared to their relatively more successful ethnic Chinese counterparts (Clammer, 1998; Rahim, 1998).

Proletarianization of Malays in a Meritocratic State

Since 1965, Singapore’s economy has transitioned from import-substitution to an export-oriented manufacturing industry and, presently, a technocapitalist knowledge-based economy to attract multinational corporations and tap into global capital flows (Rodan, 1989; Liow, 2012). The structural shift from manufacturing-based industrialization to innovation and research, niche marketing and techno-capitalism (Liow, 2012), has led to a burgeoning emphasis on higher education (Rahim, 2009: 132). The government continues to encourage Singaporeans to invest in post-secondary education or to constantly undergo skill upgrades to remain relevant and competitive in a rapidly changing labor market. They have expanded educational facilities to meet increasing demands for higher education, and provided financial incentives for citizens to learn new skills that would increase their marketability.

Since 2005, about 75% of Singapore residents between the ages of 25-34 have had a Diploma or University education. In 2010, only 6.8% of Malays have received university education compared to the national average of 28.3% (Dept. of Statistics Singapore, 2010b), and are therefore severely under-represented in the tertiary economy. Like prior economic shifts, the transition to technocratic economy affected Malays more significantly than other races because of their overrepresentation in blue-collar jobs. Most of these labor-intensive jobs have been phased out, outsourced or relocated to countries with cheaper labor.

The proletarianization of Malays were attributed to the following factors: firstly, rudimentary colonial education policies left Malays without the required English language competence (Tham, 1989: 479). Secondly, even though English has been made the official language in Singapore, fluency in Mandarin was expected within some social and professional networks leaving non-Chinese ethnic minorities at a disadvantage (Rahim, 1998: 110). Finally, job advertisements in local newspapers frequently offer high positions to non-Malays by

requiring Chinese bilingualism while low-paying jobs such as drivers, messengers and gardeners were aimed at Malay workers (Aljunied, 1979: 71).

Both ideological mechanisms of multiracialism and meritocracy, that racialize failure and cultural deficits as a Malay characteristic instead of the outcome of structural inequality, have resulted in the further perpetuation of Malay marginalization (Li, 1989). Racial governance through state ideologies of meritocracy and multiracialism ignores historical exigencies and structural inequalities among the ethnic groups (Clammer, 1998; Rahim, 1998). It contributes to the assumption that poverty, low educational qualifications and occupational status is inherently a racial “Malay problem”. In contemporary Singapore, households that lack higher education qualifications become increasingly vulnerable to structural economic adjustments. The intensification of global economic flows has produced an uneven distribution of resources resulting in social strain, particularly for working-class minorities who cannot access socioeconomic opportunities or mobilize social networks as successfully as others.

2.3.2 Invention of “Asian” Values and the Rise of the Cosmopolitan Class

In 1991, the government came up with ‘Shared Values’⁵ to revitalize loyalty among citizens, fearing the loss of national identity and solidarity due to rapid social mobility and economic advancement. The construction of public culture around the principles of Asian virtues emerged because “governments are beginning to realize the fragility of their own position and the need to redefine ways of maintaining power for an increasingly vocal and educated middle class” (Birch, 1998: 178).

The logic of “Asian” values, as a response to the liberalizing force of the West, enshrines a conservative middle-class morality and suppresses any class consciousness through a universal appeal of values (Clammer, 1998; 245-6). It ensures that individual rights are negated in favor of larger collective ethnic communities. At the same time, the citizen’s loyalties to their ethnic communities should not supersede their affinities to the nation. Further, the government emphasizes community support for the underprivileged but discourages welfare reliance on the state through the management of ethnic communities and ethnic-based self-help groups in Singapore (Teo, 2009). In this regard, the promotion of Asian values constitutes a belief that the

⁵ The five core values outlined are: i) Nation before community and society above self, ii) family as the basic unit of society, iii) regard and community support for the individual, iv) consensus instead of conflict and v) racial and religious harmony.

“individual owes allegiance to the state while the state owes nothing to the individual” (Clammer, 1998: 251).

As a global city, Singapore’s role in facilitating transnational flows of capital has produced a changing class status and structure. This has been brought about by global pressures, an influx of skilled foreign labor, and advancements in information technology which has provided alternative ways of thinking about race, belonging, identity and citizenship. In 1999, political elites identified two class of citizens: the “Cosmopolitans” and “Heartlanders”. “Cosmopolitans” are those who speak English, are international in outlook, skilled in banking, information technology, engineering, science and technology, and able to navigate comfortably anywhere in the world. In comparison, the “Heartlanders” speak Singlish⁶, are parochial in interest and orientation, make their living within the country, and play a major role in maintaining core values and social stability (Goh, 1999).

The PAP government have been concerned that the binaries between cosmopolitan and heartlander may create deeper social cleavage between those who are globally mobile and those who are not. Heartlanders are more likely to defend “traditional Asian values” that they view as essential to curb the moral ills of globalization such as the breakdown of family and same-sex marriage. On the other hand, cosmopolitans, as Singaporeans who have lived, worked and traveled abroad tend to be vocal against xenophobia, homophobia and to a certain extent, challenge the rigid multiracial model in Singapore. In creating a global city that attracts creative foreign talent, the government chastises heartlanders who are xenophobic while praising the cosmopolitan outlook of Singaporeans who encourage diversity for economic growth. On the other hand, the government also chastises cosmopolitans who push for LGBT rights and freedom of expression by positioning these demands as polemical and divisive to a heartlander-driven conservative Asian country.

The continued governance of population through the multiracial model serves as a form of social control against an emerging highly-literate and politically-astute cosmopolitan class. In doing so, the government seeks to suppress class differences between cosmopolitans and heartlanders, by homogenizing these groups within their respective ethnic communities, while at the same time positioning them against each other. The continued evocation of Singapore’s shared Asian values demonstrates the city-state’s attempts to manufacture “hegemonic consent” (Gramsci, 1971), through managing contradictions and tensions between material aspirations and

⁶ “Singlish”= Singapore-English used to differentiate from Standard English. Singlish is a local creole of English and a mixture of dialects from the different ethnic groups in Singapore.

cultural sensibilities of a growing minority cosmopolitan class vis-à-vis the “heartlander” who has been mythologized as the “conservative majority” (see also Chua, 1995).

2.4 Contemporary State Paternalism and Differentiated Deservedness

2.4.1 Family and “Asian Values”

Despite changing ruling powers of governance from the British to the PAP, the role of the family as an ideological mechanism of social control continues to feature strongly in the post-colonial state (Heng and Devan, 1995; Kong and Yeoh, 2003; Teo, 2007). The current ideal of the family is the heterosexual nuclear family unit with a wife, husband and their biological children (three or more, but only if they can afford it) who can take care of each other and their parents without much intervention from the state. The stable heterosexual nuclear family, as tradition, is *the* natural and normal path to which all Singaporeans should aspire (see Teo, 2011). Cast in this light, the state views any alterations to the family unit as a threat to the moral fabric of the nation, which will result in societal destruction, as they claim to have observed in Western societies. Individuals who do not conform to this path are portrayed as deviants and excluded from social entitlements.

While subscription to family norms as an Asian virtue is now common sense for most Singaporeans, historical evidence has shown that what is now considered a traditional family practice was not the norm in colonial Singapore. People did not subscribe to nuclear family norms. Even among the wealthy Chinese, a system of concubinage, in which men had more than one wife and multiple families was quite common (Swettenham, 1948; Levine, 2003). Clan associations existed for ethnic Chinese members who took vows against marriage and societal organizations functioned as familial support for those who were without families. In villages, it was common to have 3 or more family generations sharing a household. Among the Malays, adoption was widespread and families did not differentiate between adopted and biological children, treating them as having equal status. Divorce was also common and not looked upon as taboo. Malays relied on extensive social networks beyond a nuclear arrangement to cope with changes within the family (Djamour, 1959). Further, the cultural preference for sons amongst the Chinese created the practice of giving away unwanted Chinese daughters who would then be adopted and raised by Malay families.

These earlier histories challenge the monolithic definition of the “Asian” family as natural and the norm for Singapore. The state’s promotion of family as a moral norm thus demonstrates the regulation of heteronormativity as an economic imperative. Political elites evoked cultural notions of the family only when it simultaneously fulfills demands of global capital. For example, while the government encourages families to have children as a typical path of the Asian family, they penalize working-poor families who view children as a blessing and thus desire to have more. Thus one needs to critically examine the political rationalities behind speeches such as the one made by Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong urging Singaporeans to “continue to preserve the filial ties and bonds that hold our family units together” (Lee, 2008 in Teo, 2011). Scholars have demonstrated how the family and market economy are intertwined, where families are expected to find solutions to domestic care and responsibilities through private consumption and engaging in paid employment (Sun, 2012; Yeoh & Huang, 1995; Teo, 2011). Singapore’s model of social security is based on ‘principles of individual self-reliance and family as the first line of support’ (Yap, 2010: 67), and the state as “the last resort” (Teo, et. al, 2006: 25).

Heng and Devan (1995) describe the state’s heavy-handed intervention in the domestic lives of Singaporeans as a practice of state paternalism. They conclude that “the “intimate articulation of the traditional family with the modern state”, legitimized through Confucianist/Asian values, “facilitates and guarantees the transfer of the paternal signifier from family to the state” where the metaphor of “state as family” renders the naturalness of an “omnipotent” government. Similarly, Teo (2011) highlights how family policies reveal the government’s pragmatism in continually inventing and appropriating traditional Asian values to maintain the veneer of an unchanging Asian family within a rapidly changing global economy.

From the state’s perspective, the family serves two purposes: to provide a future source of labor to increase economic productivity, and as a network of care where children are expected to care for their elderly parents. At the same time, family policies are not evenly targeted across the demographic. Teo (2015) highlights how Singaporeans are differentially positioned as citizens and in their relationships to the state, creating differentiated forms of deservedness in terms of social entitlements. Different ideals, expectations and divisions fall flagrantly along gender, class and racial lines, subjecting citizens to unequal measures of worth, value and inclusion. State practices of discrimination, through the production of difference, explicate forms of stratified reproduction (Colen, 1986), where some women are encouraged to reproduce, and others

penalized for doing so. These concepts will be explored further through the post-colonial implementation of anti-natal and pro-natal family policies in Singapore.

2.4.2 Anti-Natalism: “Stop at Two” Policy

In the 1960s, when development experts warned of the dangers of population strain and its negative effects on economic growth, the PAP government embarked on an intense and punitive anti-natalist campaign restricting parents to two children. In 1969, the government implemented disincentives to penalize “the irresponsible, the social delinquents” (mostly low-income Malays and Indians) from thinking that having more children would give them access to free education and subsidized housing (Chee, 2008).

The burden of reproduction fell disproportionately onto women- mothers, instead of fathers, were educated on various methods of contraception. Hospital workers reprimanded women who had more than two children by recommending abortions and sterilization procedures, while condoms were discouraged in favor of promoting sterilization⁷. Due to these pressures, women who were pregnant after their second child felt like they had committed a crime (Toh, 2008). Couples who had more than three children received less tax relief, reduction for maternal leave, lower priority for school registration and had to pay more for maternity hospitalization charges, which would be waived only if they went through sterilization. These disincentives were justified as means to correct a reproductive trend that may leave Singapore with a “large number of the physically, intellectually and culturally anemic” (Lee, 1969 in Chee, 2008). The scrutiny of women’s reproductive practices also demonstrate gendered constructions of social policies based on a strong reliance of a sexual division of labor, where men are breadwinners and women, reproducers for the nation (Straughan et al. 2009: 182).

2.4.3 Pro-Natalism: “Have Three or More (if you can afford it)” Policy

In the 1980s, the “Great Marriage Debate” and “Graduate Mothers’ Scheme” to encourage fertility rates among highly educated women was rather explicit in its eugenics stance. In 1983, Prime Minister Lee Kuan Yew encouraged Singaporean men to choose highly educated women as wives because he believed their offspring would contribute to a high quality genetic

⁷ From the 70s to 80s, the government encouraged uneducated women (those without GCE O-Level certification) from low-income households to get sterilized after their second child. These women were offered 7 days paid medical leave and SGD10,000 if they volunteered for tubal ligation.

pool (Lee, 2000: 136-40). The government established the Social Development Unit (SDU) to promote fraternizing among male and female university students in hopes that this would lead to increased graduate marriages. The state incentivized married university-educated mothers by offering them tax rebates, housing and school placement priorities if they produced three or four children. Then Prime Minister Lee Kuan Yew believed that five percent of the society's population, "who are more than ordinarily endowed physically and mentally" should be given best portions of the socioeconomic pie as "catalyst" for the nation's progress (Mauzy and Milne, 2002). Medical subsidies, housing and education priorities now favored women with three or more children, abortions were discouraged, and women undergoing sterilization before having their third child would receive compulsory counseling.

Pro-natalist policies in the 80s reveal underlying anxieties over racial and class imbalance. Heng and Devan (1995) examine how graduate mothers were blamed for the "reproductive crisis" in the 80s. These women were accused of failing to produce children at a sufficiently high rate while poorly educated women were chastised for reproducing "too freely". Such "lopsided" reproductive rates diverged along racial lines. The Chinese were referenced as "graduate women" by default, and Malays and Indians were understood as lowly-educated women (Wong and Yeoh, 2003: 8-10). Ideologies of 'deservedness' were strongly linked to class, measured in terms of mothers' education levels and their participation in the labor economy⁸. Further, it was only the reproductive labor of Chinese educated women, viewed to be crucial to economic success, that was rewarded, while the highly sexualized, "soft", undisciplined, and indulgent minority women were penalized for having more children than they could afford.

In the same decade, official narratives started to depict Western sexuality as a threat to an Asian Confucian culture by suggesting that the female body, due to equal employment and educational opportunities, is vulnerable to global influences that have "affected their traditional role...as mothers, the creators and protectors of the next generation" (Lee, 1983 in Wong and Yeoh, 2003: 8). As more women obtain higher levels of literacy and are significantly represented in the labor force, social reproduction policies begin to cultivate the ideal of the citizen-worker mother by rewarding women who are married, employed and able to sustain their children without state support. Caregiving responsibilities continue to fall disproportionately onto women,

⁸ In the 90s, working mothers who obtained at least 3 O level passes (equivalent to passing Grade 10) would qualify for an enhanced child relief rebate for their third child while having a fourth child would entitle them to receive an additional 15% of their income (max SGD 10,000).

who are also expected to prioritize their economic labor, but without compromising their familial duties in caring for their children and also elderly parents.

Heng and Devan critique then Prime Minister Lee Kuan Yew's familial discourse as a "gendered formation of power" where "women, and all signs of the feminine, are by definition always and already antinational" (1995: 356). Social and family policies demonstrate the state's suspicion toward non-reproductive female sexuality that is driven by pleasure and desire, and as such detrimental to social and economic efficiency. From the colonial to post-colonial Singapore, the control of women's bodies has functioned as a mechanism for economic productivity and growth where women's reproductive labor is rewarded or penalized based on their ability to maximize labor productivity and efficiency for the nation. Reproductive policies serve as a disciplinary mechanism to instill heteronormative norms of family in citizens. Graduate women, although regarded as ideal mothers, should only have children through marriage. Without the presence of husbands and fathers, unwed single mothers and female-headed families are viewed as a threat to the state's heteronormative and paternalistic power (Heng and Devan, 1995: 202).

2.4.4 "Pro-Family" Values in Singapore: Race, Class and Gender Inequalities

Although the PAP government has discarded the explicit eugenics of the 80s, the ideologies that had shaped past pro-natalist policies continue to prevail in contemporary "pro-family" discourses. Male and female citizens are positioned and treated differentially through social policies that produce ideas and practices around "the family". While men are increasingly exhorted by political leaders to take on significant roles in child care so women do not go on "baby strike" (Lee, 2008 in Teo, 2009: 534), the general public attitude is one that continues to regard women as natural caregivers and men as playing a supporting role in caring for children.

Public campaigns and policies promoting active fatherhood such as "Dads for Life" and providing married fathers with up to two weeks of paternity leave (compared to 16 weeks for mothers) endorsed by the Ministry of Social and Family Development (MSF) and Ministry of Manpower (MOM) respectively, demonstrate gendered expectations of caregiving. Active fatherhood, while highly encouraged, remains optional. Fathers who do not prioritize raising children are not morally admonished as "bad" fathers, unlike their wives. Additionally, the deviantization of unwed single mothers absolves men of accountability in pre-marital sex. In fact, sex education in public schools teaches youth that it is the woman's responsibility to practice sexual restraint because men typically do not possess the ability to control their sexual urges.

Sexist messages such as these perpetuate gendered ideologies that place married women who give birth as natural and legal mothers, while men are only recognized as “fathers” within the context of a legal marriage.

While earlier policies systematically discriminate against uneducated and low-income women from over-reproduction, current social policies are subtler in terms of differentiating which households are deserving of particular benefits under the pretext of equality for all children and families (Teo, 2011; 2015). State agencies such as the Ministry for Social and Family Development (MSF), for instance, has endorsed several campaigns and pro-family organizations such as the “I Love Children” (ILC) organization which advocates “a higher priority to having children and promoting a society where children are loved and mainstreamed” (ILC, 2015). However, not all children and their mothers are treated as equal citizens.

Since 2001, incentives such as the “Baby Bonus” scheme⁹ are exclusive only to legally married mothers regardless of their education levels. The objective of this scheme is to defray the financial costs of raising children and to incentivize heterosexual families to have more children. A special savings account (Child Development Account) was also set up for children where the government matches, dollar-for-dollar, parents’ contributions to the account until the child turns 12.¹⁰ Prior to 2017, unwed single mothers (which also include lesbian mothers) were given only 8 weeks of paid maternity leave instead of the 16 weeks received by married mothers. From 2017, unwed mothers will be entitled to the special savings account but are still excluded from the Baby Bonus cash gift (SGD 8,000), parenthood tax rebates, and have to wait until they are 35 to be eligible for public housing (Kok, 2016).

The special savings incentive, while applicable to all households, actually privileges those with high disposable incomes to match the maximum matching contribution by the government.¹¹ Parents with better economic resources are able to optimize this policy, compared to households with limited resources. This policy mirrors Singapore’s meritocratic and anti-welfare principle by differentiating and rewarding households with high disposable incomes and

⁹ As of 2015, parents with children (who are Singapore citizens at birth) who are born after 1 Jan 2015 will receive SGD 8,000 for their 1st and 2nd child and SGD 10,000 for the 3rd and subsequent child. Parents will also receive an enhanced cash gift of up to SGD 8,000 for their 1st and 2nd child and SGD 10,000 for 3rd or more children, which will be in the form of 5 installments over the course of 18 months.

¹⁰ Subjected to a maximum amount of SGD 6,000 for the 1st and 2nd child, SGD 12,000 for 3rd and 4th child and SGD 18,000 for 5th and subsequent child. Money in the CDA account can be used for educational and healthcare expenses.

¹¹ While the promise of being able to receive SGD 18,000 seem lucrative, parents would have to contribute SGD 18,000 first in order to receive a similar amount.

who are financially savvy in planning their children's future compared to those who are unable to do so. This exacerbates class inequalities based on parentocracy, where children from richer households gain further opportunities and are provided with a privileged head start in acquiring social mobility, in contrast to children from underprivileged households.

Family policies reinforce heteronormative practices by determining which types of mothers are deserving of fertility treatments. Legally married couples with fertility problems are entitled to 75% government subsidies for Assisted Reproduction Techniques (ART) such as In-Vitro fertilization. It is illegal for medical practitioners to perform artificial insemination on single women in Singapore while married women require husbands' signed consent to undergo ART in Singapore. The differentiation in policies highlights how the state supports parenthood and childbearing only within the context of heterosexual marriages and in preserving paternalistic family norms.

Childbearing incentives are also intimately linked to the regulation of marriage and employment. Child Relief and Grandparent Caregiver Relief tax rebates are specific to working women—suggesting that what the state desires is not fertility per se but childbearing women who continue to be employed workers (Teo, 2009: 543). Poor, unwed mothers and/or female-headed households are categorized as “dysfunctional”. Perceptions of unwed mothers as sexual delinquents continue to be racialized as they were in the 80s. In 2007, Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong singled out the Malay community for producing dysfunctional families, evidenced through high rates of divorce, single mother-households and teenage pregnancies (Manap, 2010). Additionally, local Malay newspapers tend to present unwed Malay mothers in terms of failure and shame for thwarting the community's aspirations to be regarded as economically stable along Chinese families (Suratman, 2004; Manap, 2010).

The issue of dysfunctional families has more to do with a being burden on welfare assistance than about the presence of illegitimate children challenging Asian family values. When the notion of the traditional family is evoked, it reinforces a strong economic moral imperative—the state prefers families who are stable and self-reliant.

MSF's “pro-family” campaigns privilege middle-class family norms (Teo, 2011; Hsiao, 2012). Campaigns like “Eat with Your Family Day” encourage Singaporeans to leave work in time for dinner with family, which the state views as crucial to the strengthening of “strong and stable” families. Yet this campaign ignores those whose occupations are shift-oriented, or the working poor who have to work long hours in order to survive and for whom taking time off for dinner with family means compromising necessary daily wages. Teo (2011) argues that this pro-

family rhetoric effectively masks middle-class privileges and also prescribes the norms against which other families and citizens are expected to measure themselves. In contemporary Singapore, the “tradition” of childbearing is only good and ideal if potential parents are married, comfortably middle-class and able to rely on each other for support.

2.4.5 Changing Family Structures and Anti-Welfare Policies

The government’s promotion of “pro-family” demonstrates their resistance toward becoming a welfare state (Clammer, 1998; Teo, 2015). Access to public goods remains tightly tethered to employment and is also contingent on specific performance of the familial (Teo, 2015). However, the state’s definition of “traditional” family has not always been constant and reflects changing political rationalities shaping the “ideal” family.

The state accommodates changing family structures to suit the needs of a rapidly aging population where welfare and care would be a primary issue. In the 70s, pioneering elites promoted the heterosexual nuclear model as the ideal family type because the extended family system was regarded as an “obstacle to economic growth” and a disincentive for family members who were more resourceful (Chua, 1995: 27). Since May 2015, however, the government is reconfiguring family to include extended relatives who are providing a valuable network of kinship and mutual support (Teo, 2015). The increasing numbers of senior citizens who are childless or not living with their children (Goy, 2015) warrants a departure from previous policies that prioritize nuclear family formation. The government hopes to extend support in terms of housing and tax relief to relatives who are caring for elderly family members (Philomin, 2015). This is consistent with their anti-welfare stance that positions families as “the first line of care and support”.

At the same time, while the state recognizes that family forms are changing rapidly, marital or biogenetic ties remain central to accessing public goods such as home ownership and long-term housing security. Specific and rigid definitions of familial membership and practices are reproduced and reinforced through welfare policies. To qualify for public housing, a citizen must form a “family nucleus” with another citizen or permanent resident. This could take the form of a legally married couple with or without children, adult siblings (who are above 35 or orphaned), or divorced or widowed persons with dependent children. Unmarried Singaporeans may only purchase public housing if they are 35 and above, and there are limitations to the types of flats they can buy (HDB, 2015). In a country where land is scarce and the majority of housing

options are state-owned (about 80%), citizens who are unemployed or working-poor, non-heterosexual, unmarried, divorced/separated/widowed or childless experience significant difficulties in securing long-term housing.

Housing rules and regulations demonstrate differential rights accorded to citizens, shaping also specific roles, relationships and responsibilities that one has to go through in order to secure basic necessities like long-term housing for future security (Teo, 2015). Since 2013, the government has allocated a portion of new flats to working-poor divorced or widowed parents with dependent children. Poor married couples are also enrolled in public assistance schemes that would alleviate difficulties in financing their housing. Their access to housing, however, is conditional upon their ability to remain employed/employable, restricting their family size to two children and ensuring good attendance in school. Singles above 35 are allowed to purchase new, subsidized two-room flats where they could previously only purchase flats from the exorbitantly priced resale market. However, unwed mothers with children have to wait until they are 35 to access public housing while they are excluded from housing assistance schemes, because their mother-child dyad does not constitute a ‘proper’ family nucleus.

Changes in family structures are therefore only accommodated in social policies insofar as they enhance the role of the heterosexual nuclear family in providing support and empower household members to be “self-reliant” (Balakrishnan, 2010 in Teo, 2015), and resilient in light of demographic trends and structural shifts in the global economy. Housing policies that exclude single mothers based on a rigid definition of familial membership reinforce the idea that a stable, intact family structure provides a more conducive environment to raise a child. Families who depart from the norm face cultural stigmatization and even material deprivation.

2.5 LGBT Citizens as Exiles of Heteronormative Family

In this section, I examine the PAP government’s ambivalent and contradictory treatment toward LGBT Singaporeans and the kinds of discrimination they encounter in Singapore. Finally, I analyze the representation of “lesbians” in local mainstream media to uncover intersectional experiences of race, class, gender and sexuality that contribute to particular forms of female same-sex identities and practices. I tease these complexities further by exploring how race and class influence one’s participation in queer women’s spaces and social networks.

2.5.1 Public Attitudes toward LGBT Singaporeans

Since 2007, the Singapore government has maintained their stance that “homosexuals were not discriminated against; they had the same right to employment, education or housing as everyone else” (CEDAW 3rd Periodic Report of Singapore, 2007). However, the continued existence of Section 377A of the Penal Code, a legacy of British colonial laws that criminalizes consensual oral and anal intercourse between men¹², creates a hostile environment for LGBT citizens, reinforcing discriminatory and prejudicial attitudes toward them as abnormal and immoral.

LGBT Singaporeans currently experience multiple levels of discrimination and hostility where segments of the population “continue to hold strong views against homosexuality for various reasons, including religious convictions and moral values” (TODAY, 12 Dec 2015). From the Constitution, LGBT citizens do not have the right to privacy and personal liberty (Article 9) and are not entitled to equal protection under Singapore law, which recognizes discrimination *only* in terms of race, religion, descent or place of birth but excludes gender, sex and sexual orientation (Article 12).¹³ Government representatives from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA), for example have actively reject sexual orientation and gender identity as human rights issues in their defense of 377A and also through enforcing the image of heterosexual nuclear families as the only legitimate form of healthy relationships and a stable family.

The discrimination towards LGBT citizens has been reinforced through a monolithic ideology of the traditional Asian Family. The government grants particular entitlements to individuals who conform to the “proper” family. In differentiating citizens based on marital and child-bearing status, the state discriminates against queer citizens in terms of housing, employment, housing, medical and reproductive rights, which severely affects their material well-being and future security (Sayoni, 2010).

¹² Section 377A of the Penal Code: “Any male person who, in public or private, commits, or abets the commission of, or procures or attempts to procure the commission by any male person of, any act of gross indecency with another male person, shall be punished with imprisonment for a term which may extend to 2 years”. Source: Singapore Statutes Online, Attorney-General Chambers, retrieved from <http://goo.gl/08Q0u> (Mar 26, 2016).

¹³ Constitution of the Republic of Singapore: Article 9 (1): No person shall be deprived of his life or personal liberty save in accordance with law. Article 12 (1): All persons are equal before the law and entitled to the equal protection of the law. (2) Except as expressly authorized by this Constitution, there shall be no discrimination against citizens of Singapore on the ground only of religion, race, descent or place of birth in any law or in the appointment to any office or employment under a public authority or in the administration of any law relating to the acquisition, holding or disposition of property or the establishing or carrying on of any trade, business, profession, vocation or employment (Attorney-General’s Chambers, 2016)

This ideology has been steadfastly incorporated by conservative Muslim and Christian groups to justify hostility and non-acceptance toward LGBT Singaporeans. In February 2014, local Muslim professor Syed Khairudin Aljunied posted a note on his Facebook page urging scholars and religious teachers to speak up against liberal Islam ideologies and lesbianism. He called upon parents and teachers to “detect early signs of waywardness from their children and students” because “all social diseases must end at home, if not, in schools” to “stop these cancers dead in their tracks” (Lee, 2014). Khairudin’s reference to lesbianism as a “social disease” and “cancer” drew protest from university students who regarded his post as a form of hate speech. While his statements caused a public outcry that warranted a reprimand from the University’s Provost, the minority Malay Muslim community praised his courage to speak against the “rise” of homosexuality in Singapore.

The Fellowship of Muslim Students’ Association (FMSA) wrote a letter of support for Khairudin defending him as an “icon of the Malay/Muslim community” on their Facebook Page. FMSA also expressed their concerns that it is “unfortunate that the global LGBT movement has infected Singapore to the extent that some citizens have become confused about what a family unit is.” (Mar 3, 2014). They also termed the LGBT community the “Neo-Sodom-Gomorrah” (NSG) and claimed solidarity with other Singaporeans, religious and social organizations that are against the socio-legal acceptance of LGBT “values and lifestyles”. The Singapore Islamic Scholars and Religious Teachers Association (PERGAS) had earlier stated their stand that:

According to the higher objectives of Islamic Law, the family unit serves to bring in new generation and preserve the existence of humankind. For that reason, Islam gives attention in establishing a family only through the legal marriage of a man and woman. Any form of extra-marital or same-sex relations are hence prohibited in Islam.

(PERGAS, Media Statement, 11 February 2014)

Khairudin’s strong prejudice toward lesbianism is not an exception but a norm for the local Malay Muslim community. Local Malay Muslim community leaders have been consistent in their views that the only way to show support to LGBT Muslims is to provide them with good Islamic education and to encourage repentance. They view any form of support toward LGBT as a form of *subahat* or compliance in encouraging immoral behaviors and practices. Malay Muslim men and women who publicly support LGBT people have also reported being harassed and vilified in the Singapore Malay blogosphere and interwebs (#WearWhite Muslim Brothers Rise Up Against PinkDot LGBT, 2014). While I was conducting fieldwork, a Malay Muslim man, who petitioned for the removal of the professor for inciting hate speech, was threatened by Malay

netizens, who doctored an image of his body with a noose around his neck hanging from the parapet of a high-rise flat. LGBT Muslims are often accused to be *Murtad* or apostates if they challenge Islamic doctrines that forbid homosexuality. As such, Muslim sexual minorities, particularly females whose same-sex practices demonstrate resistance to patriarchal norms, become increasingly vulnerable to social prosecution.

Local Christian evangelical groups have also been vocal in demanding the removal of themes that highlight positive same-sex relationships and affirm acceptance of homosexuality. In 2009, women from a fundamentalist Christian group took over the executive board of the Association of Women for Action and Research (AWARE) to terminate the latter's sex-ed programs in public schools because it portrayed homosexuality as "neutral" instead of immoral. Following this incident, the Ministry of Education (MOE) has vetted sex education programs ensuring that children are taught that homosexuality is a deviant expression of love and homosexual acts are illegal (Liew, 2014).

In February 2014, the Health Promotion Board released an FAQ section on sexuality to educate youths on sexually-transmitted diseases but was attacked by members of the public and religious groups for stating that homosexual relationships are "not too different" from heterosexual relationships (Lim cited in Siau, 2014). Evangelical church members and other Singaporeans have also been successful in requesting the withdrawal of children's books that normalize same-sex families, promote inclusivity and family diversity, from local public libraries. The National Library Board has acquiesced to the demands of conservative religious groups by removing some of these books from public circulation and pulping others (ST Jul 18, 2014).

Singapore's state agencies and society views gender identity as a fixed and natural condition based on one's biological sex. Girls and women are pressured to conform to gender ideals of femininity with the expectation of marriage and motherhood as determinants of "proper" citizenship. In one public secondary school, three girls who shaved their heads to raise awareness for cancer were reprimanded by the school principal. They were forced to wear wigs because the school had ruled against "unfeminine" hair (Chua, 2013). Lesbian and bisexual women and trans men who are gender non-conforming experience intense policing toward their gender and sexual expression. Both transgender men and women struggle for validation in Singapore, where gender dysphoria has been pathologized as a psychological disorder. These individuals may require hormone therapy and sex-reassignment surgery that is fundamental to their well-being. Yet one may only access hormone treatments with a psychiatric diagnosis of gender dysphoria, while

access to sex-reassignment surgery is limited in public hospitals despite Singapore being a global hub for such procedures 30 years ago (Hoe, 2014; Seow, 2015).

In his analysis of gay civil servants and issues of sexual citizenship in Singapore, Chris Tan (2009) quotes one of his consultants, Eileen Lim, a prominent lesbian activist, who claims that state elites' declaration of acceptance toward queer civil servants was a form of *wayang*, a vernacular term for "performance". Gays and lesbians have always been part of civil service since there are no measures to screen applicants, and the declaration would not really change anything except make working environments gay-friendlier (Tan, 2009: 134). For some Singaporean gay and lesbian activists, the state performance becomes obvious especially when the promise of acceptance and tolerance has not been accompanied with concrete actions and policies to counter discrimination at the workplace, should an individual decide to declare their homosexuality (ibid:145).

The Singapore government owns all mainstream media outlets and controls the dissemination of content by censoring any positive portrayals of same-sex intimacies and penalizing media companies that fail to do so. Images of homosexuality are only endorsed when LGBT people are seen as depressive, suicidal or promiscuous or when same-sex relationships fail because they conform to the dominant view that homosexual behavior is a threat to stable family values. Such negative representations, on top of the state's acquiescence to aggressive anti-LGBT groups, reinforce the stereotype of LGBT citizens and their desires to love as criminal and morally-degenerate, and therefore undeserving of equal respect, dignity and protection as human beings. The absence of structures of protection makes LGBT citizens vulnerable to acts of violence enacted by members of the public, state officials and family members.

In Singapore, these geopolitical shifts, prompted by advancements in cyber infrastructure, have given rise to the production and visibility of new citizen queer subjectivities. Ong (2005) posits that the notion of the flexible citizen is driven and shaped by a burgeoning culture of individualization and consumerism, and its associations with choice and self-reflexivity. While in western societies, political struggles for gay and lesbian citizenship rights in spheres of intimacy have been monopolized through the acceptance of a new mandate that gays and lesbians reproduce family in the same way as heterosexual couples (Mamo, 2007), Singapore society still views gays and lesbians as deviant citizens with abnormal and unnatural desires.

In Singapore, the formation of new and flexible queer subjectivities has been constrained by several cultural limits. The idea of individual choice, that is, who and when one marries, with whom they have sex with and the terms of their procreation or reproductive practices, as well as

whom they share a home with has been negated through the regulated emphasis of the “proper” family. Thus, while the state maintains that LGBT citizens are entitled to their private lives, my participants’ anecdotal evidence will explicate the converse. Their experiences demonstrate exclusions from rights to reproduce, or forming a household with partners and recognition of their caregiving practices.

2.5.2 “The Good Son and Daughter”: Queer Pragmatism in Singapore

As numerous queer scholars have already pointed out, the state’s preservation of 377A while simultaneously pledging not to enforce it creates a rather conflicting relationship between LGBT citizens and the state. Phillips (2014) views this strategy as perpetuating “pragmatism” where political rationalities are driven by practical needs for the nation such as economic development compared to political philosophy (Chua, 1995: 69). This ideology of pragmatism since Singapore’s independence in 1965 has facilitated the incorporation of a neoliberal-developmental political rationality to the present day (Liow, 2012: 243). This is reinforced through the state’s contradictory treatment of LGBT citizens, where the neoliberal project of building a global economic frontier and tourist hub necessitates the rebranding of Singapore as a “creative city” to capture the “pink dollar” (Florida, 2002), and is also accompanied by social and legal policies that exclude LGBT citizens.

The state’s contradictory and ambivalent stance toward LGBT Singaporeans has informed the emergence of a particular brand of activism in Singapore. Yue poignantly argues that LGBT activism in Singapore is not “based on the western post-Stonewall emancipation discourse of rights, but through the illiberal pragmatics of survival” (2007: 151). This illiberal pragmatics of survival emulates the nation-state’s pragmatist strategies where the proliferation of Singapore’s LGBT scene emerges in tandem with economic liberalization, particularly through the development of Singapore’s creative and finance industries. Tan (2007) observes that Singaporean Chinese gays and lesbians are significantly represented within the creative class and so, through the narrative of capital and consumption, have demanded that they be positively recognized by the state based on their talents and economic contributions rather than their sexuality. Phillips (2014) points out that his Singaporean LGBT interlocutors regard the western notion of LGBT rights, based on individual autonomy, as demanding a radical politics emphasizing overt social acceptance that they consider “impractical” in Singapore. Instead, many of them embrace a queer subjectivity and performance that focuses on working within the status

quo by focusing on maintaining social balance and needs beyond the homosexual/heterosexual binary.

The practice of non-radical activism is most evident in Pink Dot¹⁴, Singapore's version of pride celebration in the form of an annual picnic. Promotional videos for PinkDot, tend to emphasize traditional family values, where being a son or daughter in the family takes precedence over publicly declaring oneself as LGBT (see also Phillips, 2014). Viewed in this manner, the strategy for "coming out" or disclosure of one's sexual identity becomes rooted within a familial practice of maintaining honest relations with kin members as good, filial sons and daughters. In closed-door meetings with government officials, Pink Dot organizers tend to censor LGBT issues associated with risk-taking behavior (eg. unsafe sex and binge drinking) to present the 'clean' image of the LGBT citizen as one who reinforces and enacts strong family values such as filial piety and responsibility, in line with state discourses on strong and stable families. Illiberal pragmatism becomes evident through the emphasis of the good and respectable queer citizen who desires to have children and family and who are contributing to the care of their elderly parents and siblings.

In Singapore, this assimilationist brand of LGBT activism draws upon two pertinent notions of respectable citizenship, one that appeals to the accumulation of capital, and the other to the image of the queer as a safe, non-threatening, family-oriented and ordinary Singaporean. Both of these strategies enact multiple exclusions. The narrative of the respectable gay citizen as talented, skilled and an asset to the economy disregards working-class queer Singaporeans who are less privileged. Meanwhile, the narrative of the "ordinary" queer citizen reinforces heteronormative privileges that exclude ethnic minorities and gender non-conforming individuals. Further, in my own fieldwork and other research projects in which I have collaborated with local lesbian activists, family members were often cited as the main perpetrators of violence for lesbian, bisexual and transgender women in Singapore. Thus, gay male activists' appeal to

¹⁴ The name Pink Dot was also appropriated from Singapore's nickname as the "little red dot", based on Indonesia's former president Habibie who had disparagingly referred to Singapore as such. On their website, the organizers also explained that Pink represents the color of Singaporeans' Identity Cards as well as the color when one mixes red and white, which is also the colors of the national flag. The organizers of Pink Dot decided that the best way to obtain a permit for a large public event was to depoliticize their movement. Since 2009, they have continually asserted that Pink Dot is "NOT a protest", but rather a "congregation of people who believe that everyone deserves a right to love, regardless of their sexual orientation" (Phillips, 2014: 50). Yet the desexualization of local LGBT expression was evident in Pink Dot where organizers made conscious effort to develop an image of the "respectable queer" by censoring images of overt sexual expression among gay and lesbian Singaporeans. Furthermore, organizers have evoked rather patriotic rituals during the event such as singing the National Anthem and timing it so it coincides with fly-past (two Chinooks hoisting a huge National flag) rehearsals for the parade on Singapore's Independence Day.

kinship and capital glosses over gendered hierarchies. The burden of caregiving falls unevenly onto queer daughters, more so than gay sons. Similarly, gender inequality in the Singapore labor market ensures that gay men, as male workers, tend to receive higher pay and career promotion compared to lesbians who face discrimination as female workers.

In addition, the local activist community, which is predominantly Chinese, middle-class, English-educated and espouses liberal views, tends to center the needs of Singaporean gays and lesbians around their experiences (Phillips, 2012). Even though queer events are open to the public, they tend to cater to the taste, preferences and interests of the Chinese middle class and university-educated queer Singaporeans, who, inadvertently, although never explicitly, exclude ethnic minorities and working-class queers. In the past three years, the unprecedented emergence of young feminists and queer women from racial minority groups have called out activists for perpetuating “Chinese privilege”. At meetings, these women have blatantly suggested that gay and lesbian activists tend to assume the Chinese middle-class experience as universal to all LGBT Singaporeans. The call to be sensitive to intersectional privileges of race, class and ableism has created tension in the queer advocacy scene. From my personal experiences in attending such meetings, the sentiment I gathered was that older Chinese gay and lesbian activists view criticisms from emergent minority queers as polemical, divisive and disrespectful of their past advocacy efforts.

2.5.3 From “Hidden Outsiders” to “Dangerous” Lesbians: Gender, Class, Family and Nation

Zubillaga-Pow (2012) posits that the LGBT activist-community’s desire to present a particular form of queer respectability is a response to counter negative public portrayals of gays and lesbians in Singapore. In the past, newspaper reports tend to portray gays and lesbians as emotionally unstable, prone to sex crimes or work (gay) and uneducated (butch lesbians). Newspaper columnists in local mainstream papers played an instrumental role in making non-normative gender and sexual identities visible to the masses. From a queer theory perspective, Povinelli and Chauncey (1999: 446) regard the production of ‘local’ sexual ideologies and subjectivities as the outcome of “multiple textual forms” already imbricated in transnational processes. In this section, I analyze newspaper portrayals of Singapore lesbians from the 70s to the 90s to examine public assumptions of female same-sex relationships as well as the gender and class ideologies that shape journalists’ construction of female same-sex partners in the local media.

Local English newspaper articles (1972 - 1999) that feature lesbians in Singapore before the Internet revolution in the late 90s debunk the assumption that “nothing happens before the Internet” (Tang, 2012; see also Altman, 2001). “Lesbians” were first featured in articles about the lives of women who love women that ran for four consecutive days from October 16-19, 1972. All of the women interviewed were English-literate Chinese or Eurasian young adults, some of whom were married, career women, and students. As a newly-developing nation, Singapore’s English proficiency and literacy rates were low, education attrition rates were high and daughters were given less opportunities for education in the 60s and 70s (see Goh and Gopinathan, 2008). The fact that these women had all attended and successfully completed their secondary school education in English-medium all-girls schools indicated upward social mobility and particular class privileges.

In the series, the meaning of “lesbian” encapsulates female same-sex desires, practices and identity—all of which could be regarded as mutually exclusive. “Lesbian” is a state of being that is contingent upon one’s attraction and relationship to another woman instead of a fixed and permanent sexual identity. The reporter, Betty Khoo, regarded all of her interviewees as “lesbians” because they experienced same-sex attraction or sexual encounters, despite the fact that most of these were past adolescent encounters, and some of the women were married to men. Only two women continued to be in a relationship with another woman and accepted their identities as lesbian, while the rest expressed confusion or perversion toward their continued or previous desires for women. Based on her interactions with her respondents, Khoo concludes that a same-sex relationship could be romantic and companionate and does not necessarily involve sexual relations.

Khoo’s assumptions toward lesbian sexuality was based on gender binary norms that position women as sexually passive and men as sexually aggressive, as well as the notion that same-sex attraction is hetero-gendered. Lesbian relationships were treated as deep emotional bonds between two women rather than sexual relationships. Khoo draws her conclusion based on her own prejudice that lesbians, as women, are not as aggressive in pursuing their sexual needs—unlike gay men, who as men are naturally sexual. Khoo had earlier assumed that female masculinity was the precursor to sexual attraction for other women. However, since none of her respondents were masculine-presenting, she concluded that it was possible for feminine women to develop desires for other feminine women.

Khoo’s assumption that lesbian relationships are hetero-gendered (masculine-feminine) was drawn from reading up about lesbian communities in the West. She found that in the West,

that “femme” lesbians tend to gravitate to “butch” masculine women. The latter’s “mannish” behaviors and presentation conveys an “overt” lesbian sexuality in contrast to the “latent” lesbian sexuality of the femme. Butch visibility therefore represents a dual function—to convey a masculine female’s sexual preference and also her partner’s same-sex inclinations. Khoo suggests that butch is not a permanent masculine identity and may be a “rebel phase” that some lesbians go through to signal their erotic desires but once they feel comfortable as a lesbian, they would “revert back to women’s clothes and feminine ways”.

While the terms “butch” and “femme” were not explicitly used by Khoo’s respondents, Khoo uses these terms in an article discussing “lesbianism in its world context” (New Nation, Oct 18 1972). The year this article was written bears important implications. In the 1970s, white lesbian-feminists in the US were explicit in their aversion toward feminine/femme and masculine/butch gender roles and presentations among lesbians and encouraged androgyny in their desire to assimilate into larger feminist movements (Brown, 1972). It was likely that Khoo’s viewpoints were shaped by the writings of radical lesbian feminists whose interpretations of gender presentation discount how certain female bodies relate to maleness, or masculinity, specifically, masculine physical appearance.

Khoo opines that lesbians in Singapore do not face hostility or condemnation unlike their counterparts in the UK or US where social persecution led to the formation of a “lesbian subculture” or social movement such as the *Daughters of Bilitis*, the first lesbian civil and political rights organization in San Francisco. She claims that western societies are generally more intolerant of same-sex public displays of affection due to the legacy of “Victorian morals and puritanism”, unlike in Asia, where intimate friendships have developed between women in some sisterhood clans in China. Thus, in Singapore, the absence of hostility was in large part due to a lack of public awareness toward homosexuality. Khoo was optimistic that Singapore would be accepting of gays and lesbians if they were to be visible since she had noted increasing societal acceptance of these populations in Western societies. Further, she posits that a strong extended family system in Singapore, would prevent lesbianism from becoming a prevalent social problem.

The connection between homosexuality and family breakdown is an important point to note, because in contemporary Singapore, it has crystalized into a state discourse that positions LGBT citizens as a threat to family norms or that LGBT individuals come from dysfunctional families. Beginning in the early 90s, a principal from an all-girls’ school called the police to “deter a group of lesbians from approaching some of her secondary school students” (ST, 5 July 1992). She described them as “20-year-old tomboys who smoked, carried pagers, wore jackets

and tight jeans” and associated them with having low education levels and coming from dysfunctional families just from observing their behaviors.

This above excerpt highlights the association of lesbians with a highly visible form of working-class masculine presentation. It also alludes to the importance of family in regulating appropriate gender behaviors in girls. Further, since most all-girls schools in Singapore tend to accept students who display academic excellence, the principal’s act of involving the police demonstrates the threat of female masculinity to middle-class gender and family ideals. The school girls, who would potentially be educated women and ideal reproducers for the nation, were to be “protected” from the predatory presence of masculine female lesbians.

In 1999, journalist Ernest Luis and his team of writers and experts, warned the public about the “danger” of a growing lesbian culture in Singapore that needs to be controlled and corrected (The New Paper, 16 May 1999). Headlines were designed with huge slogans reading “Oh No Oh No”, in shocking bold red font with the ‘O’ replaced with ambiguous gender symbols. Tan and Lee (1999: 12) described how these journalists constructed the lesbian as one who experiences “gender confusion” since the symbols were “both a man and a woman yet neither”. A side-bar illustrating gender roles in female same-sex relationship reveal how Luis, and the larger public, view gender ambivalence as a form of deviant sexuality. The headings “How You Can Be So Sure” and “The Butch and Feminine Roles” evoked a witch hunt that encouraged the public to be aware and to identify these traits in female youths. Tan and Lee (1999: 13) drew these distinctions from Luis’s articles and summarized them in Table 2:

Table 2. Summary of Butch-Feminine Roles in Singapore

Roles	“Butch”/ “male”	“Feminine”/ “female”
Presentation	Tomboyish—very short haircuts; baggy clothing, tight-bras to create a flat-chest	Pretty—wears petite skirts and tops
Disposition	Strong survival instinct- Predatory and intimidating or admired by young girls Dangerous—target married women	Weak and vulnerable— Dependent, needs affection and friends
Family Background	All brothers	No brothers or strong father figure

According to Luis, butch-feminine roles inflect heterosexual gender norms. Lesbian relationships are understood as hetero-gendered, with the characteristics of the “butch” as

diametrically opposite to the “feminine” partner. As the masculine person, butches were portrayed as aggressive and predatory, compared to the vulnerability of the feminine girlfriend who needs to be protected. The supposed “butch-feminine roles”, in their extreme negative polarities of masculine and feminine attributes, demonstrate what reporters and experts view as the cause of gender and sexual deviance. Butches are marked by their gendered sexual identity and are active in claiming same-sex desire. In contrast, their “feminine” partner is defined exclusively through her gender-conforming disposition. This seems to underscore the patriarchal assumption that feminine lesbians do not possess same-sex erotic agency independent of “predatory” masculine butches.

The negative portrayal of butch-femme relationships demonstrates paternalistic anxieties around the sexual autonomy of young women. It also reveals an imposition of sexual shame, in terms of the regulation of sexuality through gender and marriage norms. Female same-sex relationships were written as inferior or “not real” compared to heterosexual unions. Additionally, lesbians were described as perverse because they are not ashamed to express their sexual desires and practices. They supposedly enjoy pornography, take semi-nude couple photos, and discuss their sexual adventures with other lesbians over coffee, all of which are seen as unbecoming for young women. The reporter did not hide his disgust and expressed concern over lesbians who “go all the way sexually”, indicating the societal expectation that women are supposed to preserve their virginity for future husbands.

Female same-sex attraction was also pathologized as a symptom of psychological and emotional distress and family breakdown. Only these factors would explain why otherwise ‘normal’ young women would turn to same-sex relationships that go against nature. Luis and his team of “experts” (a family counselor and a school principal) suggested that lesbianism is a “reversible problem” that can be addressed with family support because lesbians tend to come from dysfunctional families that do not provide nurturance and affection. By showing care and building their self-esteem, these girls will “grow out” of their lesbian phase. Lesbians require family and social support to “recover” from a confused psychological state, and understand that lesbian relationships are “abnormal”. The article reveals the paternalism of the journalists and experts in their desire to “correct”, calling upon the family to protect young women from sexual and gender deviance. The family continues to be regarded as the primary site of disciplining norms, where non-normative behavior is attributed to family breakdown. Lesbianism is viewed as a threat to family values, while simultaneously representing the failure of the family to socialize her into proper norms of gender and sexuality.

2.5.4 Female Same-Sex Relationships in Malay Media

In 2003, in response to the state's laissez-faire hiring policy toward gays and lesbians in the civil service, Malay journalists published a month long "exposé" about the lives of Malay gays and lesbians in Singapore. Journalists for the local Malay newspaper adopted similar attitudes as their English-language counterparts toward female same-sex relationships. "Butches" were associated with blue-collar working-class jobs and low academic qualifications while their masculine dispositions were emphasized through their very short hair, excessive smoking, riding a motorbike and being sexually aggressive. Butches were treated as predators who seduce and cajole their feminine "victims" (*mangsa*) into same-sex relationships (Omar, 2003). In contrast, feminine same-sex partners were described as having long hair and being gentle and quiet. However, the latter has the tendency to be vocal, assertive and depressive upon entering relationships with butches. One narrative describes a Malay wife who "turned crazy" because she left her husbands and children for a butch (Salleh, 2007).

While female-same sex relationships are viewed by journalists as "abnormal" and a sin in Islam, the brunt of social persecution falls unequally onto butches. The articles presented butches as a negative influence to feminine partners and the source of the latter's emotional distress. Although female same-sex relationships were characterized as an "adolescent phase", journalists assumed that it was more natural for butches to be attracted to women, due to their masculine identification. Same-sex attraction for feminine partners were temporal and could be addressed with greater family support and religious education. Since these women are gender-conforming, they would still possess the "biological instinct" (*naluri*) to desire men. Their attraction to butches was only possible because butches, as female-bodied individuals, are more emotionally attuned and sensitive to the needs of women, unlike "real" men.

The term "lesbian" was understood and used differently by Malay journalists. English-language media regarded both butches and their feminine partners as lesbians, but Malay journalists engage the term 'lesbian' to refer more specifically to female same-sex practices rather than exclusively as a sexual identity. Further, feminine women were 'lesbians' contingent upon their partnership with butches, while butches, who identify as men, were not consistently labelled as 'lesbians'. In this context, Malay journalists differentiate butches from "lesbians", who are two women-identified female-bodied individuals sharing an intimate relationship. This discrepancy suggests that Malays view an external gender presentation as a reflection of one's inner self. A masculine-presenting butch is assumed to identify socially as a man, which explains "natural"

erotic inclinations towards feminine women. On the other hand, a feminine-presenting woman possesses sexual normalcy, thus her same-sex desires were only possible due to the persuasive influence of butches, or a state of emotional distress where she is not able to express ‘normal’ desires.

Further, in the Malay language, there is no separate distinction between sex/gender as it has been understood in the West. The words ‘man’ (*lelaki*) and ‘woman’ (*perempuan*) is synonymous with ‘male’ and ‘female’. To describe someone’s behavior is masculine or feminine would be to say one is “like a man” (*macam lelaki*) or “like a woman” (*macam perempuan*). While to describe someone who has male or female characteristics (maleness or femaleness), one could say *sifat* (nature or character of) *lelaki* (male/man) or *perempuan* (female/woman). I have also heard non-gender conforming individuals describing themselves as having a soul (*jiwa*) of a man or a woman, often trapped in the opposite-sexed biological male or female bodies. The observation that one’s gender attributes is seen as an intrinsically natural part of one’s biological sex coheres with anthropological studies on gender in Malaysia (Peletz, 1996) and some parts of Indonesia (Blackwood, 2010; Bennett, 2005). When gender is seen indivisibly as part of one’s sex, individuals whose gender presentations do not align with their biological ones receive considerable attention in Malay Muslim communities. Effeminate males and transgendered women are often referred through Malay derogatory terms such as *bapok*, *pondan* and *Mak Nyah*. These terms imply a third gender that is distinct from man or woman. Generally, these individuals are tolerated in the community despite not being overtly accepted. Evidence of these third gender terms in the Malay culture reveals how “male-bodied persons, however gendered, have usually been allowed far more bodily “play” than their female-bodied counterparts” (Peletz, 2012: 910). In contrast the lack of a “third gender” Malay term for masculine females and Malay journalists’ use of “butch” concedes to a sex/gender regime that refuses to acknowledge the possibilities of masculinity apart from male bodies within the Malay culture.

The shift in structures of feeling toward lesbians in Singapore (Williams, 1977), from “awareness to help” in the 70s to “awareness to vilify” in 90s, reveals how mainstream media editors and journalists constructed societal norms that they imagined were aligned to or would appeal to the general public. One editor nonchalantly claims that their paper does not portray gays to be “perfectly normal and acceptable” because its aim is “not to be ahead of the more traditional or conservative readers who form the majority of Singapore’s population”, while another asserts that their paper defends society’s view regarding lesbians and gays as “deviants and perverse” (Ng, 1999: 29-31).

The 1990s to early 2000s, when lesbians were portrayed in local media as sexual deviants, perverts and a growing problem that needed to be curbed, was also the same time period in which most of my butch and lesbian/bisexual informants experienced same-sex intimacies. Tang highlighted the struggles of her informants, who were educated middle-class Chinese Singaporean lesbian activists, in finding local lesbian “role models” while growing up, since those that were portrayed in local media tend to be “conflicted gay people” (2012: 90). This was unsurprising given that the dominant characterization of lesbians tend to be women who denounced or expressed shame about their sexuality, and/or were suicidal due to these conflicting desires. The climate of hostility toward gender non-conforming women and female same-sex relationships structure the growing up experiences of the female same-sex participants in my research. It influences how they measure their self-worth against what society constitutes as “normal”, informing their current reproductive strategies and family formation.

2.6 Uneven Circuits of Knowledge: Race, Class and the Queer Digital Divide

Blackwood (2010) and Murray (1999) have argued that much of the theorizing about queer Asian globalization has been from “above”—focused on IT-proficient, educated activists in urban metropolises while relegating the experiences of working- and lower-middle-class individuals in regional cities or rural areas to providing an alternative reading of being “queer”. As a global urban city, Singapore presents a fascinating locale to examine such multiple readings. This section provides the context in understanding the influence of class and ethnicity in providing same-sex partners with access to LGBT support networks and resources that would be useful to their same-sex families.

Queer social networks and participation, like labor movements and community participation in Singapore, tend to be ethnically stratified (see Clammer, 1998). Tan (2007) and Phillips (2014) have each observed the dominance of English-speaking Chinese middle-class gays and lesbians in the local queer community, and the absence of Malays and Indians in these spaces. Gay and lesbian activists have also expressed difficulties in getting data from working-class and/or ethnic minority groups, which makes any comparison of race and class amongst Singaporean queer women impossible (Sayoni, 2010). Since surveys tend to be circulated online and within gay and lesbian social networks, local LGBT activists have reasoned that a minority of queers are underrepresented because “they do not have or may not know how to use the computer” (ibid).

Since its widespread introduction in 1997, the Internet has played a crucial role in producing new sexual subjectivities and communities in Singapore (Tang, 2012; Berry et al. 2003). While the Internet democratizes information to a certain extent, people's access to particular forms of LGBT resources and networks corresponds to their social, economic and cultural capitals. If the presence of ethnic working-class minorities are marginal in local LGBT spaces and networks, then it would be difficult for them to access the kinds of resources that permeate through these spaces. In addition, IT has been introduced as a compulsory course so queer youths growing up in this era (35 and below), are reasonably tech-proficient. In the formative days of the Internet, a digital divide existed between those who could afford Internet access and those who could not. Despite the economic barrier, working-class Malay butch participants had access to Internet Relay Chat rooms (IRC) to connect with other queer Malays and create informal social networks. However, these networks tend to be ethnic- (and class-) based where there seems to be a queer "Malay community" distinct from a larger local queer community that is predominantly Chinese. The underrepresentation of working-class and ethnic minority queers within online LGBT communities may have more to do with their limited social and ethnic networks rather than technical proficiency.

Clammer (1998: 21) explains that the ethnic stratification in the labor movement in Singapore creates lack of real social contact and lack of perception of common class interests, especially since Malays are overrepresented in low-end services, manufacturing and clerical jobs. In the LGBT community, which is dominated by English-speaking, university-educated professionals, working-class queers are severely underrepresented, except for entertainment spaces such as clubs and bars. In my personal experiences, the working-class Malay butches and lesbians I have met interact with their co-ethnics at work or school and socialize with queer Chinese women in clubbing circuits. However, when they evoke "community", they more often than not are referring to their Malay social networks or the larger Singapore Malay community rather than a specific sexual community.

The above observation demonstrates limited cross-racial/class interactions or the lack of common class interests between working-class Malays and that of the predominantly middle-class Chinese lesbians in Singapore. On the other hand, working-class Chinese lesbians, while lacking common class interests with their upwardly mobile co-ethnics, do not feel as marginalized as ethnic minority Malays since they intersect in terms of their ethnic similarities. They are able to communicate in both Mandarin and English and participate in social activities

like drinking, singing KTV Chinese songs, sharing similar festivals and religious beliefs to which their Malay counterparts do not have any cultural affinities.

In Singapore's bid to become an "Intelligent Nation", almost 90% of households have Internet access (Info-communications Development Authority of Singapore, 2016). This means that older participants (aged 35 and above) who were not initially exposed to IT are now plugged in through their smart phones. However, the Internet's promise as a portal of infinite information in turn creates a digital class divide present between those who use the Internet for information-seeking and those who use it exclusively for recreation (Hine, 2015). Since the majority of the Malays in Singapore are working-class, the global, social and information capital that flows within queer Malay networks tend to be limited to their socioeconomic horizons. As a result, despite being digitally active, working-class Malays remain unplugged from local LGBT middle-class information and social networks.¹⁵ Access to local and global queer discourses is circumscribed by subjects' intersecting particularities of class, gender and race in Singapore, where knowledge is produced through the very routes in which they have been constituted (see Grewal and Kaplan, 2001).

2.7 Conclusion

In this chapter, I have examined the historical and ideological constructions of the "Asian" family ideology as well as its significance to the understanding of gender and sexual norms of the heteronormative family in Singapore. In addition, the colonial and post-colonial processes of governing racial difference, and the corresponding implications to Singaporeans' understanding of class and class consciousness, provides a cultural context to examine how inequalities of race, gender and sexuality are inflected in female same-sex partners' everyday practices of kinship, reproduction and mother/fatherhood.

Tan (2011) and Phillips (2015) have observed that the state's strong communitarian ideology has manifested in the way LGBT activists articulate their needs as citizens in terms of acquiring equal social entitlements with their heterosexual counterparts. LGBT citizens who stress commonalities with heterosexual Singaporeans, for example, by upholding economic

¹⁵ On Facebook, I observed that the more upwardly mobile and educated queer Chinese and Malay female participants tend to actively post and share online articles that legitimize their same-sex practices and challenge unequal forms of sexual citizenship in heteronormative Singapore, whereas working class Malay queers would only share queer-content that were trending globally and locally or when it has been featured on local Malay blogs. Malays who identifies most strongly as men, tend to post Malay quotes about roles of husbands and wives in Islam suggesting their alignment with the heterosexual world.

success and having strong family and Asian values, tend to be more successful in their strategies to attain social acceptance than those who focus solely on rights based on sexual identities and orientation. At the same time, the politics of respectability produces multiple exclusions based on one's ethnic and class subject position relative to heteronormative structures and the global economy. The pragmatic strategies of local activists led me to consider how research participants, based on their subject positions, navigate unequal reproductive terrains to have children and/or legitimize their belonging as a family.

In Singapore, where access to public resources and social entitlements require proper performance of the familial, I investigate further the relationship between participants' subject position and performance of family. Are all LGBT Singaporeans subjected to the same structures of heteronormativity, and if there are other structures of power, do these structures hold equal political and material value? I explore how female participants acquire particular notions of gender and sexuality by examining the ways in which they claim or appropriate heteronormativity through their subjective formations of same-sex kinship and parenthood. In doing so, I connect historical, cultural and global processes of gender and reproduction to participants' intimate strategies of love, parenthood and family.

CHAPTER 3. MAYBE, BABY? WHAT TO EXPECT WHEN YOU ARE [OR NOT] EXPECTING

3.1 Introduction

As stated in preceding chapters, the normal trajectory of family in Singapore has been typically charted as a man and woman getting legally married, having children and raising them in a stable family unit (Teo, 2011). This route to family has been positioned in defence of “traditional” and “Asian” family values and taken-for-granted as a norm within the multi-ethnic communities in Singapore. The imposition of heterosexuality, particularly onto female-bodied individuals, is both assumed and enforced by patriarchal institutions within the state and at multiple levels of society (Rich, 1980). In Singapore, the structure of compulsory heterosexuality penalises women who do not adhere or conform to these norms by deeming them as deviant and abhorrent.

The government has responded to low fertility rates by pressuring men and women to marry and have children. In train stations, posters display cartoons of sperm and eggs containing messages instructing husbands, as marksmen, to shoot their sperm directly into their wives’ eggs, and remind women that “fertility is a gift with an expiry date”. Local women’s advocacy group, the Association of Women for Action and Research (AWARE) criticized the campaign for disrespecting Singaporeans’ personal choices to have, or not to have, children, while others have described the campaign as “patronizing and condescending towards all women” (Law, 2016).

Although more women in Singapore have obtained higher levels of education and occupy significant representation in the labour force¹, they are seldom given the space to participate as autonomous citizens capable of making their own reproductive choices. State political elites frequently depict Western practices of sexuality as a threat to “Asian” values by suggesting that women are vulnerable to global influences that would affect their ability to uphold traditional,

¹ 47.8% of the total female resident population (> 25 years) obtained at least a university qualification in 2014, with a 60.4% female labor participation rate compared to a 76.7% male labor participation rate as of mid-2015.

procreative and nurturing roles as mothers. The disapproval toward non-heteronormative motherhood reveals a structure of suspicion towards female sexuality that has been assumed to be driven by pleasure and desire, and thus detrimental to the social and economic well-being of the nation.

The interweaving of heterosexuality, biological procreation, cultural reproduction and personal identity has converged into what Warner (1991:10) terms as the production of 'reprosexuality' that privileges marital and procreative aspects of sexuality as normal. In this chapter, I look at the narratives of participants who, based on their 'practical enactments' of gender and reproduction, queer reprosexuality in rather complex ways. I intend to capture these complexities by examining three distinct groups of participants: divorced and unwed mothers in previously "unstable" heterosexual unions, butches who become fathers through same-sex relationships with single mothers and lesbian/bisexual women who have undergone assisted reproduction to conceptualize their desires for children. In a country that regards Singaporean women as natural child-bearers and reproducers for the nation (Heng and Devan, 1995), do their reproductive practices reflect compulsory heterosexuality? How did participants acquire parenthood or materialize particular choices to have or raise children, and for some, to keep unwanted pregnancies? What do these reproductive choices signify in terms of heteronormative relations of power and in addressing reprosexuality?

In the following sections, I explicate how practical misalignment in the context of non-heterosexual/non-marital procreation and non-procreative reproduction produces a 'contact zone' (Pratt, 1992) in which biology, technology, culture and the global economy interact and challenge the interwoven assumptions of reprosexuality. At this contact zone, experiences of female-bodied individuals armed with different cultural ideologies, dispositions, and access to social rewards by having children and becoming a mother and/or father, are stitched together into a narrative that challenges naturalized constructions of kinship, reproduction and gender.

3.2 Divorced/Unwed Mothers: Unintended Pregnancies and Unexpected Motherhood

In Singapore, reproduction is only legitimate within the parameters of a legal marriage. Thus heterosexual marriages as a feature of heteronormativity impose a practice of 'compulsory maternity' (de Beauvoir, 1953), onto married Singaporean women across social backgrounds. The logic follows that women who desire children should first get married while women who are

married are expected to bear children. Additionally, compulsory maternity is limited only to married women.

In this section, I examine the effect of heteronormativity, in terms of the regulation of marriage and motherhood on the lives of six Malay Muslim divorced (4) and unwed mothers (2). The conflicting emotions they experienced in narrating their route to motherhood point toward experiences of ‘maternal ambivalence’ (Brown, 2011). Brown describes maternal ambivalence in terms of co-existing positive and negative attitudes and experiences about motherhood. For this section, I focus specifically on Malay Muslim mothers’ ambivalence toward their pregnancies, instead of their relationship as a mother to their children. Malay Muslim mothers draw upon two primary cultural concepts of *Jodoh* and *Takdir* that highlights their practical negotiations with compulsory heterosexuality and maternal ambivalence respectively.

3.2.1 *Jodoh*: Compulsory Heterosexuality is “All in God’s Hands”

In Malay Muslim communities, where women are often regarded as weaker than men in terms of regulating passion and sexual desires (*nafsu*), scholars have often noted how marriage and having children not only legitimize a woman’s membership as an adult woman in the community but to counter *fitnah*, or gossip, surrounding a woman’s gender and sexual propriety (Peletz, 1995; Vignato 2012). Never-married women are often seen as subjects to be pitied upon (*kasihan*), and derogatory terms such as “Old Virgins” or *Andartu* (*Anak Dara Tua*) demonstrate how marriage is seen as a desirable practice that accords women with particular social rewards such as having a respectable status as a wife, recognition of skillful feminine virtues in her ability to secure her fate in marriage (*jodoh*), protection from malicious gossip (*fitnah*) and sexual harassment, sexual fulfilment and companionship, and the ability to fulfil her desires for children and family (Vignato, 2012). In urban and industrialized cities, a never-married woman is accused of being individualistic, selfish, uncaring or too choosy in her choice of partners; even if she is afforded social status through a career or academic qualifications, she may still be accorded an undesirable status within her community (Ibrahim and Hassan, 2009).

I found evidence of compulsory heterosexuality in the narratives of all four Malay Muslim working-class divorced mothers I interviewed for my research. Two of them are queer-identified as lesbian or bisexual women, while the other two are presently in same-sex relationships with butch partners. They had found their former spouses incompatible as life-partners but felt the pressure to marry for various reasons. Bad, who is lesbian, had an arranged

marriage to please her religious parents while the others claim they agreed to marriage because their boyfriends had proposed and it felt like the *right* thing to do. All had married when they were about 25 to 28 years old, which, between 1995-2005, was about the median age (26 years old) for female brides in Singapore (National Population and Talent Division, 2012). For these women who associate marriage with normalcy as part of one's life course, becoming a wife symbolizes coming into maturity as an adult Malay Muslim woman.

Most divorced mothers in my research framed their marriage around the notion of *jodoh*, which draws upon a specific understanding of fate in the context of finding a suitable mate to marry. The framing of marriage in terms of fate, and for some, positioned in the 'hands of Allah' (*Jodoh di tangan tuhan*) reveals an internalization of compulsory heterosexuality where marriage is a process not necessarily or primarily determined by one's own choosing, but of larger, more powerful, pre-determined forces evoked through the will of God. Zara, for instance, reconciled her understanding of a 'chosen' mate (*ditentukan sebagai jodoh*) in terms of 'being fated to marry (*dah jodoh*) but not fated to stay together (*takde jodoh*)'.

However, while some of these women expressed acquiescence to the *jodoh* of previous marriages, their narratives of pregnancy suggest that all of them struggled more with compulsory maternity than with compulsory heterosexuality. They did not marry to fulfil desires for children. Instead, they had married in hopes of fulfilling their desires for love and companionship as part of their life-course of coming-of-age as eligible adult woman. Yet they came into marriage fully aware and accepting of the fact that as wives, they were expected at some point to be mothers. None of them had explicitly expressed not wanting children as a pre-condition of marrying their partners. Conversely, they viewed motherhood as inevitable within a marriage and thus framed their desires for children in terms of a reconciliation of norms of compulsory heterosexuality.

3.2.2 *Takdir*: Reconciling Maternal Ambivalence with Fate

While the divorced mothers internalized cultural norms through marriage, they struggled with the idea of having children with their ex-partners, whom they did not regard as suitable or compatible as co-parents. Marital happiness and stability was an important factor shaping these mothers' decision to have or withhold from having children with their former husbands. This echoes state discourses that children should be raised in a conducive and stable two-parent environment. At the same time, as married wives, they found it difficult to practice voluntary childlessness. Through their stories of conception and pregnancy, I found that divorced mothers

had children, not because of an intrinsic desire to become mothers, but rather due to various circumstances of their marriage. In their stories, the concept of ‘fate’ continues to be emphasized, albeit utilized in diverse ways. The notion of ‘fate’ is distinct from the earlier discussion of *jodoh*. In this section, mothers express fate in terms of *Takdir*, a form of pre-destiny, determined through God’s will as divine intention or intervention.

Unlike the other divorced mothers, Bad had insisted on having a child even when she and her husband had been diagnosed with fertility problems. She had regarded their fertility issues as an affirmation from God that she was not fated (*takde takdir*) to raise a child with him. However, she was determined to prove that God had intended for her to become a mother. Her determination was motivated by the idea that a child was the only viable way in which she could give and receive love while staying married to an emotionally abusive husband.

As a married woman, Bad was entitled to the state’s heavily-subsidized In-Vitro Fertilization (IVF) treatments, in which she conceived successfully after three rounds. Despite being artificially inseminated with her ex-husband’s sperm, she negates his role in her pregnancy by describing IVF as “getting *myself* pregnant”. In dissociating her ex from her pregnancy, Bad challenges dominant assumptions of biological reproduction that views husbands and wives as equally important in procreation. In this regard, she viewed her conception as a result of *takdir* or fate that was exclusive to her instead of a shared fate with her ex-husband. Her successful conception via IVF reinforced her positive belief that she was self-sufficient and destined to be a single mother. Bad’s experiences with maternal ambivalence came only when she was reminded that she was sharing her son with her ex-husband. This detracted from her sense of maternal autonomy. She had felt like a ‘bad mother’ for not wanting her son to have any associations with his biological father. She claims that her negativity tapered when she got divorced, and disappeared when her ex passed away shortly after her divorce.

Instead of planning for children as culturally expected of wives, two divorced mothers described with exuberance how they were strategizing for the right moment to leave their ex-husbands “from day one”. Thus, their immediate reaction to their unintended pregnancies was one of a profound sense of “doom” and “failure”, or a “nightmare came true”, as having children made it difficult to exit a marriage. Zara describes, “It’s hard to leave your husband when you have kids, because the first question people would ask would be *what about the children?* It doesn't matter if he’s an alcoholic or womanizer, because it’s no longer just about you when you have children.” Other divorced mothers such as Dewi, also shared that when they attended mandatory marital counselling prior to divorcing their husbands, Muslim counsellors had advised

them to resolve their marital issues for the benefit of the children, which they felt made them feel like ‘selfish’ mothers.

Compulsory maternity determines that every married woman celebrates becoming pregnant as a marital achievement. In this context, divorced mothers, who receive the confirmation, “*Congratulations, you’re pregnant*”, and *intend* to have an abortion are challenging the gendered reproductive habitus, where married women should want children conceived with their husbands. At the same time, if the habitus of compulsory maternity is also framed in terms of God’s will, then their counter-reproductive strategies may demonstrate their negotiations with *takdir* through two intertwining ideas of divine intention or intervention.

I differentiate divine *intention* from *intervention* within participants’ understanding of *takdir* because the latter requires conscious effort on the part of individuals in desiring an outcome. Given that the mothers did not describe conscious intent or efforts to get pregnant, their unintended pregnancies are different from the experience of Muslim counterparts who consciously plan and strategize for children while also relying on *divine intervention* for conception. Dewi, for instance, did not even have the time to think about children before finding out six months into her marriage that she was pregnant and had conceived on her wedding night. She claims, “Of course fate would have it that at that same time, I also found out my husband was secretly married to another woman in Thailand.” It was too late for Dewi, who was then six months pregnant, to terminate her pregnancy. Suki, her daughter, became the effect of *takdir*, God’s intention for her to be a mother.

Through Dewi’s narrative, the concept of fate in a gendered reproductive habitus is expressed in two ways: firstly, that God had intervened in her fate by revealing her husband’s secret marriage. This knowledge justified Dewi’s reasons for abortion because of her husband’s breach of their marital contract. Secondly, that she was not able to terminate her pregnancy led her to believe that she was intended to be a mother. In another situation, when Zara’s husband vetoed her request for money to get an abortion and questioned her morality as a mother, Zara resorted to a Malay old wives’ tale, consuming cans of pineapples in the hopes of causing uterine spasms to induce a miscarriage, albeit unsuccessfully. Thus, for other divorced mothers, unintended pregnancies are framed through a similar understanding of divine intention that they become mothers, which arises only after failures in terminating pregnancies. Divorced mothers express maternal ambivalence when they compare their present role as a mother with past memories of their pregnancy. While they are grateful for their children and consider themselves devoted and loving mothers, most of them also express remorse in having children only because

of the financial and legal struggles they had to go through as single mothers. Yet they also felt that *takdir* was not something they could easily control or alter even if they could go back in time. One mother puts it adequately: “I hate my ex and should not have married him. But Allah has determined my children needed to be born with him. It had to be him. It’s *takdir*. *Nothing can change that.*” In this regard, *takdir* becomes a way to explain past choices and outcomes and divorced mothers express their understandings of divine intention or intervention in rather complex ways that reveals negotiations with their gendered reproductive habitus.

The concept of *takdir* can also be viewed as a powerful mechanism to deal with the forms of sexual and gender-based violence that some mothers have been subjected to in the circumstances of their marriage. Under Singapore’s structure of reproductivity, a husband who forces his wife to have sex with him is not guilty of an offence unless the couple is commencing divorce or he has a Personal Protection Order (PPO) against him. The lack of explicit laws against marital rape compromises the notion of sexual consent between married couples and privileges a practice of compulsory heterosexuality in terms of husbands’ control over their wives’ sexual and reproductive autonomy. Divorced mothers use terms such as *sengaja lepas dalam* (‘purposely ejaculate inside’) to describe the practice of ‘intentional insemination’ where a husband would ejaculate inside his wife’s vagina with the purposeful intent to make her pregnant. Dewi, for instance, became cautious of leaving future unwanted pregnancies to *takdir*. She took control of her reproductive autonomy by setting up an appointment to insert a contraceptive Intra-Uterine Device (IUD), shortly after the birth of her daughter and without her husband’s knowledge. Her ex had wanted more children and she was afraid he would intentionally impregnate her through “forced insemination”.

Another mother claims that her two children were conceived through circumstances of her husband’s intentional insemination despite his usual practice of withdrawal or *lepas pat luar* (‘ejaculate outside’). On two separate occasions, she had earlier contemplated divorce due to his alcoholism and infidelity, and he responded by “ejaculating inside” while insisting it was accidental. She explains: “I had my babies not from making love. He *usually forces himself on me anyway* but those two times, he purposely ejaculated inside so I would get pregnant and cannot leave him.” Despite her recognition of her husband’s intent through ‘forced insemination’ and her failed attempts to terminate her pregnancy, she continues to position her route to motherhood as *takdir* that is determined by Allah. She elaborates:

What are the odds that we were not even trying for children, and the ONLY two times that he ejaculated inside, I got pregnant! Looking back, perhaps his role is to

be my sperm donor because the kids just needed to be born. This is already arranged by God.

In the absence of laws regulating marital rape, the narrative above explicates a woman's agency in reconciling herself with her unintended pregnancy. She frames her ex-husband's forced insemination as "odds" arranged through divine intervention as a strategy to reclaim her sexual and reproductive autonomy. She transforms a narrative of undesirable and violent conception that is legitimized through heteronormative norms, into an empowering narrative in which her ex-husband has been intended by God's will, to be reduced to the substance of his form ("sperm donor"). In this regard, *takdir* is evoked to reinforce and re-empower her self-determination as a mother and to assert control over past narratives in which she had felt powerless and subordinated to her husband.

Divorced mothers' evocation of *takdir* should not be perceived as a form of fatalistic acceptance or passivity. Rather, its evocation represents an active and meaningful negotiation of motherhood norms where maternal ambivalence can still be reconciled through one's acceptance of fate in bringing pregnancies to term. The narratives in this section reinforce how an evocation of *takdir* represents a practical enactment of gender within marriage where, firstly, a wife is expected to acquiesce to her husband's demands for sex. Secondly, it validates a positive sense of motherhood to counter undesirable memories of conception or maternal ambivalence.

The cultural framework of *takdir*, expressed in terms of divine intervention or intention, legitimizes a woman's maternal ambivalence within the structure of compulsory maternity, by providing a space in which a woman can comfortably express not wanting to be a mother and, simultaneously, position herself as destined to become one. In this regard, *takdir* validates the non-normative practices and subject positions of divorced mothers. It is also enabled under the same structures that produce a gendered reproductive habitus. As an Islamic-oriented practice, *takdir* makes mothers' traumatic experiences intelligible within heteronormative structures that regard marital rape and forced insemination as culturally illegible. Divorced mothers also demonstrate self-agency in reclaiming their reproductive autonomy. This includes conceiving via IVF despite low fertility, getting a secret IUD and attempting a home abortion. These examples highlight that while women accept *takdir* of motherhood, they do so with the conscious acknowledgement that they were also explicit in their efforts in attempting, whether successful or not, to thwart impositions of compulsory maternity.

3.2.3 Challenging *Jodoh* and *Takdir*: Conceiving out of Wedlock

The narratives of two unwed single mothers challenge the cultural concept of *jodoh* that endorses sexual relations with an intended married partner and also disrupts the notion of *takdir* that ties together reproduction with God's intention or intervention. These practices reveal how expectations of compulsory heterosexuality and maternity correspond to a woman's marital status, ethnicity, income and age of which she becomes a mother.

While teenage or young adult marriages are legally recognized, they are not necessarily socially approved¹. The government, for instance, are explicit about their views on marriage being a union of two stable adults, defined as financially and emotionally ready to begin a family together. Young adults who marry when they should ideally be in higher education are therefore seen as "at-risk" in terms of family dysfunction. The issue of teenage marriage has become a racialized discourse given that ethnic minority Malays are disproportionately represented in statistics of "dysfunctional families", described as families who lack a stable two-parent structure, unable to be self-sufficient and dependent on government agencies for welfare assistance. The state has defined teenage motherhood as a "Malay problem" and identified it as a root cause for dysfunctional families. Malay Muslim leaders deal with this issue by attributing high incidences of teenage and/or out-of-wedlock motherhood to mothers' alienation from Muslim reproductive and family norms. Amal and Boi's experiences highlight problems with these assumptions.

Although compulsory heterosexuality and maternity have been imposed onto Singaporean women, young and unwed working-class mothers like Amal and Boi are both legally and socially marginalized in Singapore and especially within the Malay Muslim community that views pre-marital sex as a carnal sin (*zina*) and regards those who become mothers out of these circumstances as "immoral" and sexually promiscuous. Amal and Boi who were 17 and 23 when they got pregnant, were significantly much younger than most of the divorced mothers who were about 26 to 30 when they became mothers. Between them, Amal presently identifies as a femme

² In Singapore, Muslims and Non-Muslims are subjected to different matrimonial laws through a dual legal system, where Islamic Syariah system¹ co-exists with the Civil legal system. Within a dual law system, the legal and eligible age to marry varies between Muslims and Non-Muslims. Under the civil law, individuals are required to be at least 21 years of age to register for marriage. Those between 18-21 are eligible to marry only if they acquire parental consent for marriage and attend a marriage preparation program. On the other hand, the Administration of Muslim Law Act (AMLA), recognizes that in Islam, a Muslim can marry at the age of puberty. Thus, while Muslim couples should be 21 to register their marriage, individuals who are 16 years of age are allowed to marry with the consent and presence of their parents. Further, girls who marry under the age of 16, require special licensing but are still eligible to marry.

lesbian while Boi, is masculine-identified as a butch. Both these unwed mothers were catapulted into early motherhood against their expectations of marriage and having children. In fact, for Boi, who sees herself as a man, marriage and children were not even thought of as possible for herself since she had viewed such practices as exclusive only to cis-gender heterosexual couples. Amal, 17 at the time, had just completed secondary school and was not even considering marriage, much less children at that time.

The social rewards of pregnancy, culturally understood as a blessing or *rezeki*, and the outcome of *takdir* is only exclusive to legally married Muslim couples. Within the Muslim community, Boi and Amal experience the stigma of having children out of wedlock; they view their pregnancy not in terms of positive fate, but rather negative fate in the form of God's retribution. In the larger Singapore society, Boi and Amal as unwed mothers are not entitled to similar benefits that heterosexual mothers receive. For example, they received only 8 weeks of paid maternity leave compared to 16 weeks for married mothers. Moreover, their children are also not entitled to Baby Bonus scheme cash rewards that the government has provided for married couples in order to encourage fertility rates. Both these forms of maternal penalties and deviantization reinforces forms of stratified reproduction onto women who fail to conform to ideal nuclear family norms.

In my conversations with Amal and Boi, their understanding of being "deviant" mothers primarily draw upon Malay Muslim norms of sexuality and marriage. However, the diverse circumstances in which they became pregnant meant that both of them regard their transgressions rather differently. Amal had become pregnant by her first and only boyfriend while Boi got pregnant through rape. How do unwed single mothers reconcile a gendered reproductive habitus within a stratified reproductive field?

Amal had considered herself "unlucky" and viewed her pregnancy as a form of retribution and punishment because she had engaged in *zina* (pre-marital sex). She elaborates, "I was so scared when I found out I was pregnant. I thought my parents were going to kick me out because it's a shameful thing". The fear, guilt and shame that Amal experienced is a response to strong moral policing of sexual norms. She added:

I wanted to abort, but I do not have money. But mostly, I just could not bear to do it. I have already done something wrong [sex before marriage] and I got pregnant as a result. I would just make it worse by aborting...an even greater sin because I am destroying a life and it is me who should pay for my mistake, not my baby. I felt like *God made me pregnant* as a way to show me how I can redeem myself. Perhaps, if I carry my baby to term and be a good mother, it will balance out my sins

somehow. I was very young and I saw how my entire future crumbling, I have to work I have to think about my child and it is no longer about me. The easiest way would have been to abort but I didn't think at that time, I could live with that decision. If this were to happen to me now, trust me, I would have made the first dash to the clinic. Wouldn't even think twice about aborting. I really do not give a shit about what people think now. My understanding of God is also very different now. I was a goody two shoes then, now I feel like... who is God and others to judge me? (emphasis added)

Amal's elaboration demonstrates how a woman measures herself against a gendered reproductive habitus. Raised as a Muslim and even though she admits that she was never a practising pious Muslim, her dispositions indicate how she has been socialized to view pre-marital sex as a 'sin' and 'mistake' that requires accountability and redemption. While she reasons that "God had made her pregnant", this notion of *takdir* draws upon images of correcting transgressions of sexual norms rather than conception as an intended blessing that was common to the narratives of divorced mothers. In this instance, Amal's maternal ambivalence was grounded in the fear of transgressing norms where only motherhood would enable a reconciliation of social norms. At the time, she was not able to overcome the reproductive habitus by arranging for an abortion because of the fear of social disapproval ('what people think').

But for her older self, maternal ambivalence is rooted in concerns about future security and economic deprivation and less about conforming to heteronormative norms. Amal's change in mindset reveals how women can gain reproductive autonomy through the accumulation of life experience. At the time of our interview, Amal was holding a lucrative position at work and socializing with individuals from diverse social backgrounds through her retail job with an international clothing company. The economic, social and cultural capitals she gained through her career and social networks had made her rethink her choices compared to her younger self whose interpretive horizons was limited to school and home where sexual and gender norms were more strongly enacted and reinforced around her.

Boi's traumatic experience with corrective rape as gender-based violence highlights the vulnerability of gender non-conforming female individuals within structures of compulsory heterosexuality. Boi's perpetrator was her drug dealer whom she had become closely acquainted with. He knew and had accepted that Boi identified as a man and was attracted to women. One night, while they were hanging out and getting 'high', he suddenly pinned her down and asked for sex. Boi, refused him by emphasizing her desires for women. Her dealer pinned her down harder, choked her to prevent her from struggling and shouting and forcibly penetrated her while

repeatedly shouting that he is “making a woman” out of her. Boi elaborates, “He kept yelling that as a butch, I should be thanking him for fucking me and he is doing me a favor.”

Boi suffered physical injuries: she could not walk for days, had bruises and her vagina had bled profusely. Yet she chose not to report her perpetrator or the sexual assault to the police. She was afraid that a rape-test kit would also test her positive for drugs and she might be sentenced to jail. She was not able to trust that the police would take her rape claims seriously for two reasons: prior evidence of a drug and criminal record, and that she is masculine-presenting. She explains, “I got drug traces in my urine, I got gang tattoo... I look like a man, you think police see rape? They will say I wanted free drugs and I deserved it.” After months of experiencing dizzy spells and bouts of nausea, Boi finally went to the doctor who informed her she was four months pregnant.

Like the other mothers, Boi was shocked by her doctor’s diagnosis and her immediate reaction was to terminate her pregnancy. But her reason was different: pregnancy would make her feel like a woman and she wanted to have an abortion to avoid further gender dysphoria. She chose to bring her pregnancy to term and raise her son for two reasons: she did not have the money to terminate the pregnancy and felt guilty for “throwing away her child” (*buang anak*). She explains, “Maybe I was destined (*takdir*) to have a child, my wake up call to stop using [drugs]. I was angry but a child is innocent, *rezeki tuhan* (God’s blessings). Would have been a greater sin to abort.”

Boi’s expression of *takdir* points to ideas of redemption from what she felt was an undesirable past due to being a drug addict. Like Amal, she uses *takdir* in terms of retribution and a form of moral trial where raising her son indicates a sense of accountability for one’s action and toward another life that she views as innocent. For Boi, because she was raped, her moral transgression is not sexually defined but rooted in the use of drugs, which she understood is also frowned upon in Islam. She did not think that God had intended for her to be raped and so *takdir* in her context was seen as a form of intervention that prompted a repudiation of her past addiction and encouraged her to reform her ways to be a responsible adult to her son. She also insisted that God blessed her with a child as a positive outcome to counter a traumatic experience.

Unwed mothers’ stories of conception and decision to raise their “illegitimate” children challenges state leaders’ assumptions that these women are alienated from Malay Muslim social norms. In contrast, Boi and Amal’s practice of early motherhood draws upon the very structures of compulsory heterosexuality and motherhood that simultaneously marginalizes them as deviant and immoral mothers. They evoked the sociality of God through their understanding of *takdir* as a

way to express remorse and their desires for redemption in being accountable for their past transgressions. Far from estrangement from social norms, their reproductive practices actually demonstrate alignment to norms of compulsory maternity, except their reproductive routes have not been legitimized by the state nor culturally approved. Their sense of guilt in terminating their pregnancies reveal precisely a gendered reproductive habitus, providing the practitioners strategic competencies to deal with unforeseen life changing situations. Despite being fully aware that they would be ostracized for having a child out-of-wedlock, participants reveal their cultural competence in choosing not to abort because they have been socialized as women to view such acts as deplorable.

Narratives of Malay Muslim divorced/unwed mothers demonstrate differentiated experiences and unequal access to reproductive autonomy corresponding to stratified reproduction. Although compulsory maternity is imposed onto female-bodied citizens, whether or not a woman is encouraged to have and raise children depends on her proximity to heterosexual norms and her dispositions that are also shaped by the social, economic and cultural capitals she possesses. Divorced mothers, by virtue of their marital status at the time of pregnancy, are accused of being selfish and bad mothers if they wish to terminate their pregnancy, while unwed single mothers are penalized for being sexually promiscuous and morally irresponsible for bringing their children to term.

One's social status, depending on their proximity to heterosexual norms prior to their pregnancy, shapes whether or not they experience guilt in considering abortion. To further elaborate, I noted that divorced mothers did not express guilt. They were in fact, adamant about aborting if not for reasons such as having finances controlled by their husband for one, and for another, being too far along in the pregnancy to do so. In contrast, unwed mothers felt guilty because they saw themselves as having a "spoiled identity", which Goffman (1963) describes as attributes that are deeply discrediting and cause a person to experience stigma. Unlike divorced mothers, at the point of their pregnancy, whose sexual and reproductive practices conform to Malay Muslim cultural ideals expected of women, unwed single mothers regard themselves as having a "spoiled identity" by having sex out of marriage or being a drug addict. The differences in terms of experiences of guilt demonstrate diverse personal dispositions and gendered reproductive habitus that divorced and unwed mothers draw upon respectively and which informs their reproductive agency.

To conclude, divorced and unwed mothers' stories of conception exposes a misalignment between mothers' desires (unintended pregnancies) and a gendered reproductive habitus. The

ways in which divorced and unwed mothers draw upon concepts of *jodoh* and *takdir* reinforces the productive power of normative categories in terms of compulsory heterosexuality and compulsory maternity, respectively. *Takdir*, described in terms of divine intention or intervention represents a normative force that these Malay mothers evoke them as means to reconcile a misalignment of desires within contact zones of gender and kinship in a stratified field of reproduction. Moore (1994) suggests that actions can be constituted as forms of critical and meaningful reflection that is not always and/or necessarily conscious, discursive and strategic. Becoming pregnant or having children is an agentive process where mothers' evocation of *takdir* reveals different ways of dealing with unintended pregnancies and interpretation of norms and outcomes. Contemplations of abortion and eventual decisions to keep their pregnancies highlight processes of agency where their actions reflect cultural discourses and practices that make sense to them based on conditions that they know as thinkable or imaginable.

3.3 Female Fatherhood: Socialized Masculinities and Reproductive Capacities

This section examines whether gender non-conforming females experience similar pressures to adhere to norms of compulsory heterosexuality and maternity in their desires for children. I discuss the significance of participants' gendered subjectivity and disposition and the ways in which this informs their capacities to enact or imagine possibilities to have children through alternative or non-traditional reproduction. How do butches and masculine-presenting andro women who desire children negotiate with structures of reproductivity, in which reproduction is anchored in gender conformity, heterosexuality and biological reproduction?

I conducted interviews with four Malay Muslim butches (masculine-identified) and one andro (masculine-presenting) participant who are either planning to have children, co-parenting with their partners or had previously co-parented in the context of a same-sex partnership. All of them are currently in their early to late 30s and fantasized, at some point in their adolescent lives, about having children. But they had dismissed these desires for children because they did not know of any other way in which they could become a parent without getting married and being pregnant. Since they identified as a boy/man, the "natural" routes to parenthood and procreation through their female reproductive system was not feasible because it would not align with their gendered subjectivity. In this regard, for some of them, their relationship with single mothers provided them with the opportunity to become fathers and re-energized their latent desires for children. Three of the participants, Jo, Shiq, Zai and Yam self-identify as butches or see

themselves as men. Iris, who is masculine-presenting, prefers to identify as an androgynous lesbian. Butches tend to describe having children in terms of acquiring fatherhood, while Iris, who is planning to have children has no issues in imagining herself as a “lesbian mother”.

Butches’ desires to have children were contingent upon being the inseminator instead of the one who gets impregnated, as testament to their sense of masculinity. Yam, elaborates:

The only way I want to have my own children it by making a woman pregnant. My sperm, inside her. Never me getting pregnant, I can’t even deal with my own body right now, what more when breasts start growing, breastfeeding... I find it horrifying.

Similarly, Jo associates her inability to have children with not having sperm, in spite of having the reproductive capacity to bear children. While Shiq stresses upon the fact that she is not biologically male and therefore would not be able to “make children”. Their narratives explicate the ideation of masculinized reproduction which emphasizes their role in enabling women’s pregnancies, rather than being pregnant themselves. Even though none of them have been diagnosed with fertility issues and possess a functional and healthy reproductive system, their masculine dispositions and gender identity imposes limits to their biological and reproductive capacities, so that pregnancy becomes psychologically and physically impossible to them.

Butches felt that being impregnated through penile penetration or insemination, coupled with the thought of their bodies becoming more feminized through pregnancy, disrupts their sense of self as a man, a result that they regard as emotionally traumatizing and dysphoric. This was exemplified in Boi’s experience in the previous section, where she experienced displacement of her gender identity because being pregnant had made her feel like a woman.

One andro participant, Iris, who does not identify as a man, expresses discomfort with pregnancy differently from butches’ anticipation of gender dysphoria. Iris is planning to have children with her queer German-Chinese partner, Elisa, via artificial insemination, and the couple had agreed that Elisa would be the one who gets pregnant. Iris elaborates, “As someone who is internally masculine, pregnancy would not psychologically suit me.” Elisa reinforced this by describing Iris as having “no maternal instinct” but possessing a “paternal” one. Unlike butch participants, Iris is less concerned about physical bodily changes because she identifies as a cis-gender woman. Rather, as someone who is “internally masculine” and lacking “maternal instinct” Iris is worried that she would not be as capable to be a “mother” in terms of being attentive to their feeding needs and comforting them. In contrast, butches have no issues seeing themselves being involved in the daily caregiving and nurturing children. For butches, these mothering

practices typically associated with femininity and maternity are aligned to their own aspirations of being responsible and involved fathers.

Masculine female participants disrupt naturalized assumptions of compulsory maternity by re-appropriating gender norms. Their desires to have children, as female-bodied individuals, seem to indicate adherence to the norm that these desires are natural to women as ‘reproducers’. Yet, butches’ desires disrupt feminine gender norms because they are routed through a motivation to acquire fatherhood instead of motherhood. They also disrupt reproductivity by differentiating wanting to have children from being pregnant. In doing so, they remove the emphasis of biology in reproductive kinship, which enables them to discover alternative practices in which they could father or mother children.

3.3.1 *Jodoh*, the Acquisition of Children and ‘Instant’ Fatherhood

Since “natural” routes to parenthood are not available for the three working-class Malay Muslim butches, they seek other alternatives to having children. Here I explore what happens when they get into relationships with mothers who have children. Despite their fantasies to have children and become fathers, these butches were not consciously looking for relationships or had intended to be with single mothers in order to be a father. Some of them described their unexpected romance by culturally appropriating the term *jodoh*, where their single mothers have been arranged for them by Allah. Shiq had described being butch as her fate (*takdir*) and acceptance of this fate meant that certain desires, such as having children had to be sacrificed. Therefore, she was thankful (*syukur*) to God for giving her *jodoh*, in matching her with Fauziah, a divorcee who has a daughter and an illegitimate son. Similarly, Jo, is also grateful to have met her partner who is an unwed single mother with three sons because she would not have been able to “make a generation” otherwise.

Since their single mother partners identified as heterosexuals, these butches did not expect their feminine partners to develop a romantic attraction toward them and therefore did not anticipate the transformation of a platonic friendship into an intimate relationship. It was only when their relationship took an erotic turn that they began discussing their desires to father and co-parent their partners’ children. Butches recalled these discussions with pride, because they saw an ideal future in which they could materialize their fantasies of fatherhood with their partners. Butches and single mothers who defined their co-parenting relationships as the work of *jodoh*, are

challenging heteronormativity and compulsory heterosexuality since *jodoh* is normatively used to describe marital partners within socio-legal parameters of Islam.

By partnering with a single mother who already has children from a previous heterosexual union, butches feel that they are able to become fathers in line with their gendered dispositions as masculine females. *Jodoh* is not just God's fate, but also a form of accomplishment where butches feel that their self-fashioned career of being a man can now be channelled into becoming a father. In this regard, they are able to overcome their physical and psychological discomfort of biological reproduction to enter the next life course of fatherhood, a role that they had thought exclusive to cis-gender heterosexual married men. Their new identities as fathers are also legitimized by the support from their close friends who are also working-class and in same-sex relationships.

Butches became "instant" fathers through their romantic partnerships with single mothers and some of them provided accounts of being teased by close friends who had congratulated them for having an "instant family". Congratulations were in order, because as Shiq had informed me, "it is not easy to find a woman who wants to have a family with you". While butches pride on becoming instant fathers, Rafi, who identifies as an andro 'tomboy' lesbian describes feeling uncomfortable with such forms of teasing. Rafi wanted to pursue a relationship with Amal, an unwed single mother without having to be a co-parent like the other butches. She states her position clearly, "As a tomboy, I cannot get married and get pregnant, so I cannot be a mother. If I can't do it naturally or legally, then it's not meant for me. I don't want to be pretend parent. It's not the same." Rafi's narrative reinforces how "instant" access to family does not translate into cultural forms of legitimation.

In Singapore, it is illegal for same-sex couples to adopt children. Second-parent adoption is not possible in Singapore for non-married couples. This means that butches cannot legally adopt their partners' children without the latter losing biological rights to their child. Thus, butches become fathers by informally adopting or fostering their partners' children. Further, most of these butches and their single-mother partners are also discreet about their sexuality and same-sex relationship to avoid negative repercussions from their natal families. In this context, they are secretive about their co-parenting relationship, which as a result, is not acknowledged by their natal family members. What motivates butch fathers to become co-parents despite the fact that becoming a father in a same-sex partnership does not, as Rafi has pointed out, confer any legal recognition that could translate to particular forms of social rewards? Considering Rafi's statement above and given that same-sex partnerships are deviantised, butches who become

fathers are aware that they are not able to secure any form of social and cultural rewards by informally adopting or fostering their partners' children. In my conversations with them, they insisted that they desire children primarily out of their love for children. They also regard children as crucial to achieve personal rewards of being a man and a father.

Becker (1960) claims that the desire for children is no different from any other economic motive while Blake refutes his claims by highlighting that the importance of children exists in terms of "the goals to which children are intrinsically related" (1968:22). Blake's rebuttal animates closely the motivations of butch participants in desiring children. In this regard, butches and single mothers' practice of informal fostering is also different from the consumerism noted of gay and lesbian parents who desire particular types of children, such as White over Black babies, because it connotes a particular class status and desirability (Lewin, 2009). The cultural and legal limitations in Singapore mean that butches do not have a choice of preference in terms of children. However, this is inconsequential for them as long as they are able to fulfil their aspirations of fatherhood.

While the acquisition of children seems to symbolize a particular form of strategic reproductive consumption, masculine female partners negate the instrumentality often associated with the consumption of objects by regarding children as *gifts* or a "bonus" to their romantic partnerships. Rafi, who distances herself from wanting to become a parent, describes being with Amal and Aly (Amal's daughter) as a "buy one, get one free, package." Aly comes as a 'bonus' and Rafi incorporates her into their relationship as a "god-daughter". Other butch fathers like Shiq were explicit in describing their children as "gifts" and *rezeki* (blessings) from Allah, while Yam and Zai deferred to a philanthropic perspective in rationalizing their motivation in co-parenting children. They stated that it is *amanah* (a good deed) to care for children who already exist in the world and who need love and guidance. They preferred this over spending money on other forms of alternative reproduction, like Artificial Insemination (AI), that may not be sanctioned in Islam.

Conversely, while butch partners tend to describe children as "gifts", single mothers who enter same-sex relationships are conscious of imposing the economic burdens of raising children onto their butch partners. Two single mothers described how they were touched that their butch partners were willing to take on their "baggage", where baggage, in the context of our exchanges, referred to children that their previous partners had abandoned. Based on their previous relationships with heterosexual men, single mothers had associated masculinity with a disinterest in children and active parenting. Thus, when they met their butch partners who were masculine

and enjoyed diapering, feeding and educating their children, they were surprised that butches did not have issues in taking over the responsibilities that had been vacated by biological fathers. One mother elaborates, “The children have a father, even if I don’t want him to exist. It is not fair for my partner (butch) to take care of his baggage but not get recognized for it.”

The differences between ‘gift’ and ‘baggage’ evoked by butches and single mothers respectively, both challenge and reinforce the reproximity of biological kinship. Single mothers expect biological fathers to be *naturally* responsible for children they had brought into the world because of the biogenetic connection that they have with the children. Therefore, they had found it difficult to comprehend how and why their partners, with no biological ties, would eagerly assume responsibilities that biological fathers had abandoned. Single mothers also expressed feeling guilty that they were taking in a huge debt of ‘goodwill’ that they would not be able to repay. On the other hand, butch fathers expressed that they are *ikhlas* (sincerity and goodwill) in caring for the children because it is a good deed to love and care for children despite “getting nothing out of it”.

Butch participants draw upon Islamic notions of fate and virtue evidenced through their elaborations of *jodoh*, their regard for children as ‘gifts’ and emphasis on performing good deeds (*amanah*) through voluntary goodwill (*ikhlas*). They do so to justify and affirm their personal rewards in fathering children who are not biologically related especially in a society where same-sex relationships and non-traditional families are not culturally or legally sanctioned. Further, by drawing upon the concept of childcare as *amanah* (good deed), they are also attempting to legitimize same-sex reproductive practices that have been regarded as contradicting dominant Islamic values.

3.3.2 Islam and Alternative Reproduction: Bodily Substance and Kinship Taboo

Gender non-conforming individuals who are attracted to same-sex partners have to go through alternative or non-traditional routes in order to fulfil their desires for children. Compared to the Malay Muslim divorced and single mothers that I have interviewed, butch stepfathers were more vocal and expressive about desiring and wanting children. Some of them have also thought carefully about what would be culturally permissible for them to become a social father or mother. They take into consideration the feasibility and long-term durability of same-sex relationships before thinking about having children with partners. I discuss how these Malay

masculine partners negotiate new technologies of reproduction by drawing upon Islamic ideologies of permissible sexual relations, kinship taboos and natural reproduction.

In terms of Assisted Reproductive Technologies (ART), Iris is the only Malay Muslim andro participant who is planning to have children through Artificial Insemination (AI). She went straight into discussing Assisted Reproductive Technologies (ART) options the moment I brought up the topic of children. In contrast, other Malay masculine female participants did not even mention ART; their discussions about reproduction were exclusive to biological procreation and informal fostering of partners' children. For these other participants, discussions about ART took place only after I had prompted them. Bhabha (2006) and Briggs (2006) have noted that the acquisition of children cannot be separated from global, economic and cultural forces that determine access to reproductive technologies and various forms of routes in which people achieve parenthood. What are the factors that contribute to the discrepancy in how Malay Muslim participants regard ART as a feasible option? How is this inflected in masculine partners' negotiations of class, Islam and ART?

Masculine female participants tend to subscribe to familial ideologies where "marriage" has to typically come first, as a signifier of long-term commitment, before having children of their "own". At the same time, butches, who present as men, and are attracted to gender-conforming feminine women, express difficulty in finding feminine women who desire masculine females. This is especially a challenge for the butch participants in my study who are predominantly working-class because they do not have access to lesbian social spaces in Singapore that are predominantly Chinese and middle-class. Butch participants describe feeling excluded due to their class positions and being Malay.

Due to their identification as men, most of the butch participants typically partner with heterosexual feminine Malay women who they frequently interact with in their social networks and environment. They described their romantic relationships with heterosexual feminine Malay woman as "not long-lasting". Even if there is promise for long-term, most of them mentioned that they are "not able to expect a future together" because their heterosexual partners would eventually leave them to marry cis-gender men. Therefore, the inability to see a long-term future with a feminine woman made them reluctant to discuss the possibilities of having children with these partners. Yam, for instance, describes her reluctance to talk about artificial insemination with previous heterosexual feminine partners by using the Malay word *seگان*, which means "shy" but also not wanting to impose an inconvenience (of wanting to have children with her partner) onto someone else.

The sexuality of feminine partners is a large factor in determining the viability of having children via Artificial Insemination (AI). Masculine participants are used to refraining from discussing having children with previous heterosexual feminine partners because they were afraid of making the other uncomfortable, since the latter identifies as a ‘normal’ woman and had regarded their same-sex relationships as “unnatural” to their gender and sexual dispositions. For butches, ART is a taboo topic because it would further remind feminine partners that they are not in a heterosexual relationship and would further reinforce the “unnaturalness” of biological reproduction. According to Iris, every method she proposed (AI and biomedical reproductive technologies) to “create” a child scared her ex-partners away because the idea of having children out of ‘normal’ biological procreation sounded “foreign” and “impossible” to them. It was only when she met her current Non-Muslim partner Elisa, who identifies as queer and is committed to sharing a future with her, that Iris became confident in planning for children via AI.

The absence of legal and cultural legitimization of same-sex partnerships affects how masculine participants interpret ART. In Singapore, state laws prohibit artificial insemination on married women. Most masculine participants were not aware of the latter, but they had already assumed it would be illegal based on the fact that “Singapore does not accept gays and lesbians”. All four of the butches are aware that it is possible for same-sex couples to have children via ART. They could draw examples from popular US media where gay and lesbian characters have conceived through surrogacy and artificial insemination. Most of them informed me that ART is something that “gays and lesbians in Europe and America can do” because same-sex families are starting to become common in the West, unlike in Singapore. None of them, with the exception of Iris, was aware that they could travel and perform insemination abroad, until I mentioned it to them. Even so, they continue to find ART irrelevant because they do not have the money or capacity to travel overseas. Even if they did, they described it as a “financial risk” because it does not guarantee that artificial insemination can translate into a successful pregnancy. In addition, they were afraid of producing children and raising them in a Muslim community that regards their same-sex family as deviant. Three out of six of them are not out to family members, and the question they had posed to me was: “How am I going to explain having a baby with my girlfriend to my family?”

Despite technological advancements in the field of reproduction, some masculine participants appear resistant to these advancements. They expressed stigma and fear of having children out of the normative boundaries of traditional reproduction. Butches who viewed children as a gift, blessing or *rezeki* limited these expressions of kinship only to children who are

born within the parameters of traditional procreation or reproduction that are permissible in Islam. Fewer were inclined to justify the notion of children as *rezeki* through same-sex couples' use of ART. Shiq, for instance, claimed that having children through ART, which she considers as transgressive, is akin to imposing the burden of her sexuality, a sin, onto an innocent child. Like Shiq, most butch participants view artificial insemination as only acceptable when it involves inseminating the husband's sperm into wife's eggs (as practiced by Muslims in Singapore). Their understanding of Islamic restrictions on reproductive technology draws upon norms that privilege exclusivity of marriage, and, as such, most were rather ambivalent with regards to its acceptability between same-sex couples. Some of them, like Shiq, expressed concerns that they might be "playing God" because it is already *takdir* that they are born as "man in female body" and are not fated to have their "own" children other than if they were to marry and get impregnated by their husbands. They expressed profound fear toward creating life through assisted reproduction because they view it as challenging God's will. They were afraid it would bring about material consequences—such as their partners dying in childbirth or having a child with birth defects. Apart from Iris, all of the masculine female participants acknowledge that same-sex relationships are regarded as a sin in Islam. While they have come to terms with their sexuality and being Muslim, they do not consider artificial insemination a feasible option to have children because they did not want to be further burdened with "sins".

In the Islamic world, analogical reasoning made by Muslim scholars concerning ART regards the possibility of donor sperm or egg outside of the marital contract as non-permissible. Across Sunni Muslim societies including Singapore, gamete donation (sperm and egg) and surrogacy have been religiously prohibited (Culley and Hudson, 2006; Inhorn 2006). Islamic jurisprudence laws consider donor sperm insemination from a man that is not a woman's husband akin to committing *zina*, a sexual offense. In the context, new reproductive technologies are not immune to Islamic configurations of substance and code, where "sperm", as bodily substance of males, is anchored to cultural codes of sexual conduct (see Schneider, 1968). My participants' views cohere with existing Islamic laws pertaining to new reproductive technologies.

Biomedical technologies of reproduction are seen as taboo because they pose problems to permissible boundaries of kinship relations. I had, for instance, casually asked my brother if he would be my sperm donor and he had immediately declined my hypothetical proposition. Despite his own sociological understanding that donating sperm does not equate to fathering, my brother cited his main reasons to be his proximity to my wife and future children, and the potential discomfort of being both an uncle and the biological father of my child. However, he also drew

his conclusions from a biological reproductive habitus that equates the exchange of bodily substance (sperm) and a biogenetic connection as having a kinship relation. Thus he felt that we would be sharing an “incestuous” relationship because it was “too close for comfort”, and akin to having sex with my wife, which he regards as personally and culturally inappropriate.

Practices of artificial insemination expose the cultural limits of technological innovation in the field of reproduction. This points to Strathern’s (1992) argument where “new conventions” of kinship are re-traditionalized with the old. Bodily substances represented through the sperm and the egg, even when divorced from the body, are still subjected to participants’ gendered reproductive habitus that primarily draws upon Islamic notions of permissible sexual conduct and reproductive norms. In this context, the “sperm”, as a bodily substance, is not simply a substance, but anthropomorphized into a male person and subjected to kinship rules of the stratified reproductive field. The act of insemination is therefore not regarded as a clinical procedure, but rather an exchange of the substance and code of relations that initiates one into a web of kin relations.

For Malay Muslim masculine participants, their subject positions, in terms of their gender and sexual subjectivity, ethnicity, class and life experiences, frame their reproductive choices in terms of what is possible and what remains a fantasy. Their reproductive choices are shaped first by their understanding of what they regard as permissible in Islam, and then other factors such as finances and the law. Most of these participants understand that in Islam, the right for sexual relations is exclusive within a marriage. Most of them have come to terms with the fact that their same-sex erotic relationships are not culturally sanctioned in dominant and mainstream perspectives of Islam. Based on their non-conforming subject positions, butch stepfathers have transformed their own gendered reproductive habitus in their ability to align their sense of maleness and desires for fatherhood by partnering with single mothers. In doing so, they disrupt the heteronormativity of compulsory heterosexuality as well as compulsory maternity. At the same time, their narratives demonstrate how their gendered reproductive habitus and dispositions are also primarily shaped by Islamic ideologies of kinship, which they found to be meaningful and informs also, their understanding of what is practical or permissible in terms of alternative routes of reproduction. By examining their interpretive horizons, I was able to understand why butch fathers felt grateful to be partnered (*jodoh*) with single mothers because this is the most permissible route in which they could have children within limits of their gendered reproductive habitus.

While Iris shares similar experiences with masculine participants in terms of growing up tomboy in a conservative Malay Muslim community, her life experience differs significantly from the rest of them who are working-class and whose social circles are predominantly working-class Malay Muslims. Iris is university-educated and has been active in the predominantly Chinese middle-class lesbian activist scene since she was 20. Through LGBT social networks, she met same-sex parents who had gone abroad for ART which assured her that her dreams to have children with Elisa could be realized. Iris is also well connected to liberal Muslim scholars who consider themselves LGBT allies. She acquired a Human Rights and LGBT perspective of Islam through such networks. In addition, she is also out to her family and has the support of LGBT friends that she primarily considers ‘family’. More importantly, unlike the other Malay participants, Iris is the only one who is moving to Canada where she hopes to migrate with Elisa and raise their children there. The acquisition of these forms of social and cultural capital allows her to reframe ART procedures as necessary for self-authenticity in forming an ethical Muslim subject: one who is committed to a relationship with their same-sex partner and desires to have children they would otherwise not be able to conceive.

Although the lack of economic capital is a factor, masculine female participants’ resistance to ART was based on limited access to social networks of support in terms of willing partners, family and society, and also alternative and/or progressive interpretations of Islamic laws. In comparison, Iris who keeps herself updated with liberal interpretations of Islam was the only one who was able to redefine an alternative Islamic reproductive habitus so she and Elisa could have their own children. The fact that she could, demonstrates how her accumulation of social capital (access to queer and progressive Islamic networks), economic capital (ability to migrate and gain access to AI), and cultural capital (in-depth knowledge of liberal Islam and research about ART) orient her dispositions to alter her gendered reproductive habitus. Through the narratives of Malay Muslim masculine participants, I conclude that the transformation of gendered reproductive habitus or the practical capacity to imagine and occupy new reproductive technology futures is therefore predominantly determined by one’s social and cultural capital to challenge Islamic norms of reproduction, and less influenced by one’s possession of economic capital.

3.4 Intended Motherhood: Reclaiming Sexuality and Reproductive Rights

When CJ and Olivia first came out to their respective mothers, the immediate response was, “What about my grandchildren?” The question in itself reflects the power of heteronormative reproductivity where ‘lesbian’ and ‘mother’ are viewed as incompatible categories. Their mothers’ response demonstrates the cultural assumption whereby a woman who is attracted to another woman, cannot think about making babies and having a family because it goes against the laws of nature. For all the five Chinese upper-middle lesbian and bisexual participants like CJ and Olivia, their desires to have children are seen as a natural and definitive of their identity as women, except that what appears “natural” to these women is regarded as “unnatural” and “illegal” in the cultural, socio-legal and medical reproductive field in Singapore. How do these women formulate their desires for children and overcome their gendered reproductive habitus and stratified forms of reproduction to have children?

3.4.1 Reverse Routes to Family: Baby Before Marriage?

In Singapore, according to Teo (2011), heterosexual couples tend to view marriage as a crucial step in planning to have children. Chinese lesbian/bisexual women challenge normative trajectories of kinship in their desire to have children with or without partners. Based on their narratives, their plans to have children were not conditional upon marriage. Additionally, motherhood for Chinese lesbian/bisexual women is intentional and planned in comparison to the experiences of the Malay Muslim divorced and unwed single mothers in my research. I interviewed two couples who are co-mothering, Muk Yin and Weiling, as well as Olivia and Irene, and a prospective mother, CJ, to understand what shapes their desire to have and plan for children.

Three participants, Muk Yin, Olivia and CJ, who identify as feminine (Olivia) or androgynous women (Muk Yin and CJ) had always loved children and wanted to be pregnant to get the “whole motherhood experience”. Olivia, for example, told all her friends of her goal to be pregnant before she turned 35 and would go through with it even if she had not met a suitable partner. CJ viewed pregnancy and motherhood as an “important life accomplishment” for a woman and wanted to be able to give her mother a grandchild to further their family’s progeny, an imperative goal for wealthy Chinese families due to the distribution of inheritance according to

Chinese cultural values. Muk Yin also desired children for the same reasons except she was interested in having children with Weiling.

In contrast, partners of the lesbian co-mothers did not at first express similar intent or desire to have children. Weiling was ambivalent about having children, or rather, did not think about having children until she met Muk Yin, who is 10 years her senior. Her relationship with Muk Yin had increased her desire to have and raise children together, even more so because they are lesbians. She explains, “If straight women can have children, what’s stopping us from having one too?” For Weiling, her interest in becoming a queer mother is an exercise of their reproductive rights as women to challenge what they felt were limits imposed on lesbian women. Irene desires children but was indifferent about pregnancy because she sees herself as androgynously gendered and did not see motherhood as central to being a woman. She preferred adoption because she was not close to her divorced parents and did not see it as important to have a child who was biogenetically connected to her. Both Weiling and Irene’s gender subjectivity as androgynous women and motivations surrounding pregnancy and reproduction differed from Malay Muslim andros who only partially identify as women and regard pregnancy as a disruption to their sense of masculinity.

Despite initial differences of opinions in terms of pregnancy, lesbian co-mothers’ quest for pregnancy and motherhood emerge as a shared goal. This is especially evident in terms of how partners described an interest in having children and then planning for them two to three years into their relationship. Even though not every mother views pregnancy as crucial to their subjectivity as women, all of them expressed an explicit desire to participate in the social identity and experience of motherhood. For lesbian co-mothers, having children increases their public visibility as same-sex parents. Olivia explains, “When you have a girlfriend, your family can just dismiss our relationship as “good friends” but once you bring a baby home it is a lot harder to justify friendship so it becomes obvious that your “good friend” is your partner.” Raising children together solidifies their position as partners, akin to that of heterosexual married couples.

In the absence of same-sex marriage equality laws, lesbian co-mothers articulate that they had devoted more energy, thought and extensive planning into having children than getting married. Weiling reveals the insignificance of marriage when she had forgotten to mention that they had gotten married at Brighton Park while living in the UK. Similarly, Olivia and Irene got married a year after their daughter, Zoey was born. This goes to show how formalized marriage was not in the purview of lesbian co-mothers’ family priorities, especially since same-sex unions would not be legally recognized in Singapore. But couples got married to partake in the

symbolism of marriage in terms of cementing vows of commitment to each other and strengthening their informal domestic partnership. Without formalized legal recognition of same-sex marriage, the act of having children together functions like a marital social contract, testifying to lesbian co-mothers' commitment as a family. Children represent their mutual devotion for each other.

Chinese lesbian and bisexual women's route to having children reveals an intimate reproductive politic that disavows heteronormative models and trajectories of kinship. These women challenge norms of compulsory heterosexuality by expressing same-sex attraction, which involves, for the two couples, eventually marrying each other. Further, due to unequal marriage laws, they viewed marriage as secondary to having children, even while they appropriate some of its symbolic heteronormative practices such as the emphasis on committed and stable two-parent relationships and viewing marriage as cementing commitment. Blake (1968: 22) states that the importance of having children exists in terms of the goals to which children are "intrinsically related". Chinese lesbian and bisexual women's inclinations reveal how children validate their same-sex family, enables generational transmission in furthering one's family progeny to protect wealth and inheritance, and, most importantly, authenticate their sexual and reproductive autonomy as women who get pregnant and become mothers without men. Given these inclinations, children and only children can satisfy them.

3.5 Human Reproductive Technologies and State Biopower

If biological reproduction is the taken-for-granted symbol of family and kin relations, assisted reproduction technologies (ART) intervenes in and disrupts this biological foundation. Strathern (1992) posits that what was taken to be unquestionably natural has become a matter of choice and access where nature has been "enterprised-up" (Strathern, 1992: 30). The enterprise of reproduction now provides those who choose to reproduce with an option which might not have existed before. ART challenges the presumed stability of nature and biology to procreation and family-making and exposes the social and legal constructions of legitimate parenthood. In this aspect, the existence of ART makes it increasingly difficult to think of nature, in the realm of reproduction, as "independent of social intervention" (Strathern, 1992: 30).

Singapore is not a newcomer in the scene of ART—it is in fact a front runner in new technologies and research in terms of human reproduction. In 1983, the specialized local maternity and pediatric hospital Kandang Kerbau Women's and Children's Hospital (KKWCH)

produced Asia's first In-Vitro Fertilization (IVF) baby. Married couples who experience infertility problems no longer need to rely on nature to conceive because they can utilize biomedical technology to have children. The state recognizes that in overcoming natural reproduction, the choice for women to conceive without being married may become a possibility. In 1984, through the Great Marriage Debate and Graduate Mothers' scheme, state leaders extolled university-educated women to produce babies as their duty to the nation. Then, educated women asked hypothetically, if the state wanted them to produce babies, can they do so without getting married? State leaders were explicit in their disapproval of mothers conceiving out-of-wedlock, and with ART, they have set strong policies by giving the choice to reproduce only to legally married women and only certain types of ART procedures are allowed in Singapore. It is illegal in Singapore for a woman to be inseminated without the written consent of her husband. The state also prohibits licensed healthcare institutions from providing assisted reproduction services to carry out surrogacy irrespective of a woman's marital status.

What is perhaps most peculiar about the case of human reproduction in Singapore is the way in which the use of reproductive technologies is heavily regulated while at the same time the state is also explicit in positioning Singapore as a global bio-tech hub especially in stem-cell cloning research. Aihwa Ong (2010: 2) notes how the state-funded biomedical hub, Biopolis, features "stunning buildings with names like Genome, Matrix, Nanos, Centros, Helios, Proteos, Neuros and Immunos [that] house a spectrum research institutes, many led by "world class" scientists from around the world". Singapore has gained reputation for being one of the most supportive environments for embryonic stem cell, or human cloning, research due to its liberal laws and policy on the use of stem cells.

In *The History of Sexuality*, Foucault (1990) introduces the idea of biopower where he argues that modern states regulate subjects through "an explosion of numerous and diverse techniques for achieving the subjugations of bodies and control of populations" to optimize life (Foucault, 1990: 140). Ong (2006) furthers his theory of biopower and terms the Singapore case of governance as a form of "graduated sovereignty." She highlights Biopolis as an example of the state's implementation of special zoning techniques that subject sectors of the population and economic to different scales of political exception based on their connection to global capital circuits. These zones enforce a regime of graduated sovereignty, rule or power across a vast territory in order to strategically position specific spaces to different economic, social political ends (Ong, 2006: 102-111). Rather than a uniform application of power, Ong argues that

neoliberal calculations dictate policies that efficiently differentiate the productive capacities of population and space within the national terrain.

Ong's theory of graduated sovereignty has been fundamental in the way I think about how the state manages its population, particularly in the reproductive field. It allows me to critically consider the socio-political motivations behind particular contradictions in the practice of creating life. Liberal laws enable research scientists to develop technologies to clone embryos for stem cell research in which embryos have to be destroyed after 14 days. But 'reproductive cloning', that is cloning to bring a child into the world, is banned. This ban demonstrates differentiated zones of regulation where reproduction for bio-security research, for example, finding cures for diseases, is endorsed but reproduction for reproduction's sake is prohibited, because the general Singapore public finds the latter abhorrent as it goes against the moral sensitivities of local religious communities.

Despite the apparent contradiction between reproduction for capital and for life, what remains consistent about the Singapore's state practice of graduated or differentiated biopower is its paternalistic control over women's reproductive autonomy. The different laws that prohibit ARTs such as artificial insemination, surrogacy, and reproductive cloning are driven by the same norms of reproductivity, that is, the idea of reproduction strongly stitched to the proper performance of heteronormativity that requires procreation between a husband and a wife. Reproductive cloning is banned primarily because it requires a woman's womb as a host for gestation to full term ("Human Cloning and Other Prohibited Practices Act, Ministry of Health, 2004). Surrogacy is prohibited because it commodifies women's reproduction through the "renting" of wombs. Further, if surrogacy is performed overseas, then the citizenship of the child becomes an issue. Artificial insemination is permitted for infertile married couples is premised upon practices of compulsory maternity whereby married women who are not able to reproduce are pathologized as being infertile. Since infertility is categorized as an "illness", the state permits married women access to reproductive treatments as a way to "correct" her infertility so it will be aligned to her maternal desires. These treatments are also heavily subsidized and do not require any form of cash up-front because couples are able to use their Medisave, a nationally instituted compulsory medical savings scheme. Married eligible couples can also receive up to 75% in co-funding from the government for ART treatment cycles, for a maximum of 3 fresh and 3 frozen ART cycles.

While artificial insemination seems to be the only possible way in which some married women can exercise their desires for children, the centrality of paternal genetic material becomes

apparent through the way legal courts handle cases pertaining to mixed-up sperm samples. Since August 2015, Singapore's Court of Appeal has been contemplating awarding a woman damages in the form of costs incurred to raise a child when her husband and her sued a local private hospital for mixing up sperm samples of her husband with another donor in 2012. This resulted in a baby that did not have her husband's genetic material. The court viewed their case as a legitimate grievance and made an exception since there was no precedence of awarding damages for a healthy child. There exists the cultural assumption that a husband would not want to father a child that is not from his own genetic substance. Based on this cultural logic, if the Court thus decides to award the couple for the upkeep costs incurred, it is a form of compensation to the husband who is denied his paternity rights by having to raise a child who is not biologically his own. This logic is further supplemented by policies at the Centre for Assisted Reproduction in Singapore, which requires that ethnicity of sperm donor and husband, matches. An Asian man, for example, is not able to request sperm from a Caucasian donor. This policy reinforces the centrality of sperm as patrilineal substance in conferring child's race and ethnic identity as a Singapore citizen.

The legal parameters surrounding assisted reproductive technologies in Singapore not only demonstrate differentiated deservedness in terms of who can or cannot reproduce, they reinforce state paternalism where women's bodies are literally treated as vessels of heteronormative kinship cultures. The control over women's bodies and their reproductive autonomy reveals the idea that as vessels of tradition and culture, women are to be protected and restricted from engaging in new global flows of technology and capital that may alter their role as reproducing the 'proper' heterosexual family. Liberalizing her access to assisted reproductive technologies, whereby women without husbands who desire children can execute their choice to do so, entails chaos and the end of the traditional family. The laws of reproduction and conception that I have highlighted in this section reveal social anxieties toward failed practices of compulsory heterosexuality and reproductivity, and in particular, the fear of women's ability to conceive and have children without requiring a husband or involving sexual intercourse with a man.

The inability of state leaders and mainstream Singaporeans to imagine a reproductive future in which a same-sex couple can have a child of their own or raise one through adoption is best encapsulated in an excerpt of an interview with the late Minister Mentor Lee Kuan Yew, otherwise known as the "father" of Singapore. When asked what he thinks would be an obstacle to gay couples adopting children, his response was:

Who is going to bring them up? Two men looking after a child? Two women looking after a child, maybe. But I'm not so sure because it's not their own child. Unless you have artificial insemination and it's their own child, then you have a certain maternal instinct immediately aroused by the process of pregnancy. But two men adopting a boy or a girl, what's the point of it? These are consequential problems, we cross the bridge when we come to it. We haven't come to that bridge yet. The people are not ready for it. In fact, some ministers are not ready for it. I take a practical view. I said this is happening and there's nothing we can do about it. Life's like that. People are born like that. It's not new, it goes back to ancient times. So I think there's something in the genetic makeup.
(Lee Kuan Yew in Lee and Fook, 2011: 377)

While the excerpt discusses discomfort toward two gay men adopting children, it also draws assumptions from a gendered reproductive habitus anchored in heteronormativity. First, a child requires care from at least one mother because a man is assumed to be incapable of nurturing children without women. Second, a woman is capable of caring for children only if they are biologically hers. He mentions artificial insemination, which some of my lesbian friends regard as an informal “endorsement” or an acknowledgement that lesbians can be mothers. However, his emphasis on biogenetic connection discredits the other non-biological mother. What I have found to be fascinating from the narratives of Chinese lesbian and bisexual co-mothers and prospective mothers is the way in which they appropriate Lee’s claims that it is in one’s “genetic make-up” to be gay. These women derive their reproductive agency by similarly drawing upon the idea of nature, that it is natural for them to be lesbians, and it is natural for them to want children and they should not be prevented from reproducing or penalized for it.

3.5.1 Mitigating the Bridge of Heteronormative Reproduction

How do the maternal desires of Chinese lesbian and bisexual women fit into state practices of differentiated deservedness in terms of reproduction? The stories of these women, whose gendered reproductive habitus, in wanting to have children with each other without husbands, are misaligned from state and social ideologies of heteronormativity. Like fish out of water, they encounter numerous obstacles yet emerge with successful stories of their reproductive strategies. To borrow Lee’s phrase, these women have “come to the bridge”. How did they get there and how did they cross it? Lee Kuan Yew describes that Singapore has not “come to the bridge” in understanding the desires of those who intend on having a family through non-traditional routes. He states confidently that Singaporeans and their elected state leaders are “not ready for it”.

The Chinese lesbian/bisexual women I interviewed acknowledge that they are making a family in a society that is not ready for them or the children that they will have. Coming to the bridge, and mitigating reproductive terrains that exclude them requires a lot of mental, physical, emotional and financial preparation. For these women, pregnancy is an achievement and not something that could have happened without extensive research and prior planning. When I conducted my interviews, all of the lesbian co-mothers and prospective mothers spoke extensively about the amount of research and planning they went through to understand, as Weiling puts it adequately, the “logistics and mechanics” of having a baby. By looking at Chinese lesbian and bisexual women’s ability to partake in fertility treatments and procedures, I explore the importance of various economic, social and cultural capitals required in order to become a mother, which, as I have explained, has been primarily influenced by their own gendered queer subjectivities.

In August 2013, a few months after the birth of their daughter, Zoey, Olivia and Irene organized a workshop on same-sex parenting where they shared how they negotiated conception by giving a thorough assessment of local legal policies, overseas fertility clinics, alternative insemination methods and birth plans to prospective queer parents. They knew the logistics involved in becoming a same-sex parent and wanted to convince prospective parents that it is possible to have children despite legal and social restrictions. The workshop, titled “Same-sex Parenting: Raising New Standards” was organized in conjunction with Singapore’s LGBT Pride month (IndigNation) and held on a Sunday afternoon at a local bar in Chinatown. Volunteers who manned the registration table gave away three types of stickers. Same-sex parents, prospective queer parents, and curious allies received a green, yellow, and blue sticker respectively. My partner and I pinned the green sticker to our clothing and it was quite exhilarating to see other green stickers and to know that we were not alone as same-sex parents in Singapore. I met CJ who had a yellow sticker and although we had been acquainted through my previous field research, it was the first time I knew about her intentions to become a mother.

The demographics of the attendees at the workshop represented the ethnic, social and economic backgrounds of my Chinese participants. All of the Chinese lesbian co-mothers and prospective mothers in my research possessed at least a bachelors’ degree, were educated at elite institutions and have been active in LGBT communities and advocacy groups which enable exchange of information networks pertaining to same-sex marriage and assisted reproduction technologies. They also have lucrative careers that provide various means of income necessary to live and work and/or legalize their union abroad, to migrate to countries with affirmative same-

sex laws and to access medical facilities and services that may not be legal or available in Singapore. Weiling and Muk Yin have worked in international media agencies and are now home entrepreneurs in the organic food industry. Olivia is a business entrepreneur while Irene is a tech software developer. CJ comes from a wealthy family, has worked as an urban planner and is currently furthering a PhD in architecture. The privilege of being an upwardly mobile and global citizen may not be accessible or available to most LGBT individuals in Singapore. Further, the economic, cultural and social capitals that they have acquired as young adults have adequately enabled them informed access to conceive children without being completely debilitated by the legal, cultural and medical parameters surrounding traditional and assisted reproduction in Singapore. Compared to single mothers and masculine female participants, these women were also more empowered to decide how, when and where to have children, either because they have had to overcome pressures to lead a “normal” heterosexual life and get married or were not limited by the discomfort of being biologically female.

These Chinese mothers are also part of the 70% dominant race group in Singapore. Unlike the Malay Muslim participants whose religious identities are considered synonymous with their ethnic group, Chinese mothers’ religious identities are quite heterogeneous within their ethnic group. None of them identified with a specific religion despite some of them being raised as Catholic, Christians or Buddhists. They are either atheists, spiritual or humanist.

Unlike their Malay Muslim counterparts, religion did not configure dominantly in their interpretive horizons and did not function as a cultural barrier to assisted reproduction. Some of them, like Muk Yin and Weiling who were raised as Catholics, were also vocal about resisting traditional religious doctrines that tend to defend the heterosexual family as the only legitimate form of family. They are able to do so because they are not subjected to the kind of community policing that Malay Muslim participants experience as sexual minorities in a tightly-knit community.

The Chinese community in Singapore is religiously diverse compared to the rather homogenous Malay Muslim ethno-religious community. Additionally, Chinese lesbian mothers, did not consider themselves as members of any organized religion religious community, and thus did not feel subjected to similar kinds of religious persecution, harassment and surveillance compared to their Malay Muslim counterparts in same-sex relationships. This may explain why Chinese lesbian mothers are able to “come out” publicly to family and friends and hold jobs in the creative economy that tend to celebrate diversity. Being publicly visible means that they may also garner external support from their social networks to begin their family in the event that they

face rejection from their biological families or from larger Singapore society. It is also important to point out that all Chinese lesbian mothers come from divorced families or families where both their parents are estranged. Their mothers, who are also single mothers, had expressed initial rejection toward their homosexuality but eventually reconciled knowing that these women were the only form of family support that they have. In this regard, social capital, by virtue of having friends who function as part of one's kin network, is important in determining or empowering the decision of same-sex partners to have children. All of them had described how the support of their friends was important. They were also keen to build new networks and acquaintances with other same-sex parents who were in the "same boat" as them. In this regard, even though Singapore does not support same-sex families, they have the support of individuals who matter to them and whom they could rely on for help in the caregiving of children or in navigating restrictive social and legal policies about reproduction and family. The social capital they garner through these reliable support networks increases the feasibility of having and raising children through assisted reproduction.

Scholars like Agigian (2004) and Mamo (2007) have written extensively on the practices of same-sex couples in the US "queering" heteronormative reproduction in their quest for children. The legalization of same-sex marriage and also the availability of specialized fertility clinics to assist gay men and lesbian women in materializing their desires for children demonstrates how in other parts of the world, state leaders and some segments of society have "come to the bridge" of negotiating acceptance toward same-sex families. At the same time, these scholars observed that while there is a visible and burgeoning market for assisted reproduction catered to same-sex couples, artificial insemination amongst lesbians continues to offend particular collectives, based on reasons such as homophobia, absence of father, manipulation of nature and God, fear of miscegenation and the combination of stranger and kin in terms of donor insemination (Agigian, 2004). While same-sex marriage is legalized in all states, legal parental rights are automatically conferred only to the parent who has a biological connection with the child, even though both parents consider themselves as co-parents. The non-biological parent has to apply for joint-adoption of children. In addition, not all states permit legal joint-adoption by same-sex couples.

Although the grass is not entirely greener on the other hemisphere of the world, Chinese lesbian mothers maintained that it would be easier to raise their same-sex family in countries like UK and US. Some of them have in fact given birth in the US, frozen their eggs in Australia or are currently in the process of migrating to the US (one couple is moving to Seattle). It is not just

Singapore's legal barriers limiting assisted reproduction that have been their major concerns. They had overcome this by getting artificially inseminated in London and Bangkok. Rather, their major concern is in what comes after having a baby, and their ability to imagine a future as a family. The grass is greener in the US because these couples, as global citizens, have the option to pick and choose a city that has same-sex laws most favorable to them. Their family would also have access to housing compared to Singapore where public housing for 80% of Singaporeans depend on one's ability to prove that they are a legitimate family nucleus. As one participant states, "In the US, you can always move to a better city. Singapore is so small, if it's not accepted here, it's not accepted everywhere. Where can we run?"

Chinese Lesbian mothers have encountered public ostracization and social exclusion by members of the public, primarily from Christian fundamentalist groups and churches who view their practices as mocking the sanctity of heterosexual marriage, missing a paternal figure, and being selfish and irresponsible for not providing children with a "normal" childhood, and raising them instead in a "deviant" household. These issues have been what the late Lee Kuan Yew articulated as "consequential problems". These consequential problems arise because Chinese lesbian co-mothers, through mobilizing and harnessing their economic, social and cultural capitals have crossed the bridge and transformed their gendered reproductive habitus. Negative reactions from members of the public reveals anxieties around the potentiality of advanced reproductive technologies to detach sexuality, procreation, parenthood and biogenetic connections from their seemingly natural associations (Haraway, 1997). Assisted reproduction technologies threaten heteronormative norms because they would produce not only human beings, but also natural women and natural families.

3.6 Fertile Hopes and Futile Routes: Hybrid Technologies of Becoming Pregnant

In their quest to get pregnant without husbands, Chinese lesbian mothers trouble the healthcare industry's notion of the "ideal" user for fertility treatments. By pathologizing infertility or the inability to conceive children naturally and without biomedical assistance, medicine and the healthcare industry constructs "natural" womanhood as equivalent to procreation. Infertile married heterosexual women therefore deserve to be helped so they can resume their natural roles as mothers. The pathology of infertility onto women prescribes the power of medicine to define what is normal by defining what is natural (Mamo, 2007). Reproduction is stratified based on who is deserving or legitimized to receive biomedical intervention in order to conceive

successfully. In this regard, married heterosexuals become “natural” users of assisted reproduction while same-sex couples or unmarried men and women are regarded as deviant users because they are circumventing natural procreation. Despite the dominant practice of compulsory maternity, lesbian women are not expected to reproduce. Therefore, they encounter several challenges when they seek reproductive assistance for their fertility, because their inability to conceive is not primarily based on a medical condition. Yet, in order to be eligible for medical assistance, the only sensible route for lesbians is to become categorized as “infertile”.

In her research on lesbian reproduction in the US, Mamo (2007:131) notes that “when lesbians pursue pregnancy, their social category (lesbian) is transformed into an infertility status, thereby assuming *all* such women a biomedical classification and directing them to biomedical services”. In Singapore, the medical language of eligible users of ART excludes single women, and by legal definition, lesbian women as well. The five Chinese women that I have interviewed had to procure assisted services abroad because these treatments were not available to them in Singapore. In this regard, as citizens and permanent residents in Singapore, these lesbian women have to navigate both the stratified reproductive terrains in Singapore and the countries that they were residing in or have travelled to for assisted services.

Mamo (2007: 129) uses the term “hybrid technologies” to account for the diversity and complexities of lesbians’ practices and for the multiplicity of cultural contexts and limitations based on where they are situated. ‘Hybrid’ represents women’s recombination of reproductive strategies, whether it is low-tech or advanced, home or clinical, intimate or detached. By exploring Chinese lesbian mothers’ narratives of pre-conception and conception, I employ Mamo’s concept of “hybrid technologies” to examine their complex and practical strategies of reproduction as they move across particular technologies, spaces and sociality. How are lesbians implicated as fertility users, what kinds of laws and ethical dilemmas are they subjected to and how is it reflected in their practices? What kinds of cultural ideologies do they draw upon and how do they engage in these negotiations across borders of intimacy, citizenship and family?

3.6.1 Delaying Motherhood: Pausing the Fertility Clock

Although every conception story that I’ve been told is different from the next, I do note similarities in structure in terms of the way Chinese lesbian participants narrate their story. Their narrative sequence may not follow the same order but its contents involve similar extensive preparation including research, active networking with people who share similar communities of

reproductive fate, deciding upon strategies of conception, deciding sperm donors, choosing clinics, being attentive to ovulation schedules and giving birth. Where it is different however, is that couples encounter different sets of obstacles and problems at every sequence based on their personal health, location and subject positions. I will present three stories as separate case studies to explore how participants render their subject positions and engage in hybrid technologies while navigating uncertain reproductive futures.

CJ, who is trained as an architect, had initially planned on marrying and having children with her ex, Lisa, before finding out that Lisa had cheated on her with her best friend. She ended the relationship and was determined to get pregnant even as a single mother. However, there was a dilemma. At 33, her fertility clock was ticking and the quality of her eggs and chances of conception would diminish after she turns 35. Yet, CJ was not yet emotionally or financially ready to be pregnant, especially when she is still trying to finish her PhD in Architecture and had not begun a fully-fledged career. She estimates that she would be ready for motherhood between the ages of 36 to 38 years old.

CJ's quest for pregnancy demonstrates how biomedical intervention and assisted reproduction provides women with the choice to delay pregnancy and motherhood without affecting the fertility of her eggs. Her narrative explicates differences in fertility laws and heteronormative practices between Singapore and Australia, the country in which CJ receives her fertility treatments. These differences demonstrate the ways in which medical technologies differentiate between intended and unintended users of fertility treatments. I explore how CJ's decision to have children without a partner queers social and medical norms of family and reproduction.

In finding a solution to biology, CJ was confronted with a legal hurdle. After reading academic journal articles on intentional delayed motherhood, CJ came across "egg freezing" or Oocyte Cryopreservation in which a woman's eggs are extracted, frozen and stored to preserve its fertility. Unfortunately, egg freezing can only be performed by licensed doctors in Singapore and on women whose eggs may become damaged or sterile due to medical treatment, or for married women undergoing In-Vitro Fertilization (IVF) with their husband's signed consent. CJ's procedure would be termed as "social egg freezing" since her intention to delay motherhood was for personal reasons and are not health-related. "Social egg freezing" demarcates medically intended users from 'new' users such as women, like CJ, who intend to delay motherhood because they have not found a suitable partner or to pursue their careers.

Considering that it would be illegal for any doctor to endorse her procedure in Singapore, CJ's only solution was to freeze her eggs abroad. She set her sights on Sydney, among other options abroad, as it was the nearest to Singapore. She is familiar with Sydney's local culture and community. She has close friends who could offer shelter and support and the medical facility she chose was also located in her alma mater. Support, comfort, distance and familiarity were important factors in shaping her choice of destination.

CJ conducted scans on her ovaries to make sure they were healthy before heading to Sydney. She had sought an LGBT-friendly gynaecologist who was highly recommended by queer friends. They found fibroids in her uterus and she had to undergo surgery to remove them. While it was unfortunate, her fibroids made her more aware of her reproductive health. Her meticulous planning had also paid off- she had given herself enough months for buffer just in case of unforeseen circumstances such as her surgery, so it did not affect her overall goal to freeze her eggs before the end of 2015.

While recovering, CJ contacted her prospective fertility specialist, who turned out to be the same doctor whose journal articles she had read. Her specialist categorized her as an "anomaly" since most lesbian patients were usually partnered or married while heterosexual women who froze their eggs tend to be single. CJ has no qualms being a single parent.

CJ had allocated a month for her procedure in Sydney and had to sync her trip with her menstrual cycle. She had to monitor her cycles very closely for months before purchasing a plane ticket to Sydney. In this regard, when it comes to scheduling, her reproductive system (ovulation cycles) continues to determine and inform the coordination of plans, in terms of syncing social time (work/academic calendar) to biology. When she arrived at the clinic, she met with the specialist who reviewed her medical history. As a medically non-intended fertility user, CJ had to clear psychological evaluation to assess if she was of "sound mind", because as she describes, "a woman must be crazy to want to have a child by herself." The clinic had to make sure she had informed consent of the risks associated with the treatment and that she was not coerced into getting her eggs frozen.

On the third day of her menstrual cycle, she had her blood drawn to check her hormone levels and did an ultrasound of her ovaries. She was given fertility drugs to prepare her body for egg freezing. Over the next 12 days, she had to self-administer hormone injections (Ovidrell) to stimulate her ovaries and to produce numerous follicles (8 to 25 eggs) in the month of the treatment cycle. CJ's body reacted adversely to hormone injections: it made her bloat and she was constantly fatigued and overly emotional. Despite achieving 100% freeze rate, her first cycle was

not successful because they managed to harvest only three eggs, which was not enough. She felt demoralized knowing that she would have to return to Sydney to do another treatment cycle. In order to prep for her next visit, CJ had to take birth control pills to stimulate follicle growth for the next three months.

During our interview, I had asked CJ if costs were a concern especially with the risk of failed harvest (each cycle costs USD 8000, bringing the costs of two cycles to USD 16,000). She mentioned that the costs were a necessity and does not intend on letting treatment expenses deter her from fulfilling her aspirations. She had also allocated “more than enough” expenses to cover failed cycles. CJ had a successful second harvest when she returned to Sydney in March 2016. Her eggs were frozen and stored in the same facility. Even then, there was still no guarantee of a successful outcome in having children. From hormone jabs, to harvesting, freezing and thawing of her eggs and even at the final stage of fertilization, there is no telling if she could get pregnant. If she did get pregnant, there was also no surety against a miscarriage or birth complications. She admits that fertility procedures are stressful and takes a toll on her emotional and physical well-being. She views the financial costs as an investment for her future family because it takes the pressure off worrying about a ticking biological clock. She feels empowered and in control over her body, and as she elaborates, “Now that I have my eggs frozen, I can put all my worries aside and get on with my life”.

With regards to her future plans for artificial insemination, CJ intends to secure a White sperm donor because she believes that Singaporeans “treat *Angmoh* (white) children better”. From her personal experiences, CJ has observed that Pan-Asian children tend to be excused from cultural pressures to conform to Chinese traditions by virtue of being half-Chinese and half-White. In addition, strangers or distant acquaintances would more likely assume that she must have gotten married overseas to a White husband. She would not have to justify the absence of a father because people would think that the baby’s “father” is working abroad and would not be motivated to ask intrusive questions or judge her ethics as a good mother. She explains: “The cute factor aside, with an *angmoh* child you don’t have to endure all the Asian Values nuclear Chinese family bullshit. Doesn’t apply when you have *angmoh* baby. We won’t face that same cultural pressure to conform than if my baby is fully Chinese.” Moreover, having a mixed child would make her look “modern” and “cosmopolitan” and perhaps also less expected to raise her child according to Chinese cultural traditions. CJ’s decision was motivated by her own understandings of ethnic and racial dynamics in Singapore and her own recognition of “White privilege” that is prevalent in the city-state.

In the event that CJ decides to give birth in Sydney and finds a partner while she is pregnant, her fertility clinic requests that she updates her relationship status prior to the birth of her child so her partner will be included in the birth certificate as the other parent. Laws in Sydney recognize a partner's involvement in assisted reproduction and pregnancy as proof of parent status, even if CJ had initially registered for fertility procedures as a single woman. This would not have been possible in Singapore.

CJ's story demonstrates how a prospective Singaporean lesbian mother conquers the biological limits of her fertility by opting for social freezing procedures. Her agency has been shaped by her social and cultural capital through her extensive research, her resourcefulness in seeking other queer couples who plan on having children and a supportive family (mother) and friendship network. Her ability to transform her reproductive habitus is also aided by her economic capital which allows her the ability to take a month-long leave of absence and overcome medical and legal hurdles. She harnesses her capacities as a global transcultural citizen, where she is able to escape Singapore's stratified field of reproduction to a more levelled playing field of reproduction in Sydney that caters to queer women like herself.

Meanings of socio-medical categories shift as people cross national borders, in accordance to the heteronormative norms in which she is a citizen and the country in which she is receiving fertility treatments. CJ occupies a stigmatized category in Singapore while she is validated in Sydney—evidenced in the removal of discriminatory laws against lesbian and single women with regards to fertility treatment. Based on her donor selection, CJ demonstrates practical enactment of gender and ethnicity against compulsory heterosexuality and racial hierarchies in Singapore. Her desires for a mixed-white baby demonstrates how reproduction is also tied to practices of consumption in terms of the way children confer particular statuses onto their parents, and as a strategy to escape Chinese cultural restraints ("Chinese family bullshit"). More importantly, CJ's narrative encompasses the hybrid technologies of citizenship. It explicates how expressions and practices of heteronormativity and reproductivity are culturally specific and not universal. It also highlights peculiar and ironic enactments of citizenship and sovereign power, whereby CJ has parental rights and social legitimation as a medical tourist in Sydney, compared to as a tax-paying productive citizen in Singapore.

3.6.2 The Pathology of Lesbian Reproduction: “Having a Baby is not an Illness”

This section features the experiences of a Chinese lesbian couple, Weiling and Muk Yin, who took turns to get pregnant. They timed their pregnancies seven years apart and conceived in two different countries with different laws and cultural environments. Their preferences for either home or clinical insemination highlight the different ways in which they align their identities as women against medical pathologies of infertility as well as the particular social and medical constraints to which they are subjected. It also reflects their struggles in navigating uncharted reproductive terrains especially in the context of changing laws surrounding the procurement of sperm samples. Through their choice of insemination and donor selection, I explore how meanings of “nature” and what is “natural” are incorporated into hybrid technologies of reproduction and their implications to biogenetic notions of procreation and kinship relations.

Weiling likened their journey to parenthood to the “mechanics” of having a baby. 10 years ago, Weiling and Muk Yin left Singapore because they thought it would be easier to raise a child in the UK², which has a highly visible LGBT community. In 2005, information on lesbian assisted reproduction was not as readily available online as it is today. They resorted to buying books off Amazon.com and participated in forums hoping to learn from other lesbian women who have become parents. The forums were helpful in the beginning, but after two years, they started to feel pressure when they were the only couple left still attempting to get pregnant.

Muk Yin had to get pregnant first because she was older and already in her mid-30s. It took them two years to get her pregnant. In retrospect, the process could have been more expedient if they did Intra-Uterine Insemination or In-Vitro Fertilization³, but they preferred home insemination. Since they were not ill or infertile, they did not want to be treated like a sick patient as their attempts to have a child were not pathological. The idea of going to a clinic,

³ Even though same-sex marriage laws only became legal in 2013, their union would be considered under the Civil Partnership Act, that provides same-sex couples similar rights and responsibilities of marriage.

³ In IUI, donor sperm is inserted directly in the uterus using a syringe connected to a long, thin catheter around the time of ovulation. IUI can be performed following a woman’s natural reproductive cycle without drugs or the ovaries may be stimulated with oral anti-estrogens or gonadotrophins. The procedure allows the person to bypass the cervix to deposit sperm nearer to the entrance of the fallopian tubes into the uterus. This increases one’s chances in getting pregnant because it facilitates a larger number of active sperm reaching the fertilization site of the fallopian tube. Controlled stimulation of the ovaries is often used in conjunction with IUI to enhance the chances of pregnancy through inducing multiple ovulations. The success rate for IUI is the same as having penile-vaginal intercourse (5 to 20%). Lesbian couples prefer this route because it is a less invasive procedure compared to IVF. IUI is also a less complicated process compared to IVF and is the cheaper option of the two. Women can fly to Bangkok over the weekend to get the procedure done and return to Singapore by Monday. This option costs about SGD1500 to 3000 per cycle in Bangkok and includes on-site accommodation.

seeing a doctor, surgical gloves, equipment, instruments and sterile walls seemed too medical. Home insemination offered them the possibility of getting pregnant in the least invasive way, and as close to “natural” as possible, but it was not without its own set of problems.

Due to changing laws in the UK and to keep process of insemination expedient, they decided to select whichever donor sample was available, without having any preference in terms of phenotypic characteristics. In 2005, the Human Fertilization and Embryology Authority (HFEA) instituted policies to regulate all egg, sperm or embryo donors so that donors are identifiable. Further, sperm samples purchased in UK can only be sent to clinics for insemination procedures. Since the couple could not find willing donors among friends and acquaintances, they turned to a sperm bank in the US. It was much more difficult to obtain donor-identified samples compared to anonymous ones so they did not bother agonizing over suitable donors and simply acquired whatever sample that was available. Their sperm sample was from a White donor, which is more commonly available.

For the next two years, a substantial portion of their income went into purchasing sperm (a few hundred USD per vial). They would time each arrival to Muk Yin’s ovulation and collect the samples, securely stored in a nitrogen tank from the depot. Before insemination, Weiling would fish the vial out of the tank and warm it up with her hands slowly. The sperm bank would split one ejaculation into 3 or 5 ml so the couple would have only a few drops per vial. Weiling described insemination as a “fiddly” process that was “neither enjoyable nor intimate”. In the beginning, they did attempt to be intimate (about “half a dozen [times] tops”) but this ceased after a while. As for intercourse after insemination, Weiling responded by laughing, “Oh no, not at all. Oh God, no...no. We can't be bothered. It got very routine and very stressful.” Their social life changed while trying to have a baby. They became “anti-social” because they were too broke to buy beer and attend after-work events at bars.

They became desperate when Muk Yin was still not pregnant after two years. Their concerns were further exacerbated when UK laws banned imports of sperm samples. They could no longer obtain access to sperm samples unless they chose to be clinically inseminated, which goes against Muk Yin’s wishes. Out of desperation, they decided to look for potential gay donors at IKEA. They came up to random men who “passed off as gay”, identified through fashionable clothing or if seen walking closely with another man. They had chosen IKEA because they thought it would be easier to spot gay couples looking to make a home together. The strangers they approached were flattered but no one was willing to be a donor.

Eventually, Weiling found an acquaintance, a white male, who agreed. They inseminated for three consecutive days while the donor was in town, and was surprised when his sperm worked. They were starting to feel blasé and exhausted from inseminating and was relieved to finally achieve success. Weiling described the entire process as: “Logistics, 100% logistics...It’s like who showers first and then you get into bed and then we do this and I will do the washing up.” In 2007, their first son, Liam, was born in London. They returned to Singapore when he was two because they did not find London conducive for young children, despite it being LGBT-friendly.

In 2012, they decided to try for a second child and began the “whole cycle of research” because they were in Singapore with different laws. They whittled down their list of recommended gynaecologists found on what they referred to as “straight mommy” forums until they found a doctor who is supportive of their family. Weiling chose IVF because she wanted the fastest and surest way to get pregnant and did not have an aversion to clinical procedures. Unfortunately, at her first ultrasound, they found a large fibroid and had to wait a year after her surgery to try again.

The couple chose Bangkok for IVF because of its relative affordability and close proximity to Singapore (three-hour flight). Weiling could make day trips without having to stay abroad for the entire procedure. On her first visit, she cleared the psychological evaluation where she had to prove she was not forced to have a baby and that she was mentally stable to have a child of her own. She secured an IVF appointment for the next visit and completed the paperwork to get approval to ship their sperm sample from the US and time its arrival to her menstrual period for her next visit. Unlike the first pregnancy, they had intentionally chosen a white donor who matches the characteristics of Liam’s donor so the children would look “as close to natural as siblings as possible”.

On Weiling’s second visit, she collected her medication and returned to Singapore to administer daily self-injection to prep her ovaries to produce as many eggs as possible for extraction. After five days, the trio returned to Bangkok and stayed in Bangkok for two weeks for the final procedure. Weiling got pregnant in her first attempt and gave birth to baby Jake at a private hospital in Singapore, with her wife, Muk Yin, in the operating theatre. She had to go through caesarean because a natural birth might split a prior incision in her womb. They described how important it was to have a gynaecologist who recognized and legitimized their relationship Weiling elaborates, “We were out to our gynae who was very supportive and agreed for Muk Yin to be in the surgical room. In fact, we had actually forgotten the administration letter

but the doctor told us not to worry and it was ok.” Since hospital laws only endorse legally married partners as spouses, same-sex couples have to rely on the discretion of supportive doctors who could endorse their partners’ presence in hospital spaces that are limited to biological family members or spouses.

Mamo (2007) describes how lesbians move from being a person to a patient, where they have to render themselves infertile because it may be the only legitimate way in which they can procure ART. While people do not consider an IVF baby born to a married heterosexual couple unnatural, the same principle has not been applied for same-sex couples. Muk Yin’s steadfast insistence in using a low-tech DIY home insemination, even though it took her a long time to get pregnant, demonstrates a desire to keep the process of reproduction as organically natural as possible. It indicates her resistance to be conscripted and pathologized as having an illness. Home insemination thus provides women like Muk Yin with a form of self-determination and resistance against the pathology of their female bodies. As her partner, Weiling, reinforces, “having a baby is not an illness”. However, this does not mean that home insemination represents a greater notion of agency than if a woman would be clinically inseminated. Weiling’s self-determination to get pregnant as expediently and efficiently as possible is reflected in her decision to choose IVF, because she is not averse to invasive procedures. Their hybrid pregnancy strategies illustrate equal reproductive autonomies in a relationship where it is possible for lesbian partners to have two vastly different preferences for insemination despite having the same goal toward shared motherhood.

Muk Yin and Weiling selected sperm donors based on what samples were readily available rather than choosing the “ideal” donor. Their practical enactment was in line with their desires to keep insemination as natural as possible. Weiling had felt that the consumerist tendencies evidenced through the phenomenon of IVF “designer” babies was becoming rampant through the corporatization of assisted reproduction. Both of them expressed greater priority and interest in going through the process of pregnancy and shared motherhood (see Pelka, 2009) and were less concerned with their children looking like both of them. They had felt that the obsession toward approximating genetic relatedness and parental resemblance to children is motivated by one’s vanity and ego. They found this obsession problematic and in doing so, reinforce their idea of motherhood as “pure” and motivated by sincere love rather than having children as status symbols.

Interestingly, they had specifically chosen a White donor for their second son, so the two brothers could look like “natural” siblings, as sons born to two different mothers and different

sperm donors. The couple's approaches to donor selection reveals negotiations of meaning in terms of how sibling resemblance is crucial to the kinship relationality of their family (see also Lewin, 2004). It was more important for their children to look like each other than like both of them. Their strategies draw upon dominant meanings of 'natural' families of siblings looking closely alike to prove similar biogenetic connections. For their family, having similar ethnic-resemblance for both children as mixed White-Chinese boys provides the physical appearance of shared genetic substance, which binds and connects their otherwise discrete biological mother-child dyads in relation to each other as a family.

Weiling described purchasing sperm akin to "buying groceries" which also demonstrates how the process of alternative reproduction has been normalized through their experiences, where the medical becomes enmeshed in the intimacy of everyday life. The grocery-metaphor also reinforces how sperm is essential to their own nourishment in their journey through shared motherhood. The couple engaged in hybrid technologies of reproduction by combining an intimate home setting with low-tech gadgets (syringes) and switching between transnational sperm samples, from a corporatized US sperm bank and personal UK-based friend. They chose home insemination for their first pregnancy because they wanted a non-invasive procedure route that avoided the sterile environment of a clinic. However, the intimacy of the home could not take away the medicalized and routinized practice of insemination. Weiling and Muk Yin felt that the tedium of insemination made them too exhausted to think about romance. What started out as an extraordinary event, two lesbians having a baby and overcoming a gendered reproductive habitus, became de-romanticized into a banal and mundane enactment of "logistics".

3.6.3 Hybrid Technologies of Reproduction: "Tried All Sorts of Methods"

Using the concept of "hybrid technologies" (Mamo, 2007) of reproduction and kinship practices, I explore the types of resources, networks, medical and cultural methods that enable Olivia and Irene to succeed in getting pregnant. I also examine how they appropriate dominant ideas of kinship such as intimate "procreation" and relatedness based on shared configurations of biogenetic substance in assembling their family. Further, through their insemination process, I investigate how their reproductive strategies reveal negotiations with routinized medical procedures and ambivalent laws and policies encountered both in Singapore and in Bangkok.

Olivia was 30 when she had open surgery to remove multiple fibroids in her uterus. Her gynaecologist advised her to get pregnant within four years, a brief window of time before her

fibroids may regenerate, or it would be difficult for her to have children. The diagnosis prompted Olivia and Irene to begin immediately planning for a baby even though they had planned to start a little later. After learning all the local legal and medical restrictions on assisted reproduction in Singapore, and a year spent trawling the internet for information on suitable methods, they decided on home insemination. Armed with a “mountain of research”, and a game plan, they were ready to make a baby.

They were conflicted between an anonymous donor or a known donor but settled for the latter. Olivia had grown up feeling deceived after being kept in secret about her biological father and wanted to avoid a similar fate for their child. They begun seeking potential donors from within the local gay community and came up with six criteria. The donor had to be gay because a heterosexual male may get married and they wanted to avoid potential child disputes if he and his wife were unable to conceive. He should be between the ages of 25-45 with a clean bill of health to ensure sperm quality and increase likelihood of fertilization, while their child could benefit from better genes if they had a donor whose family’s medical history was better than Olivia’s. He should also be open to the idea of being a “favourite uncle”, so their child could be aware of her heritage, but he should not seek shared parenting rights.

Three gay men came forward after six months. Since their donors were all Chinese males, progeny became a matter of utmost concern. Their child, who would be biologically related to their donor, would technically carry his family line. Donor S became an unsuitable candidate because his parents did not want to have illegitimate grandchildren even if S waives parental rights. As S is eldest son of a wealthy family and if Olivia and Irene had a son, the boy would be entitled to the family fortune as the first grandson. S’s parents were worried that the child might contest claims to their estate and family wealth in future. Donor L was eventually chosen because he fit all the criteria. It was a bonus that he had a husband who was supportive of the entire procedure. He also had a number of older siblings with children so complications related to progeny and inheritance could be avoided.

It took Olivia and Irene the next 15 months to get pregnant. In the first six months, they tried home insemination using the “turkey baster” method. Scheduling was crucial because Olivia needed to sync her insemination during her ovulation period. She would take her basal body temperature in the mornings and track her ovulation. Donor L and his husband planned their business trips around her schedule. L would arrive at their house, provide his sperm “fresh” and Irene would then inseminate Olivia in the privacy of their bedroom, using a 3ml and 5 ml

syringe⁴. The couple would “make love” right after every insemination. They had read that having orgasms would increase the likelihood of successful conception.

To generate additional income, the couple set up an ecommerce store to sell excess ovulation sticks and pregnancy test kits that they had purchased through bulk orders. To emphasize how becoming pregnant had become a routine part of their everyday life, Olivia mentioned that she had peed on so many sticks she became an expert at peeing on a tiny strip of paper. After six months without success, they became desperate and made an appointment to see a doctor in Bangkok who had performed a successful IUI⁵ procedure on their friend. They had preferred IUI to IVF because it was significantly cheaper and a less invasive procedure in comparison. They could also do it over the weekend in Bangkok and return to Singapore by Monday. IUI costs about US\$ 1200 to US\$ 2800 and it includes on-site accommodation in Bangkok.

Over the next eight months, they encountered several trials and tribulations. On her first visit to the fertility clinic in Bangkok, Olivia missed her doctor’s appointment because of work and other doctors and hospital staff refused to serve her because she was unmarried. It turned out that her original doctor was the only one in the hospital who would consult with single or lesbian women. At one point, she thought they were pregnant but it turned out to be a false alarm. On their second visit, they had visited other hospitals but were treated poorly. At one hospital, they suspected that the staff was hostile because they were not White, while another made them fill out husband’s particulars despite having informed the hospital that they were a lesbian couple. At another facility that looked more promising because there were pictures of same-sex couples and their babies adorning the walls of the clinic, the doctor had insisted they perform IVF (which

⁴ On online forums on home insemination, the most common method involves partner A gliding the syringe gently into partner B’s vagina until it is close to the cervix. The goal is to coat the outside of the cervix and deposit as much sperm as close to the cervix and as slowly as possible to prevent sperm from squirting out. Having an orgasm could further increase possibilities of fertilization because it increases the speed and quantity of sperm traveling to the cervix.

⁵ In IUI, donor sperm is inserted directly in the uterus using a syringe connected to a long, thin catheter around the time of ovulation. IUI can be performed following a woman’s natural reproductive cycle without drugs or the ovaries may be stimulated with oral anti-estrogens or gonadotrophins. The procedure allows the person to bypass the cervix to deposit sperm nearer to the entrance of the fallopian tubes into the uterus. This increases one’s chances in getting pregnant because it facilitates a larger number of active sperm reaching the fertilization site of the fallopian tube. Controlled stimulation of the ovaries is often used in conjunction with IUI to enhance the chances of pregnancy through inducing multiple ovulations. The success rate for IUI is the same as having penile-vaginal intercourse (5 to 20%). Lesbian couples prefer this route because it is a less invasive procedure compared to IVF. IUI is also a less complicated process compared to IVF and is the cheaper option of the two. Women can fly to Bangkok over the weekend to get the procedure done and return to Singapore by Monday. This option costs about SGD1500 to 3000 per cycle in Bangkok and includes on-site accommodation.

costs up to 10 times more) because Olivia had Polycystic Ovarian Syndrome (PCOS) and would not be able to conceive naturally. The couple felt that he was trying to get them to pay more for a premium service instead of providing them IUI which they had requested. Their third visit ended at the first hospital where Olivia had missed her appointment. She was subjected to a psychiatric evaluation to assess her preparation as a “single” mother. The doctor asked twice if she was “crazy” and why she had wanted children and if her parents consented. She cleared the assessment and the hospital approved their request to get IUI done.

They had purchased vials from US sperm bank California Cryobank, which had a better selection of Chinese sperm to supplement Donor L’s. They wanted their child to resemble them and to avoid further bureaucratic obstacles raising a mixed-race child who is already a child of same-sex parents, one of whom is not Singaporean. Their anonymous donor went by the moniker “cookie guy”, he was tall—to counter the short genes in Olivia’s family—and had the same A+ blood type as Irene. Since Singapore categorizes sperm as a “controlled substance”⁶, they paid USD 3500 to ship the vial directly to their clinic just in time for the third visit. The vials were held at customs and they had two days before they expired⁷. When they did receive the samples, an ultrasound scan revealed that Olivia’s uterine lining was too thin to enable successful embryo implantation. Clomid, a drug used to stimulate ovulation especially in women with PCOS, had caused Olivia’s uterine lining to thin, which also explained why their home insemination did not work. They had to wait another six months to get Olivia’s uterine lining back to normal and for the third time, they left Bangkok without any progress with insemination.

Despite all the careful planning and scheduling, each obstacle that they had overcome seemed to produce more setbacks. They finally managed to get in two inseminations on their fourth visit to Bangkok, returning to their hotel after each procedure to cuddle and have sex. The clinical process of insemination did not deter them from being romantic or intimate. They were confident of the outcome but had their hopes dashed when Olivia’s period came. Out of

⁶ The Health Products Regulation Group that comes under the Health Sciences Authority (HSA) in Singapore provides the current regulations for medical substances to be imported into Singapore for personal medical use and they are rather ambivalent in categorizing sperm samples as controlled substances. If sperm samples are found to be controlled substance, a license from HSA would be required to import them into Singapore. The couple mentioned that other lesbian couples have raised this issue with HAS and other relevant agencies but were given non-committal responses. Additionally, one would be required to pay SGD5000 just to obtain an official letter from HSA to state that human sperm is not a controlled substance. Importing sperm becomes a costly and risky endeavor as there is no guarantee what one can import sperm without the authorities confiscating samples.

⁷ Sperm samples are shipped with nitrogen tanks to ensure integrity and quality of sample. However, nitrogen tanks are good for only 7 days and the journey from the US to Bangkok takes 3 days, with their sample retained by Customs for an additional 2 days.

desperation, the couple turned to Olivia's aunt who recommended her a popular Traditional Chinese Medical (TCM) fertility doctor in Singapore while continuing with home insemination. Olivia had to swallow a bitter concoction of fertility tea and after a month, they finally became pregnant.

According to Howell (2006), "kinning" is a process in which people make family out of non-biological relations. ARTs pluralize notions of relatedness and lead to a more dynamic notion of "kinning" where kinship, as Carsten (2004) posits, is an ongoing process rather than a natural given. In choosing donors, Olivia and Irene realized they wanted a child to look Chinese, like the both of them. Yet having an identifiable local gay Chinese prospective donor, who is also the eldest son and family heir, presented another set of complications: the fear that the couple's future child may contest their rights to his family's estate and inheritance through claiming biological paternity as commonly exercised in traditional Chinese families. These dilemmas demonstrate the persistent imagination of old kinship norms despite all parties engaging in new kinning conventions through the disavowal of biological connections and rights to relatedness.

The choices that queer women make while selecting their sperm donors further explicates how kinning processes based on shared configurations of bodily substance and relatedness are also influenced by consumer variety in the global donor sperm market. When Olivia and Irene were presented with more choices on the online catalogue of their US sperm bank, their criteria became even more elaborate. Since Olivia's blood type was B, they chose a donor with an A+ blood type to match Irene's. Having a donor with the same blood type as Irene provides the couple a semblance of biogenetic relatedness where the notion of same blood type is equivalent to contributing biogenetic bodily substance to their child. Although their daughter Zoey ended up with Olivia's blood type, the couple's process of kinning through same blood substance is more important than the eventual outcome. Moreover, Olivia and Irene also wanted a tall donor to negate both their short genes and physique. Both these desires highlight selective negotiation of genetic substance, in which relatedness and notions of resemblance comes through sharing the same blood group and ethnicity but not so much represented through one's physical build.

The Singapore family justice system and citizenship laws view sperm donors, in conferring patrilineal substance, as a child's *de facto* father. Without the presence of a male spouse, single mothers have to register their child's birth at the Immigration and Checkpoints Authority (ICA) instead of at the hospital like other heterosexual and married couples. Olivia had to sign an oath of declaration that she has no knowledge of the child's father so only her name would appear on the child's birth certificate. Irene's contribution in the entire pregnancy process

is not recognized by the law and thus, her name would not appear on the certificate as the other parent. For lesbian couples, it is important to declare that their child has no father because a sperm donor cannot legally waive his paternal rights over the child.

The couple's hybrid technologies of reproduction, by incorporating romance into technical medical processes, disrupts usual medical and natural binaries. Olivia and Irene pursued intimate insemination even when the process was clinical. Olivia describes how it was "romantic all the time". Irene would hold her hand during IUI and they would return to the hotel to cuddle or make love. Hybrid technologies also demonstrate the elasticity of a gendered reproductive habitus, containing norms of sexual intimacy in making a baby, but at the same time stretched to accommodate alternative acts of procreation between two women. In doing so, it also makes natural assisted reproductive procedures that have been emphasized as "artificial". Furthermore, the combination of Chinese Medicine with new technologies of reproduction demonstrates how traditional ideas about successful conception are re-accommodated into forms of alternative reproduction that are not culturally sanctioned. In this regard, Irene and Olivia's practice of hybrid technology queers both ART and Traditional Chinese Medicine.

3.7 Same-Sex Reproduction and Contact Zones of Kinship

Strathern (1992) asserted that if kinship, as a set of social relations, is rooted in the "natural facts" of biological reproduction, then the advent of ART destabilizes and displaces the biological and "natural" within parenthood, facilitated by developments in technologies, markets and organizations. In differentiating between social and biological parenting, Strathern argues that to represent a "new convention" out of the old configuration of kinship is based on the social construction of natural facts (Strathern, 1992: 27-28). In their quest to become pregnant, Chinese lesbian mothers in Singapore queer reproduction and heteronormativity norms of kinship by getting themselves artificially inseminated with each other or alone and without a husband or through penile penetration.

In pursuing alternative practices, their contestations of infertility produce contact zones apparent in the way they negotiate restrictive laws and, particularly, hostility at hospitals in declaring their mental stability before being approved to receive fertility treatments. Psychological evaluation demonstrates how new reproductive technologies still rely on old conventions of kinship, because it reinforces the reproduction of "natural woman and natural families". Chinese lesbian mothers, as an anomaly or 'inappropriate' user of ART raises ethical

dilemmas because their desire to be pregnant as a single mother and/or without male penetration is seen as abnormal and suspicious. Their experiences reflect the normative and transnational clinical power to define what is ethically normal based on what local cultural, state and medical institutions regard as natural—standards of which evidently differ across specialists, clinics and countries.

The transference of bodily substance, or gamete donation, creates kin-like alliances among sperm donors and their recipients that would have otherwise been absent. Substance transference becomes a point of nurturance for practices of relatedness. Both lesbian couples maintain close links to their personal sperm donors who have now become part of their family as a “favorite uncle” or a family friend. These relationships highlight how gamete donation also invokes the notion of altruism, as a means to provide the gift of life to a deserving couple that would otherwise not be able to reproduce.

No matter how “organic” or natural Singaporean lesbians desire their reproduction process to be, their quest for pregnancy is inevitably “enterprised up”, pushing them into contact zones of biomedical and legal services, even if it only involves buying sperm, or purchasing syringes for insemination and drawing up legal contracts about non-parental rights. By examining couples’ experiences with procreation and genetic substances, I argue that biology is not destabilized nor displaced in these new conventions of kinship. Rather, couples’ ideas about biology and relatedness reaffirm what they regard as belonging as family. Although their innovative strategies reveal new conventions, these strategies continue to be influenced, to a certain extent, by traditional understandings of shared biogenetic substance or cultural notions of ethnic resemblance or ethnic privilege and social status. While queering reproduction as lesbian mothers, some of them also appropriate heteronormative norms by upholding or asserting the importance of a stable partnership of two parents and love for bringing a baby into the world. In this regard, lesbian mothers re-traditionalize new conventions of kinship based on their socialized understandings of commitment, love and belonging and cultural understandings of heredity and progeny.

In this chapter, I compare the experiences of Malay and Chinese participants who come from diverse social backgrounds as well as gendered sexualities to examine how intended and unintended parenthood reflects heteronormative norms of compulsory maternity and reprosexuality in an unequal playing field of reproduction. Within a stratified field of reproduction in Singapore, different conditions of power as well as proximity to paradigms of compulsory heterosexuality generate diverse responses in terms of reproductive strategies and

practices. Divorced/unwed mothers', butch fathers' and lesbian co-mothers' practical enactments of gender and sexuality and negotiations with their gendered reproductive habitus is also influenced by factors such as their ethnicity, state discourses, laws and policies, and the various social, economic and cultural capitals they have accumulated through their life experiences.

Creating a family signals adulthood, responsibility and social status. It entitles mothers and butch fathers to make or contest social and material claims, and to achieve forms of cultural recognition that would not otherwise be available without the presence of children. Children also represent differential value to the participants involved. For Malay mothers, having children signals their perseverance as a dutiful wife and good mother in a non-compatible marriage, a redemption from an undesirable past, and acceptance of God's intention and intervention in a culture that views children as blessings. For butch fathers, children legitimize their masculinity as fathers while Chinese lesbian mothers desire children as testament to their mutual commitment and devotion and more importantly, validate their reproductive autonomy as a lesbian woman and mother.

Malay and Chinese female participants' non-normative reproductive practices, in terms of not wanting children despite being married, having unwed pregnancies, taking over caregiving responsibilities of same-sex partners' husbands or male partners, or planning for pregnancy with a same-sex partner signals a departure from "normal" trajectories of family whereupon participants and their families experience particular forms of cultural sanctions and social exclusions. In this regard, the heteronormative familial language of kinship that has been manifested in various cultural ideologies and social policies on reproduction and where biological notions of kinship have been appropriated for social inclusion especially for female-bodied individuals who do not conform to practices of compulsory heterosexuality and mis-appropriate compulsory maternity.

Despite their diverse subject positions, participants share a similar community of fate as exiles of heteronormative kinship, in terms of the way they disrupt, challenge or re-traditionalize biological, natural and divine (*takdir and jodoh*) assumptions of kinship as well as social discourses of family defined as man, woman, married, and having children within a 'stable' family unit. Participants challenge compulsory heterosexuality (even for those who were previously married), through their identifications as lesbian/bisexual women without husbands, as gender non-conforming butches or androgynous masculine individuals and by raising children with same-sex partners. Butch fathers and lesbian/bisexual co-mothers and prospective mothers overcome biological and/or psychological limits of reproduction by becoming fathers to children of single mother-partners and turning to hybrid technologies of assisted reproduction,

respectively, while lesbian co-mothers naturalize “artificial” insemination by making it as intimate, homely, romantic and as least invasive and clinical as possible.

In terms of the primacy of family as a form of generational transmission, butch fathers challenge biological hierarchies of kinship by drawing upon Islamic cultural notions of sincerity and good deeds to legitimize the kinning of non-biologically related children. While lesbian co-mothers negotiate configurations of biogenetic transmission by selecting sperm donors who match their ethnicity, blood type, or would produce a strong resemblance among non-biologically related siblings. These participants demystify reprosexuality by unstitching the intricate interweaving of heterosexuality, biological reproduction, generational transmission and personal subjectivities evidenced through their same-sex desires and reproductive practices. Additionally, this chapter further reinforces the ways in which class and ethnicity, as intertwining factors, shapes and influences particular reproductive strategies. This was evident in Malay Muslim participants’ rejection of ART due to a variety of reasons such as income, withdrawal of biological family support and also access to liberal Islamic as well as medical knowledge in terms of alternative reproduction.

CHAPTER 4. SYMBOLIC INNOVATIONS OF KINSHIP IN FAMILIES OF CHOICE

4.1 What's So "Cool" about Same-Sex Families?

The night before June 29, 2013, my partner helped me pick out matching pink outfits for our two children to be worn the next day for Pink Dot, Singapore's annual pride picnic organized by local LGBT groups. However, she received a late work assignment and did not join us. On reaching the venue, the kids and I walked through a banner arch, emblazoned in pink, with the words: "Supporting the Freedom to Love". My daughter (2) was perched on my shoulders while my son (6) kept pace, carrying his skateboard. Two young women approached me and asked, "Excuse me, are these your children?"

I was pleasantly surprised by their accurate guess because strangers very rarely associate my masculine female disposition with a parent's role. Instead, I usually get referred to as a domestic helper, a cousin, an aunt or a relative. Was it because we were in the carnivalesque space of Pink Dot, the only day in a year where queer people and their allies gather in massive numbers (~ 20,000 people) to occupy a public and otherwise heteronormative space, that my children and I were read as "family", and I, as a parent?

As it turns out, both the women happened to know a lesbian couple who had just given birth to a baby girl. They were helping the couple recruit potential parents into a queer family support group and thought I would be interested. They pointed me in the direction of the couple's picnic mat, handed me a flyer with further details about the Rainbow Family Support Group and left with a parting remark, "Your family looks very cool by the way!"

From a distance, I saw a group of people congregating around a young couple that I now know as Irene and Olivia. Olivia was carrying Zoey, who was a newborn at the time. We exchanged polite hellos and I expressed interest in joining their support group. I disclosed that I was in a relationship with a divorced mother of two. Olivia reciprocated with a warm welcome while also informing me that there is "another lesbian couple" with a blended family like ours. When I politely corrected her that my partner and I were not "lesbians", she looked confused.

I begin my chapter with the above vignette as a punctum, a striking detail, to consider how symbolic meanings of relatedness are assembled in everyday representations of family and through social interactions with others. The notion of “cool” warrants investigation into how non-traditional families in Singapore are perceived against a heteronormative backdrop where positive portrayals of queer families are censored in public media to reinforce the view that these non-sanctioned families are deviant because they disrupt the sanctity of marriage and family.

The adjective “cool” has been defined in multiple English dictionaries as “fashionably attractive or impressive” or being “up-to-date”. I find “cool” useful as an analytic to refer to the practical and ongoing negotiations at contact zones, where one’s socialized subjectivity – as a sense of who one is, who they are supposed to be and who they desire to be is not seamlessly aligned with the objective structures of gender and kinship. I would argue that same-sex families are “cool” not in terms of an aesthetic but rather in their engagement with symbolic practices of kinship that trouble traditional or “normal” representations of family. Same-sex partners and their children, positioned as exiles of heteronormative kinship, appear to defy existing familial norms through the visibility of their “chosen” families. To elaborate, I draw upon Rayna Rapp who states:

When we assume male-headed, nuclear families to be central units of kinship, and all alternative patterns to be extensions or exceptions, we accept an aspect of cultural hegemony instead of studying it. In the process, we miss the contested domain in which *symbolic innovation* may occur. Even continuity may be the result of innovation.
(1987: 119, emphasis added)

Rapp’s statement is relevant to the female same-sex partners of my research who, as heads of their households, have chosen to raise children together in a country that views their familial aspirations and practices as antithetical to the Family. In this chapter, I examine how same-sex partners present their family to themselves and others. I use the concept of symbolic innovation of relatedness to explore how same-sex partners make sense of their relationships and present their families according to how they desire to be read, as well as the kinds of misrepresentations or contradictions that occur in public spaces, online media, and within their social and family networks. As they create their “chosen” families, the same-sex partners in my research find themselves reinventing and/or re-traditionalizing what it means to be related, as a way to gain legitimacy in a hetero-patriarchal culture. What forms do these innovations take, and how do these forms reflect the range of choices that are available to female same-sex partners?

To elucidate these practical enactments of kinship, I will look at three different types of families: lesbian co-mothers who conceive a child together via ART, butch stepfathers who partner with pregnant heterosexual-identified single-mothers, and same-sex stepfamilies where partners are raising children from a single-mother's previous marriage or relationship. I will examine their innovative practices through negotiations with appropriate kin-terms, naming practices, their interactions within public institutions such as hospitals, schools and immigration, and their presentation of self and family on social media platforms such as Facebook and Instagram. I explore how same-sex partners engage in kinship devices by assigning kin terms or naming rituals, in order to analyze how these practices, bear significance to relationships that are excluded from traditional kinship charts.

Other than "chosen" families (Weston, 1991), anthropological studies on adoption have also been informative in terms of how they problematize and explicate the complex meanings of biology and relatedness. Howell (2006), for example, explores how parents "kin" adopted non-biologically related children as family. She posits that the "kinning" practices of adoption provide meaning to the biological, where the conscious construction of a familial relationship exposes the rigid limitations of kinship derived only through a 'natural' relationship (Howell 2006: 152). Most of the studies on the adoption of children within same-sex families in the West are situated in cultural and legal contexts in which same-sex marriage and second parent adoption have been legalized.

In Singapore however, the Adoption of Children's Act disallows same-sex partners from adopting. Second parent adoption, which allows a non-related person to adopt a child without the "first parent" losing any parental rights, is also not available. This, on top of the absence of same-sex domestic rights, means that the kinship practices of my same-sex participants are not culturally and legally sanctioned. Their innovative and informal kinship arrangements operate based on mutual trust and reciprocity, and require careful negotiations. These kinship strategies, whether in desiring legitimacy as a same-sex family or claiming heteronormativity, reveal varied experiences of economic and social precarity.

In this chapter, I examine how same-sex partners construct affinity ties to explicate the practical enactments of relatedness in chosen family arrangements. My encounter with Olivia had pushed me to consider the diversity of non-normative parenthood, rather than examining same-sex parenting that coalesces primarily around a lesbian identity. My research, in featuring a diverse profile of same-sex partners, some of whom identify as heterosexual and claim sexual normalcy, further extends Weston's analysis of chosen gay and lesbian families further. While

Weston pushes her readers to consider diverse kinship configurations beyond nuclear sexual-conjugal units, her research does not account for different variations of sexual identity which may impact the possible choices in which chosen families are formed. Through my interactions with participants, I found that family, as a site of initiation into new forms of cultural membership, represents different meanings to participants based on their gendered sexual subjectivities. For some participants, having a same-sex family initiates membership into parenthood, while for others, it becomes an invitation into queer life.

As discussed in Chapter 3, the concept of practical enactment place emphasis on subjects' feelings of propriety and belonging to a particular subjective mode or position within the kinship vernacular. In this chapter, my emphasis on practical enactments draws analysis of kinship performance away from the resistance-assimilation binary models of queer scholarship (see Lewin, 2009). In this regard, I explore how participants' re-traditionalize or reinvigorate traditional norms, charts, rituals and hierarchies of kinship and its meaningful significance to queer practices of family and reproduction.

4.2 "Mummy, Mama and *Our* Baby"

This section explores how middle-class Chinese lesbian co-mothers demonstrate their affinity ties in becoming a family unit. One lesbian couple, Olivia and Irene have gotten married abroad despite their marriage certificates not being legally recognized in Singapore. They did so to demonstrate their commitment to each other and intention to raise children in a stable family union, as represented through marriage. Their kinship devices reveal negotiations with traditional configurations of kinship, especially since lesbian-led households are uncharted in dominant and mainstream constructions of the Singapore family.

As discussed in Chapter 3, Olivia and Irene demonstrate their affinity ties through their public blog. They use their site to constantly affirm their relationship as a same-sex family. In September 2014, Olivia set up a blog to share her thoughts about same-sex parenting, family and love. Before embarking on having a baby, Olivia and Irene found that it was difficult to find other same-sex parents that they could speak to or find any information about what same-sex parenting is like in Singapore to prepare them for a family. The blog documents the couples' personal parenting journey and their struggles as same-sex parents in Singapore. It functions also as a resource for prospective queer parents and to raise awareness of same-sex families to the general

public. For Olivia, the blog represents their courage and resistance toward social exclusion as evidenced in the “about” section:

[...]Since we have chosen to have a child in Singapore, we are well aware of the many challenges that lie ahead of us. Life is not meant to be lived in fear. I believe in living my life the way I want instead of living life the way others expect me to. Sure, we may face some obstacles along the way, but how can you know true happiness if you have not had to fight for it?
(Liv, “About the Chiongs”, April 9, 2016)

Olivia encountered severe backlash from fundamental Christian groups who cited her blog as a negative example of LGBT people threatening the moral fabric of society by raising children against heterosexual nuclear family norms. The couple responded with humor by stating that they are an “ordinary” loving family and their critics have done them a favor by increasing traffic to their site and essentially helping to publicize their blog on global viral networks such as Buzzfeed.

While her blog is written in a candid manner, Olivia is serious about the kinds of social exclusions their same-sex family has experienced due to their non-legal marital status. Without legal marriage recognition, Irene, who is a Singaporean citizen, cannot confer citizenship to their daughter, who is currently holding an Indonesian passport. Olivia is an Indonesian citizen with a Permanent Resident status in Singapore. As a non-citizen, their three-year old holds a Dependent’s Pass that requires a yearly renewal application; her legal status in Singapore is not secured despite both her mothers possessing residency status in Singapore as a citizen or permanent resident. It is also difficult for Zoey to attend local schools because the state requires Dependent’s Pass holders to obtain a Letter of Consent from the Immigration and Checkpoints Authority (ICA) before they are allowed to enrol in school. Similarly, Zoey, as an ‘illegitimate’ child and non-citizen, does not receive any pre-school subsidies for her education even though this entitlement has been extended to all married and working citizen and permanent resident mothers in Singapore. All of these problems would have been automatically resolved if same-sex marriages were legally recognized in Singapore.

The way in which same-sex couples introduce their family to the public reveals how each kin member relates to each other and negotiate heteronormative norms of kinship. On her blog, Olivia refers to herself as “Mama”, while Irene is “Mummy” to their daughter, Zoey. She declares Irene her wife as a response to the state’s refusal to legitimize their marriage and also to her critics who attempt to deny Irene’s existence by calling Olivia a “single unwed mother” or treat

their marriage as falsely construed. To shore up their critics, Olivia posted pictures of their marriage certificate, wedding ceremony and entourage in San Francisco. There were also pictures of them as newly-minted wives kissing on the steps of City Hall, along with other family photos which establish and affirm their belonging to each other.

The couple understands that Singapore has yet to accept female same-sex partners as having equal parental status to their children despite one parent not having a biological relationship with them. They posit that their family is no different than heterosexual step-parent families or families with legally-adopted children, which are culturally accepted. Unlike them however, heterosexual families seldom have to prove their biological relations in order to be legitimized as belonging to the same family. To counter accusations that Zoey only has only one “real” mother, Olivia maintains on her blog that Zoey is being raised by two co-mothers who possess equal rights to discipline, love and nurture her. They do not privilege the birth mother as the proper and rightful mother over the social mother. Olivia mentions that they have been exposing Zoey to a wide variety of books featuring diverse family themes: gay and lesbian families, single and adopted families. They do so in anticipation that Zoey will be taught in school that her same-sex family is not the norm or legally accepted in Singapore. They hope that Zoey will understand that there are many variations of a “normal” family and that she would recognize love and care over dominant ideals that insist upon having a mother and father as the norm.

Among married Chinese couples in Singapore, taking on and sharing a common family name is a kinship device to demonstrate affinity ties. The Chinese in Singapore practice patrilineal descent, in which a child or wife takes on her father’s or husband’s surname. Since the state regards Olivia as a “single mother” with no knowledge of Zoey’s biological father, Zoey would by default, take on her surname. To ensure maternal equality and fair representation of their co-motherhood, Irene and Olivia felt that it was best to create a new family name for Zoey. They settled on the surname “Chiong”, a derivative of both their mothers’ maiden surname, “Zhang” with the letters ‘i’ and ‘o’ representing their initials. However, the Registrar of Births did not allow for Zoey to be registered under a different surname from her biological mother because they would not be recognized as being officially related and create further documentation problems. Olivia and Irene’s experience at the Registrar demonstrates the importance of names as proof of relationship. This bureaucratic process is also ethnic-specific to the Chinese where sharing similar surnames connotes a legal mother-child relationship.

Hence, Olivia officially changed her surname so Zoey would be automatically registered as “Chiong”. Irene did the same to avoid facing similar problems if she were to carry their second child in the future. While the couple had to take on a massive bureaucratic hurdle in attempting to standardize their new surnames, Olivia described the entire process as worthwhile because they were all “becom[ing] a family at the same time” and paying homage to their mothers’ lineage. Their name-change practices indicate innovative strategies to symbolize family belonging and new kinship rituals, while simultaneously drawing upon Chinese traditional norms of kin members sharing similar surnames. By using derivatives of both their mothers’ maiden surnames as their family name, they are furthering both their mothers’ matrilineal descent, which symbolizes resistance to Chinese patrilineal traditions where progeny is normatively extended through fathers and husbands.

The other Chinese lesbian couple, Weiling and Muk Yin, prefer to keep their same-sex family out of public limelight unless in expressing their struggles and grievances with important matters such as promoting safe spaces for children of LGBT couples. While living in London, the couple used to be active in the LGBT community but this changed after having children and when they moved to Singapore due to difficulties in balancing work and childcare. Further, the couple were more engaged in public spaces and events because they had found London to be a friendly city to same-sex families. In Singapore, Muk Yin feels anxiety toward dealing with homophobic Singaporeans so the couple restricts their social circle and public activities to like-minded parents and queer friends to avoid further discomfort. Weiling claims that Muk Yin gets strongly affected by homophobia even if it is not directly targeted at their family so they have been very protective of their privacy to avoid being targeted in homophobic hate speech. For example, when the National Library Board destroyed and banned children’s books that depicted queer family themes, Muk Yin was traumatized because she had equated the pulping of those books to an assault on their same-sex family.

Despite their desires for privacy, the couple demonstrates their affinity ties by being forthcoming as lesbian mothers to their son’s teachers and their relatives. When they registered Liam for Primary 1(1st grade) at a local government school, they made it a point to inform the principal that they are a same-sex couple, and that Liam belongs to a family with two mothers. The principal responded that the school has not had precedence of same-sex families but did not see why it would be an issue in his school. The couple prefers to disclose their non-traditional family so teachers would be more sensitive to Liam’s situation, for example, by not emphasizing

that every family should have a “father”, or in the event that Liam gets bullied for having two lesbian mothers.

At family events, the couple would encounter extended relatives who would ask offensive questions such as, “Which one is yours?” They dismiss such questions as stemming from ignorance, given that they have emphasized how both of them are equally mothers to both of their children even though they are each biologically related to one of their two sons. Weiling elaborates that it was usually distant relatives who would make such hurtful remarks while relatives that they are frequently in contact with have been accepting of their same-sex relationship and by extension, both of their children. Close relatives validate their co-maternal status by not treating their two sons as unrelated to each other or seeing Weiling and Muk Yin as two separate biological mothers. Weiling explains that the offensive remarks by distant relatives have been negated by the acceptance and support they received from close relatives.

The kin terms that the couple used to refer to each other and with their children demonstrates the prevalence of co-maternal kinship practice. As a toddler, Liam used to address Weiling and Muk Yin as “mimmy” because he could not pronounce “mummy”. Although “mimmy” stuck, Liam would use “mummy” in public while occasionally referring to Muk Yin as “mom”. When Liam was chosen to deliver the valedictorian speech for his kindergarten graduation, he thanked both his mummies for raising him. He understands that his family is just like any other, only with two lesbian mothers. His parents told him his birth story, explaining that they “had to have a donor to contribute the bit that mummies don’t have to make a human baby.” Weiling claims that it is important to disclose to and educate their children about how their same-sex family came about instead of keeping their birth story a secret. Creating early awareness shows their pride in creating a same-sex family because being “closeted” signals fear and they did not want their children to feel that there is something to be ashamed or “wrong” about being a same-sex family.

Lesbian co-mothers use appropriate marital kin terms to reinforce queer practices and subjectivities of motherhood. While Weiling never used to refer to Muk Yin as her wife, she did so after having Jake. Weiling elaborates that Muk Yin does not relate to being a “wife” because of its “patriarchal” connotation of being someone’s property. But Weiling uses “wife” more frequently and strategically in public to avoid passing as a “straight mom with a husband”. She says she hates to be read as a heterosexual mother because it discounts the co-motherhood and intimate partnership that she shares with Weiling.

Based on the narratives of the two Chinese lesbian couples, I found that they use terms like mummy and/or mama to signal co-maternal roles and to reinforce equal motherhood status to their children, especially if the other is a non-biological mother. The use of maternal kin terms is also a strategy to counter being read as a heterosexual mother and to affirm their legitimacy as a same-sex family. In addition, by referring to same-sex partners as wife, they are also re-traditionalizing particular affinity ties where “wife” is used in resistance to being married to a man or husband, and where in their context, refers to a same-sex partner. Their emphasis on a marital status speaks of their desire to assert a legit marital relationship against heteronormative norms that devalue their marriage as illegal or non-existent. Moreover, lesbian co-mothers desire acceptance toward their same-sex family forms without constituting an erasure of their queer subjectivities. In this regard, they have maintained that it was more important to their self-determination to be regarded non-compromisingly as a same-sex family and a queer couple rather than an asexual family with two women caring for each others’ children.

4.3 Heteronormalization of Queer Kinship

In this section, I explore how Malay Muslim same-sex partners who occupy different gendered sexual subjectivities engage in particular forms of kinship devices to demonstrate their affinity ties. In these heterogendered relationships, single mothers tend to identify as “straight” feminine women while their butch partners identify as men. Their hetero-gendered kinship dynamics as man and woman appropriate traditional heterosexual family norms, while also challenging norms of compulsory heterosexuality. I show how the heterosexuality of single mothers and the non-normativity of masculine butch partners significantly influences their configurations of kin relatedness, in particular, focusing on the kin terms they use and their strategies of legitimation through their performance of ‘passing’. Whether Malay heterogendered partners desire to be read as queer or as a heterosexual nuclear family is important because it informs the types of social interactions they have with other members of the public such as health practitioners, as well as their biological family members.

Three butch partners, Yam, Jo and Shiq entered relationships with feminine single mothers who were in their first to second trimester of pregnancy. The first couple, Yam and Lina, had known each other for a year while Lina was still in the process of separation from an abusive husband. Two weeks before they officially dated, Yam had accompanied Lina to the clinic where they found out Lina was two months pregnant, with her ex-husband’s child. The second couple

features Jo, who had met Ayu while she was working as a karaoke lounge hostess at one of the red light districts in Singapore. They had gotten together after a month of dating and found out soon after that that Ayu, an unmarried mother, was three months pregnant with a third child. The last couple saw Shiq introduced to Fauziah, a divorced single mother, through a mutual friend. When they started dating, Fauziah was already visibly five months pregnant (out-of-wedlock) with her second child.

These butch partners acquire parenthood bonds and status by being physically and emotionally present at every stage of their partners' pregnancy while they were still dating. Through their involvement, butches initiate themselves as husbands and fathers of their feminine partners' unborn child. Jo described being with her partner at an early stage of pregnancy as making her feel like they had conceived a child together. Jo added that when their son used to kick Ayu in the womb, Ayu would put Jo's hand on her stomach to feel the kicks while jokingly stating that their son was following the footsteps of his father, Jo, who is a national woman's soccer player. Yam grew to feel like a husband and father after accompanying Lina through her pre-natal and post-natal checkups, catering to her food cravings and attending pre-natal birthing classes with her. Fauziah had treated Shiq like the father of her future baby, by allowing Shiq to subsidize her medical bills and deciding her birth plan including which hospitals they would go to deliver the baby. These were roles that were typically associated with male husbands.

In their interactions with medical and health practitioners at hospitals, Malay heterogendered partners do not disclose their relationship as a same-sex couple. Butches felt uncomfortable declaring their status as a lesbian couple because it did not reflect their gender identity as men or their partner's identity as a heterosexual woman. Instead, butches see their roles as husbands and would prefer to be read as prospective fathers rather than as lesbian partners or co-mothers. Further, some of them were also worried that their partners would not be comfortable being treated as a lesbian mother. Yam, for instance, withheld disclosure because her partner Lina would get very self-conscious about others judging her for being homosexual. Additionally, butches like Yam and Shiq felt that their relationship as "heterosexual" same-sex partners was not culturally intelligible to nurses and doctors, so they did not protest or correct anyone who assumed that they were their partners' "best friend".

By not disclosing their same-sex relationship, Malay hetero-gendered couples engage a specific kinship device aimed at preserving their affinity ties as a "normal" heterosexual family. Butches recounted expressing a sense of pride and validation when they were "mistaken" as husbands and/or fathers. While Chinese lesbian mothers highlight how being visible and

forthcoming about their same-sex family affirms their affinity ties to each other and to the children, Malay heterogendered partners feel more validated and self-affirmed as husbands/fathers and wives by not disclosing their homosexual relationship. These differences highlight how public disclosure or ‘coming out’ to demonstrate affinity ties as a same-sex family may not necessarily be significant to the experiences of all same-sex families, especially if hetero-gendered same-sex couples desire to pass as “normal” husbands and wives.

The butches interviewed hoped to be present in the delivery room or operating theatre to witness the birth of their newborn but some of them felt that they were not legitimized to make such demands. Shiq had planned on accompanying Fauziah throughout her natural delivery but after being told that only husbands or biological fathers of the baby were allowed, she changed her mind and accepted that she would be waiting in the corridors until the baby was born. Since the baby’s biological father was non-existent, Fauziah’s sister, as the next-of-kin, was allowed into the delivery room. Shiq thought that the policy was unfair and she deserved to be present because she had been supporting Fauziah throughout her medical checkups as well as paying the bills. When I asked why she did not request permission, Shiq replied, “It’s already their policy? What can I do? I don’t want to create a scene (*tak mau kecoh*).” More importantly, she elaborates:

I did not know how to describe our relationship to the doctors. I am the baby’s father and going to be Fauziah’s husband [she has not officially proposed], but how to explain? I don’t know if they can understand and I don’t want to draw attention to us and have people think strangely of us. I felt helpless, it *is* unfair but there’s nothing I can do about it, I am not technically her husband or her family member.

Shiq’s experience demonstrates the illegibility of ambiguous affinity ties especially when a same-sex relationship is not entirely “lesbian” (two cisgender women) nor “heterosexual” as (two cisgender man and woman). Shiq’s struggles in expressing relatedness to Fauziah reveals how same-sex relations have also been largely understood in simplistic binary terms, as diametric opposites to heterosexuality. Thus, the experiences of Malay hetero-gendered couples who are neither “straight” nor “gay” become even more invisible because their relatedness does not conform or map easily onto already established tropes of homosexual or heterosexual relations.

In contrast, Chinese lesbian mothers were more empowered to demand their rights to be present in the delivery room because they could draw upon a legible homosexual identity even if their same-sex relationship is not legally recognized in Singapore. Furthermore, these women share the same desires and intention as their female partners to be recognized as a lesbian or

queer couple. In comparison, butches and single mothers consider themselves heterosexual men and women who are in a same-sex relationship. In this regard, the legibility of same-sex affinity ties affects how partners are treated by medical health practitioners, which impacts their access to particular medical facilities such as being included as a “spouse” during their partners’ labor process.

The ambivalence of “heterosexual” same-sex relationships becomes even more pronounced when the gender conforming feminine partner, who easily passes as a ‘straight’ woman, prefers to be treated by medical officers as a “single mother”. Butches like Yam felt that they had no rights to demand presence in the delivery room because their partner wanted to be discreet about their relationship. As a nurse, Yam understood that hospital policies prevail but could be waived under special discretion of doctors. However, since Lina did not find her presence in the delivery room necessary, Yam did not want to be seen as pushing for an “LGBT agenda”, especially when the focus should be on respecting Lina’s well-being for a smooth delivery of their baby. Lina’s mother was present during labor and Yam felt resigned to the fact that blood relations (*sedara*) occupy a higher kin status than her same-sex relationship, despite the fact that she had, like Shiq, spent months being the most involved person in her partner’s pregnancy. But Yam put aside her own needs to be legitimized as a partner, knowing that Lina was not out to her natal family and did not want to jeopardize Lina’s position in her family or strain biological family ties.

The practical enactments of Malay heterogendered partners demonstrate the contextual and contingent enactment of particular kinship devices. By not claiming their same-sex status, butches understand that this strategically protects a covert same-sex relationship from natal family members who may express disapproval. They accede to hospital policies because they respect their partners’ concerns, understanding that it is not their place to be there as non-legal spouses (even if they find it unfair) and do not want to rouse suspicion or draw unwanted attention to their same-sex relationship. This is in contrast to the Chinese lesbian co-mothers who believe same-sex couples should be justified in demanding recognition as legitimate spouses in order to be treated in accordance with the kinship affinity they have within their relationship.

The concept of practical enactment is useful to explain why Malay heterogendered couples’ experiences with healthcare differ vastly from those of Chinese lesbian co-mothers’. The latter, whose primary subjectivity is equally queer, share similar intimate and political goals, and with their collective capitals, are economically and socially empowered through their LGBT networks to choose services that legitimize them as same-sex parents. They were assertive in only

selecting doctors or hospitals that were accepting of their relationship. Chinese lesbian co-mothers are also out to their natal family members, who understood that they are not in any position to contest the decisions that co-mothers made with regards to who gets to be in delivery rooms.

In comparison, Malay butch partners' ability and self-empowerment to access medical facilities as co-parents is limited or constrained by their single mother/partners' self-determination as 'straight' mothers as well as disapproval from natal families. Single mother/partners regard the care, support and love that butches provide as equivalent to the role of a supportive husband and father of the child. Ironically, in presenting as a straight woman without claiming an intimate same-sex status to her butch partner, she is treated by medical practitioners as a single mother without a partner, and their same-sex relationship is effaced or misrecognized as a devoted, platonic relationship.

From their interactions with medical practitioners, butch partners and their single mother/partners occupy different habitus in terms of how they seek to reconcile their gendered sexualities with heteronormative norms of kinship. Butches' practical sense as a non-cisgender husband becomes invisible through their partners' complicit presentation of self as a heterosexual single mother. Through their complicity, single mother-partners hetero-normalize queer kinship arrangements, inevitably subjecting their butch partners to heterosexual normative categories (being a good friend) that render butches' parental investment invisible. At the same time, butches' self-identification as men makes it difficult for them to assert same-sex relations, as lesbians, in order to be treated as a partner. Thus, the heteronormalization of their same-sex practices is also facilitated by the ambivalence of their queer practices as neither homosexual nor heterosexual. Ambivalent subjectivities, in their situation, become easily co-opted, by default, as platonic friendship, except in circumstances where butch partners are able to pass off successfully as men, and be regarded as husbands/fathers. Inadvertently, heterogendered couples' deference to biological kinship status, especially with regards to hospital policies, reveal how their choices are routed through an experience of disempowerment due to an absence of cultural approval in order to enact outcomes that legitimize their personhood as an intimate partner, husband and/or father.

4.4 Initiating New Kin into Family: Single Mothers and Butch Stepfathers

As a kinship device, naming practices demonstrate the kinning of affinity ties toward non-biologically related family members. In this section, I look at the naming practices of two

types of same-sex families who are either welcoming a newborn and/or a partner as a step-parent. Through the narratives of Malay butch participants and single mothers, I explore the relationship between naming strategies and Malay kinship practices to understand how same-sex partners map their relatedness to traditional kin charts. I examine how they negotiate traditional heteronormative structures or appropriate gendered kin terms to legitimize parent-child relations in their same-sex families.

4.4.1 Welcoming the Newborn: “I Give You My Name”

Malay single mothers and butch fathers who are co-parenting a newborn child refer to each other using kin terms that signify their affinity ties and belonging as a family unit. The choice of kin terms reflects these same-sex partners’ aspirations to familiarize and socialize their newborn into recognizing them as co-parents against heteronormative norms that delegitimize the non-biological butch parent as a father. Their practices also demonstrate the appropriation of particular norms of gender and kin complementarity in Malay families. At the same time, given that some of these hetero-gendered couples practice a covert same-sex relationship, their kin terms symbolize affinity while simultaneously cater to ambivalent interpretations of same-sex intimacies. That is, for some butch partners, terms of address had to be “fatherly” enough to legitimize their role as a social father to the single mothers’ newborn child but without giving away their same-sex relationship to protect their family unit from the disapproval of their respective biological families.

Single mothers and butch partners who are closeted about their same-sex relationship and who interact frequently with their respective biological parents tend to innovate new or ambiguously gendered kin terms to signify their new parent-child relations. I term these innovations as a form of “tacit kinship” strategy, involving shared codes of meaning between same-sex partners. Lina, a heterosexual feminine mother, addressed herself as “Ah mie”, a derivative of “mummy”, to her son Rizal. To convey kin complementarity and similar parental hierarchy, she addresses Yam, her butch partner as “Ah yam”. Lina explains that “Ah mie” and “Ah yam” sounded close enough to “mummy” and “Ayah”, which translates to “father” in the Malay language. Yam ideally preferred to be addressed in gendered kin terms that connoted being a “father”, but she understood the constraints that they face being around their conservative Malay Muslim family and relatives.

When Yam and Lina discussed what kin terms would be suitable, they figured that consistency was important. They did not want to confuse their son Rizal should they refer to Yam as “daddy”, especially when they might have to code-switch to “aunty” with other natal family members. They had considered referring to Yam simply by her name, but they also knew that Malay families regard a child addressing adults on a first-name basis as impolite. Yam also knew that other family members would impose the term “aunty” if the couple did not already adopt a kin term for her. They decided on Ah Mie and Ah Yam because it symbolizes an exclusive shared code of meaning (being a co-parenting couple) and in its complementarity, demonstrates a form of parental authority to their son as well. Their strategies explicate the possibilities of forging affinity ties based on shared codes of meaning of tacit kinship practices. It also hints upon their navigation of different spatial and cultural kinship boundaries between their own family unit, and in relation to their biological families.

The proximity between same-sex families and their biological families matter in terms of how Malay butches and single mothers present their relationships to their children as well as to members of their larger kin networks. In cases where single mothers practice a neolocal form of residence that refers to living in a household separate from their biological families, the kin terms that these couples chose reflect explicit use of masculine and feminine parental pronouns. The privacy that they possess living away from biological families, who may disapprove of their same-sex relationship, accords them the freedom to enact particular gender ideals.

Fauziah, a divorcee, lives in her own household with a daughter from her previous marriage and her newborn son, who was born out-of-wedlock. Fauziah mentioned that as a 40-year old mother, her parents and siblings could not significantly interfere with her personal life unless she were a much younger mother. On the other hand, her butch partner Shiq still lives with her traditional Muslim parents who are against same-sex relationships. Shiq does not intend to introduce Fauziah to her parents. Given both their family circumstances, they are less constrained in their use of kin terms compared to the previous couple, Yam and Lina. Fauziah addresses herself as “Mummy”, while Shiq prefers to be called “Abi”, which is the Arabic term for “Father”. “Abi” is more commonly used amongst the Arab Muslims while rare among the Malays in Singapore, although there has been increasing prevalence of use among the more religiously-oriented Arabized Malays. According to Shiq, “Abi” is less obvious than other paternal kin terms such as “papa” or “daddy”, which allows her some leeway in identifying as a father without attracting attention from onlookers.

In another situation where the biological families of both same-sex partners are accepting of their non-traditional family form, typical and gendered Malay kin terms were used, without any form of modification or less common variations. Jo and her partner Ayu have no qualms being addressed as “ayah” (father) and “ibu” (mother) respectively. In fact, Jo’s immediate family members also refer to Jo as “ayah” in the presence of Ayu’s children since they have already accepted Jo as a female son since childhood. Since Jo is already an “ayah” to her biological family, by extension, Ayu becomes Jo’s wife, and a daughter and sister-in-law to Jo’s her parents’ and siblings’ respectively. Ayu’s own biological family refers to Jo in a similar manner.

Based on the narratives above, I found that same-sex partners’ selective use of paternal kin terms corresponds directly to the degree of acceptance from biological families’ toward same-sex relationships as well as recognition and approval toward butch partners as men. Their kinship strategies, whether in sharing secret codes of meaning or in using gendered kin terms, is useful in normalizing non-biological connections into familiar social configurations, as a way to legitimize the butch partner’s role as a social father to a newborn child.

Since it is cultural practice for Muslim children to inherit their fathers’ name as their family name, same-sex Muslim couples innovate naming rituals in the absence of biological paternity. In typical Malay Muslim families, husbands are recognized as head-of-the-household and usually have the final say on their children’s names. Yam, Jo and Shiq earned their domestic positions as husbands and fathers because of their huge involvement in their partners’ pregnancies, and therefore earned the privilege to name their child. They named their sons using parts of their own names, or an amalgamation of both partners’ names. Yam named their son “Rizal”, derived from *Mariam* and *Zalina*, while Shiq named their son “Shehran Fawwaz” after the phonetics in both their names *Shikin* and *Fauziah*.

Jo named her son Rayhan Putra Johanis. Rayhan comes from her partners’ name *Rahayu* and her name *Johanis*. She added Putra, which means “prince” and is also used amongst contemporary Malays to mean “son of”. Taken together, it means Rayhan, son of Johanis. This is an intentional move, as Jo explained:

When a Muslim child is born out of wedlock (*anak luar nikah*), they are regarded as fatherless and assigned “bin Abdullah” (son of Abdullah, Prophet Muhammad’s uncle, to signify son of Islam) by default. But I am his father, so we decided to do away with the “bin” and add “Putra Johanis” (son of Johanis).

In this instance, Jo and Ayu’s innovative naming practice circumvents official practices of naming illegitimate children. Rayhan appears semiotically and symbolically as Jo’s son before their child is declared by the state as illegitimate and fatherless (bin Abdullah). Further, in letting their son

take on Jo's name, Ayu recognizes Jo's role as a man, and head of their household. Their kinning strategy differs from Chinese lesbian co-mothers, Olivia and Irene, who preferred that Zoey did not take either of their names, so as to recognize both mothers as equal and rightful parents.

While it is not biologically possible for the children of single mothers to inherit their butch fathers' genetic material, some butches consider giving parts of their name as a means of conferring their identity and self upon the child. The Malay butch fathers regard names as crucial to one's identity and naming a child means providing an identity they will respond to and claim for the rest of their lives. As Jo succinctly articulates: "My body can't produce sperm (*benih*) to make a baby, but I can give my name, and that would be part of him forever." In Jo's context, giving her name marks an affinity tie based on sharing a common feature of one's self in order to overcome the absence of shared biogenetic substance. Jo's naming practice, as well the kinning strategies of other same-sex couples in this section, reflect symbolic innovations of Malay traditional kinship and a practical enactment of gendered norms when navigating heteronormative structures of society.

4.4.2 Welcoming a Step-Parent: By What Terms Shall We Call You?

Malay divorced/unwed single mothers with already established mother-child dyads and/or households engage in particular kinning strategies that may differ from their single mother counterparts who initiate co-parent relationships with newborns. In this section, I examine how reconstituted families introduce same-sex partners into 'step-parent' roles and the ways in which non-biological parents build rapport with the children of single mothers. In the previous section, I found that co-parents are able to enforce the use of particular kin terms since newborn children do not already have an established relationship with their biological mother, or have an existing biological father. This enforcement may not be possible for most of the same-sex step-parent families in this section because some children already have ongoing relationships with their biological fathers or, in some cases, are already comfortable with their single mother-child dyad. Despite this difference, I noted similarities in terms of tacit kinship practices among single mothers who desire to protect their same-sex partners and their family units from social disapproval. Through the examples of three different reconstituted family units, I demonstrate the significance of parent-child dynamics in determining how same-sex step-parents should be addressed and/or the long-term feasibility of their reconstitution.

Kinning Step-fathers in Relation to Distant Biological Fathers

Time, presence and trust is a crucial factor in building rapport as a reconstituted family unit. Zara, who identifies as “straight”, is a divorced mother with a son (10), Mika, and daughter (4), Iman. She had met and fallen in love with her butch partner Han who subsequently moved into her household after a year of courtship. Zara describes that her children, who were then six and one years old, took an instant liking to Han and was excited to have Han live with them. It became easier for Han to assume a co-parent or step-parent role as an adult member of Zara’s household. Zara did not divulge their relationship to her children and claims instead that they “could sense it”. Their intimate relationship, as a masculine and feminine couple, became inevitable to the children who has seen them holding hands and more obviously, sharing a bed together.

Children’s acceptance of their mother’s same-sex relationship with a butch partner facilitates ease in transition for the non-biological parent into already established mother-children dyads. Forms of acceptance are also determined in terms of how butch partners insert their roles to complement children’s relationships with existing biological parents. When Han moved in, Zara was still in the process of finalizing her two-year long divorce ordeal. After a few months, Mika started encouraging Han to marry Zara. He enjoyed having a new parent who helped him deal with the loss of his father, and Zara explained that it was due in part to Han playing with him a lot, unlike Mika’s biological father who was too busy to give him attention. The couple prefers not to enforce parental kin terms and would rather the children configure their own kin terms for Han.

It is possible for a butch step-parent to have different parental relations to children within their co-parental affinity status, depending on the dynamics that biological fathers/ex-spouses have with their children. Zara describes that Han’s co-parent role was more brotherly than that of a father-figure with Mika, who maintains an ongoing relationship with his dad. On the other hand, Zara’s ex-husband does not have a relationship with Iman, who was only five months old when he left, and so does not have any memory of having a father. The absence of a father-figure facilitated Iman’s recognition of Han as a masculine person in their household and as a father.

The couple is ambivalent about enforcing suitable kin terms for Han primarily because the latter identifies as a man. Zara elaborates that if she had considered them a lesbian couple, it would have been easier to introduce Han as “mama” since Zara is “mummy” to her children. However, Zara and Han are a hetero-gendered couple and Zara recognizes and regards Han as a man and a father-figure to her children. Therefore, feminine kin terms would be inappropriate, if

not, rather jarring to both the couples' and the children's sense of affinity tie. At the same time, the couple were hesitant to have the kids address Han as "papa" or "daddy", especially if these terms were uttered in extended family spaces or among conservative Muslim friends. They want to avoid negative remarks from acquaintances and biological family members who might, as they have previously experienced, accuse Zara for being a morally irresponsible mother because she is "confusing" her children through her involvement with Han.

At the same time, while Zara and Han do not enforce parental kin terms, Zara takes it upon herself to ensure that the children recognize Han's contributions to their household and her role as a co-parent. Zara understands the context of being a same-sex family in a conservative Malay Muslim or larger Singapore society. She is afraid that "outsiders" might "influence" the children to view Han as an unsuitable parent due to her masculine identification and their same-sex relationship. Zara differentiates between "outsiders", people who are not accepting of their same-sex family, and "insiders", those who embrace them. To negate unwanted external influence, Zara and Han would arrange for play dates with other same-sex families and teach their kids that "family is about loving and caring for one another". Zara hopes that the children will be acquainted with different expressions of gender and sexuality and be able to form positive perceptions toward their same-sex family as well as Han's role as a co-parent.

The kinship practices of single mothers who take the initiative to inculcate children's openness toward understanding non-normative gender, sexuality and family practices translates to an affirmation of same-sex affinity ties against a culture that devalues these families as well as LGBT people. Zara had explained to Mika that "Han is a boy born in the wrong girl-body" and showed him YouTube videos of other transgender men to show how "common" it is, while at the same time also highlights how some of them have been discriminated against or been victims of violence. Mika is very protective toward Han because of the brother-parent bond that they share and warned Zara that he only wants Han as his "stepdad". Zara describes that Mika finds Zara's male suitors a "disturbance" to the family and would also get angry if anyone were to suggest that Han is "not family". Zara's story reflects the close bond between her children and her partner, as well as her success in building her children's confidence to defend their same-sex family and to counter negative remarks from others.

Children have limited autonomy to overtly express their affinity tie in ways that represent how they view the gender non-conforming parent. Mika grew tired of correcting Han's office colleagues that Han was a "parent, not mother" when he visits Han at her office during school holidays. When Iman turned three, she started addressing Han as "daddy", much to the

displeasure of Zara's mother, who is living with the couple and who would insist that Han was not "family". To mitigate her grandmother's displeasure, Iman invented a new kin term by referring to Han as "Farn", which according to Zara, was short for "Father Han". In doing so, Iman enacts a tacit kinship practice that enables her to express and represent her affinities to Han while mitigating her grandmother's disapproval and also without compromising her relations to both her grandmother and Han.

Zara would get upset when her mother taught Iman to address her biological father as "daddy". She considers her mother's actions to undermine her authority, especially when she considers her ex-husband undeserving of any other title except as Iman's "sperm donor". He has stopped being involved with the children, does not pay adequate child support (USD 150 a month for two children) and sullied her reputation by telling their mutual friends that Iman was not biologically his. Despite this, as Zara's mother's behavior demonstrates, biogenetic connections continue to assume dominance, even, in some instances, usurping social and/or step-fatherhood despite the latter's investment in parenting.

Further, by relegating the children's biological father to a "sperm donor", Zara's remark exemplifies how kinship is an ongoing practice and should not be assumed simply because kin terms are derived through biological relations. As Taylor (2000: 319) states, "procreation does not suppose a substantial connection between parent and child." Zara regards Han as Iman's *real* father because Han has been providing for Iman in her ex-husband's absence. In this regard, divorced mothers like Zara see fatherhood as defined by active nurturing processes and not simply given through the transfer of bodily substance for procreation.

Co-parenting as "Aunt"

In this section, I explore further how children's relationships with extended family members influence the ways in which their openly out lesbian/bisexual parents, present a reconstituted same-sex family to those around them. In particular, I examine the kinship strategy of Dewi, a bisexual Malay Muslim single mother by looking at how she navigates the fine balance between being public and closeted about her same-sex partner and their affinity ties as a family unit. This family unit differs from the previous example in that the same-sex couple does not live together and co-parenting roles only take place over weekends when their daughter is with them. Most of the time, Dewi and her daughter lives with Dewi's aunt or parents although Dewi makes it a point to sleep over at her partner's home a few days a week.

I first encountered Dewi, who identifies as bisexual and is a divorcee with a 12-year-old daughter, Suki, at the same-sex parenting workshop that Olivia and Irene had organized. Dewi

was, at that time, in a relationship with Donna, a lesbian Belgian expatriate who has been residing in Singapore for over a decade. They were invited to give a brief presentation on their experiences as same-sex parents in their blended family. I was initially surprised that a Malay Muslim woman would be daring enough to be interviewed on online gay magazines and present a talk about her intimate relationship with another woman and how they are raising her daughter together. Later, Donna revealed that they were only “out” as co-parents in the LGBT scene, while closeted in other social spaces.

The process of introducing a same-sex partner into an already established mother-child dyad is gradual. It requires time and patience to cultivate bonds of trust between the child and the new co-parent, especially when a child has not been exposed to the idea of same-sex relationships or has been taught in Islam that homosexuality is a sin. Dewi recalled that it was her daughter Suki who first approached Donna at a book festival in Singapore. Dewi, whose last experience with women was more than a decade ago, found herself attracted to Donna. Then, when it became apparent to Dewi that their relationship might be headed for the long term, she reintroduced Donna to Suki as her “best friend”. Over two years, the trio spent a lot of weekends together and their relationship gradually grew into family. Donna made the effort to swim with Suki and tutor her in Science and Math, as well as buy her books, toys and enroll her in enrichment classes. Soon Dewi and Donna started to present themselves as ‘co-parents’ in a ‘blended family’ to their contemporaries in the gay and lesbian creative and advocacy scene. Donna functions as a co-parent with limited capacity since Suki could only join them on some weekends when she is not with her biological father. Additionally, Dewi also regards herself as an independent single mother who does not require nor expect much co-parental contributions or involvement from Donna.

Since Dewi’s divorce in 2009, both mother and child had to live with Dewi’s conservative Muslim family who had at some points, expressed their “disgust” toward gays and lesbians, when Dewi came out them in 2013. To illustrate the extent of her mother’s influence onto Suki, Dewi described how Suki had started donning the hijab and even asked Dewi why she was not wearing one. Dewi was worried that Suki’s increasing religiosity might turn her against them. She attempted to resolve her worries by facilitating open discussions with Suki about gays and lesbians as well as teaching her to respect diverse family forms, such as same-sex families or families with adopted children.

Although Dewi was publicly vocal about her intimate relationship with Donna, she kept it vague with Suki and a secret from her biological family. However, Donna’s consistent outpouring

of care and affection won Suki's love and approval, and the two became, as Dewi described, "inseparable". Eventually Suki started to see Donna as a co-parental figure, calling her *Tante* Donna (Javanese for "Aunt" or elder female relative), which tacitly recognizes Donna's position as a co-parent in adopting kin terms reserved for a respected elder. Suki had also asked Donna if the latter was going to marry her mother because she would love to have "another mama". Despite being touched by her daughter's gesture, Dewi reminded Suki never to mention Donna to her grandparents or they might not get to see Donna again.

Around October 2013, Dewi confided that her relationship with Donna had become tumultuous and they were frequently breaking up. Dewi felt that it was in their best interest that Suki continues referring to Donna as "tante" instead of 'mama D' despite knowing that Suki was already comfortable in doing so. Dewi did not want Suki to be further attached and get disappointed if their relationship or family did not work out. Additionally, Dewi was also afraid that her "vengeful" ex-husband, might challenge her sole-custody of Suki, if he were to find out about her same-sex and co-parent relationship. Their tacit strategies symbolize affinity ties without revealing a same-sex intimate relationship, which would have created dangerous consequences for Dewi and Suki such as losing child custody or being disowned by their natal kin respectively.

Dewi and Suki's story highlights a similar practice to Zara and Han's household, where children who are old enough to speak are given the autonomy to decide how to address the new co-parent/step-parent of their family. Birth mothers and their same-sex partners were themselves trying to grapple with how to represent their non-traditional family form without getting negatively sanctioned by non-accepting outsiders. In addition, they were also worried about imposing their intimate relationship onto children who may not be ready to accept their parents' divorce or comprehend the non-normativity of same-sex relationships. As a result, their children developed their own understandings of how to view their new co-parent, by drawing upon familiar kinship charts, while at the same time reconstituting unfamiliar kinship paradigms into traditional practices.

While kin terms are not enforced onto children in the context of a same-sex relationship, this changes when the birth mother eventually gets married to a man. This shift reinforces the pertinence of traditional hierarchies of kinship within culturally endorsed heterosexual marriage. In heteronormative step-parent relationships, adult partners typically introduce and reinforce appropriate parental kin terms. In the Malay culture for example, it is considered rude for children to not accept and acknowledge their biological parent's new husband/wife as a step-parent and

refer to them in the suggested terms-of-address. While in a same-sex relationship, Dewi had refrained from correcting Suki who addressed Donna as *tante* (aunt), even though both of them associate Donna's bond with them as similar to having another mother or co-parent. Although Dewi did not enforce parental kin terms onto Suki in order to protect their mother-child dyad, she insisted and enforced that her daughter call her new husband "Ayah" (Malay term for father). She was also able to post pictures of her new husband and daughter on Instagram and captioned their relationship, for example, "father-daughter bonding time" where it would have been impossible, if not dangerous, to do so when it came to Donna and Suki.

Donna admits that as a feminist bisexual, she finds it discomfoting and unfair that her new husband's father-daughter relationship was so easily legitimized by her family members despite the fact that Donna has actually contributed more to Suki as a co-parent than her new husband. She was also struggling to accept that her marriage to her husband has effectively effaced the same-sex family she had with Donna because no one in her family or her husband knew about that previous relationship. Dewi has expressed regret that she was not able to give Donna the same kind of legitimacy as an intimate partner and co-parent that she could confer upon her new husband through marriage. She maintains that her new husband had the privilege of being a father and husband because as a cisgender man, their marriage was legally and culturally permissible. If her biological family had approved her same-sex relationship, Dewi claims:

There would not be a single doubt that I'd move in with her, marry her and have her be Suki's other mama. It is what I would have wanted, and the reason why our relationship did not work out. I don't have a choice. It's between me leaving my family for her or forcing my daughter to abandon her ties with my parents, whom she is close to.

Dewi's narrative demonstrates the limited future of her same-sex family, due to concerns that her child might lose connections to grandparents and extended relatives. In this regard, the only possible recourse and alternative Dewi had in a lifetime companion, one that was within her disposition, was to marry a man she also loves. Her same-sex family experiences also indicate how new kinship forms are subject to the reinforcement of traditional kinship norms and hierarchies, that, by default, excludes the same-sex co-parent. Thus the balancing act of being both visibly queer and overtly "normal" to maintain same-sex affinity ties as well as one's good position with families of origin, actually affirms the dominance of heteronormative Malay kinship.

“From Hero to Villain”: Impermanence of Step-Fatherhood

In this case study, I feature the story of Zai, a Malay butch and her partner Mona, a heterosexual single mother with two children. Their story demonstrates a situation in which children, given the autonomy, can easily assemble a same-sex family and also influence its breaking apart. This section details how a lack of enforcement of co-parental authority may accord children as having more power and position in the family than the butch partner/step-parent, in spite of the latter’s contributions in raising the children.

Zai entered Mona’s life in 2000, when her “step-children”, Fitri and Farin, were 14 and six respectively. Zai, adopted the role of Mona’s husband as well as a father-figure to Fitri and Farin. Mona had already been divorced for a year and her ex-husband, who is also the children’s biological father, was serving time for stabbing Mona several times in a case of domestic violence. Zai claims that the children were both traumatized from witnessing their mother being stabbed and were very protective of their mother. They were happy to have Zai in their family, especially since she was a former police officer and that she had cared for their well-being, even before Zai and their mother got together.

The children invented new kin terms to include Zai in the family. They started calling Zai “Papa Bear” because of her lovable, kind and doting disposition, while they wavered between calling Mona “Mama Bear” or the Malay kin term “Ibu” for mother. Zai and Mona refer to each other as “papa” and “ibu” as a way for their children and even themselves, to get used to their transition from being housemates, to intimate partners and co-parents. While Mona was always “ibu”, calling her “Mama Bear”, as a complementary term to “Papa Bear”, highlights a new mothering identity in relation to Zai as well as a form of cementing Zai’s membership as a co-parent in their family unit.

For the nine years that Zai and Mona lived together, Zai had assumed that she was always going to be “papa” to both the children. She had not expected that at 15, Mona’s daughter, Farin, would have a change of mind. Farin had succumbed to peer pressure and felt it was “abnormal” to have same-sex parents and was no longer comfortable calling a woman “papa”. She confided in Mona’s biological family who later blamed Zai for Farin’s depression, discounting Zai’s efforts in raising Farin from when she was six. Mona’s family arranged for Mona to go on a date with a prospective male suitor and in about two weeks, Mona decided to accept the arranged marriage. With the support of her parents and brothers, Mona ended her marriage to Zai, took her two teenage children and moved into her parents’ home. At that time, the older son, Fitri, was still very attached to Zai and would still keep in contact with her. Mona’s family did not approve this

and sent Fitri to study abroad in order to sever their relationship. Zai eventually lost contact with Fitri.

The structure of heteronormative privilege carries very real consequences, as Zai explains, “I went from hero to villain almost overnight, and I can’t do nothing about it.” Zai claims that she had immediately “lost all privileges” of having any authority as a co-parent, the moment Farin had decided Zai was undeserving to be her father. She described feeling betrayed by the very child she had raised for nine years. Zai’s experiences demonstrate how new kinship forms do not confer equal privileges to all partners. In fact, they may increase the vulnerability of non-birth parents like Zai who, despite their commitment and years of sacrifice, are not protected by any legal marital or parental rights. Butch partners like Zai have also highlighted to me that they were often first to be blamed as a “bad influence” for when anything goes wrong in the children or single mother’s lives.

The time period in which couples become same-sex “step-parents”, age of children at the beginning of the relationship, and children’s dispositions are important factors to consider why children in certain same-sex families are more accepting of their parents’ relationship than others. It is easier to enforce kin terms with newborn children who are not yet able to speak or to create awareness in younger children who are more impressionable than teenagers who may have already formulated their own opinions. In her study on step-families in Singapore, Tan-Jacob (2006) posits that families with children below the age of eight tend to transition better into a reconstituted family and have positive relationships with step-parents as compared to older children.

From my research, I posit that the temporal contexts of same-sex relationships and children’s dispositions are more significant factors than the children’s age. Since it is not within the approved ethical parameters of my research to conduct research on children in same-sex families, I view children’s dispositions through the ways in which same-sex parents cultivate awareness or expose them to LGBT social networks, issues and teach them about diversity of family forms. Like the other hetero-gendered Malay same-sex couples, Zai and Mona shared a “heterosexual” relationship with Zai who identifies as a man, as Mona’s husband, and Mona as her wife. However, since the children had accepted their relationship from the get-go, Zai did not have to do what the other same-sex step-parents did—cultivating awareness of their alternative and non-traditional kinship forms as well as educating them about LGBT people. The other step-parent families had to engage their children in these topics because they had wanted their children

to feel confident and assured about being in a same-sex family and wanted their children to not only accept, but respect their same-sex partner.

Additionally, it is also important to note that when Zai and Mona were in a relationship between 2000-2009, there was hardly any source of alternative media portraying same-sex families in a positive light in Singapore. It was nowhere near in comparison to the mainstream public visibility given to both the support for and against LGBT people and same-sex relationships that I have noted during the duration of my dissertation research from 2011 to 2015. In this regard, the other Malay same-sex “step-parent” families could draw from a variety of resources to cultivate awareness that would not have been available to Zai and Mona in their time. For example, Zara and Han watch *Modern Family* with their children, a US sitcom that includes a gay couple raising an adopted Vietnamese daughter together. These forms of media help children connect similarities to their own same-sex family and the positive portrayals of gay families facilitate children’s acceptance of their non-traditional family form. In addition, other same-sex parents are also connected to each other, and would meet up for arranged play-dates, birthday celebrations and get-togethers. Thus, children in these families have been socialized to view same-sex families as equally normal and valid to heterosexual families. At the same time, the children in Malay step-parent families are also aware that they need to be careful about how they present their mother’s same-sex partners as new co-parents.

4.5 Significance of Kin Terms, Belonging and Legitimacy

Kin terms alone do not define what makes a family, yet they create a reality of family. From the lens of performativity, kin terms are a form of illocutionary speech-act that legitimizes how partners regard each other and their children (Searle, 1979). Butler (1993:13) takes Searle’s theory further by explaining that “a performative is that discursive practice that enacts or produces that which it names.” Words, when uttered through a body of social conventions, do what they claim to say and reproduce a social reality that Butler argues is already socially constructed. When a man and woman marries, they are pronounced as “husband and wife”, endorsed by a person of authority or marriage officiant. When the same woman gives birth, the doctor pronounces her a mother and her husband, the father. Although socially constructed, these kin terms have become accepted as a natural fact of family and reality, based on the prevalent assumption that biology and procreation is a crucial substance of kinship.

Based on my research, the kinning practices of same-sex families in my research debunk biocentric kinship conventions. Participants highlight possibilities in which traditional kinship charts or norms of relatedness can be re-appropriated or rearranged beyond a heterosexual matrix. This is evident in the way same-sex partners challenge heteronormative structures of kinship by appropriating conventional gendered kin terms, through their non-conventional relationship and queer intimacies, and for some families, transforming the durability of their habitus.

In the absence of legal and cultural legitimization of same-sex families, traditional kinship hierarchies, which prioritize biological family members, continue to assert dominance over social mothers or the butch step-parent. Both Chinese and Malay same-sex families innovate different kinship strategies in response to this dominance: The former engages in overt kinship affinity ties aimed specifically at challenging the primacy of biological relations, while the latter's strategy is premised upon tacit kinship forms, where same-sex partners struggle to keep up a "normal", "straight", non-intimate appearance of family. Thus the closer same-sex partners are in relation to homophobic biological families, the less likely they are to publicly present themselves as a same-sex family unit. Instead, these partners choose to pass as two heterosexual women who are 'best friends' with each other.

The use of kin terms not only creates a reality of family, it reflects same-sex partners' negotiations with heteronormativity and signals the distribution of power and authority in the family. Chinese lesbian co-mothers actively enforce maternal kin-terms such as "mummy" or "mama" which connotes equality in their relationship; the co-mothers view themselves as having shared authority over their children. The parent-child dynamics differ for Malay same-sex step-parent families where the non-biological same-sex parents enter an already unequal kinship dynamic. As "new" parents, they have to gain the trust and respect of children already raised by single mothers and extended relatives. Kin terms are not enforced in the latter to empower children's sensitivities and cultivate acceptance of co-parents. While adults who are providing for the household typically have power over children who are dependents, this dynamic was not to be found in most Malay same-sex families. Children in these families have more family authority than their butch fathers, despite being dependent on the latter for material and emotional needs. These children, based on their close ties with conservative biological family members, are able to influence the outcome of parent-child dynamics or the feasibility of a same-sex relationship. The success of this is determined by both the resources and subject positions of same-sex parents to cultivate perspectives that would enable children in same-sex families to feel like they belong and are no different from "normal" families.

4.6 Reconstituting “Blood” Kinship Through Shared Temporality, Home and Hearth

Same-sex partners’ experiential aspects of kinship blur the boundaries between “true” (biological) and “fictive” (social) families, evidenced through their appropriation of conventional kin terms. I explore further how the reality of family is structured by other ongoing processes and performances of kinship that challenge restrictive understandings of family based on consanguineal (blood ties) or affinal (legal marriage ties). In particular, I asked Chinese and Malay participants what defines them or makes them family and their responses congregate loosely around the experience of sharing a life together. Further, most of their anecdotal evidence points to an understanding of relatedness based on a shared temporality of experience, sustained nurturance as well as the sharing of finances. On the other hand, the ending of a relationship, as the undoing of kinship, signifies the absence of these factors.

My discussion of relatedness is primarily shaped by Carsten’s (1995) study of “shared blood” among a rural population of Langkawi Malays. She posits that blood, as substance, can be transformed into social properties that defines one’s position and belonging in family. In this regard, blood relations are at once nature, given in birth, and nurture, which can be acquired through cumulative processes of care and feeding. Carsten elaborates that people acquire a notion of ‘shared blood’ or biogenetic substance by living in the same house, feeding and nourishing from the same hearth, “even when those who live together are not linked by ties of sexual procreation” (2004: 40). I develop her ideas further by looking at how Chinese and Malay same-sex families in a global city like Singapore construct symbolic biogenetic links or acquire a notion of “shared blood” (*sedara*) through their performance of family.

Malay butch fathers’ practice of fostering their partner’s children is not an entirely ‘new’ practice of kinship. It draws upon a cultural history of adoption that used to be prevalent within the Malay community (Djamour, 1959), although these practices are no longer widespread due to rising costs of living, confined and limited living space, as well as stricter laws surrounding child adoption (Li, 1989). Butch and andro partners have informed me that it was more acceptable for them to inform their biological families that they are fostering/taking care of an unrelated child than to divulge their sexuality to their parents. As these children and their mothers begin spending more time eating, interacting and playing with their butch fathers’ biological family, they become incorporated into their (butch fathers’) natal kin as a grandchild, niece or nephew.

Kinship strategies of Malay same-sex families reveal an adoptive practice that is marginal in anthropological literature, with the informal adoption of adults into families. Malay same-sex couples who are close to both their biological families are “kinned” as an adoptive daughter or sister (*anak/kakak angkat*), and never as an “in-law” except for one couple, Jo and Ayu, whose families regard them as husband and wife. The kinning of partners to a sibling-relationship demonstrates how conservative family members make sense of the close bond between two female partners. It also serves as form of negation of their same-sex sexuality through an unspoken reinforcement of incest taboos. Yam found this kinning strategy practical to both her and Lina’s desires for acceptance without being rejected by their families due to their same-sex relationship. As adoptive daughters, same-sex partners help out in the activities of their partners’ families such as cooking at family gatherings, planning outings, caring for other children in the household and even with household chores. To summarize, same-sex family members earn the title of adopted grandchildren and daughters by fostering close relationships to each others’ biological families as well as partaking in family activities and duties.

In the absence of blood relations, Malay butch fathers and their partner’s children “share blood” by acquiring similar dispositions and resemblance to each other. Carsten (1995) and Peletz (1996) highlighted a belief among the Malays that children who are fostered or adopted are said to take on the character traits and physical attributes of those who raised them. I have also heard from my elder Malay relatives that people who spend prolonged periods of time living and caring for each other may end up looking like each other: husbands and wives appearing similar as siblings and informally adopted children (*anak angkat*) resembling their adoptive parents. This belief is culturally contextualized within the common practice of fostering and informal adoption of children among Malay families in Singapore’s past.

My participants similarly associate resemblance with evidence toward the acculturation of biogenetic substance that links non-birth co-parents to the children they are informally fostering. Zara’s friends had commented that Mika and Han were starting to behave and talk like each other. Yam, who had spent significant amounts of time with baby Rizal and Lina, when they were still a family, got mistaken as Rizal’s father on a few occasions. Once, when they were at the clinic, the nurses teased that Rizal would grow up as chubby as Yam, and in fact, was already starting to look completely like his father Yam (*muka bapak habis*). These examples intervene between the rigid construction of blood relations, by demonstrating how similar mannerisms and physical resemblance constitutes a symbolic biogenetic link. Features which have been typically

reserved for biological parent-child relations can be acquired through sustained forms of nurturing and prolonged practices of caring for each other.

Most of the Malay same-sex partners in my research do not share co-residence with each other, which brings about rather interesting variations to what Carsten (2000) suggests; that relatedness is acquired by living in the same house. In the context of Singapore, housing is a premium and there are age-restrictions that enable one to be eligible to purchase affordable public housing (only if above 35), along with other rules such as being legally married and having a 'proper' family nucleus. These policies co-produce particular practices of kinship and residence in Singapore, where it is not common for adults to move out of their family home unless they are married. Those who do tend to be negatively sanctioned by relatives who would regard their decision to move out as 'selfish' or not wanting to be close to family. In the Malay community in Singapore, kinsmen who live apart from family are have been historically pitied for being isolated (Djamour, 1959). This coheres and reinforces Carsten's observation that Malays count those who live and eat in the same house as family.

To navigate cultural and policy constraints, same-sex partners construct new norms of kinship by demarcating and redefining spaces that they consider 'home', and by extension, their household. For example, even though Shiq does not reside with Fauziah and their children, she makes it a point to take her meals at Fauziah's flat even on the days that she is required to return to her parents' home. By her definition, "home" is where one invests most of their time eating, feeding and contributing to household provisions instead of where one sleeps at night.

In another example of cohabitating same-sex partners, the sharing and contributing to food consumption symbolizes and even guarantees the non-biological member's belonging to the family unit and home. Zara explains that her mother, who lives with them, was sometimes mean and hostile to Han. Han decided to resolve the tension by confronting Zara's mother, whom she calls "Cik" (Aunt). Cik assured Han that she would not have cooked, bought or served Han food if she had not considered Han to be in their family. The provision of food, for Zara's mother, is regarded as sign of acceptance of membership, because they were all contributing to the same hearth and consuming it together.

In situations where couples may not have the time to cook and eat from the same "hearth" or have the opportunity to live together (Carsten 2000), the significance of the hearth gets transplanted in the form of bank accounts. This analogy is telling, for example, in Weiling and Muk Yin, who do not have "separate pots". In their words, "Everything comes out from the same pot." Malay and Chinese couples, who see themselves as a single unit, tend to share joint

accounts. If they save separately, they have a common understanding that what they own belongs to the other, and vice versa. For most same-sex partners, family members are people one trusts with their bank accounts and share financial resources with in order to feed and nourish the family for survival and life's pleasures. A partner who is not transparent with their finances is regarded with high suspicion and if they withhold financial information, they are seen as being adversarial and attempting to create distance from their partners. It is also a common narrative that partners hesitate to accept money from each other towards the end of a relationship.

Kinship alliance and relatedness among partners signify an unspoken contract of mutually reciprocating each others' expectations, be it in the form of monetary resources or in terms of love, care and compassion. When partners no longer see resources as shared, it also means the end of their connection as a family unit. A concern would then emerge that in accepting money or resources one would be incurring a debt of favors to their partner. If one is family, gift giving is thus seen as a reciprocal act, where the gift compels a gift in return from the recipient. But in the undoing of kinship or the severing of affinity ties, a gift becomes a debt because reciprocity may no longer be a mutual interest, instead turning into a form of emotional taxation. In this regard, partners view the state of being indebted as a form of unpleasant connection to former kin, whereas the sharing of debt (paying for each others' credit card bills) and reciprocal gift giving is seen as strengthening kin alliances. If belonging as kin means to participate in one another's life, through giving and partaking food together, love and nurture, sharing sorrows and fortunes, then the undoing of kinship signals a refusal to be a part of the other's life, and withholding from the above life-giving activities.

4.7 Cyber-Performance and Memorial of Kinship Affinity Ties

Through my interactions with same-sex couples, I was also interested in examining new sites of kinship production to extend the performance of kinship beyond the domestic domain. I have earlier discussed negotiations that occur at these 'new sites' by analyzing partners' engagement with reproductive technology, corporate sperm banks, medical institutions and biogenetics lab. In this section, however, I will extend my discussion further by looking at new sites of kinship in cyberspace. In terms of same-sex relationships, online platforms such as Facebook and Instagram offer non-conventional families a place to pursue recognition and validation for their kin relations.

Elsewhere, anthropologists have urged the importance of studying cybersociality because virtual worlds are ‘robust locations for culture’ that are both bounded and porous (Boellstorff, 2008). As the Internet has by now penetrated the everyday lives of most Singaporeans, the boundaries of reality between one’s online and offline identity practices have become permeable (Hine, 2015). Online social media platforms have also brought about new forms of intimacy that reproduce one’s cultural and subject location. Gershon’s (2011) observations of college students who claim that Facebook increases their sense of jealousy and feelings of threat to their monogamous relationships demonstrates how Facebook profiles are intrinsically linked to one’s offline life. Further, the format of Facebook, in requiring its users to manage themselves as flexible collections of skills, usable traits and tastes that need to be constantly maintained and enhanced (Gershon, 2011), highlights a form of symbolic and social investment that are important to their sense of reality. Facebook, as a platform for managing alliances, shown through wall-postings, photos, mutual friends and social networks, provides participants a place to maneuver the content of their family life. It leaves clues of partners’ kinship connection, and, at the same time, accommodates ambivalence in interpretation.

Facebook allows same-sex partners the opportunities to represent their family and gender identity (for some) according to their desires, but without the restrictions they would have encountered in their offline world. Many participants take pictures of their family to achieve these aims. On Facebook, partners post family photos, tag and comment on each other’s photos as a way to connote an intimate relationship between same-sex partners. Depending on how the individuals view their queer subjectivity and the management of their privacy settings, they are able to decide how much information about their sexuality and their same-sex family they want to reveal. Sontag has previously written, “cameras go with family life” as a ritual in which people memorialize or symbolically demonstrate the fragile continuity or ruptures in making familial connections (1977: 8).

Mary Bouquet (2001) develops Sontag’s ideas further by looking at how persons appear as family or are read as “family” in photographs, such that even when “constituents do not add up to a ‘biological family’ they manage to effortlessly evoke one, while simultaneously adding a new dimension to the original form” (94). Informed by the above works, I view online family pictures as a kinship repository. I utilize Bouquet’s arguments to explore how kinship, connection and “shared substance” (Carsten, 2004) in same-sex family photographs demonstrate partners’ interpretation of affinity ties. In addition, butch fathers were also able to select their sex as “Male” and use male pronouns “His” or for those who prefer to be less obvious, they have the

option of not choosing a gender and opt for gender neutral pronouns “they”. For these fathers, they take pleasure in having the flexibility to become ‘male’ where these options would not have been possible for them in the physical environments they live in.

By looking at online photographs of Malay hetero-gendered same-sex couples, I observed the gender roles that partners adopt in the relationship. Pictures are used as a cultural device to constitute the substance of alternative kinship, and how they appropriate representations of kinship (see also Kimport, 2012). Their poses resemble that of typical nuclear family portraits, with the masculine female resembling the patriarch, sitting side-by-side with her feminine partner as the matriarch, either with an arm around each others’ shoulders, signifying romantic alliance. Depending on the number and age of children they are raising, a toddler would usually be with the biological mother, while other children would flank the same-sex parents. In some pictures the single mother and children are seated together, and the butch father behind them with her arms around her wife and children.

At first glance, family photographs of hetero-gendered couples appear like a typical heteronormative family, with a man, woman and children. Yet in other family photographs in their repository, butches are tagged as someone’s sister or daughter, which immediately gives away their sex as female. Without these other photographs, most butches could easily pass as cis-gender fathers making it difficult for viewers to see their queer family form beyond a rather conventional, heterosexual veneer. Thus, photographs of hetero-gendered couples, when placed in relation with other family photographs brings to attention a queer performance of kinship. Their visual and practical enactment of family exposes the performative nature of heterosexuality and gender (see Butler, 1999) and through this revelation, demonstrates how same-sex partners simultaneously appropriate and disrupt heteronormative conventions of kinship.

In contrast, gender role differentiation was less clear among photographs of Chinese lesbian co-mothers, who tend to be similar in their gender-presentation, as two androgynous women or a feminine woman and a more androgynous partner (but not as masculine as the Malay butch or andro who partner with feminine women). At the same time, because of the absence of masculine-feminine partnership that Singaporeans have associated with a “lesbian” relationship, their relationship may be read as platonic. In order to not be dismissed as “best friends”, lesbian couples caption their photographs as “my wife, love of my life”, and kin terms such as “mummy” or “mama” and “our child” to make the substance of kinship apparent. The text that accompanies photographs anchors the meaning of familial relatedness, which would have otherwise been effaced.

In terms of public presentation of family, Malay hetero-gendered couples' online representations of kinship differ vastly from Chinese lesbian co-mothers. The latter would either share one Facebook profile which signifies their partnership as a single unit or those with separate profiles would constantly and intentionally pepper kin terms such as wife, mummy and mama to make visible their same-sex relationship. Olivia and Irene frequently refer to each other as Zoey's parents, often show photos of their family going about daily activities together, relationship anniversaries, romantic gestures and would also use terms of endearment when describing the other partner. Weiling and Muk Yin, who share a Facebook profile, seldom describe their relationship but would post pictures of their children. It was also evident that the latter are same-sex parents because they talk about their challenges as lesbian mothers raising children in Singapore, frequently posting articles about LGBT rights and same-sex marriage. The content of such articles point to their visible representation and desires to be validated as a same-sex family.

In contrast, butch partners and single mothers have separate profiles and engage different strategies in presenting relatedness. Butch partners tend to be more insistent than single-mothers in demonstrating their same-sex relationship as well as their identity as fathers by inserting their relational kin terms in photographs of their children, and referencing their partners through gender-complementary parental kin terms. In some photos of herself with Ayu, Jo refers to herself as "ayah" and labels Ayu "ibu". She would also caption photographs of their children as "my sons". More pious butch fathers would also share articles on Facebook about the responsibilities of Muslim husbands and wives, which reinforce their gender identity as men and husbands and the heterosexual dynamics of their same-sex relationship.

Hetero-gendered couples negotiate their online representation of self and family by taking into account their partner's level of comfort toward public displays of intimacy and same-sex parenthood. Taking into consideration their fear of being "outed" to people who within their social network might disapprove of their sexual identity and same-sex family, these couples navigate public-private online spaces by setting up privacy perimeters on their Facebook and Instagram profiles. This would mean that their pictures are only viewable by those they perceive to be in their inner circle of trust. Han, for instance, is vocal about being a same-sex parent, but maintains ambivalence about her identity as their "father" or as Zara's "husband", out of respect for Zara who, being new to a same-sex relationship, has expressed discomfort at visible displays of suggested intimacy.

Zara expressed the notion that Han tolerated being an "invisible" romantic partner to protect Zara from being negatively sanctioned by homophobic Muslim friends. Zara had cropped

Han out of family photographs when she did not want her friends to know about their relationship. Han eventually got tired of being excluded and felt that Zara was devaluing her position as a life partner and co-parent. To Zara, Facebook “is not real” but Han felt that Zara’s practice of cropping photos meant that she understood the *real* consequences of Facebook in affecting her personal life and in thinking that way, Han concluded that Zara cared more about placating her followers than their relationship. Zara responded by gradually including Han in family pictures on her Facebook and Instagram and began referring to Han as an intimate partner and co-parent. She controlled the privacy settings of her Facebook and only posted and shared family photos that are restricted to friends who have accepted them as a couple.

Zara and Han’s conflict explicates how online social media platforms like Facebook and Instagram are simultaneously bounded and porous, co-shaping same-sex partners’ production of family, which may not always be interpreted similarly. Han’s sentiments of being devalued suggests that online performances of kinship are not distinct or separate from one’s physical experience of family in the ‘real world’. However, same-sex partners may each have different interpretations of the distinction between the reality of offline and online worlds, depending on their subject positions. Chinese co-lesbian mothers’ kinning practices on Facebook demonstrate the porosity of online and offline social realities. Similarly, butch fathers also view their presentation of self as an extension of their physical world and in constituting their reality of family.

Malay butch fathers get emotionally affected when they sense being excluded by their partners despite the awareness that their partners, although affectionate and loving in private, and fear being judged online. Shiq constantly writes herself as “Abi” (father) and talks fondly and frequently about her children. In comparison, Fauziah barely makes a mention of their relationship. I would frequently notice how heterosexual-identified single mothers, hardly post photographs of their masculine partners and if they do, online photographs are seldom captioned, signifying ambivalence in terms of their same-sex relationship. Single mothers also refer to their children in the singular “my baby” instead of, as what their butch partners usually refer as, “our baby”. These discrepancies indicate that single mothers legitimize their partners as fathers only in private domestic or intimate spaces. Within online personal-public domains, such as Facebook, their identities as heterosexual single mothers occupy dominance over their identities as co-parenting partners.

The observations above further underscore single-mother partners’ claim to sexual normalcy, where their romantic kin alliance with a same-sex partner is temporally and spatially

contingent to domestic domains. This intimate space, however, is distinct from mothers' sense of personal space. In other words, single mothers' gendered reproductive habitus, evidenced in their online presentation of self, is that of a heterosexual woman, and the intimate relationship these individuals share with their partners does not change the way they position themselves as a single mother even when they privately acknowledge their partner as a "father" and "husband".

The differences in partners' management of self and kinship on Facebook profiles reveals both the lure and limitations of Facebook - as a place that offers a lot of information, yet in some situations, incomplete information (Gershon, 2011). Conflicts arise when both partners are not able to appreciate or understand why the other reveals too much or too little about intimate details. These domestic struggles explicate the materiality of Facebook based on how couples view their connection to each other. As Facebook provides users with autonomy in controlling their privacy settings, butches tend to interpret the act of femme mothers who exclude their butch partners online, as a lack of commitment to kinship.

What happens when love and family is not forever? If partners are publicly visible in their performance of solidarity as family, then the undoing of kinship becomes a public performance online in the same way. When Shiq previously got married to another single mother with four teenage children, she posted photos of her commitment ceremony on Facebook. A few months later, when the relationship was no longer, Shiq wrote in her Facebook status, "I divorce thee, Sasha (name of previous partner), by the 1st *talaq (talak satu)*," thereby informally officiating a divorce and separation while also appropriating the Muslim denouncement of a marriage within a non-culturally sanctioned context. When strong bonds between couples are suddenly severed, Facebook becomes traumatic ground for partners who were pushed away. Yam resorted to disconnecting herself from Lina and deactivated her account while she grieved the loss of her partner and son offline. Lina left Yam abruptly to marry a Muslim male colleague because she succumbed to accusations of her committing sins by being in a same-sex relationship, labeling her an immoral mother who has no interest in raising her son according to proper Muslim conduct. Since Facebook has become a place where butches introduce their partners and children as theirs, a break-up leaves a haunting reminder of the impossibilities of their desires for family.

If photographs memorialize kinship, then they also demonstrate the importance of memory in substantiating kinship ties. Nurturance, as the substance of kinship, is also embodied in memory such that "memory...is essentially linked to kinship and is kinship itself" (Taylor, 1996: 206). Vilaca (2005: 449) writes that it is not just substance that circulates among kin members but rather memory—thought to be located in the body as the medium in which kin is

constituted based on everyday reciprocal acts of affection. Renato Rosaldo also reinforces the importance of shared memory to kinship when he notes the Illongot of Philippines regard those who share a history of migration and co-operation “share a body” (Rosaldo, 1980: 9). The notion of memory as a shared substance is so crucial to the formation of kinship affinity that the loss of this connection can be traumatic when kinship ends.

Zai felt the loss of a relationship with Mona strongly because they had shared a lot of struggles trying to make ends meet for nine years of their life together. Through their struggles, Zai felt the unity of their partnership, as well as a strong sense of being family. When Mona severed their relationship, Zai was left with a haunting loss because she had already started to see her life as intertwined with theirs. Even now, Zai talks about losing the children she had had, and continually pines for reconnection with them. Kin relatedness is also articulated based on shared life conditions and shared memories. The cumulative time people spend kinning others becomes a practical enactment, embodied in memory. This shared memory, and a mutuality of being, forms the substance of kinship.

If memories create deep affective bonds of “sharing one body”, some of my research participants express the loss of kinship ties as losing a significant part of one’s life and identity. Zai’s depression in losing her family drove her to attempt suicide. Meanwhile for masculine partners like Yam and Jo, who were involved with femme mothers since the start of their pregnancies, the end of a romantic and subsequently parent-child bond becomes hard to bear when kinship ties are disconnected, because their familial fantasies are thwarted. Butch partners feel dispossessed after having their affinity ties severed and removed from contact with their children.

Jo’s words resonated with Yam and Zai: “I can always get another woman, but children? Where can I find one like them? Every child is different.” Romantic love is replaceable whereas the bond that they have with their partner’s children defines who they are as fathers and their sense of belonging to the family. Yam states, “How do you get over your son, when it’s their mother who broke your heart and not them? How do you forget being their parent when you still feel like a parent? It feels like death, except the child is living but I can’t get to them.”

While it takes time to build kinship mutuality, it also takes time to “forget”, undo, or dispel kinship ties, which jilted butch partners found difficult to do even years after the relationship had passed. Their experiences highlight how the affective ties of kinship are not something that is simply tacked on to one’s sense of self, or explained by biology. As Carsten (2004: 106-7) explains, “kinsmen are people who live each other’s lives and die each other’s

deaths.” For butch fathers who experience the loss of family, single mothers and children are perceived as intimately related to them, and by extension, also intrinsic to their being-in-the-world. Thus the more intensely a partner invests in the performative aspects of kinship, the more material and intrinsic their affinity ties become. This sense of strong belonging that some partners feel toward each other and their children challenges the notion of same-sex families as being less real or inferior to “true” and “proper” heterosexual family.

4.8 Conclusion

Weston (1991) raised an important argument that queer families should be understood as pluralistic. She cautions against an over-emphasis on the sexual-conjugal parent unit and monogamy as definitive of “family” because it replicates hegemonic discourses of “proper” families. In this chapter, I focus on same-sex families who comprise sexual-conjugal parent units to demonstrate their diverse innovations of kinship. In doing so, I am not prioritizing the monogamous two-parent family units as definitive of queer families. Rather, my intention was to highlight how partners’ realities of family have been influenced by their subject positions, habitus and their relationship with families of origin. This, in turn, determines the kinds of choices that are available to different same-sex partners to enact practical performances of kinship, even if they appear to replicate heterosexual family dynamics. In addition, same-sex partners narratives of kinship reinforce the intersubjective practices of family and the conferring of particular gendered identities, parent-child dynamics and hierarchies within these same-sex relationships.

In particular, I found that the factors accounting for diverse practices and arrangements of two-parent family units correlate to intersectional matrices of class, ethnicity, gender identity and sexuality. My discussions demonstrate how Malay and Chinese same-sex families, and within them, partners of different gender and sexual identities, are subjected to different relations and structures of power, despite occupying the margins of heteronormativity. In addition, while all same-sex families queer heteronormative kinship, not every family possesses similar choices to disrupt or overcome traditional hierarchies of kinship. However, what I observed to be common across Malay and Chinese same-sex families is how participants re-traditionalize procreative ‘facts’ of kinship. Whereupon ‘blood’ or biogenetic connections have been taken-for-granted as the substance of family, participants re-appropriate ‘shared blood’ by conferring it to the experience of sharing a life together and engaging in cumulative as well as sustained acts of care and nurturance toward loved ones.

The symbolic ways in which participants innovate or re-traditionalize kin relatedness are informed by particular constraints in their lived environments such as restrictive social policies, conservative and religious attitudes of biological family members, gendered structures of moral policing and partners' gendered sexual subjectivities. This has been evident through participants' practical enactment of kin terms, naming practices, as well as their online and physical everyday presentation of family. I found that the closer same-sex families are positioned in proximity to the above heteronormative forms of social regulation, the more limited their choices are to secure same-sex family futures and belonging. Same-sex partners who have severed kinship ties to each other usually attribute their loss of family due to social and family pressures that require feminine mothers to conform to compulsory norms of heterosexuality. This observation further reinforces unequal distribution of power in the field of reproduction and kinship that results in different gendered reproductive habitus and dispositions among same-sex partners. The gendered reproductive habitus appears to be more durable and enduring for the gender-conforming Malay feminine single mothers compared to other research participants.

Same-sex partners' agency is therefore shaped by what these participants consider to be important to their self-determination and survival as members of particular cultural communities, be it an ethnic or LGBT community. Given this context, some partners were more enabled than others to affirm their queer representations of family and be read accordingly as such, while others do not see any other legitimate alternatives for survival other than to pass as 'normal' or turn to heterosexual marriages. The enduring capacities of the gendered reproductive habitus for some of these partners can be gleamed through the ways in which Malay single mothers self-regulate their presentation as a heterosexual single mother, despite having the opportunity through online platforms such as Facebook, to reinvent herself and family. In the next chapter, I will further explore the notion of self-regulation and agency by examining how normative categories of motherhood get taken up in participants' everyday experiences of parenting.

CHAPTER 5. “PROPER” PARENTHOOD AT THE MATRIX OF HETERONORMATIVITY

5.1 Connecting Less Familiar Dots of Mothering

Contemporary feminist interventions into the institution of motherhood have questioned the categories of experience and power often taken for granted through Eurocentric perspectives linking maternity to biology via heterosexual forms of kinship (Collier & Yanagisako, 1994). By focusing on mothering as practice instead of fixed identity, current approaches simultaneously emphasize diversity as well as contextual specificities of motherhood without claiming a fixed or essentialized aspect of maternal experience, desire or subjectivity (Kawash, 2011). Being a “mother” is seen as part of a woman’s identity, as with other multiple identities that inform her subjectivity. The context of motherhood through prisms of gender, race, class, sexuality and global political economy provides an understanding of the diversity of ways in which women experience and engage in mothering (Collins, 2000; Stack, 1997; Lewin, 1993; Colen, 1995). The attention to multiplicities of subject positions and intersectional matrices of power reveals the discrimination against and exclusions around those not termed as “true mothers”, in particular stepmothers, single mothers, mothers of color, lesbian mothers, and migrant mothers (Yuval-Davis, 1997).

In this chapter thus, I begin first with the understanding that mothering, as with fathering, is a relational practice whose meaning and organization must be understood with reference to certain configurations of relationships in particular interactions, places and times. I deconstruct cultural ideologies of motherhood by narrowing my focus to three assumptions: monomaternality, the examination of maternal masculinities to uncover the biocentrism of motherhood to the category ‘woman’, and maternal competency as a natural ability. I attempt to connect the less familiar dots of mothering through my participants’ experiences of motherhood by identifying the kinds of cultural ideologies they draw upon in their everyday lives.

5.1.1 Challenging the Monomaternalism of Motherhood

Park (2013) argues that society privileges birth mothers culturally as well as legally, because the construction of the ‘real’ or ‘true’ mother is based on biocentrism, or the biological assumptions of procreative kinship. The dominance of monomaternalism has been reinforced through heteronormative assemblages of the nuclear family comprising of a father, a mother and their children. She introduced the term polymaternalism to include the multiple mothering practices in same-sex families. Since 1995, studies on lesbian blended families as the most common form of queer motherhood have given way to a burgeoning literature on “lesbians choosing motherhood” (Moore, 2011), which focuses on the experiences of white lesbians who begin parenting after taking on a queer identity. Mamo (2007) and Sullivan (2004), for example, explore how lesbian couples engage in new reproductive technologies and kin non-biological mothers as social mothers.

Through their co-maternal practices, female same-sex families queer motherhood by defying the monomaternalism of the mother-child dyad. However, the naturalization and legality of birth mothers as the ‘true’ mother may produce maternal jealousy among lesbian co-mothers (Pelka, 2009; Ryan-Floyd, 2009). Informed by the above contributions, my research aims to explore how biological and social parents negotiate their relational subjectivities to each other. I also seek to examine factors that influence same-sex family environments, whether their practices produce maternal competition amongst partners or enable solidarity as equally legitimate parents.

5.1.2 Challenging the Biocentrism of Mother to Woman

While queer feminist approaches to motherhood have deconstructed the biocentrism of woman as “mother”, the reverse relationship, mother/maternity as “woman”, has remain relatively unchallenged or less disputed. Moore (2011) and Pelka (2009) explore butch-femme co-maternal relationships, and posit that hetero-gendered same-sex dynamics transform particular gender and sexual meanings in terms of motherhood, but focus on co-maternal relationships. Since their butch participants self-identify as “women” and “mother”, the maternal body continues to be linked to a woman-subject. Middleton (2000) argues that the maternal body remains among the most under-theorized issues in the study of ‘gender’ and ‘kinship’.

Lewin (2009: 134) notes that the gay fathers in her research reinvent imagined gender scripts to overcome their discomfort in adopting a ‘mother’ type caregiving role. Their discomfort highlights how the act of nurturing children is fixed to a woman-mother body and the fear of

emasculatation reveals how “mother” is a subordinate or shameful category. In contrast to gay fathers, Middleton (2000) examines possibilities of mothering by Karembola men who acquire prestige and power by becoming the mother and nurturer of other men. They rely on embodied maternal subjectivity in describing their sister’s son ‘as born from their own belly’ or as ‘crying for their breast’ (112). The example of Karembola men challenges maternal practices and identity that has been steadfastly anchored to female reproduction and embodiment. Middleton’s example is useful to my research particularly in framing the possibilities of maternal subjectivity through masculine female bodies.

If gay fathers occupy distance from being constituted as mothers, does the father role have to be occupied only by a male-bodied person? Ryan’s (2009; 2011) insights on pregnant transmen and pregnancy for masculine-identified lesbians challenge notions of “patriarchal fatherhood” and raises questions about the gendered roles of mothering (147). Similarly, Halberstam (2012) claims that “the assault on fatherhood launched by the butch is very possibly the untold story of this reproductive revolution” because of their ability to secure fatherhood that seems to have been exclusive to men (58). I will examine how masculine female-bodied individuals position themselves in relation to their maternal practices to demonstrate the possibilities of resituating categories of ‘father’ and ‘mother’ away from the dominance of cisgender male and female bodies.

5.1.3 Cultural Competencies of Mothering

In anthropology and many other disciplines, discussions about mothering often assumes a basis of shared understanding (Barlow and Chapin, 2010). Idealized versions of a ‘good mother’ seem to be similar across cultures. The ‘good’ mother privileges the well-being of her children and is almost always described as patient, protective, nurturing, generous and self-sacrificial. Hays (1996), for example, argues that all women face cultural expectations to engage in “intensive mothering” that requires them to lavish time and energy upon their children. Yet Barlow and Chapin (2010) assert that these cultural expectations are not constant and especially in particular circumstances, goals and actions of mothering that seem “universal” may have multiple and even contradictory meanings both culturally and personally. For instance, in societies with high infant mortality rates, a mother learns when to neglect and when it is safe to love her child (Scheper-Hughes, 1992). In poverty-stricken neighborhoods, despite rising costs in raising children, poor women regard children as desirable, instead of a burden, because they

elevate their social status in their communities and become a way towards experiencing fulfilment and achievement when life offers limited prospects (Edin and Kafelas, 2005). In order to work, low wage and welfare single mothers depend on other women within their social networks to care for their children (Stack, 1997).

Ideologies of maternal competency are reproduced through racialized, economic and sexual discourses. Mothers in deprived social and economic situations are frequently labelled as bad mothers due to poor outcomes in the education and health of children (Val Gillies, 2006). Sidel (2006) pointed out that “single mothers” are not a monolithic category and emphasizes the agency of women who are mothering without partners as strong, creative, courageous and resilient.

Additionally, the dominant assumption that ‘mother’, as a procreative identity, and ‘lesbian’, as a sexual identity, are mutually exclusive contributes to the marginalization of lesbian mothers as ‘unfit mothers’. Lewin (1993) counters this assumption by highlighting the competence and devotion of lesbian mothers who prioritize motherhood over their sexual identities. The ethnographies above shape my analysis of maternal competencies among some of my participants, who by virtue of their sexuality, marital practices and class, have been stigmatized as ‘unfit mothers’. As Sidel (2006) and other feminist scholars have also pointed out, motherhood, or more specifically, the ‘unfit’ mother, is not a monolithic category, as practical enactments and affects of heteronormativity may differ across race, class, age and education levels.

5.2 The “Good” Mother in Singapore

The narrative of ‘proper’ motherhood in Singapore bears strong racialized and classed impositions. In colonial Singapore, the idea that poor ethnic minority women make incompetent mothers was reinforced by Eurocentric practices of hygiene and nutritional habits (Manderson, 1996). This continues in contemporary Singapore society, where the state measures competence by a mother’s ability to transfer her intellectual dispositions and class capitals to her children, who will contribute to the competitive labor market in the future (Heng and Devan, 1995). Viewed in this regard, the maternal competencies of lowly-educated mothers, who are disproportionately ethnic minority Malays, are regarded as inferior to their more educated counterparts. In addition, unmarried motherhood, due to its sexual transgression of marital norms, is also looked upon in contempt. The government is explicit about distancing unwed mothers

from being a “respectable part” of Singapore society, by restricting, for instance, their eligibility for public housing (Goh, 1994). These examples demonstrate how, in an anti-welfare regime, female-headed households are treated with suspicion due to their overrepresentation in terms of dependent households receiving financial assistance.

Based on these brief examples, the ‘bad’ mother is, in reality, the ‘welfare’ mother who is dependent on external support and public resources – someone who is statistically likely to be Malay, financially unstable, lowly-educated, unmarried or divorced, and unable to keep her family together. The cultural archetype of the Malay welfare mother is exemplified in the statement by Minister of Malay Muslim Affairs, Dr Yaacob Ibrahim:

In my opinion, dysfunctional families are among those who do not share the same kind of social values that we do. These individuals choose to exist at the margins of society and lead their own distinctive lifestyles – they marry early, and then get a divorce, there is no parental control and the children in these environments mix with bad company. In these families, people cohabit with their partners without getting married and justify these behaviors as the norm. Having a boyfriend who lives in the same house as you, and you’re not married – this is not what the Malay Muslim culture advocates. This is sex subculture. What is scary is that this subculture has its deep roots among dysfunctional Malay families. If this is so, this is dangerous for us Malays. With these foundations, they will be like the African Americans or Hispanic Americans. The Hispanic Americans, in the past, many of their young women have children out of wedlock in order to escape their poverty and this has been accepted as the norm. And since you’re pregnant, the government will take care of your welfare.
(in Hussaini, 2009)

Yaacob’s opinions demonstrate how the unmarried and hypersexualized Malay mother epitomizes family dysfunction. Although the use of “you” is targeted to a general audience, gendered terms such as “boyfriend” and “pregnant” makes it clear that the state shifts the burden of family breakdown onto the Malay mother. While the state links bad mothering to practices of racial and underprivileged minorities in the US, they position “good” mothering as specifically “Asian”, which, in Singapore, often stands in for Chinese cultural dominance (See Rahim, 1998; Clammer, 1998). It is the practices of Chinese mothers and middle class Chinese families that Malay state leaders often evoke as their standards of ‘normal’ or ‘successful’ families (Rahim, 1998).

The Singapore state’s management of family functions as a mode of intimate governance insofar as it compels self-regulation and produces particular subjectivities in response to the norm. In terms of motherhood, reproductive social policies such as the Home Ownership Plus

Education (HOPE) Scheme that extends housing and financial assistance to young widowed/divorced mothers (below 35), privileges the ideal woman as both a productive worker and a nurturing mother who succeeds in keeping families together and children in schools (Ministry of Social and Family Development, 2015).

In examining ‘proper’ norms of motherhood, I investigate participants’ social location and proximity to idealized virtues or competence extolled by the state, and/or to Islam for some. Hing Ai Yun (1998) argues how, amongst Singaporean women, class and ethnicity remains a crucial element in contributing to mothers’ sense of self-worth. Teo (2015) describes how middle-class Singaporeans benchmark themselves against other “typical” and “normal” Singaporeans as they figure out everyday practices such as marriage, raising a family and having a home. Her respondents view it as necessary to align their embodied subjectivities to the state’s neoliberal discourses of self-reliance and stable families. She also posits that Singaporeans desire to internalize stability and self-reliance as a norm that is fundamental to their identity and self-worth as well as the future of the country. While Teo does not discuss in detail the dynamics of racial subjectivity and practices of self-regulation, I intend to extend her research further by comparing what the Malay and Chinese mothers in my research benchmark as the ‘norm’.

The state insists that workers regularly reskill and retrain themselves to remain relevant in the job market, which imposes additional burdens on women who are struggling to maintain competencies at work and at home. Experiences differ according to one’s race and class. Hing’s (1998) research reveals particular contradictions where working-class women struggle to fulfill their filial obligations to keep their families together. Comparing her Chinese and Malay Muslim female respondents, Hing observed that predominantly working-class Muslim women appear to continue accepting traditional roles of being a filial daughter, doting wife and mother as measures of self-fulfillment. In contrast, middle-class Chinese women tend to express difficulties in balancing both a fulfilling career and marital life that requires them to make choices that can be particularly detrimental to both. Despite these differences, Hing concludes that all her participants, regardless of whether their primary identity is rooted in domestic roles or their employment status, emphasize efficiency and responsibility towards “time management” and “quality time” as new, flexible orientations of motherhood in Singapore.

Hing’s study thus coheres with Teo’s conclusions that Singaporean women have internalized and constantly self-monitor their conduct against norms of proper motherhood. In Hing’s study, even the supposedly “delinquent daughters” who prioritize their careers claim that they choose not to marry or have children because they do not wish to end up a neglectful wife or

mother, a factor that they feel is important to familial stability. Both these findings correspond to theories of neoliberal modes of regulation in terms of how voluntary governance of the self increasingly defines “good” citizenship (Adkins, 2002), and where “proper” motherhood reinforces a gendered reproductive habitus.

However, the limitations of local studies on motherhood and citizenship is their focus on women who are already aligned to heteronormativity, in being married and/or being career women. Here, my dissertation research, in exploring sexuality and non-marital subjects, offers an intervention by connecting marginal narratives of motherhood/fatherhood in Singapore, and the ways in which these participants encounter and appropriate the ‘normal’.

Additionally, I also aim to push the notion of maternal competence into further scrutiny. First, I take on the position that ideologies of maternal competence reveal dominant and marginal bodily and sexual maternal identities. Second, I draw upon contemporary perspectives of disability studies from feminist queer crip perspectives (McRuer, 2006; Kafer, 2013) to interrogate how ableism configures in the production of maternal ability and the ‘good’ and ‘proper’ mother. McRuer’s (2006) suggestion that compulsory able-bodiedness is analogous to compulsory heterosexuality pushes me to think more critically about what society and the state has privileged as the ‘able’ mother. I adopt this perspective to deconstruct hegemonic ideals of motherhood that has produced images of the incompetent mother. My engagement in disability and queer theory has been informed by the life narratives of two participants who experience chronic depression and deafness respectively, making it difficult for them to function like other able-bodied mothers. While not discounting the embodied experiences of less-abled people through my theoretical abstraction, I have found it useful to borrow the queer and disability perspective to challenge the biocentrism of maternal competence.

Third, if motherhood and the maternal body is naturalized to women’s bodies as the product of biology, maternal competence becomes supposedly natural to women and enacts a gendered reproductive habitus that assumes compulsory maternal competence. Mothers who experience chronic disabilities tend to be excluded from representations of ‘good’ mothers because their maternal bodies are abject (see Kafer, 2013). In my research, I explore also the experiences of other abject maternal bodies of able-bodied participants who have been pathologized as ‘unfit’ mothers because of their sexual identity, age, class, race and non-marital status. Fourth, I argue that able-bodied mothers are not disabled, but rather, disenabled by structures of compulsory heterosexuality. In the context of Singapore and informed by Hing (1998) and Teo (2011; 2015), I posit that in the context of competence and motherhood, maternal

ableism, as embodied, symbolic and material, is achieved based on one's ability to approximate or assume dominant maternal identities and practices.

In this chapter, thus, I will further investigate how heteronormative ideals of motherhood, as a form of gendered citizenship, produce different kinds of female citizens who enact particular forms of motherhood/fatherhood based on their proximity to these norms. If the ideal citizen-mother is both a good homemaker, wife, obedient daughter and successful career woman, how do my participants, who exist at intersectional margins of race, class, gender and sexuality, approximate these norms in their everyday practices? My ethnographic discussion will draw upon the three broad themes of maternal competencies, multiple maternities and de-gendering motherhood to capture how "proper" practices of mother/fatherhood are enacted among single mothers, butch fathers and lesbian co-mothers whose parenthood identities and practices have been disenabled and delegitimized by gendered anti-welfare policies and heteronormative cultural discourses.

5.3 Disidentifications: Negotiating Sexuality in Motherhood

In this section, I detail how acquisition of the normative status of motherhood, or the desire to be regarded as a good mother, reveals the construction of norms that govern the sexuality of mothers. I will discuss mothers' practical enactments of sexuality through intersecting themes of ethnicity, class, sexual agency and normalcy.

In exploring participants' subject positions vis-à-vis dominant heteronormative structures, Munoz's (1999: 31) concept of disidentification strengthens my intersectional analysis to think beyond binary strategies of accommodation or resistance that other queer anthropologists have already criticized (Lewin, 2009; Weston, 1991). Munoz writes:

The process of disidentification scrambles and reconstructs the encoded message of a cultural text in a fashion that both exposes the encoded message's universalizing and exclusionary machinations and recircuits its workings to account for, include, and empower minority identities and identifications. Thus, disidentification is a step further than cracking open the code of the majority; it proceeds to use this code as raw material for representing a disempowered politics or positionality than has been rendered unthinkable by the dominant culture. (Munoz, 1999:31)

The framework of disidentification is useful because it offers an alternative way to capture the queer practices of minority and/or non-normative subjects who do not completely reject not

accept dominant categories and norms, but rather “works on and against dominant ideology” (ibid: 11). For this section, I am interested in exploring processes of disidentification as participants deconstruct and reassemble heteronormative meanings of motherhood to secure their sense of competence and self-validation as legitimate subjects.

5.3.1 Asexuality and Maternal Selflessness

The concept of *malu* or “appropriate shyness” (Collins & Bahar, 2000: 39) has been inculcated in the emotional development of Malay individuals, where understanding the full range of *malu* or shame is tied to learning about one’s dignity or status as a person (Keeler, 1983: 160). In the Malay Muslim community in Singapore, women are regarded as more passionate and prone to following their emotions and desires whereas men are considered less emotional and more rational (see also Peletz, 1996). *Malu* is therefore a “moral affect” (Rosaldo, 1983: 136), one which positions the individual within a social order. As a discursive practice, it is enacted more often on female-bodied individuals than onto male-bodied people. Peletz, for example, argues that *malu* functions as a “brake” for women’s passion or unregulated sensual desires (*nafsu*) (Peletz, 1995: 91). Alternatively, Blackwood (2010:75) observes that for women, being *malu* is closely associated with proper feminine behavior which requires them to learn to restrain themselves by not acting in unfeminine ways. In my research, I found that themes of shame, restraint and resistance frequently appear in Malay mothers’ negotiations with their sexual subjectivities.

In two separate stories, two mothers, Bad (50) and Zara (38), describe how they negotiate their sense of self and worth, between wanting to be seen as a respectable mother and also as an autonomous woman. The different ways in which they self-regulate shame or *malu* and their practical enactments of motherhood reveal the diverse forms of heteronormative power that are embedded in their cultural and lived environments.

The Dividuality of ‘Selfish’ Lesbian and ‘Selfless’ Muslim Mother

Bad’s narrative reveals the negotiations of maternal self-sacrifice through faith, sexuality and gender. As a pious Muslim, Bad’s disidentifications with motherhood draw upon Islamic notions of motherhood which are also the cultural framework of her meaningful reconciliation and resistance to heteronormativity. Her story traces her strategies toward reconciliation, which also highlights how particular norms of maternal competence are not always constant, but rather circumstantial.

At 50, Bad, who works in the healthcare sector, is the oldest member of a local Malay Muslim lesbian support group in which some of the participants and I take part. As an active member of the group, Bad has spoken frequently against the prosecution of LGBT individuals in the larger Muslim world and finds it important to mentor younger Muslim lesbians to reclaim and be proud of their queer identities. Her activist strategies relate to her personal biography because she had been struggling to reconcile being a pious Muslim and a respectable mother with being a lesbian for the past 20 years of her life.

Bad's first struggle to be a good mother and a committed lesbian lover happened when she was in her late 30s, a few years after her marriage had dissolved. She had entered a three-year relationship with a bisexual and closeted Malay Muslim colleague. When her lover migrated to Australia, Bad chose to remain in Singapore because it was not fair to uproot her son, who was then eight.

When their long distance relationship ended, Bad, who has been single ever since, questioned whether her maternal 'sacrifice' was worth the loneliness. At the time, she had viewed the role of being a mother and a lesbian lover as separate spheres of her life. The mother occupies the "selfless" part of her while the lesbian occupies the "selfish" part of her. She thought that same-sex desires, as *nafsu*, or unregulated passion, should be regulated by maternal selflessness. She had prioritized her son above her sexual and emotional needs to achieve a suitable balance, or she would not have been able to deal with the guilt of being selfish.

Bad derives the ethical conduct of being selfish and selfless from her primary cultural habitus as a devout and pious Muslim woman. Bad posits that she was appointed by Allah to perform her duty as a guardian to her son, whom she views as "Allah's creation." Being a lesbian mother was difficult because her same-sex desires were contrary to what a Muslim mother is expected to be, that is, someone who should put aside her *nafs* (Arabic word for desire) to be a proper guardian to their child.

At one point, she declared apostasy by denouncing her Muslim identity. At another, she had become a wife and mother to prove herself as a faithful "servant" of Allah. Neither of these choices made her feel authentic. Bad realized that she was not able to lead a meaningful and fulfilling life if she is expected to be either a self-sacrificial mother or a non-Muslim lesbian. Eventually, Bad was able to reconcile same-sex desires as crucial to her own self-determination as a Muslim mother. She elaborates:

Sometimes I remind myself that Allah created *nafs* (desires) for a good reason. I love Him through my desire for another woman, who is His creation. Each time I feel guilty, I would remind myself of my dedication as His servant. God is Love and

above gender, I must have faith that this is what Allah wants for me too...that He accepts it is ok to be selfish, because to love and be loved is an essential human need.

Bad admitted that if she were not a mother, she would have no qualms in declaring herself as lesbian to those around her. While she could negotiate her desires and frame in in Allah's acceptance, she was not as comfortable disclosing her sexuality to her son until he turned 19. In this context, Bad had felt that her sexuality compromised her maternal competence as a "good Muslim servant".

She positions motherhood as a divine calling from Allah (*takdir*) where she has been chosen to guide, protect, nurture and serve as a teacher and guardian of the Muslim faith. She was concerned that disclosing a "lesbian" identity, which also signifies erotic sexual agency, to a pre-pubescent son, was incongruent to a good Muslim upbringing where sexuality is supposed to be private and also only permissible in heterosexual marriages. Her non-disclosure is a practice of self-restraint where she engages in the inculcation of *malu* or embodied sexual propriety that is central to the transmission of Malay cultural values to children. She was afraid of losing her moral and parental authority if Hakim stopped respecting her as a competent role-model at home.

In this regard, Bad's maternal sacrifice stems from choosing to present asexuality to her son until he comes of age. At 19, her son is considered an independent adult according to Islamic jurisprudence, so Bad was no longer obliged to be his primary moral guardian. His coming-of-age had eased her transition from parent-child authoritative relationship into a reciprocal relationship as confidants. Bad's ideas of "proper" motherhood has now transitioned from being a moral disciplinarian to one that focuses on honest communication, compassion and achieving authenticity. She had come out to her son for these very reasons.

Bad's story underscores her disidentifications, where maternal duty and same-sex desire produces a dividual self as a devout Muslim lesbian mother. Her story also informs our understanding of subjectivity, agency and power—the structural relations of power that appear to constrain Bad's personal autonomy became the very habituated structures that produced her sense of self-worth and authenticity. She informed me, "In life, you need to be both selfless and selfish. You can't just obey and be selfless. You need to also be selfish for authenticity." Bad's statement exemplifies the operation of a dividual self, where selflessness cannot exist without being selfish.

While her submission to Islamic ethical norms was the source of her guilt, it later became her source of emancipation from conformity and social scrutiny by kin members and other Muslims. This transformation was also shaped through the acquisition of social and cultural capital through interactions with feminists, learned scholars and her personal research. In this

regard, Bad embodies the well-disciplined docile subject (Foucault, 1980), where her agentive capacities demonstrate Foucault's paradox of subjectivation. Explained through the concept of subjectivation, Bad's self-mastery of Islamic ethics, reconciliation of her sexual desires and her identity as a "servant of Allah" provided her with the ability to harness new embodied capacities of being lesbian and a competent Muslim mother that differ from norms of maternal self-sacrifice.

"Children Always Come First": Asexuality as Maternal Affirmation

Zara, a 38-year-old image consultant who is co-parenting two biological children with her butch partner, explains that 'sex' does not define her identity as a mother. Further, as a 'straight'-identified woman, Zara disidentifies with norms of heteronormative propriety by presenting herself as asexual. Additionally, her experiences reveal multiple social exclusions as a divorced mother in a same-sex relationship.

Zara firmly believes that "good mothers" prioritize their children above everything else, including their personal autonomy. On her Facebook and Instagram, she performs competence, evident from messages that imply her "children are everything". To friends and clients who marvel at her long working hours as a single mother providing food and shelter for her children, Zara clarifies that her suffering is secondary to her children's needs. Once, at a dinner function, her colleagues asked if she had intended to remarry. Zara silenced them by stating that her "children always come first", and asserted that "finding a husband" was the least of her concerns. Aside and in private, she elaborates, "I don't get single mothers who are crazy about their boyfriends until they forget about their children. I can't love like that. I find it selfish and irresponsible." From her statement, Zara associates romance with obsessive love and is cautious not to express a sexuality that resembles obsession.

Yet, I was also curious and asked how she views love as a mother who is in a same-sex relationship. Zara was stumped and gave a non-committal reply, "I'm still myself... normal mother." I had initially assumed that what she meant as 'normal' was her identity as a heterosexual mother. But, she also asserts that as a mother, 'sex' does not define her identity because she "does not have much interest in it." Zara views asexuality as 'normal' to motherhood, a perspective that is drawn upon Malay Muslim cultural norms, that also tends to portray mothers as sexless, deprived of sexual agency and desires other than procreation. Her immediate recourse to asexuality represents a contingent performance of "proper" motherhood. Within the Malay Muslim community, pre-marital and extra-marital sex are viewed as transgressive practices because they are considered sinful in Islam.

Zara makes evident how meanings of acceptable heterosexuality shift based on a woman's marital status: "If I'm married and I talk about my sex life, it's still acceptable. People take it for granted it's with my husband... unless I state otherwise. But as a single mother talking about my sex life? Immediately I am shameless, sexually deprived, cheap and a bad mother." Her statement demonstrates her necessity of affirming a non-sexual maternal body, because propriety for single mothers without legal husbands operates through a continual performance of asexual motherhood. In this instance, Zara highlights how heteronormativity negates the sexual desires of unmarried heterosexual women, whose sexuality as a mother can only be validated through re-marriage.

Peletz (1995: 166), describes how the *Mak Janda*, as divorced or widowed women, are regarded as both vulnerable and dangerous because they are sexually experienced due to their previous marriages, at the same time, not legally subordinated to any man. In Singapore, the *Mak Janda* is also commonly referred to as *Model-J* or "J-Model", as Zara jokingly refers to herself. This derogatory term circulated through the Malay male motorcycle subculture. It references the divorced/widowed mother as a machine to "ride", similar to other motorbikes that are named model K, model S – thus the *janda* becomes "Model-J". Implicit in this association is the connotation that divorcees are promiscuous or an inferior piece of machinery. Zara's performance of asexuality is therefore a necessary intervention to affirm her self-dignity as a respectable mother against a cultural context that would assume otherwise. Under this heteronormative purview, I would argue that any active heterosexual desire of Malay single mothers becomes positioned as queer and abject.

I decided to rephrase my question by asking if Zara had felt any different being a mother before and after being with Han, her butch partner, and her response was telling: "I've not yet overcome the stigma of being a divorcee and a single mother and then unexpectedly I'm with a butch and now I'm so called a crazy lesbian mother. It's overwhelming." What changed for Zara, was coming to terms with the loss of heterosexual privilege and the micro-aggressions that came with being "suspected as lesbian". Zara felt that her social status as a mother was negated by her romantic involvement with Han. When she told close Malay friends that she was in a relationship with a "butch", they reacted with, "What about the children?" Zara knew that their reaction would have been immediate excitement had she informed them she was dating a cisgender man, rather than a deep concern. It reinforced her perceptions that the Malay community associates being a good mother with having a husband.

Zara allayed her friends' concerns by telling them that Han has a university degree and is very experienced with children. In doing so, she draws upon middle-class parenting norms of respectability and responsibility in Singapore where parents' illustrious academic credentials supposedly ensure children's future success. It is also a deliberate attempt to show how Zara prioritizes her children's future even in her considerations of her romantic partner. "A responsible mother", Zara continued, "finds a partner not just for love but someone who also prioritizes nurturing and care for my children like their own."

Yet this affirmation creates another concern: her friends were worried that she was sacrificing her sexual needs *for the sake* of securing a stable future and upward mobility for her children. Zara was asked, for instance, if she was able to achieve orgasms with Han. She usually responds by saying that she has "no sex drive", although she admits this was not true. She claims that withholding any information about her sex life or desires was strategic, because, "the more they know, the more intrusive they get. The less they know, the better. I feel less constrained." Zara's strategy reveals her process of disidentification—where withholding information increases others' difficult to impose any identity categories onto her. It indicates Zara's self-determination to remove any markers of sexual identity from her maternal self, in order to reclaim her social status as a proper mother and to seek validation in choosing Han as a partner.

Zara claims that the most patronizing and condescending forms of policing and judgment comes from Malay men and women who are pious middle-class Muslims or Christians. She claims that the latter feel entitled to tell her what to do with her life, how to mother her children and admonish her interactions with Han as "immature", "foolish" and "irresponsible". Her experience provides evidence of the role of marital institutions in regulating heterosexual norms, behavior and practices. By looking at the prejudice she encounters with her middle-class friends, I posit that heteronormative behavior is strongly enacted on Singapore's middle-class population which has been socialized to reproduce the "normal". Thus, Zara's appeal to middle-class norms of respectability and responsibility is an attempt to self-regulate her inclusion within those who are viewed as normal mothers. If reproduction is only permissible within marriage, Zara's experience highlights how heterosexual privilege excludes heterosexual women who do not conform, such as working-class divorced and single mothers like her.

Zara's performance, in desiring to pass as a "normal" mother, is also contingent on her social contexts. She is asexual to homophobic Malay friends but is comfortable being regarded as a "queer" mother at LGBT events, even if she maintains a passive presence. For Zara, having sexual visibility in heterosexual social circles makes her vulnerable to social prosecution while

claiming an identity as a same-sex parent provides credence. At the same time, she does not desire to come out as queer, despite feeling welcomed in queer social circles, because she finds it important to distinguish her personal subjectivity as a heterosexual woman as separate from her same-sex practice. Her strategic performances of motherhood indicate her cultural competence in code-switching between different gendered reproductive habitus that contribute to her acceptance in both Malay Muslim networks and in the local queer community.

While feminists may argue that asexual motherhood denies mothers their sexual agency (Mamo, 2007), Zara's strategies of impression management reveal precisely the opposite. She does not regard her performance of asexuality as a form of maternal sacrifice. On the contrary, by claiming asexuality, Zara derives self-validation and maternal affirmation. Her decision to "pass" as asexual or as she puts it, a "normal" mother, reveals an intimate sensitivity to discriminatory structures within her social environment.

5.3.2 Poverty and the Hyper-sexuality of Welfare Mothers

The pregnant maternal body is fraught with cultural symbols that shape particular forms of social interactions depending on the marital status and age of the mother. In this section, I examine the sexual policing and shaming that one Malay Muslim mother on welfare encountered when she became pregnant out-of-wedlock. Additionally, I explore her disidentifications with motherhood and sexuality against state and cultural discourses that approximate her status as a single mother on welfare assistance to one of incompetence.

Fauziah, 37, was a divorced mother with a 15-year-old daughter until she became pregnant and gave birth to an illegitimate son in 2015. In her household, Fauziah occupies two different statuses of motherhood simultaneously, as both a divorced and unwed single mother. Despite being the legal birth mother to both her children, her teenage daughter and newborn son accords her different social entitlements as a citizen-mother.

Fauziah related that her social life changed after being pregnant with her son. She had only agreed to meet me because Shiq, her butch partner and co-parent, had convinced her that I was "open minded" and also co-parenting with a single mother. Fauziah wanted to keep her pregnancy private because she understands that most people perceive having an illegitimate child (*anak luar nikah*) as a source of shame that needs to be concealed. Personally, Fauziah does not feel ashamed to be an unwed mother, nor that she had to hide her pregnancy. She would be upfront about her status as an unwed mother to reduce potential awkwardness toward any person

who enquires about a husband or father. Her deliberation reveals a method of disidentification—Fauziah wants to appropriate the ‘shame’ rather than have it imposed onto her subjectivity. However, in coming out as an unwed pregnant mother to some Malay friends and social workers, Fauziah’s honesty was perceived, instead, to be “lacking of shame” (*tak tau malu*) and propriety because it indicates transgressive pre-marital relations that ought to be kept secret or hidden. Fauziah felt alienated by friends and social workers when she became visibly pregnant. She restricted her social circle to “accepting” friends because she did not others to feel embarrassed for her or experience discomfort marked by her sexually transgressive pregnant body. She explains:

When you are pregnant and there’s no husband or a man, people will label you as promiscuous and think you do not know how to take care of herself (*jaga diri*). When you have given birth, the child is innocent and cute so maybe it softens people’s hearts. But then, they will just look at your family in pity.

The above statement highlights the sexual policing of compulsory heterosexuality that Fauziah encounters. Her pregnancy is viewed as the outcome of being ‘careless’ and implicit in this condescension is the idea that a careless woman would be less competent as a mother. Fauziah’s experience of being pitied is a reflection of her financial situation. As a shop assistant, Fauziah brings home only S\$800 a month. Because of her low income, she is entitled to public rental housing, which costs S\$100 a month. She describes that prior to her pregnancy, social workers viewed her as a poor divorced mother who needed financial assistance to get by daily and support her teenage daughter. However, their support turned into hostility when she became pregnant with her second son. Social workers patronized her for being sexually irresponsible and asked how she planned on raising her son when she was barely surviving with her teenage daughter. They also emphasized that it would be difficult for her to receive additional funds to support her illegitimate son. Fauziah recalls that an advisor told her that if she “knows how to make a baby, then [she] must learn to how to find a good job to support the baby and not expect government to take care of [her] family.”

As a welfare mother, social workers assumed Fauziah’s pregnancy would increase her dependency on the state. Immediately, her out-of-wedlock pregnancy positions her as an undeserving recipient of welfare when, prior to it, financial assistance was given to enhance her capacity to be a competent mother in raising her teenage daughter. The condescension ceased after her son was born. It was instead replaced with constant advice that she should now work hard to be a good mother, provide for her daughter and baby and avoid getting pregnant another

time. Implicitly, Fauziah thinks that the social workers were trying to tell her to abstain from sex if she was not going to use protection, and more importantly, especially when she does not have a stable job and income or married to a man who would be able to support her and the children adequately.

Fauziah's familial instability has hitherto been attributed to the misfortune of a failed early marriage but, as an unwed mother, it is attributed to her lack of sexual responsibility. Being pregnant out of wedlock represents a lack of self-restraint. Fauziah was patronized like a child because her perceived lack of restraint is commonly associated with adolescence. Her social workers' attitudes in advocating abstinence for welfare single mothers reinforces proper practices of sexuality where sex, as pleasure-driven, is only deserving for those who are financially capable. The hostility that Fauziah encountered from social workers demonstrates how her pregnant body is regarded as culturally offensive. First, within the Malay Muslim community, Fauziah's pregnancy is a visible marker of sexual and moral transgression. Second, she is viewed as irresponsible in expecting the state to "take care of her welfare", and therefore, her sexuality is the epitome of "dysfunction".

The sexuality of a proper mother is therefore someone who can exercise control over her desires, and independently provide for her household. The paternalistic giver-recipient relationship that the state has with Fauziah disempowers her by reinforcing her incompetence as a working-poor mother. As a welfare mother, the state assumes that it has the right to her private decisions, including her sexual desires and practices. I was surprised that Fauziah's social workers did not discuss sexuality by encouraging marriage in the way society expects of unmarried women. Instead, by suggesting abstinence, they are implicitly discouraging marriage. This highlights how the norms of compulsory heterosexuality are not uniformly enforced onto women. Fauziah, already exists out of the parameters of a defined proper subject of heterosexuality due to her low income, education level and non-normative marital status.

In this regard, Fauziah does not feel that being with her butch partner, Shiq, has transformed her sexuality as a mother because she views her relationship with Shiq the same way as any other heterosexual relationship. Fauziah is also less concerned with how people perceive her same-sex relationship. She elaborates, "I'm already getting shat on for being an unwed mother, being with a butch doesn't make a difference! In fact, I think people are relieved that there is someone to help take care of me and the kids." Her kin, including her sister and mother, would rather she have a reliable female partner than marry a man who would end up being a liability. With a low-paying job and two children at 38, Fauziah was not confident that she could

attract a man with a stable job and income. For working poor women like Fauziah, marriage would be a burden because it would mean having another mouth to feed and care for but without any significant improvement to her quality of life.

Fauziah's parenting strategy is reflective of her own sensitivities as a welfare mother who is unable to adequately provide her teenage daughter with the material comforts associated with being an 'able mother' (*tak upaya*), such as living in a bigger home, bringing her out to eat, buying toys and giving her tuition lessons. Due to her financial inability to be a provider, Fauziah derives maternal competence by maintaining an elder-sibling parental role in which her daughter relates to her as a peer rather than an authoritative figure. Fauziah refrains from being authoritative because she felt she has not provided for her daughter enough to feel she was deserving of authority at home. She also wants to avoid the situation where her daughter might accuse her of "pot calling the kettle black" if she was too limiting or strict on her daughter's behavior. Their close relationship must have paid off because Fauziah's daughter had received awards for good behavior and academic progress in her school. Her daughter had also started donning the hijab which made Fauziah confident of her ability as a competent mother, even though Fauziah herself was not pious. Her daughter has embraced Shiq as a father-figure and does not see it as contradicting her Islamic piety. Fauziah attributes it to her gentle parenting; she has raised a daughter who is accepting of difference because being poor and marginalized has made them more empathetic, sensitive and compassionate toward others, like Shiq, who as a butch are perceived negatively in society in a similar manner.

The bodies of working-poor Malay mothers are, by default, already sexual, rather than maternal. Fauziah felt that her pregnancy rendered her a hypersexual subject as a promiscuous woman. However, after she gave birth, Fauziah noted that her social workers became less hostile. The shift in social workers' attitudes could have been due to Fauziah's age, as being 38 signifies maturity, and, perhaps, is regarded as an appropriate age to mother. Fauziah's narrative demonstrates the volatility of maternal competence where statuses of propriety are contingent upon one's age, marital status, number of children, income and education levels, race and sexuality.

In addition, since Fauziah is already labelled as a sexual deviant, her relationship with Shiq did not change her status much. In this regard, Fauziah did not feel the loss of heterosexual privilege the way Zara experienced it. This is mainly because Fauziah, by virtue of being a welfare mother, was never regarded as a "proper" heterosexual in the first place. Conversely, she feels being with Shiq will ameliorate her social status because having a partner providing for her

children would improve their family's financial ability. Fauziah's desire for financial stability demonstrates that even for those who "choose to exist at the margins of society and lead their own distinctive lifestyles" (Yaacob as cited in Hussaini, 2009), it is understood that having a reliable partner is an important component to raising a family and acquiring the social status of "proper" motherhood. For mothers like Fauziah, heteronormative propriety is acquired through having an economically stable family, rather than enacting compulsory heterosexuality.

5.3.3 Reclaiming Sex in Motherhood

The Malay concept of *malu*, embodied through sexual propriety, appears frequently in the narratives of the three Malay mothers, Bad, Zara and Fauziah. In this section however, I will introduce a Malay mother whose narratives challenge the cultural imposition of sexual restraint and shame. Her story provides another perspective of mothers who do not define their maternal competence based on sexual propriety. I explore how Dewi negotiates motherhood with her kink bisexuality and her strategies to carve spaces of sexual expression in a conservative heteronormative culture that treats her sexual needs as non-existent for a mother. Dewi, a 36-year-old events planner, is a divorced mother who was in a same-sex relationship with Donna when we first conducted our interviews. At the tail end of my field work, Dewi ended her relationship with Donna and decided to get married to a former male lover.

Dewi primarily identifies as a "highly sexual" bisexual feminist and frames any notion of motherhood as secondary to her sexuality. As a feminist, she expresses her sexuality as representative of her self-determination and authenticity as a woman and does not regard it as something that has to be compromised in being a mother. Before she was pregnant with her only daughter, Suki, Dewi was active as a professional dominatrix in the local BDSM circuits in Singapore, but had stopped when she got pregnant with Suki. Dewi elaborates:

I stopped [BDSM]... because it was hard to feel on top of the world and in charge of flogging someone if you're terribly, terribly nauseous... It was not only the physical implications of pregnancy, but my mindset had changed. I was literally living for my child. Being a mother only impacted my domme instincts but never my sexuality. My domme personality became dormant when Suki was younger because to sustain that level of dominance in my head took a lot of energy... energy I needed to take care of the baby. It remained underneath my skin until I met Donna who ignited it... When I was dominating Donna and even as a mother, I started going to kink-play parties on my own to re-explore my sexuality.

Since her initiation into motherhood, Dewi has always regarded her erotic subjectivities as a bisexual domme congruent to motherhood instead of mutually negating categories. What limits Dewi's sexual expression are the biological and physical demands of motherhood, instead of cultural norms of maternal propriety, unlike her counterparts, Bad and Zara, who regard sexual agency and motherhood as incompatible. Dewi took a hiatus for a few years as she was parenting a young Suki because her ability to be a successful dominatrix competed with the physical demands of motherhood. Her explanation that she was "living for her child" was not framed as maternal self-sacrifice. Rather, Dewi was emphasizing how it was difficult to achieve competence in domination if she was also simultaneously experiencing the physical discomfort of pregnancy and lethargy from caring for her child.

Dewi finds the concept of maternal self-sacrifice "hypocritical" because she does not identify with the idea that a mother should prioritize their children's needs above their own, including their sex life. Unlike the other Malay mothers whose primary source of socialization has been predominantly Malay Muslims, Dewi describes that her friends and co-workers are usually non-Malays who are upper middle class and like herself, university educated. Thus her different strategies of negotiating sexuality and motherhood may be attributed to her social networks and her acquisition of cultural capitals. Her distance from Malay social networks as well as a higher level of education allows her access into networks that her other Malay mothers have not been privy to. She is able to habituate new mothering dispositions to transform her gendered reproductive habitus.

It was evident through our interactions that Dewi did not feel burdened by the need to measure herself against Malay Muslim cultural codes of 'selfless' or 'good' motherhood. Her sexual agency is a form of resistance against the self-regulation of *malu* or propriety to which Malay women are subjected. She emphasizes disinterest in appropriating *malu* as the "ideal of Malay femininity" (*perempuan melayu terakhir*) to prove that she is a respectable mother. She views an active sexual life as fundamental to maternal competency, and asserts that as a "highly sexual creature" she requires sexual release to be able to function adequately as a mother. She prioritizes having her daughter's respect more than performing respectable motherhood to society.

While motherhood did not spur her exit from the BDSM kink scene, she left the scene upon confirming her plans to marry her current husband. I asked if a monogamous marriage would satisfy her sexual needs as a domme and she elaborates, "The good thing about being married is that I can remind him of his Islamic duties to give me sex... and it won't make me look

like a slut or an immoral mother.” Dewi’s assertion of sexual agency stands in sharp contrast to Malay Muslim portrayals of the asexual mother and the sexually submissive wife.

As a feminist, Dewi takes issue with marital gender roles in Islam, which she feels positions women as subordinate to men. But she realizes that as a Malay Muslim wife, the same patriarchal marital/sexual norms actually provide her an avenue to express her sexuality without appearing as a “slut” or an “immoral” mother, because Islam posits that a husband’s role also includes satisfying his wife’s sexual needs (*nafkah batin*). In this context, Dewi’s act of disidentification is apparent in terms of how she appropriates cultural norms that require a wife’s sexual subordination to her husband’s pleasure that also legitimize her subjectivity as a “highly sexual” wife and mother. Her strategies of reconciling norms are rather subversive in its disidentification—Dewi is only able to enact sexual privilege through marriage where her claims for sexual fulfilment are validated as a competent performance of heteronormative motherhood.

In comparing the narratives of the four Malay mothers, I demonstrate the significance of one’s social and cultural capital to counter regulatory structures of proper motherhood. Bad, Zara and Dewi, due to their cultural and social capital, are able to navigate between queer and normative cultural spaces and, in doing so, have found ways to overcome the constraints of a gendered reproductive habitus that nullifies the sexual agency of mothers.

Additionally, an intersectional analysis provides the critical lens to assess which subject positions are more salient and meaningful to Malay mothers. It is evident that being a Malay Muslim mother exerts a dominant influence in shaping their strategies to resist, appropriate or reconcile ideals of sexual restraint or *malu* as it is practiced in the local Malay community. Mothers whose primary mode of socialization is bound to Islam and/or the Malay community tend to express their struggles as directly related to current or anticipated prosecution or sexual policing by Malay members, while Dewi, who distances herself from it, appears to have more freedom, in comparison to the other women, in expressing her bisexuality. In Dewi’s case, her feminist politics and bisexuality are salient identities compared to other women whose personal meanings are more tightly connected to being a mother and a Muslim, and, for Fauziah, her economic deprivation as a welfare mother.

Their stories reinforce Foucault’s observations that normative categories are only productive and dominant insofar as the individual, who understands the conditions of their subjectivation to these relations of power, feels compelled to measure and monitor themselves against the maternal norms of sexuality. As I have highlighted in Dewi’s situation, the norms

governing proper maternal sexuality do not hold much relevance to her, since she possesses alternative modes of identification to other ethical values, such as being a sex-positive feminist.

5.4 Queering Mother-Nature: Lesbian Motherhood and Disidentifications

Lewin (1994) notes that in her study of US lesbian mothers, becoming a mother grants queer women access into a more natural or normal status of being a woman because it represents conformity to gendered expectations. At the same time, their proximity to normalcy allows for the deconstruction of compulsory heterosexuality from motherhood. Lewin describes further that this act of resistance is paradoxically accomplished through conformity to gendered norms for women, which is construed also as an expression of accommodation (1994: 349). She also points out that the lesbian mothers who desire acceptance tend to downplay, desexualize or distance themselves from their queer sexuality (see also Mamo, 2007).

While Lewin's analysis has been useful to my research, I am interested in how negotiations of resistance or accommodation configure the everyday lives of Chinese lesbian co-mothers. Unlike in the US, where same-sex marriage has been legalized across states and non-biological co-mothers are permitted to adopt, same-sex unions are not recognized in Singapore and adoption is illegal for same-sex couples. In this section, I will explore how four Chinese lesbian co-mothers, claim a lesbian/bisexual identity vis-à-vis heteronormative assumptions of motherhood. Do these lesbian mothers, like some of their Malay counterparts, desire to be regarded as 'normal' mothers? What does normalcy mean for Chinese lesbian middle-class co-mothers? Their narratives highlight dominant assumptions that underscore categories of 'lesbian', 'woman' and 'mother'.

The first couple comprises Olivia (36), an Events Organizer, the birth mother of Zoey (2), whom she co-parents with her wife Irene (32), an IT Software Engineer. They refer to each other as 'mama' and 'mummy' respectively. Olivia is feminine-presenting and identifies as bisexual while Irene, who is more androgynous, identifies as queer. The second couple, Muk Yin (44) and Weiling (37), are home entrepreneurs in the organic wellness industry. They have been co-parenting for nine years and are each birth mothers to one of their two sons, Liam (7) and Jake (8 months). While both of them are androgynous women, Muk Yin identifies as lesbian while Weiling is bisexual. Both the two couples self-identify as "lesbian mothers".

Chinese lesbian co-mothers do not feel that motherhood has significantly altered their identity as lesbian or bisexual. In contrast, they felt the need to assert a lesbian/queer mother

identity even more intensely now compared to before they had children. As a feminine-presenting woman carrying a baby, Olivia automatically gets read as a heterosexual mother. By declaring Irene as her wife, she is signaling her identity as a lesbian mother because her queer subjectivity can be easily elided when she is out in public with Zoey. Bisexual mothers like Weiling and Olivia use the terms “lesbian” and “bisexual” interchangeably and also strategically to describe their identity, relationship and family structure. For instance, having been in a long-term relationship, Weiling jokes that she is “theoretically bisexual but practicing lesbian”. Olivia finds it “too complicated” to explain being bisexual when one is married and has a child with another woman. Olivia prefers to state she is a lesbian mother, rather than bisexual, to avoid unsolicited advice that she could “someday change and marry a man” for the benefit of her child. Through their articulations, both Olivia and Weiling differentiate between their sexual orientation as bisexual and a committed and sexually intimate union with women as the practice of being lesbian. In this regard, same-sex motherhood prompts them to take up lesbian visibility, although they self-identify as bisexual.

In discussing the relationship between motherhood and same-sex sexuality, bisexual/lesbian mothers like Olivia and Muk Yin evoke biology to justify how desires to be a mother is a natural process for women. Olivia and Muk Yin turn to biology and nature to assert their reproductive autonomy as queer women. For instance, Muk Yin preferred home insemination instead of clinical intervention because being a lesbian who desires motherhood is ‘not an illness’. In this regard, Muk Yin’s alternative reproductive strategy, while assuming the normative category of ‘mother’, enacts disidentificatory practices against the disabling pathologies of heteronormativity and healthcare.

Meanwhile, Olivia describes pregnancy and motherhood as “wonders of nature” and elaborates: “It’s just so amazing that my body can sustain a life by making milk that can feed and grow a child.” On her blog, Olivia joked that other than their inability to produce sperm, their process of giving birth is “all very ordinary”. In response to a comment that her lesbian pregnancy and birth was against nature, Olivia responded by saying:

I am happy to let you know that there was no magic or cultism involved. There were no white unicorns flying in on rainbows to deliver the baby. It was all done in the same way as everyone else – in the operating theatre at [a public hospital] by a senior doctor.
(Liv, June 10 2015)

Olivia uses the imagery of her nurturing maternal body and asserts the ordinarieness of her birthing to reinforce the idea that nature had intended for her to be a mother. She juxtaposes the

banality of birthing in a hospital with queer icons such as “unicorns” and “rainbows” as a disidentificatory strategy to evoke queerness, while simultaneously emphasizing sameness. Her intention, similar to Muk Yin, was clear—lesbian mothers who are fertile and able-bodied are not any less natural than their able-bodied heterosexual mothers. Their appeals to nature and biology challenge dominant heteronormative discourses that regard them as “unfit” or “unnatural” mothers. Their claims signify an intent to be treated and accepted like any other normal mother, where differences based on their sexual identity should not be a precursor to social exclusion. For Olivia, normal and natural were interchangeable.

In contrast, their co-mothers, Irene and Weiling do not position motherhood as an innate, biological desire. The latter had only considered pregnancy after being in a relationship with their partners. These co-mothers view what was ‘natural’ to motherhood rather differently from Olivia and Muk Yin.

Hays (1996) posits that women are culturally expected to engage in intensive mothering by dedicating a lot of time, care and attention to their children. When I asked Weiling how she viewed herself as a mother, she responded, “I don’t identify primarily as a mother, even though I spent most of my days looking after children. I’m just a person. I do not like looking like a typical mummy so I choose not to look like that.” Weiling’s idea of a ‘typical’ mother signifies representations of sexuality, race and gender. Her statement problematizes the relationship between intensive mothering as practice and “mother” as one’s identity. She demonstrates the possibilities of detaching “mother” from the practice of mothering and from her maternal body. In doing so, she explicates “motherhood” as a fragmented identity. The amount of time she spends mothering her children does not occupy her subjectivity as a queer woman. She spends a lot of time with her children because she loves them and she views it as a moral imperative to be a responsible caregiver and nurturer rather than her obligation as a mother.

Weiling enacts norms of “proper” motherhood by performing what “typical” mothers would do, but she actively refuses to look like a normal mother. She elaborates:

When I am around the children with or without my partner, salespersons will look at the children and go ‘Oh, the father is Caucasian (*Ang Moh*)?’ My unusual appearance serves to reinforce in their minds that I’m very modern, unconventional, therefore only White men would have me.

From Weiling’s statement, the normal mother, as opposed to an “unusual” mother, embodies feminine, heterosexual Chineseness, all of which point to a dominant representation of gendered heteronormativity in Singapore. Thus, Weiling’s androgynous presentation of self as dis-

identification from “normal” or typical motherhood (see Munoz, 1999: 12), suggests a resistance to gendered norms of compulsory heterosexuality. In this regard, her androgynous appearance and her mixed Chinese-white children becomes read as modern and un-Chinese resulting in the assumption that she is married to a white man. In this dilemma, Weiling desires to disrupt dominant images of motherhood by reclaiming maternal propriety through her queer androgynous body. Instead, onlookers mis-identify her androgyny as a form of imagined cosmopolitan heterosexuality. Thus the constant mis-identification of her queer/androgynous performance reinforces a gendered reproductive habitus that is oriented toward challenging heteronormative motherhood as a queer maternal subject.

As middle-class and university-educated Chinese women, Chinese lesbian co-mothers represent what the state regards as the “ideal” mother. But in asserting their lesbian/bisexual identities through their same-sex relationships and their non-legal marital status, they are treated as unfit mothers and have been excluded from benefits granted to married heterosexual couples. These mothers straddle the intersection of both revered and reviled subject of the state’s heteronormative policies because they are positioned out of the boundaries of normativity despite being a graduate mother, a status that Singapore state prescribes as “ideal” for mothering (Heng and Devan, 1995).

Yet Chinese lesbian co-mothers’ narratives, depending on whether they appropriate their reproductive rights as ‘natural’ lesbian birth mothers, or their feminine or androgynous subject positions, reveal their disidentifications with normative categories of motherhood in terms of its heteronormative gendered assumptions. Their intimate politics hint at their desires to be legitimized and accommodated within heterosexual structures of motherhood, while at the same time display resistance by refusing to be seen as a “normal” heterosexual mother.

The different social status and experiences of mothering demonstrate how disidentification with motherhood is fragmented, diverse and non-monolithic. Negotiations between sexual expression and motherhood draw upon images of guilt and self-sacrifice, sexual liberation, shame and respectability as well as biological/natural justifications. Mothers tend to measure their sense of self-worth and derive their maternal identities based on these themes, which differ according to their personal sensibilities in relation to their economic, social and cultural capitals.

Intense experiences of exclusion differ according to mothers’ attitudes toward sex, whether it is a source of shame, guilt, liberation or fulfilment as well as the degree to which they organize their everyday lives around particular sexual identities, practices and orientations.

Mothers who view their lesbian and bisexual subjectivity as fundamental to their sense of self accommodate heteronormative ideals of motherhood while simultaneously rejecting the performance of “normal” heterosexuality. Unlike their lesbian and bisexual counterparts, working-poor Malay single mothers desire to “pass” as a normal, heterosexual mother. Their desires to do so reveal multiple marginalities where their race and class already positions them as deviant mothers even before they enter a same-sex relationship. Thus, whether or not a non-normative mother can successfully identify or counter-identify as normal/proper demonstrates the operations of heteronormative privilege. In some mothers, their attempts to pass as normal are a form of disidentification—meaning they are not derived from a privileged proximity to mainstream and dominant practices and norms, but rather through their experiences with material deprivation and/or hostile social contexts.

Lesbian/bisexual co-mothers’ and heterosexual single mothers’ negotiations of motherhood indicate how heteronormative matrices of domination affects all mothers, some more acutely than others. Different types of mothers possess varying amounts of privilege and disenabledness that are based not only on their proximity to compulsory heterosexuality but also where they are positioned in relation to race and class.

5.5 Transgendering Mother/Fatherhood: The End of Normal?

Queer scholars like Ryan (2009) and Halberstam (2012) posit that butch and transgender fatherhood provides a radical space to bring about the “end of normal” parenthood due to the disruption of patriarchal fatherhood and compulsory heterosexuality. When parenting practices such as nurturing and caring for a child have been associated with feminine and maternal traits, butch fathers’ parenting practices challenge the assumed gender stability of maternal bodies and mothering roles. How do these butch fathers reconcile their masculinities through their pregnant body and/or practices of raising children?

In this section, I look at the experiences of four Malay Muslim butch fathers and how they navigate gendered structures of parenthood in Singapore. Three of these butches, Yam, Jo and Shiq, assume fatherhood through their relationship with heterosexual single mothers while Boi became a father through natural birth. I aim to examine the flexibility of gendered norms of parenthood to accommodate the gender non-conforming bodies of female-bodied men. Through butch fathers’ narratives of parenthood, I explore how they seek legitimation both as non-legal parents and non-mothers. Further, since butch fathers self-identify as Malay Muslim men, I seek

to investigate if hetero-patriarchal practices exist in their relationships with feminine single mothers and their children, or if patriarchy, like Halberstam (2012) suggests, is absent in heterogendered same-sex families.

5.5.1 Maternal Man

Female participants who identify as men may experience intense gender dysphoria especially when maternity and a maternal body are culturally reinforced as embodied paradigms of femininity. Boi, a 35-year-old Security Supervisor, is a working-class single butch father who has a 12-year-old biological son. Her narrative explicates flexible constructions of motherhood through a masculine subjectivity while at the same time revealing the rigidity of gendered reproductive norms. In this regard, Boi's story demonstrates individuals' capacity to rearrange norms in order to accommodate their transgressive gender subjectivities, but without directly rejecting dominant norms of motherhood.

Impregnated as a result of violent rape, Boi narrates how she acquired maternal instincts and reconciled a physically changing maternal body with her identification as a man. She considers maternal instincts as natural to women; a quality not intrinsic to her masculine subjectivity. Boi had dissociated herself from her pregnant body and by extension, the fetus that was growing in her womb due to both her trauma as a rape survivor as well as her transgender subjectivity. She had expected that her dissociation and maleness, coupled with an absence of maternal instinct, would culminate into a sense of detachment toward her son after his birth. However, she was surprised that she had instantly bonded with her son when he was born and rationalized that pregnancy had provided her the maternal instinct that was previously non-existent. Boi elaborates:

After carrying my son in my tummy for nine months, your body *naturally* switches to make you a mother. I transformed from being emotionally detached (*takde perasaan*) to deep love (*sayang betul*). I did not read books or go for classes to learn about what to do when the baby comes. I left it to fate and it so happens, *your body does it for you*. (emphasis added)

Boi utilizes the imagery of nature and biology in rather complex ways. She disidentifies against the synonymity of woman to motherhood by appropriating maternal instinct to her masculine female body. In this regard, she differentiates herself from other cisgender mothers but without dismantling dominant ideals maternalism or motherhood, because she expresses that motherhood would be more natural to cisgender woman than a butch man like herself. She

reinforced that motherhood, through the acquisition of maternal instinct, became natural to her only through her pregnancy. Her emotional competence developed in tandem with her pregnancy. While these qualities were attributed to nature and biology, they were not considered natural to her masculinity. By suggesting that she did not need to learn about being a mother in order to know how to care for her son, Boi is also reclaiming motherhood through a non-normatively masculine and maternal body.

Boi's negotiations with masculinity and maternalism intensified when she had to engage in practices such as breastfeeding that are specific to female bodies. Breastfeeding was challenging for Boi because the somatic process of having to touch and hold her chest so her son could latch on and feed was deeply dysphoric to her sense of maleness. She had to convince herself that it was her responsibility to provide milk for her son. Boi's explanation reveals her reconciliation to gender norms:

Do you know how painful it is when your breasts are engorged? Even if I were not comfortable breastfeeding, my body forced me to do it. I felt guilty 'cos I am producing milk and it is selfish of me to think more about my discomfort than to feed my baby. It is maternal instincts. This is the same as how a man provides for his family, except I can actually feed him milk from my own body.

In using biology, Boi demonstrates how her body naturally provided her with the ability to bond with her baby even though she has always identified as a man. At the same time, she extracts nature, or her "maternal instinct", back into her masculine subjectivity by analogizing breastfeeding through the dominant gender script of father as provider. In this context, Boi demonstrates the transmutability of biology, using breastmilk, as the substance of motherhood, and transforms it into a cultural code for fatherhood (see also Carsten, 2000). Milk as substance is therefore extracted into a gendered practice that emphasizes Boi's role as a father to provide food for her son. Boi has always felt like a she had a male soul (*jiwa lelaki*), hence feminine attributes of being nurturing and "motherly" (*sifat ibu*) arose only out of necessity to ensure her child's survival.

Boi reproduces popular perceptions of motherhood, where care has been gendered as feminine, while simultaneously also challenging dominant constructions of motherhood by positing it as a form of 'enforced maternity'. If, as argued by feminists like Simone De Beauvoir, pregnancy is a form of "enforced maternity" (1953: 724), this enforcement is enacted by individuals like Boi only as a matter of contingency. In other words, Boi is only enforced as a "natural" mother for as long as her son is dependent on her body for food. When Boi weaned

Rizqi off breastfeeding, her masculine body ceased to be a mothering body and she could comfortably assume fatherhood.

The dynamic that Boi currently has with her son, Rizqi, is that of “father and son” even though Rizqi continues calling her *ibu* (mother). While she would have preferred being called *ayah* (father), she explained that it would have been awkward to train her son to do so in his younger years, especially when she was using much of her maternal body in the early stages of parenting. Even though her mother, who is living with them, recognizes Boi as a man, Boi’s maleness was negated through maternal practices of pregnancy and breastfeeding. Boi claims that it is hard for others to see her as a father if she is at once also the “real”/biological mother (*ibu betul*), even though her masculine disposition had, according to her, been constant before and after motherhood.

Boi’s narrative explicates intricate social constructions of motherhood where she evokes nature and biology to both disrupt dominant ideas of motherhood while simultaneously realigning a masculine subjectivity. In de-gendering the substance of pregnancy and breast milk from the category ‘woman’ by encoding it with new imagined forms of masculinity and fatherhood, she exposes the malleability of gendered roles of fathering/mothering to establish her position as a masculine father. She challenges dominant forms of compulsory maternity onto female-bodied individuals by reinforcing how masculinity, not motherhood, is natural to her subjectivity. Boi’s parental sensibilities add another layer to feminist scholarship that has refuted the common assumption of motherhood as something innate to women where care-work and child-rearing by mothers appears as women’s “natural” responsibilities performed out of “natural” love (Ginsburg and Rapp, 1995).

Boi’s lived experience challenges the prevalence of dichotomous gender paradigms where motherhood/femininity and fatherhood/masculinity are regarded as polar opposites. By becoming a biological mother and a social father, that is, a man who obtained maternal instincts and identifies intimately as a father, Boi’s evocation of “nature” and “biology”, through her gendered subjectivity, can be understood as flexible concepts that blur dichotomies which have naturalized the mother as a woman and not a man. In this regard, Boi’s everyday practice of transgenering mother/fatherhood does not signify the end of normal; rather, she has reconstituted a discursive space in which normal categories of “mother” and “father” are reimagined into new gendered subjectivities of parenthood.

5.5.2 Whither Patriarchal Fatherhood? Lessons from Malay Heterogendered Same-Sex Parents

In 2014, when the local university term had closed for the summer, I became a “stay-at-home” dad in my household. Freed from primary caregiving duties, my partner supported our family by taking on as many freelance projects as possible. My daily life consisted of ferrying kids to-and-fro from school, feeding and clothing them, supervising homework, putting them to bed and bringing them out on playdates. While I was lauded by our mutual friends for being an “amazing” father, my partner, who was positioned as the “true” mother, was criticized for prioritizing her work instead of her own children. Unable to deal with the pressure, my partner subtly suggested that I either get a job or hide my active parenting because it was making her look like a “terrible” mother. On another occasion, university-educated Malay friends who were impressed by my parenting skills commented that they wished their husbands were as involved as I am. But one of them also had to add, “You’re naturally good at parenting compared to our husbands, because you’re not a real man. Real men are clueless when it comes to taking care of babies because it’s just not in their nature.”

Halberstam (2012: 58) posits that a butch-femme household is a radical space in its potentiality to disrupt gender norms because those households would be absent of patriarchy and compulsory heterosexuality since the butch father has no access to male privilege while the femme mother does not always have heterosexual privilege. However, my personal vignette above reveals how radical or egalitarian practices of gender continue to be reconstituted back to biology: either that of my partner as the biological mother of our children, or my own, as a masculine female-bodied person. Both the incidents prompted me to consider how “nature” comes into play when we examine fatherhood through non-biological female-bodied parents.

The manner in which my friends justified their husbands’ fathering practices by dispossessing my masculinity reveals the fragile social constructions of fatherhood, which I will further discuss in this section. On the other hand, my partner shows how her credibility as a mother was tied to my performance as a father. If “motherhood” is sutured to nature, what anchors “fatherhood”? Is the “end of normal” a desirable goal for the Malay hetero-gendered households in my research? The butches from these working-class households, Yam (40), Jo (32) and Shiq (34), are regarded as fathers by their partners and/or partners’ children. Unlike Boi, these participants were addressed through self-identified masculine kin terms that appropriate their role as social fathers precisely because they possess distance from being a biological mother.

Butch fathers, who take on active caregiving roles largely associated with femininity and mothering, do not view these practices as natural to their female biology. Rather, it is a skill that they have acquired and honed. When they were co-parenting together, Yam was the one who taught her partner Lina how to breastfeed, feed, burp and diaper their newborn son, Rizal (Lina's biological son). Yam, a middle-class butch, who works as a Senior Nurse in the pediatrics department, was used to looking after newborns and young children so she found it infuriating when people attribute her parenting skills to her being a woman. Prior to parenting Rizal, she never had to deal with comments that imply she had feminine traits. She expressed, "Why can't I just be a good parent without anyone teasing me for being a woman?" I asked if she viewed being a woman/mother as inferior to her masculinity and self-determination as a father and she clarified:

I respect women who mother, but when you know that I see myself as a man, telling me what a woman I am, I find it intentionally patronizing. I can excuse you if you're a stranger but not when you are a friend and knowing that calling me a woman would upset me.

Dichotomous parenting paradigms, such as the expectation that nurturing is only natural to women-mothers, continue to reinforce stereotypes that position "masculine" and "feminine" acts of child care as gendered polarities, much to the detriment of non-gender-conforming parents. Yam does not conceptualise her parental abilities as something that was innate to her biological female body. Instead, Yam posits her maternal skills and disposition as the product of knowledge and practices that she had accumulated through her professional experiences as a pediatric nurse. She felt discomfort that her caregiving practices became defining of her biological female body and elides her self-determination as an involved father. Her narrative explicates how everyday experiences of gender fluidity are still beholden to gendered binaries of parenthood.

Although Yam, Jo and Shiq spent a lot of time with their partners and children and have frequent sleepovers, they do not live in the same house as their partners. As non-resident parents, these butch fathers demonstrate the diversity of parenthood practices that extend beyond a nuclear, two-parent residential pattern. For Yam and Shiq, who do not intend to come out to their biological families, their performance of social fatherhood, unlike Jo, can only occur in the domesticity of their partnership. Their gendered strategies signify how fatherhood is contingent upon specific social environments and demonstrates differentiated enactments of gendered sexual subjectivities. Yam and Shiq are 'tomboy daughters' (gender non-conforming heterosexuality)

with their immediate family, ‘butch’ (gendered sexual subjectivity) with colleagues and friends and a ‘father’ (gendered sexual kinship subjectivity) in their partners’ home and among closest friends. Fatherhood, based on their social positions, is therefore a layered, relational and contextual subjectivity in comparison to cisgender mothers who do not articulate similar fluidities of moving in and out of motherhood.

Despite the non-residential practices of butch fathers, their partners do not consider them irresponsible or absent fathers. In one example, there is no space to accommodate Jo in Ayu’s one-bedroom rental apartment that Ayu shares with her sisters and three children. Jo, who works as a janitor, would visit Ayu and their children when her shift hours permit. Both Jo and Ayu rationalized Jo’s non-residence as typical of fathers who “sacrifice” to work erratic and long shift-hours in order to provide for the family in which they are seldom present. Ayu explained:

It’s normal. Men are not usually involved in taking care of kids. That’s the mother’s responsibility. To me Jo is still a good father – even if he is not here, he still provides for us. Fathers who are home all the time are actually useless and a burden, because it means they are not out there working at a stable job. Worse, they still expect mothers to take care of the kids *and him* even though she has to go out and find a job because the family cannot rely on him.

From Ayu’s perspective, a man’s role as a father is solidified by his ability to provide for the family, and not primarily based on their presence at home or having an active involvement with children. As a working-poor and unwed single mother, Ayu’s views of ideal fatherhood draw upon state and cultural discourses of ‘good fathers’. State campaigns such as ‘Dads for Life’, initiated to promote involved fatherhood among married men, continue to reinforce the ideal father as a breadwinner and a ‘babysitter’ to their children, since intensive parenting for men is optional because it is predominantly the mother’s duty as a nurturer. Additionally, despite her lower-class position, Ayu’s narrative animates dominant middle-class narratives of family stability and reliability where she similarly chastises fathers who fail to provide adequately for their families and reinforces the stereotype that men who are frequently at home do not actively take care of children. In this regard, Ayu legitimizes Jo’s absence through intimate and social narratives of hetero-patriarchal competence.

In the summer of 2011, Shiq, a working-class draftsman, was hardly at home with her then wife, Shasha, who was an unwed single mother with four teenage children. Shiq’s parents had expected her to be at home every night. Shasha rationalized their arrangement by drawing upon Malay historical practices of migration and household management by stating:

Last time, Malay men *merantau* (moving out of natal home) to find work to provide for the family. Mothers can manage the household and the children if men give us money. My children are also used to not having a father around so if Shiq lives with us, it may affect the dynamic. Men tend to be strict with children and my kids may not like that.

In justifying Shiq's limited role as a non-residential father, Shasha's evokes past Malay matrilineal practices common in Minangkabau culture in parts of Malaysia and Indonesia where mothers and wives hold power in households (see Peletz, 1995; Blackwood, 1995). Like Ayu, Shasha's narrative reinforces how working-poor Malay mothers link fatherhood to the ability to provide without any expectations for fathers to be equally involved in sharing domestic tasks at home. In their understanding, an absent father is one who is incapable of providing income for the family.

The experiences of parenthood for non-resident butch fathers are similar to the Black lesbian step-parents in Moore's (2011) research. Moore found that that parenthood represents a small share of lesbian step-parents' subjectivity. They tend to compartmentalize their identity as parents from other aspects of their lives, because as step-parents, they do not get to exercise full autonomy in parenting compared to the biological mothers they are partnered with. In my research, Jo, Yam and Shiq became social fathers when partnered with pregnant single mothers. They had different dynamics with older children in the household, meaning they played a social father role to very young children and took on a friendly advisor role to older children. If the latter has a known biological father, it is only then that masculine female partners see themselves as a step-parent.

As step-parents, the roles that were expected of these masculine participants mirror closely the roles expected of step-parents in Singapore (Tan-Jacob, 2006). Tan-Jacob found that a positive response of acceptance and affection was best obtained when the step-parent did not try to be the social parent but took on roles as the friendly advisor, mediator and provider (2006: 134). She observed that stepfathers who attempted to be social fathers—authoritative and disciplinary figures—were unsuccessful in their attempts to be accepted by children.

Malay single mothers' preference for detached parenting is not an expectation exclusive to stepfathers but also draws upon cultural norms of fatherhood as practiced in the Malay Muslim community and espoused by the state. The women do not expect active involvement from butch

partners because their former husbands or boyfriends were largely absent fathers. These dynamics reinforce the notion that being an involved father is an exception rather than a norm¹.

Butch fathers' experiences in negotiating gendered parental subjectivities are similar to the experiences of gay men in Lewin's (2009) research on gay fatherhood in the US. Like the gay fathers, butch fathers, except those with exceptional circumstances like Boi, assert their desires for children as something that is intrinsic and natural in them. At the same time, those who engage in practices that are typical of mothering roles such as birthing, feeding, diapering and comforting children, do not see themselves as mothers. While these activities should not define their gender identity, being referred to as "mother" disrupts butch fathers' self-determination as men.

The relational hierarchies between butch fathers and femme mothers elucidate the cultural malleability of fatherhood juxtaposed against the biological stability of motherhood. Butch fathers' active parenting is feminized into a form of failed masculine performance, where some find themselves teased for "being a woman". In managing their gender performances to secure efficacy in being fathers, butches demonstrate the precarity of fatherhood because it is contingent upon their role as an adequate provider and exists only in the context of a functional romantic relationship with single mothers.

The narratives in this section exemplify the dominance of hetero-patriarchal norms in shaping ideas of fatherhood and reinforcing heteronormative motherhood. Malay single mother-partners may not have access to heterosexual privilege, but as biological mothers, they exercise these privileges in their households by determining butch fathers' access to fatherhood. Male privilege is extended to their butch partners in so far as they prove their ability to provide for their family, yet it limits butch fathers since as non-biological parents, they do not have legal rights nor the authority to make household decisions controlled by birth mothers. Hetero-patriarchal privilege is transferred from butch fathers to feminine single mothers, rather than being anchored through the position of men as head-of-the-household. The exclusion of butch fathers from having household authority or legal parental rights reinforces their insecure positions as social fathers.

¹ Although fathers are becoming more involved in parenting, caregiving is still seen as a mother's job in Singapore. Stay-at-home mothers do not receive any subsidies for childcare because the state views non-working mothers as responsible for unpaid care work, unless she has a disability or chronic illness that prevents her from taking care of children. Many Singaporean working married fathers, for instance, do not claim their entitled two-weeks of paternity leave because they are afraid to be seen as skiving from work since it is uncommon for men to assist their wives in the caring of a newborn.

While Halberstam frames their argument by positing queer fatherhood as the “end of normal”, ethno-cultural and class context matters in examining the feasibility of radical queer projects of gender. How do subjects radicalize the “normal”, if they were never regarded as proper or normal subjects to begin with? Based on my participants’ narratives, I find it erroneous to assume that all gender non-conforming parents desire to destabilize and disrupt patriarchal norms and structures of compulsory heterosexuality. The stories told by Malay heterogendered couples demonstrate how radical gender politics are not a desirable aim within their households. Positioned outside of “normal” families because of factors such as class, gender, ethnicity and sexuality, both working-class Malay butch fathers and single mothers co-monitor each others’ gender performance with specific aims to reconsolidate heterosexual patriarchal norms that validates their meaningful subjectivity as the responsible father and caring mother. Despite their desires to be normal, these same-sex families queer patriarchal heteronormativity by reinforcing the very patriarchal structures that exclude their subjectivities. At the same time, their disidentifications with patriarchal gender norms come from a position approximated to, rather than through occupying, male privilege.

5.6 Demystifying “Real” Maternal Bonds in Lesbian Families

Suzanne Pelka argues that lesbian-led families challenge the notion of having more than one “real” mother, through the presumed singularity of a maternal role (2009: 423). In this section, I examine mothering practices of Chinese lesbian co-mothers to understand how they position themselves against dominant discourses of monomaternality in nuclear family households. My intention is to also compare why parental equity is feasible in these Chinese female households while absent in Malay heterogendered households.

Prior to interviewing Chinese lesbian co-mothers, I had spent a year interacting with working-class Malay heterogendered same-sex parents who consistently prescribed differences in parental abilities based on who is the “real” mother and what men or women should do at home. Since lesbian mothers like Olivia and Muk Yin used biology to describe their “natural” desires for children and why they wanted to mother children of their own, I decided to ask these couples about their thoughts on the “maternal bond” and whether there are differences in roles between biological and social mothers in their respective households.

In fact, Chinese lesbian co-mothers looked at me incredulously when I asked if they experienced any form of maternal jealousy or exclusion, or felt detachment with non-biological

children. The response I received from these couples turned into a lesson on “archaic” gender roles in man-woman households. Muk Yin replied sarcastically, “Bond with scotch-tape!”, before proceeding to let me know that my question was steeped in rigid gender stereotypes.

Based on my research, university-educated upper middle-class Chinese lesbian co-mothers desire equal maternal roles and do not distinguish between the biological mother versus the social mother. Their co-mothering practices stand in sharp contrast to working-class Malay Muslim butch-femme households where power and authority coalesces around one’s biological rights to children as well as Malay Muslim cultural norms of gender. Among these lesbian mothers, although their children were more attached to birth mothers during the early years of breastfeeding, social mothers take the initiative to affirm their bond with the children, and children equally seek out both partners for care, comfort and affection.

Chinese lesbian mothers take on the view that monomaternality, or the biocentrism, of the mother-child dyad and bond is a social construction that has been naturalized into a biological fact. Muk Yin, for instance, suggests that the presumed anxiety that a non-biological parent would feel left out is not only particular to same-sex families because biological fathers in heterosexual families tend to experience distance from children as well. She posits that the experience of detachment is not a condition of biology, rather it “boils down to the type of relationship that partners create in the family”, as a result of “gender stereotyping where people assumed that males are naturally incapable of taking care of children”. Bringing in her personal experiences, Muk Yin opines that the “older generation heterosexual parents” project their “rigid” ideas about gender roles onto her same-sex family, where mothering is seen as natural to women and not men. In these regard, her family elders “expects one of [them] to be in the male space and therefore uninvolved or left out when the other one is having ‘her’ child.” Because Weiling and Muk Yin, are not convinced that *only* the biological mother can have a “natural” bond with the child, they do not consciously allocate roles based on who is the birth mother. They prefer to “play it by ear”, or as Muk Yin articulates, “parenting based on whoever’s hands are free to catch the ball.”

The assumption that cisgender same-sex parents who are raising children would necessarily identify with the category “mother”, due to their co-maternal practices, excludes the experiences of participants like Irene, who finds the category rather restrictive toward gender diversity among women. Even though Irene has been referred to as “mummy”, she is more comfortable with the term “parent” than “mother”. When I asked what differentiates a mother from a parent, she reveals that it has to do with social norms that society defines what a mother

should be, such as being “*nurturing*”. During our interview, I had laughed when Olivia and Irene emphasized the word “*nurturing*” at the same time, because it was also the same word I had in mind. Our exchange exposes the strong linguistic referent of nurture to “mother”. Irene does not see herself as “*only* capable of nurturing”, and justifies it by stating that she takes Zoey to swimming classes. For Irene, being a “mother” is not limited to only nurturing. She elaborates:

To be honest, a lot of women nowadays don’t just nurture, they provide for their family and take the kids to play sports. I’m not against the term “mother”, but I thought that being a “parent” would be more representative of how diverse our parenting experiences are.

Irene’s comfort in identifying as a “parent” instead of “mother” highlights a rejection of restrictive norms of motherhood because it does not account for hybrid parenting practices that do not conform to cultural expectation of either a mother and father. As a queer androgynous woman who embodies both masculinity and femininity, Irene’s understanding of parenting roles is one that is similarly fluid. At the same time, her preference for “parent” instead of “mother” also represents a self-idealization of her gender and sexual identity. Irene’s practices reveal a method of disidentification with normative practices of motherhood, where she is ‘mummy’ but not ‘mother’. In doing so, she appropriates motherhood by re-assembling its gendered reinforcements.

Irene and Olivia’s narrative of co-maternalism brings into attention the exclusion of disability into dominant representations and practices of heteronormative as well as homonormative able-bodied ideals of motherhood. The couple puts in a lot of effort to ensure that mothering roles and parental authority are also equally distributed between them in their household. But their challenge also comes in confronting Irene’s hearing disability.

Irene, who is deaf, informed me that she was initially worried that her hearing impairment would create unfair caregiving obligations for Olivia. To overcome this, Irene started changing her sleeping habits, first by sleeping with her hearing aid turned on so she could hear and respond to Zoey’s cries. Irene did not want to leave all the mother-work to Olivia because she sees herself as an equal parent to Zoey and wanted to be similarly responsible and reliable. Irene wanted Olivia to get five to six hours of uninterrupted rest since Olivia would have been exhausted taking care of Zoey while Irene was at work. Irene also saw it as a form of maternal bonding with Zoey, as the other feeding-mother.

To mitigate Irene’s disability, the couple had decided to purchase a special deaf-friendly baby monitor that could vibrate when it detects a baby’s cries or movement. It took them some

time to source for it online through “Amazon” after finding out, to their surprise, that deaf-friendly baby equipment was not available in Singapore. This encounter made them realize how multiply marginalized and socially excluded they were as same-sex parents and, additionally, with a partner who has a hearing impairment.

Irene and Olivia’s experiences reinforces the exclusive relationship between maternalism and compulsory able-bodiedness of women. Their narrative demonstrates that in Singapore, deaf people are not regarded as potential and appropriate users of baby and parenting equipment, and in this regard, positions their motherhood as doubly queer. The absence of deaf-friendly parenting equipment, despite Singapore’s role as a hub of technological and capital flows in the region, further fortifies my observation that maternal competence has been disenabled for deaf parents who, as invisible minorities, are regarded as unfit parents.

The practice of multiple co-mothering roles in both Chinese lesbian households challenges the assumption of a “real” maternal bond that is natural only to biological mothers. For these couples, they utilize biological constructions of motherhood to assert their reproductive rights where assisted reproduction techniques helps them restore their natural fertility as lesbian mothers. However, unlike Malay single mothers, lesbian co-mothers view motherhood and mothering in terms of diverse practices of care-work that can, and should be, unmoored for biological underpinnings to accommodate flexible forms of parenthood. Their dynamic differs from Malay heterogendered couples who adhere more to the mother/caregiver and father/provider roles of parenting, reasoned through bio-cultural understandings of what men and women are predisposed to in terms of parenting. In this regard, the presumed singularity of the maternal role can only be destabilized if both same-sex partners mutually recognize that differences between a biological and non-biological parent, and/or masculine and feminine subjectivities, are sociocultural constructs that can be manipulated to cater to desires for parental equity.

5.7 Maternal Consumption and Sacrifice: The “Gift” of Raising Children

Second-wave feminists have earlier argued that pregnancy and motherhood increases women’s sociocultural and economic vulnerabilities which they view as the source of women’s devalued social status (Rich, 1976). Yet, the cost-benefit analysis in terms of raising children becomes a taboo issue, especially when the site of motherhood, as posited by Taylor (2004), has been fetishized from the domain of the material. Taylor articulates this maternal dispossession aptly:

Motherhood is supposed to be a special kind of human relationship, uniquely important because uniquely free of the kind of calculating instrumentality associated with the consumption of objects. It stands for ‘love’, in sharp contrast to ‘money’ – a simple but persistent opposition that structures American middle-class cultural values concerning family, parenthood and child-rearing. (3)

Thus, despite evidence that parenting requires explicit consumption strategies, dominant ideologies of compulsory maternity and intensive mothering elides an important component of mothering: its material and social costs for women. For the mothers and butch fathers in my research, having and raising children is not only intrinsically rewarding, it signifies maturity, responsibility and acquisition of social status. It entitles mothers and butch fathers to make social and material claims for cultural recognition that would not otherwise be available (Lewin, 2009; Calhoun, 2000). At the same time, when the financial costs of raising children are a premium in urban global cities like Singapore, what are the hidden costs of parenthood?

A mother’s ability to be recognized as ‘competent’ is limited by particular political economic contexts along with her age and class. Unwed teenage mothers recognize their obligation to financially provide for and parent their children but labor opportunities do not support these aspirations (Edin and Lein, 1997). Lareau (2003) suggests that class and context matters in terms of standards of good motherhood. It may create opportunities or constrain one’s ability to engage in intensive mothering.

In this section, I explore how Malay and Chinese mothers mediate the materialism of raising children through their mothering practices. I demonstrate the relationship between commodification and maternal competence through the ways in which mothers frame their consumption patterns, work-life and self-child balance as well as instances of maternal sacrifice and devotion. In discussing maternal competence, I look into relational themes of “sacrifice” and “investment” as articulated by mothers, and divided it into three components of analysis: self/emotive, monetary, and time-based, to question whether mothers position their acts of caregiving as a ‘sacrifice’ or an ‘investment’ that reveals diverse practices and temporal orientations of maternal competence. In doing so, I am able to contextualize the ways in which children become consumer acquisitions of motherhood, as living testimonies of mothers’ class status, moral values and other desirable traits associated with maternal competence.

5.7.1 Emotional Labor as Maternal Sacrifice

Within the Malay household, one's dedication and sacrifice of time and money reinforces the notion that money, goods and services transferred within the household are *given* willingly out of concern and affection (*sayang*) for other household members (Li, 1989: 10). According to Li, the Malay familial view prioritizes unconditional voluntary love, that is, it is more worthy to give with love and generosity than to be forced by obligation or expect a calculated return. Parental authority and responsibility is cemented by 'gifts' of love, care and affection to their children. Framed as such, maternal sacrifice demonstrates a mother's devotion and love, and good Malay mothers are those who dedicate their lives to children unconditionally.

Drawing from Li, I noted similar expressions of sincerity and unconditional love among two divorced Malay mothers, Dewi and Zara. For these mothers, their notion of maternal sacrifice emphasizes the forms of emotional labor that they have undertaken to provide for their children. Dewi, who has been diagnosed with depression, admits that it is hard for her to give affection and devotion to Suki when she lacks the ability to care for herself. Dewi trains Suki, her daughter, to be independent because she is aware that she is not the type of mother who indulges in attention and "molly-coddl[ing]". She says that she displays and captions photos of Suki going for enrichment classes alone, to demonstrate that her child's independence is an intentional and cultivated form of parenting rather than laziness or negligence.

Dewi shows her maternal sacrifice by consciously putting her depression aside to be emotionally present for Suki. She does not want to be like her own mother, whom she claims did not care about her. She says she had to "learn to do everything by [herself], including love". Yet, as Dewi claims, her maternal efforts were not adequately acknowledged because her sisters and parents have continually accused her of being a negligent mother since she is either at work or the gym, and therefore hardly at home. Dewi's narrative exemplifies how compulsory competence, through emotional labor, is conditionally expected out of mothers without considering that some mothers, like herself, who might live with chronic depression, do not possess similar emotional and physical capacities as other able-bodied mothers to devote all of their time and selves to intensive mothering.

Similarly, Zara also describes that she is hardly an affectionate person, but she is determined to give "a mother's love" to her children since she had herself never experienced it with her own mother. Unlike Dewi who reinforces the importance of independence with Suki, Zara, who struggles to balance her competing work and mothering demands, prefers to show her

attachment and indulgence toward Mika, her eight-year-old son whom she regards “still a baby”. She has also devoted a “#hashtag” with a collection of her children’s photos under “#mypreciousjade”. Her actions highlight the commodification of love, of children as emotionally valuable and sentimentalized as “precious” gift (“jade”).

Zara views her sacrifice of emotional labor and time as necessary to her responsibility as a mother, so her children would grow up feeling loved and hopefully become “useful” adults. When I asked if she expects similar forms of devotion from her children, she explicates:

No. It’s my job as a mother to sacrifice for them when they are young, but when they are ready to work, they are on their own. I have no intentions to support them nor do I expect them to take care of me.

Zara’s statement exemplifies Li’s observation that emotional labor for Malay mothers is treated as an unconditional gift where the rewards of motherhood are fulfilled through providing *sincere* love and care instead of expecting reciprocity. At the same time, maternal devotion is age-specific and not lifelong; it is dependent on the needs of children rather than encompassing all parent-child relations for life.

Additionally, for Zara and Dewi, they express the sacrifice of emotional labor of love and devotion as an investment of time and effort, evidenced from the way they describe having to struggle both in terms balancing their work and emotions to put their children’s needs ahead of them. They demonstrate maternal competence differently—Dewi inculcated independence so Suki would not extract more emotional labor than she could give, while Zara desires to be closer to her children so her affections, as mother-work, would become more natural to her unaffectionate disposition.

5.7.2 Career-Life Sacrifice: Chinese Lesbian Mothers, Consumerism, Class and Competence

Middle-class Chinese lesbian mothers tend to describe how having children has transformed their social and economic lifestyles, as they prioritize the caregiving and parenting of children over being career-minded and living in luxury. Chinese lesbian mothers, more so than working-class Malay mothers, expressed the preference to be stay-at-home mothers where being successful in mothering was placed at equal value, if not more than being a successful career mother. I demonstrate how the ‘conscious choices’ that Chinese mothers made in achieving a work-mother balance problematizes state’s gendered discourses that produce ideal ‘supercareer moms’ and complicates how class categories are measured in Singapore. Additionally, I make

class comparisons to situate why these career and intensive mothering practices were more feasible for Chinese lesbian mothers than their Malay counterparts.

In one lesbian household, Olivia states that motherhood has changed her perception about her relationship to work. Before they had Zoey, her life had revolved around pursuing a successful career and after Zoey, she optimized her time to give the best at work with minimum effort in order to spend more time with her baby. Olivia had switched to a freelance job before Zoey was born, and although their household would be earning more if she took on a full-time job, the couple decided that it would be better for Olivia as the breastfeeding mother to stay at home to provide and nurture Zoey's fundamental early years. Irene describes her sacrifice in terms of having to have a full-time career in order to support their family's needs, which meant having less time than she would ideally prefer to spend with Zoey. Similarly, in another household, Weiling and Muk Yin sacrificed lucrative positions in the advertising and media industry to become work-from-home mothers because they valued spending time with their children more.

Chinese mothers' ability to switch career modes, to work-from-home and transition between freelance and full-time, and vice versa, demonstrates middle-class privileges that working-class Malay mothers do not have. Olivia, for instance, is sensitive to the notion that as a middle-class and highly-educated woman, she has the skill set and flexibility to organize a work schedule that would cater to both Zoey's needs and her personal professional fulfillment. She acknowledges this rather succinctly: "I know that we are able to have our family the way we want because of our educated middle-class privilege."

In this regard, the state's idealization of intensive mothering in terms of a work-life balance discounts two issues. First, the professional and economic costs to women's careers when intensive mothering is culturally expected out of mothers but without institutional support. Second, women's diminished class status as a result of these expectations complicates class analysis of co-maternal households. The opportunity costs that these women forego to be devoted mothers describes their class positions rather than their household income. In this regard, the flexibility of "choice" to demonstrate mothers' competence in balancing work and mothering often neglects class privileges, or, more specifically, the expected loss of income when a woman prioritizes motherhood over career. These choices are unequally distributed among women in Singapore, where the ability to balance work and children, if flexible work opportunities are even available, is not the norm for all mothers. The ideology of maternal competencies ignores

structural inequalities of race and class in Singapore while the naturalization of motherhood elides the commodification of mothering.

Working-class Malay and middle-class Chinese mothers differ in terms of how they express maternal sacrifice, which is also indicative of intertwining race and class privileges. Malay mothers tend to make maternal sacrifice through their devotion as selfless mothers. In comparison, the narrative of selflessness was absent among Malay and Chinese middle-class lesbian/bisexual mothers. Irene elaborates:

Don't get me wrong, I'm not saying that our entire life should revolve around Zoey, but we make choices about our lifestyles that includes her. Instead of having comforts like a car, we use that money for Zoey. This is a trade-off that we feel is worth it, but it doesn't mean that everything in our life is all about her.

Irene's statement directly contrasts with working-class Malay mothers, who in enacting maternal sacrifice position their children above their personal needs, often to the detriment of their emotional (e.g. sexuality) and physical health (e.g. working long hours).

While 'choices' for lesbian mothers mean giving up on material comforts, some of the working-class mothers' sacrifices mean giving up essential needs necessary for daily survival. Bad would rather carry Hakim when he was a toddler from his school and walk 40 minutes home than taking the bus because it would mean food for their family. Zara would rather struggle and work 70-80 hours a week to cover her rent than move her children to cheaper housing because she wanted to minimize disrupting her children's routines and adjustment to new schools if they were to shift. Fauziah would rather go to bed hungry and give her last few dollars to her daughter for her field trip than have her dinner. Yet, the mothering practices of these working-class mothers are marginal to middle-class norms intensive mothering, which privileges mothers' investment of time spent with children.

Articulations of selflessness appear more in the narratives of working-class Malay mothers because they are women that the state views as potentially 'unfit' or 'bad' mothers due to their lower levels of education and income (see Heng and Devan, 1995). Thus, articulations of selflessness are necessary to counter the institutionalized stigma that positions low-income single Malay mothers as less than desirable.

Meanwhile, lesbian mothers like Irene and Olivia articulate maternal sacrifice as a form of counter-identification against the stereotype of affluent queer consumerism. Olivia explains:

The idea that as a queer couple we would have a lot of money since having a baby is expensive, is bullshit. It is hard and it takes conscious effort to tell yourself not to compare with your friends who are earning big bucks and can afford fancy

vacations, living in a condominium, having a nice big car and expensive handbags. But we made a conscious choice to not want these in our life. What is the point of working so hard and having all these material luxuries and only able to come home when our daughter is asleep? That's not the kind of life that we want as a family. We are able to make the choice to balance work and spend time with Zoey and still be able to live comfortably. We know other mothers need to work around the clock just to feed the family. We have the privilege of making a conscious choice to focus on what we prioritize and make the effort.

Chinese lesbian co-mothers' strategies reveal the extent to which parenthood has altered their life priorities, and how they perceive the pursuit of a consumerist lifestyle as contrary to being good and responsible mothers. In contrast, the 'conscious choice' to forego work opportunities to spend quality time for children is not available to working-poor Malay mothers in my study. For the latter whose household's survival is contingent upon their ability to accumulate as much income as possible, a shift to prioritize intensive mothering over work would not be viable as it compromises the financial stability of their family. For women in working-class households, since their ability to mother is tied to being hired as a worker, they tend to practice detached parenting. In comparison to their middle-class counterparts, working-class mothers find it difficult to devote as much time to parenting, as they do with work, because feeding the children is a primary urgent source of anxiety over whether children are happy, well-balanced, developing intellectually—attributes that queer middle class mothers view as of utmost importance over their careers.

In addition, middle-class Chinese lesbian co-mothers are highly-skilled and are able to negotiate and leverage demands of motherhood with that of their careers, and thus are afforded more choices to parent according to their desires. In this context, their articulation of maternal sacrifice is derived through their occupation of privilege and proximity to middle-class norms of intensive mothering. On the other hand, the competence of working-class Malay mothers, despite their efforts to be good mothers, are often measured to middle-class parenting practices of educated Chinese women like the lesbian mothers in my research.

5.8 Mothering and Politics of Respectability

Lawler (2000) discusses the relationship between class and "good" mothering. She asserts that good mothering is not determined simply on the basis of a child's needs because the notion of needs has been associated with middle-class practices which 'becomes the norm against which others are measured...the norm to which working class people are supposed to aspire

(2000: 79). From interacting with both working-class and middle-class mothers, I found differences in terms of how mothers spend on children's needs. I explore how Malay and Chinese mothers allocate expenses toward their children to understand what they regard as a necessity for their children's upbringing and its relationship to race and class privileges, as well as performance of respectability.

For working-class Malay mothers, children are seen as living testimonies of devoted mothering, providing women with access to norms of respectability that they have been socially excluded from by virtue of being Malay, unmarried/divorced and lower-educated. When some of these women spend on children, it is usually through forms that are highly visible. Although money is tight, Zara makes sure that her children are very well-dressed and eat good food. She and her partner regularly dine with their children at fancy cafes because Zara finds it important to develop their taste palettes to adapt to a variety of cuisines. She states with pride, "The kids can tell if it's cheap chocolate cake or if it's expensive." Zara desires to transfer her cultural capital (tastes, preference) to her children whom she claims were "robbed of a very comfortable childhood" as a result of her divorce. Thus, her well-dressed children not only represent her middle-class aspirations, but are a reflection of her ability to successfully provide and manage a household. She elaborates:

When people see my kids well groomed, they will not even think we are poor. No one would be able to see how we struggle to survive. I don't want people to assume that because I'm in a difficult financial situation, I'm not able to provide for my kids. They deserve a good life too.

By buying better quality clothing for her children, Zara hopes to 'protect' her children from the 'pathological and worthless' connotations of working-classness (Skeggs, 1997: 86), so the children can pass as kids from respectable middle-class families.

Fauziah, who receives welfare assistance, demonstrates her strategy of disavowing assumptions that equates Malayness to poverty. She posits that in a predominant Chinese country, Malays are often "looked down upon". Like Zara, she would buy "nice things" for her children, when there's extra money, so they would be able to look presentable. From her personal experiences, she pointed out that Malay children are often seen as "problem children" (see Stimpfl, 2006), and she expressed concerns that her children would be further looked down on if they dressed "shabbily" and "looked poor".

While working-class Malay mothers view their consumption practices as strategic to their desires for respectability and legitimation of maternal competence, local Malay elites have

associated these consumption practices with a form of irresponsibility and poor financial management. A Malay Minister had stated, “It is common for Malays to live beyond their means... They can’t even take care of themselves properly” (cited in Stimpfl, 2006: 78). It is a common narrative for Malay state leaders to point out how Malay parents often misplace priorities in spending on their children. They urge Malay parents to emulate Chinese parents who live modestly to prioritize children’s academics over spending on consumables like home renovation, clothing, fashion and having a car.

In Singapore, the discourse of poverty and family dysfunction has been associated with Malayness (Li, 1989). Viewed in this manner, a Chinese child can wear shabby clothes and she would not be judged as coming from a poor family. Her appearance would be rationalized as her parents’ ‘conscious choice’ to not spend money on clothes rather than parental neglect. The same regard cannot be guaranteed for a Malay child who dresses similarly. Thus, the reason why working-poor Malay mothers would rather invest more in their children’s appearance is because of their experiences with discrimination and prejudice due to their racial visibility as Malays. Through this perspective, underprivileged Malay mothers feel that their better-dressed children may provide them with some degree of protection from further class/race prosecution.

In contrast, middle class lesbian co-mothers view expenditure on children’s clothing as a marker of materialistic parenting. Olivia and Irene, for example, would rather Zoey wear hand-me-downs and they would buy second-hand products for all their toddlers’ needs, such as toys. Their daughter’s appearance is not a priority as long as they can dress her decently, that is clothes that are not tattered or torn. Since children outgrow things rather quickly, they prefer for money to be spent on things that are “value-add” instead of “disposable”, such as enrichment classes and books which they view as proper investment in their child’s future. Similarly, while Weiling and Muk Yin claim that they “don’t earn much” and their income is “enough to pay bills”, they spend a large proportion of their income toward their sons’ education and enrichment programs. They enrolled Liam in a private arts kindergarten that costs above the average (S\$ 2400 per term), because they wanted him to have a creative arts education alongside an academic curriculum with a strong Chinese language component.

Pelka (2009) highlights the performance of respectability among lesbian feminist mothers who view the need to raise “good and intelligent children” according to religious traditions in the face of public skepticism about their non-conventional family configurations. Among the Chinese lesbian co-mothers, I noted similar strategies of cultivated parenting, but they view creative and highly literate children as an indication of successful transference of their class and cultural

capitals rather than a politics of respectability. In fact, they tend to describe themselves apart from the “typical” Singapore parent in that they do not see their children’s academic success as the only determinant of good parenting or good children.

Both families, quite unlike Singaporean middle-class parents, did not want a preschool that was “too academic” because they felt that it was important for young children to interact with their peers, gain language acquisition and explore a sensory environment through play. At home, the Chinese lesbian co-mothers invest a lot of time in reading to their children with a focus on language acquisition. Olivia mentions that their household places a strong emphasis on reading and that Zoey had over 200 books even before she turned two. Irene and Olivia compared their parenting skills with their peers who do not have university degrees and have kids:

Irene: Because we both studied in fairly elite schools, we may not be the top but we know of many overachievers. One thing we noticed is that we value reading a lot in children because we have friends who do not have books in the house...

[interrupts] Olivia: I'll give you a very simple example, we read to Zoey since she was born. I let her listen to classical music since I was pregnant. None of my friends, or close friends with kids believe in that.

Irene: We love reading, and we want Zoey to love it too.

In striving to provide the best for their children, lesbian co-mothers’ consumption patterns emphasize providing a holistic development for their children, placing importance in literacy, education, the creative arts as well as physical development—evident from the pre-schools and enrichment classes their children are presently enrolled in.

Working-class Malay mothers do articulate similar aspirations to provide their children with supplementary classes, encourage reading and enrol them into enrichment programs. But surmounting obstacles such as finances and time, makes these aspirations materially impossible. However, on Facebook and Instagram, I do observe Malay mothers’ efforts in presenting forms of cultivated parenting: by posting pictures of their children going to the library, reading and family excursions to the park, representations of which, have been closely associated with leisure practices of the middle-class families. These mothers also acknowledge the stereotypes that positions Malays as lazy and intellectually inferior to Chinese Singaporeans, and in presenting images that connote diligence, academic literacy and success, they are also approximating middle-class norms of parenting through whatever resources they at their disposal.

The differences in consumption practices between Malay and Chinese mothers demonstrate how race and class privileges are intertwined. In Singapore, investing in children’s

education has been indexed as and signifies responsible and future-oriented parenting. My research informs me that despite being socially excluded as lesbians, middle-class Chinese mothers approximate ideal norms of middle-class parenting that have been valued as best suited to address children's needs. Chinese middle-class mothers, for instance, are able to position a de-emphasis on academic success as their strategy of cultivated parenting, while working-class Malay mothers have found it difficult to state as such without being negatively sanctioned by society. Against this racialized class structure, working-class Malay mothers' practices of consumption will always be marked as irresponsible and careless, because they do not have adequate capitals, like their middle-class counterparts, to demonstrate otherwise.

5.9 Conclusion

One of the central concerns in gay and lesbian scholarship in the US is in asking whether same-sex parents are transforming hetero-patriarchal institutions of family or mainstreaming their queer identities to gain access to heterosexual privileges. Halberstam (2005), for instance, critiques the politics of respectability among lesbian mothers and cautions scholars to be critical of homonormativity evidenced in the queer normalization of middle-class nuclear tropes.

Responding to the concerns above, the most challenging aspect of this chapter is to encapsulate how matrices of heteronormative domination and privilege are embodied in Singapore. Although all mothers and butch fathers featured in this chapter are viewed by the state and society as "deviant" mothers, their narratives indicate that social exclusions are differentially experienced among them. In this regard, Chinese lesbian co-mothers feel the oppression of their sexuality, but they exercise the domination of race and class. Although working-class Malay single mothers exercise the domination of being heterosexual, they feel the oppression of both class and race. Butch fathers exercise the domination of being masculine, but they also feel the oppression of being female-bodied. This brief summation of intersecting privileges reinforces my argument that heteronormative power is not just a binary narrative of heterosexuality versus homosexuality, but by extension, strategies of identification cannot simply be reduced to the assimilationist/resistance binary.

Intimate narratives of mother/fatherhood exemplify mechanisms of stratified reproduction (Colen, 1986), where one's value and competence as a mother is significantly differentiated based on structural inequalities of gender, race and class. I found that participants deploy cultural resources offered by the state and society's norms of motherhood to enact and

achieve meaningful goals that they find necessary to their self-determination and family survival. This pursuit of self-determination is evidenced in participants' disidentifications with heteronormativity and compulsory maternity, which is also mediated by their membership in different ethnic, socio-economic class and gender paradigms. In these regard, their diverse narratives disrupt the biocentrism and cultural competencies of motherhood as natural, fixed and monolithic.

Where articulated, mothers' politics and performance of respectability, despite their emulation of middle-class tropes and compulsory heterosexuality, actually demonstrate a reassembly and/or displacement of normative categories when reconstituted into their queer/object bodies and practices. The enactment of respectability politics, in passing as 'normal', reveals contexts of which these performances are necessary and, more importantly, the signifiers of normal to 'good' motherhood. For participants, normalcy encompasses varied desires of passing as non-sexual, middle-class, non-Malay, successful and functional. These intimate projections, when considered together, create a rich narrative that explicates not so much 'the end of normal' but a resignification of family norms that Chinese and Malay mothers as well as butch fathers have found to be deeply meaningful to their everyday lives.

CHAPTER 6. EGALITARIANISM, FAMILY POWER AND GENDERED DOMESTICITIES

6.1 Distribution of Power at Home

In this chapter, I examine the division of labor in same-sex households to demonstrate the significance of class relations between partners and other family members, and the ways in which they legitimize one's position in the family. I draw upon Acker (2006) who argues that the political economic perspectives of housework tend to focus on women's unpaid work in caregiving, but ignore the class relationship between women's productive (paid) and reproductive (unpaid) labor within households. To link complexities between household and economy, I deploy Julie Nelson's (1993) concept of economic activity as "processes of provisioning, providing what is socially defined as necessary to sustain life and ensure survival" (cited in Acker, 2006: 8). I find Nelson's concept useful to the discussions in this chapter because it challenges androcentric notions of the capitalist economy that exclude women's processes of providing for and sustaining home embedded within larger socio-economic structures (see also Moghadam, 2000).

My discussion is also bolstered by Kessler-Harris's suggestion that class should be "defined as an outgrowth of a broader system of production that includes family, home and community" where wage work and the market economy exists only as a fragment of one's life activity (1993: 199). Taking these points into consideration, any discussion of division of household labor and power should include an analysis of class relations and inequalities of members in single or dual female-headed households.

I explore the following questions: How are class and/or gender relations reproduced in same-sex female-headed households? What kinds of cultural models do participants draw upon in the distribution of domestic labor? Who has power, and how is power organized in these households? Relating to the previous chapter, how an individual configures their gender and sexual subjectivities provides insight into the management of household chores, allowing for critical analysis of gendered power relations among same-sex couples and/or their households. In

this chapter, I look at how domestic tasks are allocated within these households to examine the relationship between distribution of household tasks, perceived gender identification, and the ways in which these domestic practices reproduce power in terms of family norms, especially those that may circumscribe forms of vulnerability for particular individuals. Further, my discussion also attempts a rethinking of domestic power in terms of interpersonal influence, rather than power based on personal characteristics acquired through conventional economic modes of production.

My analysis of power is informed by Kranichfeld's (1987) concept of family power, which deconstructs the androcentric models of power based on men as provider. She offers a corrective by focusing on how power is generated through the accumulation of skills based on interpersonal relationships *within* the family (reproductive labor/unpaid work), rather than power generated by the acquisition of skills, resources and status in the market economy (productive labor/paid work). Significantly, she argues that household management in terms of parent-child relationships makes for a conceptualization of power that is more significant and complex. Accordingly, she argues that family power operates based on influence, that is, the capacity of individual members to enact change in behavior, thought and affect of other family members. Viewed in this manner, power is not something that is derived through coercion, but rather seen in terms of a capacity of influence, wielded to the detriment, or used to promote the well-being, of others in the family. The concept of family power is helpful in explaining why a partner's financial power does not translate to having actual power in some same-sex families. By identifying these complexities, my research focuses on the significance of interpersonal relationships, and how partners derive influence within their same-sex households.

In Singapore, Suratman (2011) argues that the state's gendered familial discourses have created a "supermom" effect where women are expected to excel in both their work and a "second shift" at home (Hochschild, 1989). In her research on Malay households, Suratman notes that working Malay wives and mothers are the ones who decide and delegate who performs which tasks at home. In this regard, Malay women's notions of women's and men's work matter in defining what their husbands can or cannot do. Suratman argues that maternal gatekeeping inhibits Malay men's household involvement, which could have resulted in a more equal household division of labor.

Additionally, strong government initiatives, through enhancing access to childcare facilities and the importation of female domestic workers to assist in the caregiving of children for working mothers highlights the state's agenda toward the "de-housewifization" of women in

Singapore (Ochiai et.al, 2009). The maternal influence and competence of Malay wives and mothers reinforces Kranichfeld's concept of family power where, in this context, having more household roles and chores does not mean one is lacking power at home. Further, as I have discussed in the previous chapter, lesbians who choose to work-from-home complicate practices of de-housewifization. In this regard, does the supermom effect engender a "re-housewifization" in Singapore? Or could it be the case where some same-sex families have not completely departed from traditional models of housewifization?

Studies on Malay households in Singapore offer a different interpretation of household division of labor and care-work in comparison to generalized studies that assume the universality of middle-class Chinese family practices. Ochiai et.al. (2008), for example, states that "Singaporean women" no longer view it as their task to prepare meals for their family. In contrast, Jamil (2009) uncovered the constructions of the "ideal Malay woman" in local Malay newspapers from 1970s to 2009 that continue to remind Malay women of their "important duty" to "organize the household effectively".

In another study of Malay dual-income households in Singapore, Suratman (2011) continues to find existing cultural perceptions of women as caregivers and men as breadwinners among her middle-class participants that correspond to the state's gendered discourses. Middle-class Malay wives continue to view the preparation of meals and caring for children as their responsibility, even in instances when these tasks have been outsourced to grandmothers, aunts or live-in domestic helpers. When Malay fathers do help out in performing household tasks, they do so as "helpers" taking instructions from their wives. In this chapter, I extend Suratman's discussion further by examining the implication of gendered and/or class distinctions in household dynamics of dominant caregiver/helper roles among same-sex couples across households.

Since most of the studies on households in Singapore tend to focus on heterosexual middle-class nuclear families, I extend the scholarship on household practices in Singapore by looking at how power is distributed along the legal and biological status that partners share with the children in the household, and its relationship to ethnicity and class in same-sex families. Further, by offering comparisons in terms of Malay and Chinese single-mother and same-sex households, I intend to explore further the kinds of factors that reproduce particular practices of family power within female same-sex households. How is family power manifested through the kinds of roles and household responsibilities that single mothers and female same-sex partners take up in their homes? While Colen's (1995) analysis of stratified reproduction tends to

approach inequalities of caregiving and raising children at a macro-structural level, my chapter seeks to locate intersectional inequalities through interpersonal interactions within particular households. I posit that household dynamics between female same-sex partners further nuance the complexities of stratified reproduction, differentiating categories of partners and other kin members which acquire family autonomy and authority over others.

While there has not been prior academic research on same-sex family households in Singapore, research pertaining to lesbian families and motherhood in the US shows that lesbian parent couples have high levels of commitment to egalitarianism within the household—as seen through the sharing of paid-work, housework and childcare (Biblarz and Savci, 2010; Moore, 2011). However, given that studies of US lesbian families are disproportionately middle-class, white, and highly-educated (Lewin, 2009; Moore, 2011; Weston, 1991), Moore's (2011) research demonstrates that differences in meanings of egalitarianism among black lesbian same-sex families differ from white middle-class lesbian families. Moore observes that the former tends to emphasize the importance of financial independence, being employed in the labor force, and being co-providers over equal shares of housework and childcare. Black lesbian birth mothers do more housework and childcare, and in doing so are perceived to have greater responsibility and power in decision-making on issues involving the children. In this chapter, I am more interested in analyzing practical meanings of egalitarianism or equity as they are defined and assembled by same-sex partners across households, rather than taking pre-theoretical assumptions of egalitarianism as a given.

Additionally, another critique that I have toward queer analysis of same-sex domestic labor is the focus on two-parent cohabitating families that ignores the intra-diversity of family structures of same-sex families beyond marital arrangements. Taking into account the common existence of intergenerational kinship networks in Singapore households (Ochiai, 2009)¹, my research extends the literature on same-sex households in the West by looking at intergenerational household divisions of labor between same-sex partners, single mothers, children and elderly parents who contribute to domestic chores. In doing so, I offer a corrective that takes into account contributions of elderly kin, as well as children, in sustaining households. How are family power and domestic responsibilities distributed within these single-parent

¹ Similar to other East Asian urban households, Ochiai (2009)'s study highlights how parents in Singapore are embedded in a large network of relatives who share caregiving roles toward children. Those who do not have care network outsource their care to state provisions of care such as through hiring domestic workers and sending children to childcare centers. Despite formal forms of state-endorsed care, mothers and grandmothers are still regarded as preferred caregivers of children (Ochiai, 2009).

households? How do non-cohabitating, and partners who see themselves as family, divide household responsibilities when they do not live together?

For the purpose of this chapter, I segment my analysis on division of labor and power relations according to same-sex family types and household arrangements. From the participants' profiles, I noted three distinct analytical units of residential arrangements. First, I look at cohabitating lesbian-mothers' households and compare it to cohabitating heterogendered households. Second, I examine non-resident partners' households, and finally queer single-parent households. The themes that I will be exploring include distribution of family power and household labor, factors that contribute to egalitarian or unequal households, balancing multiple caregiving roles, outsourcing of caregiving and dependency on natal-kin networks and sites of household conflict.

6.2 Practical Egalitarianism in Middle-Class Lesbian Households

Same-sex couples in lesbian-led households espouse principles of egalitarianism during our interactions. In this section, I draw upon case studies of three different middle-class lesbians to demonstrate how practical enactments of household equality differ among same-sex families' class positions. In these middle-class lesbian-led households, partners share similar ideals about gender, where they see masculinity and femininity as dynamic and fluid social constructs to be contested and appropriated. Thus, if partners are masculine, feminine, or androgynously presented, they tend to see their gendered embodiment as an aesthetic style rather than a reflection of a natural and essentialized sense of self. Is gender significant in terms of partners' allocation of domestic labor? How does family power manifest in egalitarian households?

Two of the households comprise Chinese co-lesbian mothers, Irene and Olivia, and Weiling and Muk Yin. The third household is inter-racial, where Iris is Malay Muslim while Elisa has German-Chinese heritage. In all three of these households, partners reside together and earn relatively similar incomes or belong to the same socio-economic class. Both partners have at least a Bachelor's degree and their mutual social networks are predominantly queer (lesbian, gay, bisexual). Partners in these households are cosmopolitan citizens: Weiling and Muk Yin are actively connected to the queer scene in London, having resided there for seven years before choosing to return to Singapore. Olivia's mother and brother are naturalized US citizens while Olivia, who holds an Indonesian citizenship, has close relatives living in Jakarta. Irene, while Singaporean, had received a job offer for a software engineering firm in the US and the couple

was considering relocating to the US with their daughter Zoey by the end of 2016. Iris will be pursuing graduate studies in Canada by August 2016, and Elisa will follow her, where they hope to get married and hopefully raise their future children in Canada.

6.2.1 Equal Distribution of Labor: Competency, Efficiency and Shared Responsibilities

In the first case-study, Weiling and Muk Yin complicate the distinction between domestic and economic labor as work-from-home mothers. Both partners are involved in managing Weiling's family organic food business from home. However, Weiling is assigned more hours toward the children because Muk Yin has more responsibilities in dealing with the accounts and logistical operations of their business. In their household thus, domestic division of labor is allocated based on who has less responsibilities in managing their home business, rather than sharing paid-work and childcare, while equality is derived through partners' contributions in ensuring household efficiency.

Weiling and Muk Yin demonstrate their egalitarian maternal roles by taking turns to get pregnant with their two boys Liam and Jake. Despite both partners being birth mothers, Weiling devotes more hours to caring for both sons Liam and Jake, even when their firstborn, Liam, was the only child and is Muk Yin's biological son. With the arrival of their second-born, Weiling had to spend more time with two children since she was breastfeeding Jake. Given the consistency in childcare, it is evident that Weiling occupies the more domestic role compared to Muk Yin, who executes and oversees their home business operations. However, they maintain equal parental authority over the children regardless of birth-mother status and the amount of time spent on childcare.

The couple stresses equality in their relationship even with the unequal amount of hours to childcare and home business distributed between them. In this regard, they view their separate contributions as equal in terms of their necessity to maintaining the overall efficiency of their household. Muk Yin's greater time expenditure on their business, for instance, is essential to the nurturing and well-being of their family because it enables both mothers to be at home with the children. Muk Yin makes the decisions about the distribution of domestic chores and responsibilities in the house and the organization of their business. However, Weiling claims that the allocation of tasks takes into account each other's competencies, based on "who finds what easy" or who would do a "less shit job" of accomplishing a task. For example, Muk Yin cleans the toilets and mops the floor because she feels that she does it better than her wife. Weiling deals

with parent-teacher relations because she finds the task easier compared to Muk Yin. They would also frequently eat out so no one partner has to devote extra time to prepare and clean up after meals, especially since affordable food options are easily available where they live.

In their household, egalitarian principles operate in terms of regarding their respective contributions as non-hierarchical, that is, no one partner's role is more important than the other. Although Muk Yin, the decision-maker, seems to have greater family power in influencing who does what at home and at work, Weiling explains that there is always room for negotiation and that they are quite flexible in taking turns and taking the initiative to switch roles if one of them is not able to perform their assigned tasks. Moreover, Weiling defers to Muk Yin because the latter is better at organizing and managing the household. Each of their contributions, whether in efficiently managing the business or children, cannot exist without the other. Weiling would not be able to devote time to the children if she had to put in equal working hours, while Muk Yin would not be able to focus on their business if she had to devote equal hours to caregiving. Their case-study demonstrates the distribution of tasks both in business and caregiving, which, in their case, can be regarded as equally domestic and economic at the same time. Egalitarianism is achieved through balancing each other's competencies and taking primary and individual ownership of shared responsibilities to create an efficient household.

The second case study features a dual-income household that will shift into a single-income household when one of them finishes graduate school. Whilst in Singapore, Iris and Elisa allocate domestic responsibilities based on individual preference while egalitarianism is defined in terms of equal distribution of time taken to complete domestic chores. Elisa does the cooking because she enjoys it, and Iris contributes by doing dishes and cleaning the rest of the house. If there are chores that they are impartial to, they will perform it together, such as doing laundry. Elisa is more proactive with their cats, so she sees to their feeding, although both of them tend to their cats together. Iris, on the other hand, is in charge of taking care of the maintenance of the house, including their urban garden in the corridor of their HDB flat.

After Iris completes her Master's and they move to Canada, Iris will assume the main breadwinner role because she has more professional experience and higher earning capacity in comparison to Elisa. Elisa would also devote more time to their future children. Their power dynamics would not shift significantly in a single-income household with children since the distribution of caregiving/breadwinner roles are allocated based on profession and personal preference rather than coercion. Elisa makes a better stay-at-home parent because her "maternal instincts are stronger", evidenced by her current disposition toward their pets. As a teacher, Elisa

feels her professional competence makes her “more motherly” than Iris because she has a better understanding of young children and their developmental milestones. They would also support each other—Elisa would take up part-time jobs to supplement the household income while Iris would also be the other caregiver for their children.

Iris and Elisa’s household demonstrates the allocation of caregiving and breadwinner roles based on notions of maternal and professional competencies. Iris, who identifies as an androgynous masculine woman, finds Elisa, who is feminine-presenting and more attentive to pets, better suited for nurturing their future children. While there is an obvious gendered division of labor pertaining to childcare and providing for the household, the couple claims that their gender roles are rather “versatile” and are based on what would be optimal and efficient. Elisa’s maternal competency is acquired through her skills as a teacher instead of being feminine-presenting. Similarly, Iris’s role as a provider is not determined through her masculine disposition; instead, it is based on economics—Iris’s professional qualifications enable them to secure better financial stability.

In the third household, Irene and Olivia hired a live-in domestic helper so they could spend quality family time with Zoey and increase efficiency in the day-to-day organization of their home. Olivia explained that they were both “very bad at housework” and when Zoey was using cloth diapers, they were too exhausted for daily laundry. Since the time spent on completing daily chores such as cleaning and cooking negates quality time with Zoey, outsourcing chores to a domestic helper, in “trading money for time” was viewed as an investment for their family. Before having a domestic helper, they allocated hours for chores “very equally”, but because they had different standards of cleanliness, they frequently argued whether the house was tidy or not. Olivia highlighted that Irene tends to be the messier partner and outsourcing chores to their domestic helper minimized these conflicts.

While the couple claims that they are rather egalitarian in their division of labor, I found that Olivia, who had the privilege to work from home, put in twice the childcare hours that Irene did, before their daughter was placed in school. This arrangement, however, was circumstantial, as Irene had to be physically present in the office for eight hours a day. They also felt that it was important to have at least one parent who could nurture Zoey closely in her early formative years, and Olivia as the breastfeeding mother was the obvious choice. Olivia’s preference of being with Zoey could be supported with Irene having a full-time wage.

For Irene and Olivia, egalitarianism means sharing decision-making power, with breadwinner/caregiver roles being interchangeable and a shared responsibility even though Olivia

earns more income while Irene spends significantly less time with Zoey. They counter potential inequalities by taking proactive roles. Irene, for instance, would immediately take over Olivia's caregiving duties the moment she reaches home from work. Irene would feed, read and play with Zoey before Zoey goes to bed and she would also perform the main caregiving role over the weekends when she's not working. Caregiving hours became equally distributed when Zoey entered full-day childcare and Olivia transitioned into full-time employment, because both Olivia and Irene would then spend equal hours with Zoey after work hours and during weekends.

In middle-class lesbian households, partners share decision-making processes. Even if one of them takes the lead in organizing and managing the household, she would have been the preferred choice between them. For the Chinese lesbian co-mothers, both partners are acknowledged to possess equal maternal authority and competencies, regardless of their biological status to the children and unequal caregiving hours. While caregiving is sometimes allocated based on preference and competency, it does not mean that the other partner is incompetent. Rather, allocation of caregiving is distributed based on noting equal competence, and then deciding who would be *more* efficient and proficient in achieving particular family goals, such who was better positioned to tend children's needs based on work schedules, disposition and feeding needs.

In these case studies, I found that egalitarianism is not only about dividing equal and tangible hours of household tasks or claiming exclusive domestic roles. Since their actual practices demonstrate otherwise, lesbian households define equality in terms of being *equally competent* in their respective roles and being flexible in accommodating partners' tasks and responsibilities when circumstances require them to do so. They are egalitarian in their committed desire to shoulder domestic burdens together. The allocation of household chores and careful deliberation in deciding who should be the primary caregiver or breadwinner takes into consideration each others' best interests in maintaining and sustaining their family. These considerations were not based on gendered notions of masculinity and femininity, but rather on their personal and professional acquisition of skills to accomplish these roles successfully.

6.2.2 Household Budgeting: Reducing Bureaucracy and Promoting Goodwill

In Singapore, because of a prevalent gendered discourse that positions men as household providers, female-headed households are viewed as economically vulnerable due to the notion of "missing men" or "absent fathers". When breadwinner roles have been typically associated with

having household power, housewives are seen as dependent on husbands' incomes. In dual-income or work-from-home lesbian households, the role of the provider tends to be similarly egalitarian because couples have similar incomes and earning capacities, as well as financial autonomy. Irene, for instance, states:

It's easier to be egalitarian when couples earn fairly close to each other, so there's even power dynamics. In another family where someone earns so much more, we enter into a situation where the one who earns more feels entitled to not have to do much housework.

In this section, I look at how same-sex partners manage their household budget and bank accounts to examine what they consider to be egalitarian in their relationship. In the first household, Olivia and Irene claim that they have an unconventional way of splitting their finances because they pay for different things unlike their married heterosexual friends who tend to share and pay for everything out of a joint account. Irene and Olivia's household expenditure amounts to S\$6000 per month. Out of this, Olivia takes care of their helper's salary, mortgage, Zoey's school fees, utility bills and a portion of groceries, while Irene pays for the remaining portion of groceries, Internet, phone bills, Zoey's swimming lessons, supplementary classes, miscellaneous needs, clothes and doctor's bills, and any random expenses that the couple requires, such as date nights and cab rides during family outings.

Olivia contributes more in terms of fixed expenses because she earns a higher income compared to Irene. They do not believe that equality means equal financial contributions to the household. Instead, they practice mutual reciprocity or "give and take" and refrain from monitoring transactions on a "running spreadsheet" because they find it distasteful and calculative.

Even though they demarcate different financial responsibilities, it functions as a "loose guideline instead of a defining blueprint". If in the event that one partner encounters difficulty in paying for her share, the other partner would willingly help her out. Olivia reiterates, "We don't care, as long as things that needs to be paid, get paid."

Olivia and Irene have found it more productive to maintain separate savings accounts instead of sharing a joint account. They were not as expedient in maintaining and replenishing funds in their shared joint account because it would always be depleted. According to Irene, having separate accounts works well because they are "both working equally hard and are not living off each other". They consider each other financially prudent and savvy enough to be trusted with saving for their family's future. Equality in the relationship is measured through

mutual reciprocity and interdependency, while the power balance would be unfavorable if one partner is reliant on the other. In other words, if both partners view each other as equally diligent, financially responsible and earning similar incomes, who pays for what and how much they can contribute becomes inconsequential. They trust each other to be financially competent, and in this regard, share equal family power and autonomy in managing household finances.

In the second household, Iris and Elisa pay separately for items in their household, while ensuring that the bills are split equally in their household. Although Iris earns more than Elisa, their house is under Iris's name, which means that all mortgage payments and renovation loans are kept under Iris's account, which they keep separate from their household budget. With Iris paying all their housing payments, other household bills can be divided equally, irrespective of the differences in their incomes. Iris pays for Internet and utility bills while Eli pays for stuff related to her motorbike, which she uses to chauffeur Iris to and from work. Each of their payments add up to the same amount. They do not have access to each other's personal savings and maintain that whatever monies spent on each other would be out of "goodwill" and not to be treated as a financial transaction or counted as part of their household budget. Since they are planning to migrate to Canada in mid-2016, they are saving independently of each other and will combine all their savings when it is time to move. While they do not share a joint account and maintain separate saving accounts, Iris explains that they operate on trust and full disclosure that "my money is her money and her money is mine too. It is always *our* money".

In the third household, Weiling and Muk Yin's financial practices differ from the first two households. Weiling explained that when they were cohabitating in London, they had started the habit of pooling all their resources into the "same pot" because it was expedient to do so. After moving back to Singapore, they continued sharing the same bank accounts because they did not see the need to alter the status quo. Since work and home are overlapping domains, Muk Yin handles all the financial transactions for their business, and also manages the couples' personal and household finances. Both work and personal bank accounts are shared and whatever money that goes into either one of those accounts belongs to the both of them. According to Weiling, "There are no separate pots. Isn't there enough bureaucracy in life?"

Unlike the previous two households, Muk Yin is the couples' financial manager at work and at home. Weiling, who does not enjoy calculating finances, identifies as a spendthrift and is relieved that Muk Yin is trustworthy and capable in making strategic decisions with regards to their business and household budget. During our interview, Weiling was not able to provide a detailed breakdown of their household expenditure compared to the partners in the other lesbian

households. She describes, “This is Muk Yin’s department. She handles all the finances.” I proceeded to ask if she felt vulnerable since Muk Yin is solely managing their finances and Weiling gave a confident reply, “Not at all. I trust her. I wouldn’t know what to do, really.”

In the event of an unfortunate divorce, the couple discussed that they would divide their assets equally because both of them have put equal effort into union, regardless of the amount of contribution to their “shared pot”. Weiling elaborates that she is “not too concerned with liquid assets” because she could always “earn the money again”. Since the distinction between home/business, unpaid/paid work are rather porous for their household, both partners share the same personal (household) income and bank accounts in the everyday operation of sustaining their family. Thus, their respective contributions as dominant caregiver and primary provider are seen as equal to each other. Their household practices challenge the primacy of the financial provider and decision maker as monopolizing family power. The interpersonal relationship that this couple has accumulated based on trust and mutual reliance demonstrates how power can be shared even when one partner’s access to financial resources may be unequal.

The ways in which the three households plan and allocate household budgets, share or maintain separate bank accounts and decide who manages their finances demonstrate an egalitarian organization of family power. Power in lesbian households is not determined based on conventional models of caregiver/breadwinner binary roles, even though “re-housewifization” was apparent in some of these households. Instead, power is distributed based on strong mutual co-operation and trust between both partners. Since both partners are equally educated and are able to bring in relatively similar incomes, their households operate on the basis of interdependency or co-dependency instead of partners being dependent on each other. In these households, mutual assurances that partners have access to each others’ savings and income and are responsible for sharing each others’ financial burdens reduce potential issues of vulnerability. Couples in these households ensure that their partners have an equal stake and autonomy in making decisions about how to spend or save their money. Their mutual co-operative and reciprocal strategies are reflected in the choice of words they use, for example, “give and take”, and giving to each other out of “goodwill”.

In these lesbian households, and as Irene has mentioned, vulnerability is inevitable when one partner feels exploited or when there is power imbalance based on high wage differentials between partners. However, based on their interpretations of fair redistribution or accumulation of monies, I observed a strong ideological support for equality as well as a commitment to overcome such threats. Since partners in all three households have similar socio-economic status and are

also highly mobile in the labor market, they do not view reliance toward their partner as a source of inequality or vulnerability. This dynamic facilitates their ability to regard each others' financial contributions to the household based on the notion of "sincerity" rather than a form of indebtedness or obligation.

6.3 Family Power and Insecurity in Heterogendered Cohabiting Malay Households

In this section, I explore how gender roles are inflected in the household practices of butch fathers and single mothers who are living together. In the two Malay Muslim working-class dual-income households that I will be looking at, wage differentials and education levels between butch fathers and their feminine partners are significant. Unlike the financial stability of middle-class lesbian households, the partners in cohabiting butch-feminine households experience periods of emotional and/or financial instability, which would impact household decisions pertaining to the management of finances. In addition, partners in these households are also hetero-gendered, meaning they identify strongly with being masculine and feminine, and view these aspects of their subjectivity as natural and fixed. In these households, butch fathers assume stepparent roles to their partner's children while birth mothers have full parental and legal rights to their children. However, unlike Chinese lesbian co-mothers, these Malay birth mothers do not accord butch fathers equal parental autonomy and authority in the household. If family power in the Malay Muslim community tends to cohere around norms that position men as authoritative figures in the household and women as efficient household managers, how do these norms feature in butch-feminine households?

6.3.1 Unstable Family Power

In the first household, I examine the gendered division of labor between Mona, a feminine-presenting divorced mother with two children, and Zai, her butch partner. Their domestic roles and power dynamics shift according to the conditions of their financial and relationship stability. Zai was living as Mona's housemate before they decided to become husband and wife and moved their entire family to live in a rented condominium together. During their courtship period, they had discussed on their household expectations and both of them mutually agreed that Zai, as Mona's husband, would also become a father-figure to Mona's children, Fitri (14) and Farin (6). Throughout the nine-years of their domestic partnership, Zai

had felt that as a husband and father, her responsibility was to “get money” to provide for their household.

The couple’s financial contributions were relatively equal while they were a dual-income household; Mona paid for rent and Zai was tasked to pay for everything else including children’s education, medical and miscellaneous needs. Their separate household expenses would, more or less, add up to the same amount. Although Mona brought home a higher disposable income, Zai was responsible for managing their finances because Mona hated dealing with numbers. Zai organized their budget for marketing, household maintenance needs, school, utility bills and entertainment. Domestic chores were divided equally based on personal competence. Zai did the sweeping and cleaning up after the household while Mona did the laundry and cooking. They also kept each other accountable, as Zai puts it adequately, “She made sure I gave her money for food in the kitchen, and I made sure she kept my clothes clean.”

The division of labor in Zai and Mona’s household was distributed based on gendered notions of competence. As the masculine husband and social father, Zai was the household’s “financial controller” as well as a “discipline master” to their children. Zai took on these roles because she was perceived to be more capable than Mona in organizing the household as well as nurturing and disciplining the children. More importantly, Zai associated her competence with that of a responsible man, whose job is to protect her family and satisfy the needs of everyone.

In the early years of their family life, Mona was still recovering from post-traumatic stress disorder after being nearly stabbed to death by her ex-husband. Her constant depression and anxiety made her ineffective in managing the day-to-day activities of their household as well as being a functional caregiver for her children. Mona struggled to be the disciplinarian and educator, roles that required consistent routines. Zai, who was more educated than Mona, coached the children in weaker subjects and monitored their homework. Further, Zai’s previous experience in helping to raise her 14 nieces and nephews increased her parental competence. As the children’s primary educator, she was also more involved in attending school functions and Parent-Teacher’ meetings.

Near the end of their relationship, they became a single-income household when Mona got retrenched. Their complementary household dynamic shifted into a prolonged provider-dependent relationship due to Mona’s unemployment. Their credit card debts accumulated as they had difficulties adjusting their lifestyle to a single-income household. Zai had found it difficult to control Mona’s spendthrift habits because she wanted Mona to be happy and minimize disruption to their family’s harmony. She found herself struggling to keep afloat with their finances but did

not feel comfortable enough to let Mona know about their dire situation as she was afraid Mona would view her as incapable. During this period, Zai shouldered all the responsibilities of being primary breadwinner, caregiver and housekeeper because Mona's depression had exacerbated into a debilitating condition. Desperate to put food on the table, Zai moonlighted in sex work, charging \$300 for oral sex to random men. Their financial instability became the catalyst to their separation in 2010, when Mona also made the decision to accept her family's arranged marriage to a Malay Muslim male divorcee with two children.

Among black lesbian stepfamilies, Moore (2011) found that partners who manage money matters have greater family power. These tend to be biological mothers who also prefer to have autonomy in the care of their children. As a stepfamily household, Zai and Mona's household practices seem to demonstrate the possibilities of non-birth parents having greater family power within their household. Although they claimed to split responsibilities equally, Zai had greater responsibilities in organizing the finances, as well as disciplining and educating the children. These key decision-making roles should accord Zai greater family power than Mona, despite not being the birth mother.

Since the acquisition of family power is based on the skills that individuals possess to influence and enhance interpersonal relationships within the family, it is also sensitive to particular changes in the household. Initially, Farin did not have problems having same-sex parents, but when she entered high school, she was bullied by friends who constantly harassed her for having two mothers. Farin confided her upset feelings to Mona's parents who used it to end Zai and Mona's relationship by claiming that their Farin needed a "proper" father figure and the same-sex relationship was damaging her emotional well-being. Mona's parents arranged for Mona to be married to a man they knew. Mona accepted the arranged proposal and started turning her children against Zai following her decision to marry. Zai was devastated that after nine years of building a home with Mona and being an involved parent, Mona did not accord her visitation rights to their children. Zai became suicidal as a result, describing the loss of her children, and Farin's betrayal, as one of the most painful experiences she had encountered.

Kranichfeld (1987) argues that family power operates based on one's capacity to influence other family members' dispositions through existing interpersonal dynamics. When Mona lost her job and the family had to rely on Zai, their dynamic shifted from an egalitarian interdependent arrangement to an unequal form of dependency. While Zai may seem to have held family power in making executive decisions and having to take the lead in the household, this power is derived based on coercive circumstances; that is, Zai had no choice but to absorb all

responsibilities. Based on this dynamic, it is apparent that Mona's incapacity also reveals her influence in their household. Zai's acquisition of family power was only productive insofar as Mona functioned as an equal and capable partner. Zai was destabilized from power when Mona ended their domestic partnership, and with the support and approval of her parents and siblings, also helped to evict Zai from their condominium and terminated Zai's contact with their children.

In this situation, family power, or one's ability to influence household decisions, is also based on hierarchical interpersonal relationships with external kin members. Mona leveraged on her parents' authority as elder kin to dispossess Zai's family power, knowing that these biological relations accorded her greater power in re-establishing her autonomy and influence in her household, since her marital union with Zai was legally and culturally non-existent. Zai lost family authority and legitimacy the moment Mona had the approval of her own biological family members to marry a man.

The instability of family power within same-sex step-parent families is reinforced by larger socio-legal structures in Singapore. In Singapore, there is a lack of legislation on the rights and responsibilities of stepparents. In the event of a divorce, the stepparent does not have joint custody or visitation rights even if they had fully supported the family and played an active parental role in lives of children (see Tan-Jacob, 2006). This law positions stepfamilies as an incomplete social institution compared to heterosexual nuclear families, where legal rights and child custody are accorded in the interests of children involved, as well as recognizing both spouses' roles as parents.

The absence of cultural and legal recognition for butch fathers accentuates the instability and insecurity of the family influence they have cultivated. Prior to their separation, Zai's leadership and competence accorded her authority as the effective head-of-the-household. However, without any legal/biological connections to the children, her authority was easily undermined by Mona's natal kin who effaced her position as the husband and father. In this regard, Zai's authority and family power is subordinate to legal and biological structures of kinship. Mona, as the legal birth mother, could legitimize her desire to have a 'proper' father for Farin, without being accountable for any consequences of the loss of domestic partnership she had shared with Zai. Based on their story, analyses of family power need to also take into account partners' access to equal rights and privileges as a member of a household, the absence of which reveals negative family power, which may not always be constructive or wielded to ensure the well-being of all members of the family.

6.3.2 Balancing Independence and Maternal Authority

In Zara and Han's intergenerational household, domestic responsibilities and labor are allocated based on the demands of their work schedules. Their division of labor is unequal because one partner works long hours a week, which results in domestic conflicts and struggles for family power and authority. Zara, a feminine-presenting divorced mother of two children, describes that during peak business periods, she is expected to work for twelve and eight hours daily during weekdays and weekends respectively. Peak periods usually last for nine consecutive months, leaving Zara almost no time to fulfill domestic chores such as caregiving, educating the children, providing meals and housekeeping. These duties are distributed between Han, her butch partner, and Zara's mother, who lives with them in their rented two-bedroom apartment. Zara's mother would do the groceries, prepare meals, laundry and housekeeping and ferry the children, Iman and Mika, to and from school. Han would teach the children daily when she comes home from work and take them out during the weekends and school holidays.

Zara expresses the loss of family power and maternal authority because her contribution in raising the children, cooking and housekeeping—roles which have been culturally understood to be a mother's primary domestic role—are negligible. She feels guilty that she has been unable to contribute to the household and was often reprimanded for being a "bad mother" by her own mother. To reduce her mother's heavy load in caregiving and housekeeping, Zara requested her mother to focus on cooking and caring for children while Zara herself would take care of the housekeeping when she comes home from work. Yet, Zara claims that her mother prefers to handle everything herself, so "she can be the big boss of the house". Zara's mother acquired family power as an influential and authoritative figure to the children as their grandmother and through her roles in managing household chores and being the primary caregiver. Zara states, "I feel invisible as a mother. I might as well not be one since my mother controls everything in the household including my kids and I." She feels demoralized that her children share a close relationship with their grandmother and Han instead of her, as their birth mother.

While studies on household dynamics have highlighted how mothers acquire family power through their influence as a household manager and interpersonal relationships with her partner and children (Suratman, 2011; Moore, 2011), Zara's narrative reveals how women's family power becomes a site of conflict and tension between two maternal figures, a mother and a grandmother. Zara shared that her mother would admonish her for being neglectful while at the

same time controlling her access toward her own children and undermining her parental authority. She recalls:

There were times when I had planned to leave early from work so I could take the children out. I would inform my mother that I will be home early, and tell my son that we might go out. But when I arrive home, I'd get very upset that my mother left the house with the children without even informing me.

Based on these experiences, Zara concludes that her mother desires to take over responsibilities because this secures her authority and influence over the children. She points out that her daughter, Iman, refers to her grandmother as “mama”; her mother would also “poison” the children by telling them that their mother is “useless”. In addition, Zara feels that Han has more influence and authority with the children as the kids’ educator since Zara’s mother, who is semi-illiterate, is not able to teach.

Zara’s narrative demonstrates the significance of senior women in the distribution of family power. Because of her seniority and maternal authority, Zara’s mother was, at some points, able to influence her children and partner in turning against Zara. She describes, how in the initial stages of her relationship with Han, her mother would speak ill of her while also reminding the children that Zara loved Han more than them. Zara’s dependence on her mother as a primary caregiver advanced her mother’s family power but at the expense of Zara losing her biological parental authority.

Competing power hierarchies exist in Zara and Han’s intergenerational household because there was a lot of mistrust between Zara, Han and Zara’s mother. Zara claims that her mother is insecure that she would lose her position as the children’s primary caregiver because Han was frequently at home, and unlike other men, Han was very involved in raising the children as a stepfather-figure. Han, on the other hand, is insecure about being exploited because she is contributing physically, emotionally and financially to the household without any legal status as a married partner or cultural rewards from caregiving that a legally-married stepfather would have. Meanwhile, Zara feels that she is losing her position as the children’s biological mother because a demanding work schedule makes it difficult for her to be physically and emotionally present with her children. There is struggle for family power because the three adults feel threatened about their status in the household.

Zara realized that the only way for her to reclaim her maternal authority was to quit her job to be a stay-at-home mother. While this would significantly reduce her dependence on her mother and allow her to be closer to her children and her partner, she was worried about losing her autonomy and financial independence as a working mother and a co-provider for the

household. She views financial provision as a form of control over her autonomy and wanted to avoid setting up a provider-dependent power imbalance between Han and her.

When we conducted the interview in 2014, Han was earning three times Zara's basic pay and was contributing much more to their household expenses. Han settled Zara's unpaid bills and loans as well as household and personal items for their entire family, despite Zara's protests. Zara did not like that Han felt entitled to make demands of her time and attention and also control her personal expenses, simply because Han was managing their household expenses. Zara would emphasize that her family was surviving decently before Han came along, which negates Han's contributions in settling her unpaid bills and debts that were already accumulated before they met. Zara's reiteration indicates a desire to counter a potentially vulnerable and dependent position through her insistence that she could survive without Han's help, even though this may only have been partially accurate.

Gender roles from previous marital and relationship experiences also inform how partners manage household finances in their current relationship. Despite sharing a joint account, Zara prefers to save separately because she has had trust issues ever since her ex-husband pocketed all her savings from their joint account. Ironically, she gives Han complete access to her bank accounts to manage her online banking transactions because she is "too lazy to deal with the computer". Han is more efficient and competent in dealing with online banking technology, such as setting up billing accounts and transferring rental transactions, while Zara, who is not IT-literate, does not have access to a personal computer.

Zara reasons that financial transparency is fundamental to building trust in a relationship but claims that she has no idea how much Han has in her bank account and justifies her lack of knowledge by saying:

It's very typical of men, to be secretive about their finances. I don't ask because my husband used to get angry if I asked him about money so I have learned not to ask. If Han thinks it's important for me to know, he should have the initiative to tell me. I am not going to push for it.

Zara rationalizes that money in her personal account would be solely hers and she wants to avoid fighting over who gets how much in the joint account, in the event that their relationship does not work out. More importantly, Zara does not want to be stereotyped as the "downtrodden" single mother who "leeches" off of her partner for money.

However, the couple came to a mutual agreement that by 2017, Zara would leave her job and be a stay-at-home mother, while Han becomes the sole-breadwinner for their household. To mitigate being completely dependent on Han, Zara is planning to go for computer courses to

upgrade her professional skills so she can set up an online image-consultant business from home. In addition, she is paying half of the total cost of their new apartment, which is also under her name. These contributions make her feel that she has equal stake in their household, where she has more time to be a wife and mother, and where Han can focus on being the main provider. She considers herself rather traditional in terms of gender roles because she finds this important to the overall function of her family. Further, quitting her job allows her to re-establish her maternal authority within the household which, when wrested from her mother, would also legitimize Han's paternal status and authority as the household's main provider.

To mitigate dependence on Zara's mother as a caregiver, and re-establish the couple's family power in their household, Zara suggested that Han pays her mother a monthly allowance as a "token of appreciation". According to Zara, her mother is "money-minded" and their monthly payments would place her mother into a receiver role where Han, and, by extension, Zara would be contributing to her mother's welfare and redistributing the monopoly of caregiver role and family power to the couple. Zara is willing to sacrifice her financial independence because she views having family power through her relationship with children as more important.

Zara and Han's impending household dynamic highlights complementary-egalitarian household practices based on traditional gendered division of labor. Zara claims that she prefers the traditional model of woman/housewife-man/breadwinner rather than an egalitarian model where roles and responsibilities are divided equally. As the biological mother, Zara thinks it is only fair that she should be the primary caregiver while caregiving should be optional for Han, who, as a man, and more importantly, without legal and cultural parental status, can focus on her career and be a stable provider. Zara does not want to burden Han with additional domestic roles on top of juggling a career.

When there is a wide disparity in terms of partners' competencies, familial responsibilities are allocated based on traditional gender divisions of labor, determined through partners' class and economic advantage. Despite enacting traditional gender roles, their future household strategy resembles a form of "rehousewifization". Traditional ideas of being a housewife are now enhanced with equitable household decision-making power instead of a monopoly of household power by the breadwinner. At the same time, the "housewife", in Zara's case, is also tasked with furthering her personal competencies so she can eventually find paid-work that allows her the flexibility to work from home and supplement the household income. In their situation, Zara feels that her maternal authority complements Han's economic advantage as a higher wage earner.

A partner's authority in managing household finances does not translate into total power over the household. Rather, power differentials around finance and household management, while distinctively complementary, also takes into account the birth mother's status as the "real" mother. The dynamic they have is not interdependent like Chinese lesbian couples. Rather, equity for Zara and Han is achieved through mutual co-dependency. Han's status as a parent is dependent on her relationship with Zara and the children, while Zara's economic stability is dependent on Han's relationship to her as a husband.

In the two butch-feminine households, partners adhere to a complementary-egalitarian model where household labor is distributed based on gendered notions of competence in accomplishing particular household responsibilities. Their distribution of labor challenges dominant gender models observed in dual-income heterosexual Malay Muslim households where wives are "household managers" and men as "helper husbands" (Suratman, 2011). Butch fathers are pro-active about being an involved parent and view it as their equal responsibility to raise their partners' children instead of only 'helping'. In both the households, butch fathers were seen as equally if not more competent in both realms of childcare, organizing household duties as well as providing for the family. Given butch fathers' versatility in switching between stereotypically masculine and feminine domestic tasks, household responsibilities are distributed based on what their feminine partners are not able to do.

Factors such as mental and financial stability, employment conditions, legal parental rights and status, influential power of biological kin relations and maternal hierarchies affect the distribution of power in cohabitating butch-femme households. Butch fathers acquire power in the family through conventional masculine roles as the provider and protector of the feminine partner and her children. Ultimately, the birth mother holds influence and authority in matters pertaining to children, and by extension, their shared household, regardless of the substantial contribution and responsibilities of their masculine partner. Butch fathers' authority in the family as the social father and husband comes without traditional male privilege as the head-of-the-household. Their legitimacy and influence are non-secure forms of family power, due to the lack of legal and social status as a stepfather.

Gendered power relations within cohabitating butch-feminine households are also affected by larger natal kin relations. Birth mothers can displace butch fathers' power by securing senior-maternal and familial authority through their relationships with biological family members. Without legal and social reinforcements, biological kinship relations take precedence

over “chosen” partners and emphasize butch fathers’ lack and loss of family power in the same-sex household.

6.4 Configurations of Gender and Power in Malay Households

I compare gendered relations of power between two working-class Malay Muslim single-parent households. The first household centers around a biological butch father Boi and her mother who is the primary caregiver of her son, Rizqi. The second household features Bad, a single-mother, who had recently come out as “lesbian” to her 19-year old son, and whose narrative highlights differential treatment of family power and status as a married woman, a divorced daughter and a lesbian mother. By comparing their narratives, I intend to explore how gender norms are inflected in their household division of labor with other kin members and how members in these households acquire or dispossess family power through their domestic practices.

6.4.1 Re-Traditionalizing Gender Models Through Co-Operative Maternal Hierarchies

Boi is proud to have raised her 12-year old son, Rizqi, with the help of her mother, who is a widowed single-mother. Living as a working-poor single parent has been a struggle, especially in trying to provide and nurture Rizqi and ensure financial stability for their family. In the earlier days when Rizqi was born, Boi was living in her mother’s L-shaped one-bedroom rental unit (*Rumah L*). With a pooled income of only S\$1200 a month, they were not eligible for home ownership and had to remain in their subsidized rental flat. The Housing and Development Board (HDB) charged them a rental unit that was relatively affordable at S\$100 a month. Growing up, Boi did not find any issues with a neighborhood that was rife with drug and gang problems, but as a parent, she did not want her son to grow in an undesirable neighborhood. She was worried that her son might perceive dangerous conditions of their estate as “normal” and did not want her son to be like her, especially with her history of drug use and gang affiliations.

According to the Singapore state’s housing rules (HDB), as an unwed mother under 35, Boi could only purchase a flat with her mother as a co-owner, because the state does not recognize unwed mothers and their child as a “proper” household nucleus. Boi did not mind living with her mother because she saw it as her responsibility as the only child to provide shelter for her mother. Moreover, she knows that her mother, who was also working as a janitor, could

help take care of Rizqi. For six years since Rizqi was born, Boi worked multiple jobs so she could have enough to move out of their rental flat and save for their new home in hopes of providing a better future for Rizqi.

In Boi's single-parent intergenerational household, household division of labor was distributed based on gendered norms as well as a member's ability to contribute to the family income. Boi sees herself as a son and father, and felt that it was her duty to be the sole breadwinner for her family. Her mother decided to quit her job to be Rizqi's primary caregiver. Although her mother's monthly income (S\$600) would have made a significant contribution to the household, they would have had to spend more money placing Rizqi in infant or childcare since there was no one else they could rely on. Prior to 2013, government childcare subsidies extended only to married working mothers and excluded unwed single mothers. In 2001, Rizqi was not entitled to any subsidized childcare because of his status as an illegitimate child. Even at the cheapest center, Boi would have to pay at least S\$600 a month, and even if they could afford it with her mother's income, the nearest childcare was still a few bus stops away. As both of them worked shifts and had irregular work schedules, Boi's mother quitting her job was more viable than sending Rizqi to childcare.

Presently, Boi's caregiving role is limited to sending her son to school if she has afternoon shifts. After a night shift, she would prepare his lunch and wait for him to come home. She spends her off days going for skills upgrading, an investment, which eventually led to her promotion as Security Supervisor. She plays soccer with her son and buys him food and toys. Boi does not do any housework, because her mother, whom she calls "lady boss" prefers to do it since Boi does not do the job well. Now that Rizqi is 12 and can take care of himself, her mother needed to feel useful around the house.

Currently, her mother works part-time for her own savings. Boi's mother refuses to accept payment for raising Rizqi because she sees children as *rezeki* or blessings from God. Monetary compensation would be an insult to her sincerity (*ikhlas*) and love in nurturing her grandson. In return, Boi claims that there is an unspoken expectation that Boi and Rizqi would continue providing for her mother and care for her in her elderly years.

The gender division of labor, cultivated through a cultural framework of *ikhlas*/sincerity, gender complementarity (male as provider, female as caregiver), filial piety and children as *rezeki*/blessings, has shaped Boi's family harmony and stability. Although this household is intergenerational and co-maternal, there is an absence of competing maternal hierarchies based on seniority and economic advantage. Household labor is divided based on on gendered notions of

masculinity and femininity, where gendered responsibilities are seen as mutually reciprocal instead of hierarchical. Unlike other working single mothers whose mothers have chastised them for not being a “good mother” due to work commitments, Boi’s mother did not accord Boi similar expectations in raising Rizqi. Boi’s mother has always regarded Boi as a son instead of a daughter, thus her gendered expectations align with dominant models of breadwinner sons/fathers and heads-of-the-household, instead of a radical perspective of maternal norms.

Boi acquires family power as the birth mother and the sole-breadwinner. She has full authority in terms of the finances of their household and in decisions pertaining to Rizqi. On the other hand, her mother manages and organizes the domestic responsibilities in their house and engages in a form of “maternal gatekeeping” (Suratman, 2011) where she regards the housekeeping as her domain.

Boi’s mother derives family power because she occupies kinship seniority as a mother and grandmother. By not accepting compensation for her household contribution, she creates a relationship based on voluntary will where she hopes that her sincere efforts will influence Boi and Rizqi to care for her in the future. Her acquisition of power is therefore based on influence through a mutual and co-operative maternal relationship with Boi and Rizqi. Boi’s access to family power is also generated through her mother’s validation of her role as a responsible provider and future caregiver.

Boi was not interested in having partners as co-parents to avoid introducing instability and domestic conflict in her household. She understands that being poor means that any minor changes or disruptions to her household would make them economically vulnerable. Boi’s choice to raise Rizqi as a single-parent with her mother was based on past emotional trauma from her failed relationships with women, where emotional instability might distract her from functioning as a good provider for her household. In addition, she does not see how her household can benefit with another woman being a co-parent. Rizqi has his grandmother who functions as his mother-caregiver, and he has Boi, who is both a father and mother. Boi elaborates, “I would not want my girlfriend to be like a “mother” to my son. He already has enough mothers.” Since Boi also prioritizes her mother as the “lady boss” of the household, introducing a wife to their household might complicate their dynamics because her mother may view her wife as a threat to maternal authority while her wife may feel that Boi is misplacing her priorities by positioning her mother above her wife.

Boi draws upon a Malay Muslim framework of a sexual division of labor to justify her lack of interest in having a wife or domestic partner even though she desires to have one. Ideally,

if Boi does have a partner, the woman's role would be to offer romantic and sexual companionship, and is expected to be financially independent. However, Boi is also aware that romantic companionships are not for "free". Boi informed me that as a responsible man, "If your girlfriend keeps you company and have sex with you, you also need to maintain her upkeep... know how to play, know how to take care." She admitted that because she is poor and has a low-paying job, the women she attracts tend to share a similar life history of incarceration, homelessness and family instability which makes it difficult for them to be financially independent.

Boi's explanation is similar to the concept of *nafkah* (maintenance) according to Islamic jurisprudence and common knowledge among Malay Muslims in Singapore. *Nafkah* is based on a sexual division of labor where husbands are responsible for the provision of wives especially if she has provided for his conjugal needs. A husband is expected to offer her shelter and pay for her basic necessities to reciprocate the wife's efforts in providing companionship, sexual pleasure, caring for children and maintaining the household. As a man, Boi would be expected to financially support her partners as well as her family. This would mean taking away resources that would have been allocated to her son and ensuring his future. Boi did not feel that providing for another woman was worth the risk because her romantic relationships were never long-term and she might end up feeling exploited if her partner leaves her to marry a man.

Through Boi's narrative, I demonstrate how class relations between paid and unpaid work are engendered at home, where one kin member's decision to stay at home allows the birth parent to work and support the family. This narrative challenges the Singapore state's discourse that prescribes paid employment as a measure to alleviate poverty. Ironically, Boi's mother's subscription to unpaid domestic work saved the family's expenses more than if she were to be a wage worker. While Boi's understanding of *nafkah* demonstrates how wage differentials and relationship stability between prospective masculine-feminine partners reinforce traditional hierarchies of gender that coalesce around the exchange of [feminine] women's sexuality for her masculine husband's status as provider.

6.4.2 Shifting Relations of Subsistence as Wife, Daughter and Single Mother

The end of a marriage does not guarantee a woman's exit from gendered hierarchies of household division of labor. Conversely, without a husband, a divorced and single mother's status may actually be placed lower in her natal family compared to other siblings. I examine the

significance of paternal authority, marital status and birth mother in contributing to Bad's subservient status among her natal kin.

After her divorce, Bad lived with her parents for a while. Her status shifted from being a married woman to a daughter and a single mother. On top of being solely responsible for raising her son, she was expected to also financially support her mother, who was a kidney patient. She has elder siblings, but since they had their own "intact" families, the responsibility somehow fell onto her, as a single mother. They had assumed that as the youngest daughter and a single mother, she had fewer family commitments compared to them, and thus had more time and money to be a better caregiver. Then, she was earning only S\$1000, and by the time her mother's medical bills, Hakim's childcare fees and money for groceries were deducted, she would be left with only S\$ 30 for the month which was hardly enough to pay for transportation costs. Her siblings view it as her total responsibility to manage her mother's medical bills because she was living in their household for "free". When her mother passed away, her dad sold their flat and moved in with her.

In her new house, Bad finally acquired financial and personal autonomy because her elderly father and son were now her dependents. Yet, her autonomy was still framed within traditional gender norms where she was still responsible for being both the provider and caregiver of her son, with her household continuing to observe Islamic norms. In return for shelter, her father would sometimes take care of her son. As a grandfather and paternal kin, his caregiving role is optional and involves only a few hours of his time a month. He does not contribute to any housework because it is seen as a woman's job and as a man, he was not expected to assist.

Around the same time, Bad was also in same-sex relationship with a fellow colleague. She met and fell in love with a Malay Muslim lesbian co-worker whom she had a three-year relationship with. Even though she owns her own home, she did not think it was appropriate to bring her partner home. She compartmentalized her same-sex relationship as separate from her household with her son and father. On days that she was spending time with her partner, she would have her father take care of her son.

For convenience, Bad's partner purchased a flat adjacent to hers and did not assume any responsibilities for Bad's household other than romantic companionship. They kept separate finances and led independent lives apart from going out on dates. Bad never spent the night at her partner's house because she did not want her father to assume she had "loose morals". Bad and her partner's strategic negotiation of shuttling between houses and setting up independent households demonstrates Bad's limited autonomy.

Despite being the provider, Bad's fear of her father's judgment and doing all the domestic chores reinforces her deference to her father's patriarchal authority, where her position as the head of her own household is subsumed under his kinship seniority as a father, and thus head of her larger natal family.

Bad's lack of household autonomy and low position of power within her natal family became apparent when her siblings refused to believe that her father had sexually assaulted her in her own house. They had felt it was impossible for the husband of a former *Ustazah* (religious teacher) and a man who had performed Haj to sexually assault his own daughter. Bad was forced to make a public apology to her father for tarnishing his name and bringing shame to their family. Her father did not acknowledge her apology but instead told the relatives in attendance that Bad was "nothing but a slut" who was trying to scapegoat him when she was having non-marital sexual relations with a man. Her family's immediate reaction to distrust her narrative demonstrates her father's influence as the patriarch and reinforced her low status as a single mother without a husband and also the youngest daughter. Without a husband to vouch for her honor, Bad's sexuality was held in suspicion and it was more believable that she had lied about her sexual relations rather than her father violating her.

Bad's experience with her family post-divorce and in her status as a single mother reveals unequal hierarchies within her natal kin. Without a husband, her priorities as a single mother were seen as less important as her other siblings who had spouses and children to support. On top of this, as the youngest daughter, the duty to care for and financially support her ailing elderly mother fell on her. These hierarchies of power are further enacted when she was made to apologize to her father, who sexually violated her, because his honor was more important than her own safe space. Even as the head of her own household with Hakim, this role is negligible because she still occupies a lower status as a daughter. As a single mother, moving back to her parents' house was not only a material shift, it was also a symbolic return in status from "wife" to "daughter", where her father resumes being the head of her household and her guardian as an unmarried woman.

Since the traumatic episode, Bad became estranged from her family and raised Hakim by herself. Hakim went to after-school care programs until he was old enough to be by himself at home. Bad took up a part-time diploma course in Management, which enabled her to switch to a better-paying job and obtain increased financial stability for their family. Bad never had the time to train Hakim to do the chores at home, and it was more efficient to get everything done herself.

In this manner, the division of labor between Hakim and her, has been allocated based on competency and efficiency rather than in terms of gender or seniority.

When I enquired about her caregiving role, Bad answered, “I see myself not as a mother, but a father. I am the one providing a living. I am the one doing the disciplining. I am doing the man's role more than a woman's role. That's why my son feels threatened by me because I can be very strict. But at certain points I will be like a mother, where he will tell me everything. But that is very rare.” In stating her role in their family, Bad draws upon gender norms that again prescribe the role of the man/father as provider. Accordingly, she feels that it is more appropriate for her to describe her role as a father than a mother because she spent more time providing for him and was absent in terms of nurturing him. Bad said “Hakim was always in childcare.” Her role as the main caregiver was outsourced.

This is the manner in which Bad thinks about the mutability of caregiver/provider roles, which reveals a strong regulation of gendered norms. Instead of expanding the mothering role to include being a provider and disciplinarian, she positions herself as being more of a father than a mother. In actuality, Bad did spend considerable amounts of time with her son when he was younger. During weekends, she would take him out to the zoo, the bird park, or movies, and occasionally to the library. The fact that she continually considers herself an “absent” mother demonstrates pervasive gendered expectations toward intensive mothering and women as primary caregivers instead of working mothers. Bad’s case study highlights multiple caregiving burdens placed on women, and the vulnerability of single mothers, who not only have to be responsible for their households in providing and caring of their own children, but are also expected as daughters to be tasked with the responsibility of caring for elderly parents.

Both the two households in the section demonstrates the division of labor and gendered relations of power where marriage or domestic partnership is not the focal point of the organization of their household. Factors influencing participants’ decisions to remain a single-parent household include previous experiences of instability of romantic partnerships with women and perceived judgment of natal kin members toward homosexual relationships. As biological single-parents who are providers for their household, the differences in terms of family status and power coalesce around natal kin members’ expectations toward their gendered subjectivity and dispositions. Masculine-identified birth mothers are not denigrated as non-primary caregivers and their parental authority or or their influence to acquire family power is not tied to these roles within an inter-generational household. In contrast, divorced single mothers

occupy low positions in the family hierarchy, where priorities of elderly care are shifted onto them instead of married siblings.

6.5 Kinship Hierarchies Between “Blood” Families and Chosen Partners

This section explores how two Malay Muslim participants balance their familial and romantic obligations between their natal kin households and non-residential same-sex partners. In looking at their narratives, I am interested in understanding how they conceptualize power and responsibilities in their same-sex relationships and within their natal kin households, especially in taking into account differences in legal and parental rights, wage differentials, gendered hierarchies and relationships with natal kin.

As daughters, Rafi and Dewi are expected to be responsible for the caregiving of aging parents as well as the organization and maintenance of their natal kin households, which makes it difficult for them to share a household with their partners even though they may see each other as wives or co-parents. The participants also differed in terms of their gender presentation and parental status. Rafi, who is masculine-presenting, assumes the role of a “godparent”, while Dewi, who is feminine-identified, is the biological mother of Suki.

6.5.1 Recognizing Limited Kinship Rights and “Loving Smart”

In this case study, the non-biological partner’s decision to not share a common household with her partner was attributed to personal circumstances such as family disapproval, lack of finances, avoidance of social prosecution and the threat of domestic exploitation. Rafi, who is an androgynous lesbian, is married to Amal, a lesbian single mother who has a four-year old daughter, Aly, out-of-wedlock. When they first met, Rafi was 34 while Amal was already a 19-year-old teenage mother. After a two-year relationship, they got married in the presence of close friends in Batam, Indonesia. Rafi regards Aly as her god-daughter and maintains that Aly is strictly Amal’s responsibility.

Despite having been married for three years, they are not living together because Rafi needs to take care of her ill-stricken mother who is also against Rafi being a lesbian. Even if the couple desires to live together, they are not able to afford a rental apartment. Rafi owns an apartment that she is currently renting out to finance both her elderly parents’ (who are divorced) medical bills. She currently lives in her sister’s small three-bedroom apartment with her four

children, husband, a second sister and her mother. Amal and Aly are presently living with Amal's grandmother, who disapproves of her relationship with Rafi.

Rafi is aware that the local Malay community views homosexuality negatively and while she tolerates being socially prosecuted for being an androgynous lesbian, she does not desire further prosecution as a same-sex parent. From the onset of her romantic partnership with Amal, Rafi chose to be a distant parent to Aly to avoid accusations from onlookers that she is a "bad influence" to Aly and Amal. She added that familial obligations and responsibility to co-parent or become a step-parent is only justified if same-sex couples are socially accepted by the Muslim community and can actually marry and be legally and socially recognized as parents.

Since same-sex marriage is not legal in Singapore nor is it culturally approved in Islam, Rafi feels that all that effort that some butches put in to be responsible parent makes them a "pushover" because it actually produces situations of vulnerability and exploitation for the non-biological parent. She elaborates:

It's not your child, your marriage is not recognized, society does not even want to acknowledge your existence. If the marriage was properly legal and respected, you will be treated fairly in a divorce settlement and you can get visitation rights, the children will still be a part of your life. But for people like us? Take care of yourself. Love smart, don't over commit and then get depressed and furious that you become trash when she decides to be with someone else, or marry a man. You really do not have anyone to blame but yourself. Should no better than to be someone else's father or husband when doing so only makes you look like *Pak Sanggup* (Mr Pushover).

Rafi's elaboration for non-biological butch parents to "love smart" and not be a "pushover" reveals several themes for further discussion, in terms of how unequal citizenship rights informs her decision to not be a "responsible" partner and share equal household burdens in raising her wife's daughter. First, she demonstrates how heteronormativity, in privileging legal marriages between men and women, produces unequal rights and social rewards to same-sex households with or without children. Second, she outlines how unequal social recognition of parental rights enacts a potential system of exploitation. Thirdly, she explains how the appropriation of heteronormative notions of familial responsibility to a non-culturally sanctioned relationship advances the vulnerability of non-biological parents instead of conferring social recognition, rewards and respectability. In heterosexual marriages, stepfathers and husbands receive social rewards for assuming financial responsibility for another man's biological children. In a same-sex union however, not only does the masculine female partner who assumes financial

responsibility and the caregiving of children not get recognized or validated for their efforts, they have been denigrated as deviant partners or “trash”.

Although Rafi claims parental distance toward Aly, her initiative toward the Aly’s well-being seems to highlight otherwise. Her concerns for Aly is derived out of her commitment and love for Amal and based on what she understands of her role as a god-parent. As a god-parent, Rafi’s role is to offer emotional and administrative support for Amal. For example, it was Rafi who approached me to find out more about childcare options and subsidies even though Amal and I have been acquainted. Throughout our consult, Rafi had referred to Aly by name or as “her (Amal’s) daughter”, and did not use shared pronouns like “our daughter”, which is consistent with her distance as a godparent.

Based on her experiences of an unequal reproductive and kinship terrain, Rafi emphasizes that she maintains separate financial accounts from Amal even though they are each others’ wives. Unlike other co-wife relationships that I have explored in the previous sections who view each other’s “separate pots” as mutual household/relationship assets, Rafi and Amal’s financial accounts are independent of each other. To avoid creating a potentially exploitative situation, Rafi refrains from pampering Amal with gifts unless it is reciprocated accordingly. She explains that her past relationships were situations in which Malay women took advantage of her generosity.

Despite having separate finances, the couple supports each other when necessary. Amal, who used to earn a much higher income as a retail manager, would pay for Rafi’s daily expenses and transport since Rafi’s pay had to go into supporting the medical bills for both Rafi’s ailing parents. Rafi’s elder sister has four children and mortgage bills while her younger sister was in and out of jobs and struggling to finance her further education, so none of these siblings had the capacity to finance medical bills. With Aly getting older and her schooling needs increasing, Amal had to stop helping Rafi because she needed to use her money to save for Aly’s future. Rafi started to take on two additional jobs so she did not have to depend on Amal’s income.

Their financial practices depart from conventional norms common among heterogendered Malay same-sex couples. Usually, the masculine partner who provides for their feminine partner would resist being supported because it would be detrimental to their image of masculinity and might, in some situations, encounter being shamed by their peers (see Maulod and Jamil, 2009). However, Rafi views herself as an androgynous tomboy and, in perceiving her subjectivity as such, does not identify with gendered norms that accord masculine generosity as respectable and personally rewarding.

The struggle for work-life balance and being a young single mother affected Amal's ability to be a doting mother and a romantic partner. Their relationship suffered a breakdown after Amal quit her well-paying job that became too strenuous for her. According to Rafi, Amal started becoming a negligent mother through frequent late-night partying, and prioritized being with her friends instead of spending time with her daughter and Rafi. Amal had accused Rafi for being selfish and unsympathetic to her needs as a 21-year-old who should be enjoying her youth instead of being just a wife and mother. In private conversations, I realized that Rafi was insecure that Amal was losing interest in their relationship. She admitted that Amal has been the same with Aly, whose main caregivers are actually Amal's grandmother and aunt. Rafi confides:

I'm just desperate because I feel like I'm losing her and if she thinks of her daughter, she would back away from these activities. I will understand if she wants to spend less time with me, and be with Aly. I would support that. But I am upset that her free time is all for friends and parties, not Aly or me. I understand that it is difficult being a single mother, she needs her break. But, what about me, I'm supposedly her wife, right? How am I selfish, when I am asking her to be more responsible toward her daughter and not behave so immaturely?

Rafi and Amal's confrontation reflects a power struggle between personal autonomy and responsibilities as a wife and mother. Rafi draws upon the caregiving obligations expected of a mother as a desperate attempt to sway Amal's priorities toward her as a wife when she felt threatened by Amal's potential suitors. Rafi thinks that Amal would be a good wife who is attentive to her needs, if she were home more often as a good mother to Aly. The power dynamics in their relationship produce competing interests: Rafi is able to declare her priorities toward her natal kin members over a "chosen" family and be unburdened by parental obligations. At the same time, she feels entitled to articulate demands toward Amal's caregiving role as a strategy to prove Amal's commitment to her.

Rafi's desires for Amal to be a good mother had more to do with providing with Rafi a sense of relationship security than about mothering per se. Amal's retaliation demonstrates her negotiation of autonomy, where in calling Rafi "selfish", she is also establishing boundaries of control within their relationship. Rafi's assertion of household obligations (good mother, faithful wife) was lost on Amal who already has an independent household due to Rafi's insistence about parental distance. In stating the status quo as such, Rafi eventually realized that she has limited power to make demands on Amal's household duties and what Amal does in her leisure time.

6.5.2 The Burden of Equality and Traditional Hierarchies of Kinship

Both Dewi and Donna, who are very active in the local LGBT and feminist advocacy communities, are very committed to achieving equality in their relationship. But their ideas about what equality entails differ. This section encapsulates their conflicts based on different interpretations of egalitarianism and parental authority. I examine their negotiations with autonomy and household power while they were co-parenting despite living apart in the duration of their three-year relationship.

Although Dewi co-owns the flat that her parents and four other siblings are living in, she and her 11-year old daughter, Suki, live with her aunt. Since Dewi's name is already enjoined in ownership with her parents, public housing rules stipulates that she is not able to get a house of her own unless her parents are willing to sell their flat. Due to these restrictions and expensive rental costs, Dewi has no choice but to live in homes of relatives, and sometimes with her parents, with whom she has a tumultuous relationship. She travels to Donna's condominium three times a week and would sometimes spend the night there. Among my participants, Dewi is the only birth mother who commutes weekly to her partner's house with her daughter.

Donna, a Belgian innovator, has been living in Singapore for the past 15 years and earns three times more than Dewi. In terms of finances, both of them kept separate accounts and their monies were not considered shared assets. Dewi claims that Donna's idea of egalitarian means that partners contribute equal amounts to the relationship. In terms of finances, Donna expected the couple to split their expenses "50-50". Dewi felt the arrangement was unfair to her since she does not earn as much, and their expenses on activities such as dining out, watching plays and travelling took up a significant portion of her income compared to Donna's. Although the expectation to "go dutch" was "heavy" on her finances, Dewi did not feel comfortable discussing her finances with Donna. She was embarrassed to be regarded as incompetent and worried that Donna might view her as a dependent because she could not afford to contribute the same amount to their expenses.

While they were in a relationship, Donna took care of rent for her condo and would pay for the couples' extravagant expenses such as holidays because it was the only way Dewi could accompany her. Donna paid for some of Dewi's specialist appointments and medication to treat her depression. She also paid for Suki's supplementary classes such as swimming and drama and offered to pay for additional tuition lessons that Suki might require for weaker subjects.

Dewi earned enough to save while paying her aunt (who takes care of Suki while Dewi works), and for her mortgage, Suki's education and miscellaneous needs, as well as allowance for her parents. Dewi divided her time between her parents' home in which four of her younger siblings are still living, her aunt's flat where she stays with Suki, and Donna's home. When Suki was not with her father, she would accompany her mother at Donna's home. Donna would also use the time to teach Suki mathematics and science. Dewi describes Donna as the more patient parent out of both of them. Donna did all the cooking in their family because she has strict dietary restrictions while Dewi admits to being a lousy cook. Although Donna hired a part-time helper who did the cleaning, laundry and ironing every weekend, Dewi would sometimes clean and do chores for Donna as an expression of her love.

In terms of power dynamics, Dewi describes Donna as the dominant person in the relationship, yet this relationship was subverted in the intimate space of their bedroom. Dewi enjoyed being in a relationship with Donna whose alpha personality made her highly reliable and dependable, yet equally overwhelming. According to Dewi, Donna idealized an egalitarian relationship but Dewi felt more like a "trophy wife". She elaborates: "A partner who sees you as equal would not patronize you and talk to you like you are incapable of making decisions for yourself. It makes me feel very inadequate."

In an incident that had led to their break-up, Donna caught Dewi raising her voice at Suki. She advised Dewi to be more patient, but Dewi felt patronized and informed Donna that parenting Suki was not her jurisdiction, since she is not the birth mother. That argument became one of the catalysts to their eventual break up. Dewi felt that as the biological mother she was ultimately answerable for Suki, while Donna, could offer opinions but not held to the same responsibilities as a non-legal parent. Meanwhile, Donna felt that Dewi was manipulating her position as the legal parent to assume authority, which reinforces Donna's co-parenthood without parental autonomy.

Donna's frequent interjections about Dewi's parenting abilities made Dewi feel like a bad mother while Donna felt that her limited parental authority reduced her to Suki's sponsor rather than a co-parent. Donna had issues with Dewi's lack of efficiency for example, in confirming Suki's classes that Donna had paid for. These issues made Donna feel unappreciated and affirmed her suspicion that her co-parenting status was lip-service. In Dewi and Donna's non-cohabitating household, being the primary financial contributor does not translate to equal parental autonomy, but it does allow the provider some degree of power with her receiver in the parameters of their romantic relationship.

The couple had planned to move in together, but Donna felt that Dewi was giving excuses about moving out from her aunt's and parents' home. On the other hand, Dewi explains her hesitation to move in with Donna:

She finds it ridiculous and does not understand why I bother to acknowledge my family who actually hates me. She would never understand our [Malay] culture, and the responsibilities we have to our parents, no matter how we hate them. My family is obliged to report to my ex-husband who gives them money to take care of Suki. And since they've always been so disapproving of my freedom, I'm quite certain they might report my decision to move out and live with my girlfriend. I can't take the risk and lose child custody.

Dewi felt that Donna's insistence for her to move in was based on convenience rather than sincere motivations of sharing a home. She pointed out that Donna wanted a "subservient wife who would be agreeable to all her decisions" because Dewi did not feel she had equal autonomy in the relationship. Donna still wore her ex-wife's ring and maintained joint accounts with her ex-wife. When Dewi articulated her grievances, Donna had dismissed her for being petty and unnecessarily jealous. Dewi elaborates:

If she can't cut ties with her ex-wife or even introduce me to her parents, why is it all on me to cut my ties with my family, to uproot my daughter and move in with her? Would she do it according to my terms? I don't think so. She makes demands of me, but I can't and shouldn't have a say about what she does with her life. It's like my life needs to revolve around her needs, but her life is her own. That's not fair, is it?

Despite their desires for an egalitarian relationship, Dewi expressed that she has not been accorded similar forms of decision-making power about their relationship with the same kind of authority that Donna imposes on her personal and family life. Dewi felt that Donna invalidates her own responsibilities as a daughter and a mother because it was easier for Donna to make decisions as a "single person" whose life is not tied to family obligations. Donna, on the other hand, had assumed that as an independent adult, Dewi should be empowered to decide what to do with her life rather than revolving around her family's needs. From their conflict, I noted that Dewi's sense of agency and autonomy is deeply embedded to her relationships with her natal kin.

In her own natal household, Dewi describes how traditional gender expectations and parental favoritism subject her to a "pariah" status in her family. Power in her family is not distributed in terms of one's domestic or financial contributions to the household. Rather, it is measured by one's interpersonal relationships with parents. Dewi demonstrates her position as the least favored child because she co-owns her parents' flat but she had to protest to be allocated a

room to live in it. Yet, despite not having a room in her parents' home, she continued fulfilling household responsibilities such as paying the mortgage for their house, cleaning the house, giving her parents money for their groceries and bills, and also being the guardian for her youngest brother who has Down's syndrome. None of these contributions seem to matter in terms of constituting family power.

Further, Dewi's parents conform to traditional gender roles where daughters have lower status than sons and are expected to clean and care for parents while sons do not have any domestic responsibilities. At the same time, these gendered division of labor has not been equitably distributed among Dewi and her two sisters. Despite her extensive contributions to the household, Dewi mentions that her sisters and parents often accuse her for being a "bad daughter" because she is frequently absent from family events due to her busy work schedule. Her sisters have been excused from domestic chores and contributing financially to the house because one of them is married with four children and the other is working as a flight attendant and saving for marriage. She expressed, "I have a child too, I am also working, so why is it all on me?"

Similarly, her brothers, as men, were able to "lead their own lives" and have high status in the family despite not contributing financially to the household. She reasons that her sisters are influential in the family because they were able to "play the game" by "sucking up" to her parents. Dewi's sisters, who maintain a good interpersonal relationship with her mother, the matriarch of their household, have more family influence which translates to their higher status in the family.

It is significant to note the multifaceted notions of power at play within Dewi's same-sex relationship with Donna and in her own natal household. As the birth mother, Dewi had more autonomy in deciding Suki's future. Dewi's insertion of birth parent status is an attempt at challenging her subservience to Donna, and to limit Donna's dominance in their relationship.

In her natal household, gendered hierarchies, as well as the absence of positive relationship with her mother, who has the monopoly of power in her household, relegate Dewi to a low position despite her extensive contributions. Her relationship with her natal family reinforces how family power is determined through interpersonal relations over financial or domestic contributions. As a divorced single mother without her own home, Dewi is expected to prioritize her mother's household over her personal household with Suki. In contrast, similar priorities are not expected out of her younger sisters who are either married or engaged-to-be-married. Here, familial power for daughters is also based on the presence of a male husband where it is understood that a woman's responsibilities would prioritize her husband.

Additionally, within her traditional family, her ex-husband has more family power over her because he gives her parents money and maintains good relations with them, compared to Dewi, who is the daughter and a mother in her household. This evidence highlights Dewi's low status in her family and her limited capacity to make decisions in matters, especially those concerning her daughter. Dewi's story reinforces how single biological mothers do not necessarily have autonomy in matters pertaining to children, because they are also locked in the cultural bind of being subordinated as daughters to mothers who hold power in managing day-to-day household affairs within the natal household.

The two case studies in this section explicate how unequal registers of legal and social parental rights shape particular conflicts with regards to parental authority and individual autonomy. Partners without birth parenting rights and legal marriage status enact parental distance and financial independence to mitigate potential situations of vulnerability and exploitation. On the other hand, for biological mothers, asserting one's cultural and legal parenting rights becomes effective in negotiating and balancing power struggles with a dominant and economically-privileged same-sex partner.

Gender and kinship hierarchies continue to be evident in terms of relationships with natal kin, where divorced single mothers are treated unfairly within their natal households despite their extensive domestic contributions. Patriarchal gender norms are also regulated through the influence of senior maternal kin; it is not always the case that it is regulated through the men in the household.

6.6 Are Female Same-Sex Households Free from Patriarchal Inequalities?

This chapter offers a corrective to patriarchal and heteronormative assumptions of marriage, power and familial stability. In Singapore, as in the United States, female-headed households or households led by women are characterized as economically vulnerable and/or unstable and dysfunctional. My intention to focus on female-headed households through the narratives of female same-sex partners, queer women, or single mothers seeks to debunk the assumption of "missing men" in explaining the causes of poverty, vulnerability and instability in female-headed households. By including same-sex partners and external kin networks in state-defined single-mother households, my chapter accords recognition to the forms of kin-work performed by butch fathers and queer women who are marginalized in non-culturally sanctioned

relationships, as well as the contributions of grandmothers and other relatives who forego paid employment to look after the children of birth mothers.

Further, following Blackwood's (2005) suggestion to deconstruct the anchoring trope of the dominant heterosexual man and his place at the core of marriage and family, I too agree that any critique of marriage and household dynamics must interrogate the gendered assumptions that de-normalize other forms of relatedness. At the same time, same-sex households or queer single-mother households do not exist in isolation but are imbricated within larger discourses of "proper" families and traditional family hierarchies. The former determines whether a couple can own, rent a home together or share a household, decisions of which also reflect their class positions. The latter defines the limits to autonomous family power within neolocal female-headed households—a partner's proximity to their family of origin may unfavorably affect the distribution of power in a same-sex relationship. In particular, the specter of the dominant "heterosexual" man haunts rather powerfully the lives of divorced single mothers, who without valid marital status have been unfairly treated within their natal kin households.

In lieu of patriarchal husbands, the regulation of patriarchal norms that position women as subordinate to men and/or stipulate caregiving as the primary duty of women is enforced by senior members in the household such as fathers, mothers and siblings. The specter of the dominant husband also haunts butch fathers who have been stripped of access to family power and parental rights despite their substantial and disproportionately larger domestic and financial contributions to their partners' household. Meanwhile, Malay single mothers experience injustice when former husbands, as absent fathers, are accorded greater deference and respect by their natal family even when the burden of childcare has been completely absorbed by these mothers.

Importantly, in Malay households, where kin members adhere to a traditional male/provider and women/caregiver model, mothers' substantial household contributions through waged labor are negated by her absence as the primary caregiver. This power dynamic denigrates women's family power and autonomy while also reproduce competing cultural discourses and paradox of the "working mother" as the ideal citizen.

Partners' gender identity and views of gender, the legal and biological status of same-sex parents, differences in socio-economic and education backgrounds, and emotional and economic instability of partners are important factors that influence whether partners engage in egalitarian, complementary or traditional gender models. Among Chinese lesbian co-mother families, family power is not dependent on the biological status of the mother to her children. Birth mothers do not have higher status over the social co-mother because there is explicit mutual recognition of

equal parental status. Both partners have equal capacity to make decisions for their children as well as discipline them. These equal senses of parental authority and autonomy mitigate any source of insecurity or maternal jealousy among partners.

In contrast, among Malay heterogendered families, birth mothers have the final authority over children's matters, which reinforces their higher status and family power over their masculine partners. Domestic conflicts pertaining to partners' lack of parental authority and birth mothers' household privilege reinforce unequal relations of power, even if couples desire to be egalitarian. Thus, the ways in which same-sex partners manage unequal vectors of legal and social parenting and marital rights is important because they determine the durability of their relationship.

This chapter underscores different types of practices that partners constitute as "egalitarian" or, in some of their words, what they mutually regard as a fair distribution of roles and responsibilities in the household. Middle-class households prefer a sustainable egalitarian model where partners share an interdependent relationship rather than one that is mired in co-dependency. In middle-class lesbian co-mother households, actual practices reveal one partner performing more labor in terms of frequency and hours than the other. In these households, egalitarianism operates on the basis of role specialization through the understanding of partners as mutually and equally competent, especially in being able to switch and exchange roles if the situation calls for it. Although these roles have been routinized, partners expressed having the initiative to assist in completing each others' tasks when necessary in order to achieve household efficiency in managing day-to-day household tasks. Lesbian co-mothers who do not identify strongly with any particular gendered masculine or feminine performativity allocate labor based on their skilled capacities rather than stereotypical masculine or feminine tasks.

In contrast, egalitarian practices in Malay heterogendered households are derived based on gendered notions of competence. Roles and responsibilities are distributed based on traditional cultural ideals of men as provider and protector and women as primary caregiver, based on Islamic norms of *nafkah*, or provisions of husband and wife in a marital contract. Butch fathers take on provider roles because they tend to earn more than birth mothers, yet even if single mothers earn similar wages, butch fathers contribute a higher proportion of their income to the household compared to their partners. The role of provider reinforces masculine competence that butches find personally rewarding and validating of their gendered subjectivities. Feminine partners take on the role of caregiving because they view it as their responsibility as the birth mother.

Despite the appropriation of Islamic gender models, domestic same-sex practices simultaneously depart from heterosexual norms that accord men higher family status and power. The absence of male privilege, lack of legal, social, parental and marital status negates any form of economic advantage and limits any potentiality of acquiring family power for butch fathers over single mothers. In these relationships, housework and caregiving (unpaid work) roles, while feminized, are not regarded as an inferior form of authority in the household, compared to heterosexual Malay families. Unlike heterosexual fathers who tend to assume roles as “helper husbands”, butch fathers desire to be involved in the caregiving of children as their involvement is aligned to their strong desire to be a responsible father and head-of-the-household.

In intergenerational households, family power and influence is derived through the seniority of the maternal kin, this being seen in children’s grandmothers. The status of bio-mothers depends on the strength of their relationship with their own mother, especially if the latter is tasked with the caregiving of their children. Weak interpersonal relationships affect bio-mothers’ access to family power and their capacity to influence other members in her family, including her children and her partner. On the other hand, cultivating a strong relationship with one’s mother who is the primary caregiver reduces competing maternal hierarchies and instead strengthens complementary maternal roles.

Li (1989: 11), who studied Malay households in Singapore, explains shifting relations of household power through the practical concept of the gift based on the Malay word *kasihan*, where the root word *kasih*, means love and affection and *kasi* means “to give”. When translated, the term is defined in terms of kindness, favor and pity. She elaborates that transfers of goods and services and gifting based on *kasihan* connotes the least egalitarian relationship as it indicates which individuals are contributing to the household more than they are receiving or receiving less than what they should be entitled to.

In this chapter, I have discussed how the notion of egalitarianism is also based on reciprocal or complementary transfers of goods and services in households. The most equal of relationships that has been described by partners and maternal kin is one that is reinforced through the giving of one’s time, labor and money voluntarily and sincerely out of concern, affection and devotion to the other.

To summarize, middle-class lesbian co-mother households are more egalitarian than other co-parenting relationships because partners earn fairly similar middle- to upper middle-class wages, have similar competencies, and enforce and extend similar parenting rights to non-birth mothers. Same-sex and/or intergenerational households that practice maternal gatekeeping—

where biological mothers limit the parental authority of co-parents and senior mothers monopolize power—are the least egalitarian. These households experience uneven distribution of power that negates individuals' competencies in organizing the household and managing the finances for the family, practices of which would have typically advanced their family power in married heterosexual families.

The case studies in this chapter reinforce Kranichfeld's argument where power differentials, unlike in the traditional gender household model, are not centered around one's economic advantage but derived through influential interpersonal relationships between same-sex partners and, for some, with natal kin members that determine one's position in the household. Single-mother households are also economically vulnerable because double burdens of caregiving, of children and elderly parents tend to fall disproportionately onto them. In this regard, state heteronormative discourses and cultural gender ideologies reproduce unequal hierarchies of domestic power and stratified forms of reproductive care that may privilege a kin member and disempower another within single-mother households and female same-sex partnerships.

CHAPTER 7. THE TROUBLE WITH NORMAL AND SAME-SEX FUTURES OF BELONGING

We should recognize that homosexuals are part of our society. They are our kith and kin ... and I would add that among them are some of our friends, our relatives, our colleagues, our brothers and sisters or some of our children. They too must have a place in this society and they too are entitled to their private lives. We shouldn't make it harder than it already is for them to grow up and to live in a society where they are different from most Singaporeans.

-Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong, October 2007.

All participants view love, reciprocal care, sharing a life and mutual sense of belonging as fundamental to being a family. At the same time, their desires to seek legitimation and recognition for their same-sex kinship forms drive new complexities and trouble the “normal” in ways that have not been imagined before (Warner, 1999). Despite the Prime Minister’s statement that LGBT citizens are “kith and kin”, “must have a place in...society” and are “entitled to their private lives”, the narratives in this dissertation exemplify otherwise: those who engage in same-sex practices are still regarded as exiles of the heteronormative family. Their sense of belonging and future as a family remains marginal and precarious in Singapore. If anything, their narratives serve as a haunting reminder that much needs to be done to materialize the state’s promise of equality from a mere ‘economy of appearance’ (Tsing, 2005).

Throughout this dissertation, I have encapsulated the struggles that queer women and masculine-identified participants face in defining themselves as authentic members of families and seeking acknowledgment for their familial existence. From critically examining their desires for children, diverse and strenuous routes to parenthood, challenges in assembling their “chosen” families and staying together, and their performative engagement with mother/fatherhood and domestic relations of power, these chapters are bound by an overarching theme. Heteronormative ideologies of family and kinship exclude not just LGBT citizens but also heterosexual mothers who are ethnic minority Malays, unmarried/divorced, lower-educated and poor. Thus, in an anti-

welfare regime and even at the margins of family, heteronormativity produces differentiated forms of deservedness that implicate participants, corresponding to their ethnicity, class and relative position to middle-class categories, as well as proximities to the global economy.

I placed my participants' stories in relation to the larger socio-historical events and policies that have shaped ideologies about the ideal mother and the traditional "Asian" family in Singapore. My intention was not to demonstrate how radical or transgressive same-sex families and alternative kinship forms are to "Asian values" of heteronormativity. Rather, I attempted to deconstruct the naturalized tradition of the Asian family, and expose its rather invented discourse, formed by various stakeholders at particular conjunctions of time and space.

I draw attention to the exiled specters of a heteronormative past to capture the presence of those whose sexual and reproductive liberties have been restricted both in the colony and in post-independence Singapore. I connect participants' "less familiar dots" of reproduction and kinship to these specters in order to demonstrate that the quintessential "Asian" family, comprising of a husband, wife and two (or more) children, was never a historical constant. In colonial Singapore, heteronormative family norms were benchmarked against Eurocentric standards of mothering and patriarchy. In contemporary Singapore, the heteronormativity of the "stable" family is measured against Chinese middle-class practices. Between these shifts in geopolitical and intimate governance, what remains constant is the racialization of poverty and, consequentially, the association of unfit motherhood and family dysfunction with Malay bodies.

State practices of stratified reproduction—in terms of who and what are regarded as undeserving subjects of family, unfit to mother and, accordingly, discouraged from having children, or sex for that matter—is therefore not specific to homosexuals. But together, these power relations are inflected through different practices of empowerment between Chinese lesbians and Malay same-sex participants, as they reassemble and retraditionalize meanings of compulsory heterosexuality and motherhood.

7.1 Recapitulating Sites of Radical Possibilities

My dissertation makes the important contribution that social policies and cultural ideologies around family norms affect participants differently and endow them with different relations to the state and larger Singapore society. Even though all non-traditional forms of families are marginalized in Singapore, not all exiles or same-sex couples experience similar forms of marginalization as people are differently positioned in terms of proximity to dominant

norms and/or to global economic flows of capital. While it is important to look at the different ways in which same-sex families have been discriminated against or marginalized in the state, I also subscribe to bell hooks's (2004) suggestion to view marginality as more than a site of deprivation but also a site of radical possibility to counter hegemonic discourses pertaining to reproductive freedom, poverty and heteronormativity.

Participants challenge biocentric notions of kinship in multiple ways, depending on their gendered sexual subjectivities and race/class positions. Chinese lesbian/bisexual partners who conceive with assisted reproductive technologies contest the dominance of biology while also affirming the importance of biogenetic ties to kinship. These lesbian/bisexual partners assert their reproductive rights as women to validate their desires for biological children of their own, as well as their concerns with heredity, progeny and sibling resemblance. For Chinese same-sex partners, biology is not a prerequisite for relatedness, despite its predominance in partners' understanding of conception. When the baby is born, non-birth mothers in these same-sex households regard each other as having equal maternal authority and rights, despite the non-legitimacy of their practices in larger Singapore society.

Malay participants who are in co-parenting relationships challenge biological forms of relatedness while also privileging blood relations in hierarchies of household and kin relations. Birth mothers and butch fathers view biology as a flexible concept that can be reassembled in other social practices and traditional routines to kin non-biological parents and children. However, the flexibility to think of relatedness beyond biogenetic connections is limited especially when birth mothers are accorded higher status than non-birth partners in Malay same-sex households. Additionally, blood relatives have more authority in influencing same-sex family futures than non-birth parents. The meanings participants give to their alternative forms of kinship indicate the continued significance of biogenetic relatedness, but the key to families staying together lies in whether "blood" relations are important to having equal forms of autonomy and authority in same-sex households.

In examining the potentiality of new reproductive practices to disrupt or assemble new meanings of heteronormativity, I made four key assertions in this dissertation:

First, structures of compulsory heterosexuality and motherhood simultaneously validate and marginalize female same-sex participants as deviant and immoral mother/fathers. While participants have been accused of transgressing social norms, their reproductive practices in raising children without husbands, with same-sex partners and/or by themselves, demonstrate varying degrees of cultural competence and negotiations with their gendered reproductive

habitus. Thus, far from being estranged from heteronormative social norms, their reproductive practices actually explicate their alignment or re-appropriation to norms of compulsory maternity and heterosexuality, except that these routes have not been legitimized by the state nor culturally approved. Their narratives reveal the power and pleasure of occupying normative categories, for example, in asserting their reproductive rights, their desires to be acknowledged as responsible and good mothers, or similar to ordinary and “normal” families, especially in reproducing ideologies of family stability.

Despite Singapore’s position as a biomedical hub for stem-cell cloning research, reproductive technologies for bio-security research are endorsed while reproduction for alternative family forms is prohibited. The state’s enactment of biopower reveals contradictions between reproductive technologies for capital and for life. What remains consistent, however, is the state’s paternalistic control over women’s reproductive autonomy, which, as an indoctrinated form of biopower has its roots in Singapore’s colonial past. Chinese lesbian mothers traveled abroad to secure access to fertility treatments at other regional medical facilities such as Bangkok and Sydney. Meanings of medical categories and whether they are regarded as ‘intended’ or ‘unintended’ users of fertility procedures shift as they move across national borders. Their transnational reproductive strategies demonstrate practices of flexible citizenship in overcoming the limits of paternalistic forms of biopower and at the same time introducing new contradictions to particular forms of social entitlement. Some of the lesbians noted that they would have more family and marital rights in countries where they are tourists or under restricted study/employment visas, rather than in Singapore, where they are supposedly citizens.

For most of the Malay-Muslim participants, new reproductive technologies appear irrelevant as a viable route to parenthood. Their narratives reinforce the durability of the relationship between substance and cultural codes of kinship, where sperm as the necessary substance for artificial insemination within the context of same-sex relationship is seen as sexually, rather than medically, transgressive. Placed together, the narratives of Malay and Chinese participants demonstrate the cultural limits to new reproductive technologies, which continue to be subsumed under structures of compulsory heterosexuality in both state and ethnic discourses.

Second, choices pertaining to reproduction, living arrangements, household responsibilities, relationships with children and long-term commitment and security reflect upon individuals’ subjective sensibilities and material realities that shape what is possible or not. From my findings, I conclude that the radical transformation of one’s gendered reproductive habitus or

the practical capacity to imagine and occupy new reproductive or family futures is predominantly determined by one's social and cultural capital and less influenced by one's accumulation of economic capital, although the latter is still significant to a certain extent. The symbolic ways in which participants innovate or re-traditionalize kinship norms are co-constitutive of particular constraints in their lived environments, such as restrictive access to fertility treatments, conservative, homophobic and religious attitudes of blood relatives, gendered structures of moral policing and partners' gendered sexual subjectivities and dispositions. These social constraints ultimately inform participants' practical enactments of gender, sexuality and kinship that are crucial to their survival as a family.

In this regard, some partners are more enabled than others to affirm queer representations of their family. Partners who are relatively more empowered know that they have acquired the cultural, economic and social capital to overcome negative consequences such as being disowned by natal kin members, confronting discriminatory state agencies and structures, and having their self-worth constantly scrutinized and invalidated. In contrast, their less privileged counterparts do not see any alternatives to survival but to reconsolidate norms and embody normativity, such as passing as a heterosexual woman or engaging in tacit kinship alliances in their everyday lives. They do so because they understand that any failed performances of heteronormativity will be negatively sanctioned and constitute withdrawal of forms of social support, which would be detrimental to their well-being. Eventually, for some of the working-class and ethnic minority Malay participants, the duality of trying to be normal while engaging in queer reproductive practices has unfortunately resulted in the end of their same-sex family.

In short, the closer same-sex families are positioned in proximity to heteronormative norms of social regulation, particularly in intimate social networks such as conservative family members and friends, the more limited their choices are in securing futures of belonging for their alternative family forms. In contrast, those whose primary social networks consist of members who are equally invested in challenging heterosexist gender norms, as well as practices of compulsory heterosexuality, are better positioned to challenge their gendered reproductive habitus and find meaningful ways to persist as a family unit, despite the fact that these practices have not been culturally sanctioned by the state and society.

Third, is the desire for same-sex partners to assimilate into heteronormative practices of kinship always homonormative? On the contrary, my dissertation demonstrates the paradox of subjectivation, where participants' agency to address or redress heteronormativity is shaped by matrices of power which in turn inform their capacities for meaningful enactments. The

intersectional analyses of participants' narratives regarding mother/fatherhood reinforces my pre-theoretical conviction that heteronormativity is not a binary narrative of heterosexuality versus homosexuality. Participants' strategies of disidentification with intensive mothering, self-sacrificial motherhood and normative sexualities of motherhood reveal expansive registers of experience that cannot simply be reduced to whether their practices are conforming to or resisting norms. On the contrary, participants deploy cultural resources that are available within their practical milieu to enact and achieve meaningful goals they find necessary to their self-determination and survival. These resources are mediated by their membership in different ethnic, socio-economic class and gender paradigms. Racialized class structures in Singapore, for instance, contribute to particular narratives of motherhood. Malay working-class mothers, in comparison to their Chinese middle-class counterparts, tend to emphasize maternal selflessness as a key attribute to being a good mother, precisely because their maternal competences have been stigmatized as incompetent or irresponsible in Singapore.

Depending on their subject positions, participants' experiences with troubling the 'normal' do not necessarily translate to the end of heteronormativity. Rather, their enactment of mainstreaming practices or respectability politics in emulating middle-class ideologies to occupy meaningful forms of 'good' motherhood reveals hostile contexts in which these performances are paramount. Additionally, mothers' politics of respectability, even in privileged approximation to heteronormativity, testify to a resignification and/or displacement of norms, especially when they are being reconstituted by their queer, minoritarian abject bodies and practices.

Fourth, female same-sex households or queer single-mother households do not exist in isolation but are imbricated within larger hetero-patriarchal discourses of 'proper' families and traditional family hierarchies. Not all same-sex households are autonomous and for those who cannot afford to outsource care to domestic helpers or childcare centers, members depend on larger kin networks for provision of support and stability. From working-class participant narratives, these forms of co-dependency may reinforce the regulation of patriarchy. In lieu of patriarchal husbands, the specter of the dominant 'heterosexual' man exists powerfully in the everyday lives of Malay single mothers and butch fathers, some of whom have been unfairly treated within their natal and chosen households. Paternalistic practices, endorsed by the state and regulated by natal families, continue to position women as subordinate to men and/or stipulate caregiving as the primary duty of women, enforced by senior members of the household such as fathers, mothers and siblings. These forms of power relations negate same-sex partners' family

power and autonomy while also revealing paradoxes of the ‘working mother’ or ‘supermom’ as the ideal citizen.

Within same-sex households, power differentials, unlike in traditional gender household models, are not centered around one’s economic advantage as the provider, through wage labor. Rather, partners acquire family power and influence to wield particular actions and demands through interpersonal interactions with fellow household members or larger kin networks. In particular, partners’ gendered dispositions and orientations to gender norms of masculinity and femininity, the legal and biological status of same-sex parents, differences in socio-economic and education backgrounds, and the emotional and economic stability of partners are crucial determinants that influence whether partners engage in egalitarian, complementary or traditional masculine/provider, feminine/caregiver gender models.

Middle-class families of similarly gendered partners and socio-economic backgrounds are able to successfully materialize their egalitarian ideals through everyday domestic practices because partners are acknowledged to have similar forms of competencies and acquisitions of family power. However, for working-class Malay families, egalitarian practices are compromised, especially when birth mothers are accorded greater family power based on their biological connections with children. Thus, power in the household is more equally distributed when both same-sex partners are conscious about transforming gendered heteronormative discourses, that is, in recognizing that practices of masculinity/provider and femininity/caregiver are socially constructed and fluid, instead of natural, fixed and monolithic. Families which adhere to the latter tend to reproduce unequal hierarchies of domesticity that may privilege a kin member, usually birth mothers and their natal kin, and disempower the butch, foster parent within the household. In this regard, the masculinity of butch participants, even in their competency to provide for their household and nurture children, is subordinate to biocentric ideologies of procreative nuclear kinship. Thus, same-sex households that privilege the authority of birth mothers reconstitute patriarchal power through forms of maternal gatekeeping.

Based on participants gendered sexual subjectivities, the four key assertions further demonstrate the significance of race and class as intertwining privileges co-shaping participants’ negotiations of heteronormativity, and in securing participants’ futures of belonging as a same-sex family.

While alternative kinship practices highlight radical sites of possibilities for the transformation and/or retraditionalization of heteronormativity, these possibilities have not been translated into equal citizenship rights in Singapore. In mediating between current alternative

family practices and futures of belonging, I conclude by offering strategies to connect these radical possibilities into sites of justice and inclusion. Among my research sample, deep polarities exist in terms of participants' education and income levels, race, class, gender and sexual identities that any language of rights needs to be examined with greater precision to the politics of space and location so as to not exclude or silence voices of those that do not have similar access. In this regard, my dissertation opens up spaces of radical inquiry by examining the possibilities of creating lines of needs-based solidarity and how to put those needs in representation among unlikely allies who share similar communities of fate.

7.2 Politics of Recognition and Belonging: Differentiated Needs for Family

In my research, although some women and butch participants may share and articulate similar needs or interests, it is difficult to generalize what their needs are as a collective. Since participants occupy diverse social locations and gender and sexual subjectivities as members of different societies, their interests and needs are similarly shaped in complex and, to a certain extent, even conflicting ways. My dissertation shows how various categories of women might be affected differently, and may act or articulate their needs differently on account of the particularities of their social positions and enacted identities. Thus, participants' propositions describing their social landscapes in terms similar to being "heterosexist", "patriarchal" or "homophobic" reveals how the individual exists in relation to the state or community. In furthering potential research on same-sex futures of recognition and belonging, I had asked participants what their primary difficulties were and what they felt could improve their current and future lives.

Based on my findings, I delineated two different types of participants' interests, strategic versus practical gender interests, to understand their capacities to struggle and benefit from social change. Strategic interests include the equal redistribution of domestic labor and caregiving, discriminatory practices against women, sexual and reproductive autonomy and protection against structural and domestic violence and control over women. The formulation of these demands are considered "feminist" because of the level of political consciousness required to translate these claims into political action. Since not everyone possesses similar "feminist" capacities and cultural capital to articulate their interests and needs, practical interests serve as a response to an immediate perceived need and do not generally entail an overarching strategic goal toward women's emancipation or gender equality. The concept of dual interests is sensitive to the

different kinds of political capacities that my participants possess or have acquired, and to the notion that participants may differ in terms of their understanding of “women’s interests” due to their social location. In the context of my research, while all participants were able to voice their immediate needs, not all of them were able to articulate their immediate needs with the strategic interest of challenging heteronormativity and/or gender inequality.

7.2.1 It Should Be Legal: Decriminalization of 377A and Moving Beyond Marriage Equality

Openly out middle-class and university-educated Chinese lesbian co-mothers tend to discuss their struggles and needs while also addressing the inadequacies of state laws to protect their rights as citizens. They view the retention of the penal code 377A that criminalizes sodomy and the non-legal recognition of same-sex marriage as directly affecting their well-being and survival as a family. At the surface level, the decriminalization of 377A and legalization of same-sex marriage would resolve their immediate needs. To what extent are these needs practical and/or strategic?

Chinese lesbian mothers regard it as a form of injustice and hypocrisy for the government to preach tolerance of LGBT citizens without providing equal social and legal entitlements that heterosexual citizens have access to, such as the ability to express love through marriage. Thus, what they are demanding is not just same-sex marriage, although they view such provisions as ideal to their family structure. Rather, they are demanding equal access to the kinds of socio-legal protections and basic material benefits afforded to family forms and relationships that are endorsed by the state. This is well-articulated by one participant:

Many of [LGBT Singaporeans] aren’t broken, but the law breaks us from birth. 377A continues to tell LGBT children [or children of LGBT parents] that they are wrong and undeserving of recognition, protection or inclusion.

They are vocal about the decriminalization of 377A because the penal code portrays non-normative sexual expressions or same-sex relationships as deviant and “unnatural”. Even though the state has proclaimed not to enforce this ruling, it affects the way other Singaporeans view LGBT people and compromises their families, particular their children’s vulnerability to being bullied or chastised in schools.

For lesbian mothers, a change in the law through the decriminalization of 377A and legal support for same-sex marriage can create a truly tolerant society, rather than relying on the goodwill of individuals to create a diverse community. One of them claims that social change where a society is accepting of LGBT people cannot happen under the “tyranny of the poorly

informed...the entitled paper-certificate holders, the one-newspaper readers.” From this statement, lesbian mothers demonstrate awareness toward the government’s ownership and control over communications ideological state apparatuses such as the local mainstream media, radio and television, and that their negative portrayals of LGBT citizens has shaped Singaporeans’ poor perception of LGBT individuals. Due to this structure of control, lesbian mothers think that only the state can affect change in attitudes because it is hard to transform the mindset of the well-regulated, middle-class and university-educated Singaporeans whose thoughts, practices and behaviors set the typical norms of which other Singaporeans, such as themselves, are measured against.

Thus, decriminalizing 377A and legalizing same-sex marriage is both a practical and strategic need. First, it serves to de-stigmatize the sexual shame that affects the emotional well-being of their same-sex family. In addition, legal recognition of their family status would enable them access to subsidized public housing. Addressing these socio-legal inequalities in citizenship entitlements may resolve their immediate need for family protection and housing. At the same time, their needs are also strategic in pushing the state to recognize family diversity beyond the heterosexual nuclear family.

However, despite their desires for the legalization of same-sex marriage in Singapore, lesbian mothers are also equally aware of gender inequalities embedded in Singapore’s paternalistic acquisition of citizenship. In this regard, they find that legalization of same-sex marriage would be a possible eventuality through the critical dismantling of hetero-patriarchal gender structures. Thus their claims toward same-sex marriage take into account gender inequalities within larger structures of state-society relations, where they view the legalization of same-sex marriage as solving only an immediate need—while beneficial to them, it does not resolve persistent gender inequalities in the system. Thus, they make claims for same-sex marriage only insofar as a practice of solidarity of needs and interests with other female Singaporean citizens who have not been afforded similar entitlements, for example, to confer citizenship to foreign spouses or to access public resources and assistance due to a lack of legal marital status. Their larger concern is for the government to stop privileging male citizens over females and, more importantly, for the government to recognize the contributions of spouses in building a stable family regardless of gender, sexuality and nationality, and to offer equal protections to all members of the family.

Additionally, lesbian couples have indeed gotten married and receive fertility treatment overseas as a practice of self-determination and legitimation toward their commitment and love to

each other and their goals to raise family together. While their same-sex marriages are legally recognized in countries of which they are non-citizens, their marriage certificates are only useful in private spheres' consumption rather than public entitlements. They can, for instance, make insurance claims as spouses but are not able to use their marital status to obtain housing or tax reliefs as a family. In this regard, they do realize their privilege in being entitled to same-sex family recognition in their private lives, but also demonstrate how discriminatory heteronormative structures compromise their intimate sense of well-being. Thus, they feel dissatisfied with the state's assurance that homosexuals are "entitled to their private lives" because it means that they are penalized each time their family pushes for recognition in the public sphere, such as being protected from bullying in schools and their inability to secure permanent forms of housing as well as parenting tax reliefs. The legitimization of LGBT citizens through private and intimate forms of consumption absolves the state's responsibility toward them as tax-paying citizens equally deserving of public inclusion.

As children of single mothers and divorced families themselves, Chinese lesbian mothers have experienced the stigma that caregivers and children encounter in a country that insists upon a singular heterosexual nuclear model of "proper" families. They posit that any caregiving relationship that is invested and committed to ensure a stable and caring environment for all members, such as dependents that are children or elderly, should be legally constituted and validated as a proper kinship unit. In this regard, they position their same-sex family as *no different* from other caregiving units such as single mothers, grandparents and relatives who are similarly responsible in raising children. The only difference that same-sex families face is the cultural stigma based on their sexual orientation that has been discursively positioned as abnormal, unnatural and illegal. Thus, laws surrounding the family should focus on the caregiving contributions and practices of members than the biological relations, marital status or sexual identities of caregivers.

By articulating their solidarity as co-lesbian mothers to other diverse single-parent family units, some of them do not hesitate to position their upper middle-class two-parent family unit as a marker of privilege. Olivia and Irene, for instance, realize that their efforts in promoting awareness for non-normative family forms must also address discriminatory moral and legal structures that differentiate and privilege married mothers from single mothers. In forming lines of solidarity, some lesbian women utilize their race and class privilege as "unwed" mothers to also mobilize support against a social structure that attributes the absence of legal marital status as a fundamentally moral issue that justifies single mothers' "undeservedness" in terms of social

acceptance, protection and security. In this regard, they position family-based rights through a recognition of intersecting needs with heterosexual women who share similar fates as exiles of the heteronormative family.

Some lesbian mothers are also cautious about how they use their racial and class privilege as upper middle-class Chinese women to push for marriage equality for gays and lesbians. They have, for instance, denied the requests of gay activists whose agenda is to feature their same-sex family as exemplars of a “stable family” because their education pedigree and esteemed occupations “fit the profile” of a “successful” family. One couple found such “homonormative” politics “distasteful and insensitive” because it disregards the family and caregiving practices of the less privileged.

To conclude, lesbian mothers’ aims in claiming recognition and respect for their same-sex family is based upon their belief that no family is superior to the other and that families come in different forms, engaging in diverse caregiving choices and strategies that they find crucial to their survival. To promote social inclusivity and belonging, and for the protection and security of adult caregivers and their dependents, they find it imperative for the government to support family diversity rather than penalize non-traditional nuclear family forms. They do not see same-sex marriage as a long-term solution that ends heteronormative and prejudicial attitudes towards alternative families, because the structure of marriage is primarily based on a two-parent unit, which does not encompass other familial experiences that includes single mothers and fathers, grandparents, friends or relatives taking care of children. Thus, only the acceptance of family diversity beyond biocentric and procreative ideologies of kinship will create an empathetic society that will ensure equal protection of citizenship rights instead of pushing already marginalized citizens further into vulnerability.

Lesbian co-mothers’ articulation of both practical and strategic interests to push for equal citizenship rights are directed at the state’s structures of kinship and systems of care that privilege legally married, heterosexual nuclear families legitimized as a “proper” unit. They view the state as holding a monopoly over the symbolic power of “family” and gender norms, which accords certain lives and citizens as having more worth and being deserving of protection and benefits over others. Their claims for equality, in terms of decriminalizing 377A and legalizing same-sex marriage, are not only intended as a solution to address their immediate needs as a same-sex family, but also strategic to counter heteronormative exclusions that prescribe certain forms of citizenship, primarily based on sexual identity, as liminal and precarious. Their demands for equality are informed through their acquisition of cultural capital which, as highly educated and

well-read global citizens, contributes to their self-worth as deserving of equal respect against a homophobic social landscape. This self-esteem empowers their political agency and capacities to challenge the prejudice of local institutions as well as members of the public.

Unlike with the Malay queer participants, the focus on sexual rights features prominently in Chinese lesbian mothers' narrative of social entitlement because it is salient to their experience of marginalization where their lack of reproductive rights positions them, and by extension, their children, as incomplete citizens. At the same time, I found that lesbian couples, who organize and isolate their lives primarily around their queer identities and social networks to protect themselves against social discrimination, tend to articulate same-sex partnership rights as the end goal for reproductive rights and social justice. In comparison, lesbian mothers who view their sexual identity as only an aspect of their personhood are able to situate their marginalized same-sex experiences within broader relations of power that also affect the families of less-privileged heterosexual citizens. The latter is able to make broader claims for solidarity based on needs to address gender and reproductive inequalities in heteronormative policies rather than view their same-sex experience as an exceptional form of marginalization. Overall, the claims made by all the lesbian mothers demonstrate their entitlement to public resources and legal recognition, and not simply the right to exist only within the confines of their domestic private lives.

7.2.2 Promoting Inclusive Discourses to Counter Homophobia in the Muslim World

Malay Muslim lesbian and butch participants who have become active in forming queer Muslim support network vocalize their needs and rights in different capacities than their Chinese lesbian counterparts. The ways in which they articulate their needs is reflective of the marginalization they experience as queer Muslims within a tight-knit ethnic community in Singapore. Their desire to maintain close relationships with their natal kin makes them cautious about participating publicly in LGBT events and discussions because they fear being "outed" or bringing shame to their families.

Queer-identified Malay Muslim participants do not view the promotion of marriage equality as their primary interest in demanding social inclusivity. Although legalizing same-sex marriage would benefit the LGBT community as a whole, they are aware that their same-sex marriage, even if legalized, would still not be condoned by the larger Malay Muslim community. Most of them similarly recognize that, as Singaporean Muslims, they are de-facto subjected to different marital laws under the Shariah court. Without even taking same-sex marriage into the

equation, Singaporean Muslims are legally prohibited from getting married through the civil court unless they have denounced their faith. For the queer Malay participants who view the Islamic faith as fundamental to their subjectivity, the legalization of same-sex marriage would have made little difference to their legitimization as a same-sex family.

Based on their personal experiences, Malay Muslim participants emphasize homophobia within their families and the Malay Muslim community as the most salient denominator of their everyday struggles, rather than discriminatory penal code laws, *per se*. Countering homophobia becomes a practical need for them as it appears as an immediate form of discomfort. Those who are more involved in Malay queer networks suggest two forms of strategies to counter homophobia. First, this can be achieved primarily through the reconciliation of their queer sexualities within Islamic frameworks that they find important and meaningful as a source of self-legitimation. Second, they may share and exchange their Islamic knowledge and training to wider social networks that promote diversity and equality such as LGBT, interfaith and humanist, feminist, Malay academic and liberal Muslim activist and advocacy social networks and support groups. Third, they find it important to connect with regional activist networks in Muslim-dominated countries like Malaysia and Indonesia. Their connection with regional Muslim groups has been useful because they are able to leverage on the resources of Malaysian and Indonesian Muslim feminists and humanist scholars who provide training on promoting a language of human rights in Islam.

Queer-identified Malay participants view their reconciliatory strategies as different from the needs of local gay and lesbian activists who push for equality in citizenship rights and the decriminalization of 377A. Their practical needs are strategic insofar as they seek to dismantle an image of Islam as punitive toward LGBT Muslims, but this does not necessarily translate into organizing for equal citizen rights at the national level. Their articulation of needs for equal respect and dignity is aimed toward building capacities for self-worth, where they view self-empowerment through mastering religious knowledge and continued training as necessary for future strategic needs to raise awareness about LGBT Muslims within their families and ethnic community.

In this regard, they find it more strategic to push towards creating diverse and safe spaces for dialogue with members of the Malay Muslim community as a platform to push for tolerance and equal respect toward their co-existence. They are also building networks of solidarity with regional LGBT Muslim members and keeping abreast of queer developments and movements in the larger Muslim world. The differences in articulating needs and rights between queer-

identified Chinese and Malay participants highlights the significance of racially-segregated networks and class-integrated (Moore, 2011) experiences that shape differentiated interpretive horizons in challenging heteronormativity.

7.2.3 Custodial Rights and Unequal Caregiving Responsibilities

Although the Malay divorced mothers did not state homophobia or LGBT rights as their primary difficulty, they articulated the fear of losing the custody of their children due to their romantic involvement with their female same-sex partners. In this respect, they positioned their needs differently from lesbian co-mothers and queer-identified Muslim women due to their individual subjectivities and life experiences. Malay divorced mothers' claims reveal how particular heteronormative norms discriminate against and differentiate men and women's performances of heterosexuality, especially in terms of caregiving and custodial rights, as well as women's authority in female-headed households.

The Shariah court's focus on religious welfare of children has created concerns among Malay Muslim single mothers who fear losing the custody of their children should their ex-husbands find out that they have been intimately involved and/or sharing a household with female partners. While cases of divorced mothers who become lesbians are rarely heard in the Shariah court, I have spoken to lawyers who claimed that they have worked on such cases. I was also informed that none of their lesbian clients have lost custody of children simply on the account of their sexuality, but for other reasons such as emotional instability, history of drug use and drinking and evidence of child neglect. They claimed that they have yet to encounter a case in which lesbian mothers who show evidence of consistent care and stable home environment have lost custody of her children.

Pertaining to custody issues, some divorced mothers pointed out that state agencies seem to give little recognition to the decision-making role of mothers who have been awarded joint custody, care and control of the children. Most state application forms for matters pertaining to housing and children's education require ex-husbands' approval through signed consent. According to the Housing Development Board's rules, for example, only one partner is allowed to purchase or retain a public housing flat after a divorce is finalized. Usually the partner who has care and control and resides with the children will get priority, but consent from the non-resident partner is needed in case of future disputes. Due to these forms of paternalistic policies, divorced mothers stated that they often had to take multiple trips, often taxing on their time, to meet with

state officials in order to petition for a waiver of consent, where there is no guarantee of endorsement. One divorced mother articulated:

Does the government not see how getting an ex-husband to give his consent is like asking to be abused? What's in it for ex-spouses to let their wives purchase a flat? They are assuming that all fathers are responsible and care for the interest and welfare of the children. Not every man is a good, normal father. Some, like my ex, enjoy seeing their wives suffer more than giving children comfort.

The state's assumption that divorced parents would practice equal responsibility and consideration toward children's interest and welfare disregards actual practices in which single-mothers bear the burden of child caregiving. Numerous research has shown that married mothers tend to be home managers responsible for children's education and well-being (Suratman, 2011; Hing, 2004; Ochiai, 2008). Thus, the state's insistence that divorced fathers with joint custody have equal say in major parenting decisions like a child's school options may actually detract from the caregiving autonomy of single-mothers who may have to live with the consequences of their ex-spouse's decisions which may not be in the best interests of their children.

In terms of decision-making matters pertaining to education, for instance, the Ministry of Education (MOE) requires the approval of both divorced partners to enroll their children in public elementary schools, or to transfer a child to another school. Some divorced mothers exclaimed that the state's assumption that all fathers would be 'naturally' invested in their biological children has produced rather undignified situations whereby mothers had to resort to begging their ex-spouses in order to demand their co-operation to transfer or register their children for education needs that would be in the best interest of children.

In this instance, the government's ideal of "responsible" joint-custody husbands makes caregiving for single-mothers even more difficult and emotionally stressful, especially when reality demonstrates otherwise. The assumption that divorced parents should maintain family harmony and mutual co-operation, as reflected in education and housing requirements, penalizes divorced mothers who are already struggling to maintain their single-income households, and reinforces forms of structural violence onto female-headed households.

If, in a marriage, parenting responsibilities are hardly equal between Singaporean men and women, what is the guarantee of parental equity after a divorce? Joint-custody and non-residential husbands may veto parenting decisions that do not work in their favor, but unlike married husbands and fathers, they do not have to be accountable for the logistics and effects of these decisions in their everyday lives. Single mothers with joint custody, care and control who are responsible for the daily needs of their children, should be given greater autonomy in

parenting decisions. In this regard, social policies pertaining to children should protect single mothers from situations of potential abuse of veto-power by ex-spouses instead of penalizing them for having a non-cooperative co-parent. From the stories told by divorced mothers in my research, the burden of proof has been on women to demonstrate that their husbands are uncooperative, while husbands can veto caregiving decisions without having to exhaust time and money in dealing with the bureaucracy.

As evidenced through my divorced mothers' experience, social policies focusing on two-parent decisions gives a non-co-operative and non-contributing parent a misplaced sense of familial and patriarchal entitlement. Heteronormative social policies that privilege two-parent households place the burden of caregiving unequally on divorced mothers who have to bear the time and cost of making their parental decisions heard and validated. Their experiences also exemplify the dominance of the 'heterosexual' man through the state's misrecognition of the needs of mothers, as heads-of-the-household, instead of fathers.

7.3 The Way Forward: Ruminations of Family-Based Rights and Strategies

Warner (1999), has been explicit in his criticisms toward gay rights activists who promote same-sex marriage as the primary goal for LGBT activism. The genesis of my dissertation research has been shaped by scholars like Warner. Through the findings of my research, I similarly view the exclusive promotion of same-sex marriage as inadequate and undesirable because it stigmatizes people who engage in diverse types of non-normative relationships and also negates a broad range of legal benefits and social entitlements that would be more equitable for the entire community. Further, a focus on same-sex marriage as a goal toward sexual citizenship prescribes an institutional sanctioning and mainstreaming of certain types of relationships at the expense of other queer forms of kinship which are, by contrast, abnormal, shameful and inferior. In this regard, family-based approaches to sexual citizenship (for example, arguing for the rights of same-sex marriage) potentially constrain the limits of queer experiences and subjectivities and implicitly reinforce heteronormativity (Bell and Binnie, 2000).

The empirical narratives in my dissertation strengthen Plummer's (2001) method of 'intimate citizenship' in privileging the multiplicity of intimate and erotic relationships that relates closely to my participants' experiences and negotiations of sexuality, motherhood and kinship formations. In following the stories as shared by the participants, these narratives not only

blur private and public boundaries of citizenship as pointed out by feminist scholars (Lister, 2003) but also demonstrate the limitations of citizenship rights if only narrowly defined through a focus on sexuality.

Analyses from previous chapters have explicated how participants are embedded in multiple webs of power. Thus, their political subjecthood is informed by these multiple and fluid subjectivities that mirror multiple differentiations and marginalizations of groups that are seldom visible to a patriarchal and heteronormative state. Amongst the participants who identify as a parent, some of them are women, some masculine-identified, some are middle-class, some require welfare, some are religious, some are atheist; some are Chinese while others are minority Malay Muslims; and some are queer while others become queer only in the context of their same-sex relationship. Their articulation of needs and desires for particular forms of social entitlement depends on which of these differences are salient to their experiences. By connecting these “less familiar dots” (Weston, 1991) of kinship in the previous chapters, I was able to situate the differentiated experiences, inclusions and exclusions to citizenship in Singapore. In this regard, a focus on same-sex marital rights would benefit the middle-class Chinese lesbians who are already approximating heteronormative middle-class family practices, while this continues to discredit the family and reproductive experiences of less-privileged minoritarian participants.

While examining intimate narratives offers a locus to view participants’ sense of self-determination as citizens, do all expressions of self-determination count as forms of political agency? Lister (2003: 37) argues that for any theorizations of citizenship to be of potential value to women and minorities, we need to account for access to political participation that is not just based on articulation of needs and rights alone. Similarly, Collins, in adopting a Black feminist standpoint to examine political capacities of welfare mothers, describes agency as a form of self-definition through which Black women’s consciousness as equal human subjects enables them to enact control over aspects of their lives that require social validation (2000: 106-7). The belief that one is entitled to equal worth and rights and act in that capacity as a citizen reinforces one’s sense of political agency. Through my research, I found that more educated middle-class participants who were already connected to LGBT social networks and support groups were able to translate their intimate struggles into a language of political rights and inclusion at the national level. However, ethnic minority working-class participants experience difficulties in overcoming their non-normative stigmatized positions and, in this regard, reinforce discourses that categorize them as undeserving of equal forms of social entitlements.

Further, another issue that would be of further research interest is to question, if subjects desire validation as equal citizens, at what levels of society they are acting as agents: is it within themselves, family, community or nation? What are the implications? Here, Foucault's paradox of subjectivation is also useful, where he argues that the very processes and conditions that secure a subject's subordination are also the very means by which she derives her consciousness and agency (Foucault, 1980; 1988). My research has demonstrated that not every participant possesses similar capacities to translate intimate experiences of exclusion to public spheres of citizenship where claims can translate to potential forms of social action. In this regard, my dissertation's contribution to future scholarship on alternative families in Singapore is the attention given to the claim that not every desire for self-autonomy is a desire for full political participation. Ethnic minority working-class participants tend to articulate desires for social inclusion at the level of the family and immediate social networks rather than on a larger national scale. In comparison, middle-class and university-educated women tend to evoke the state and global political movements in articulating their claims for social inclusion. The significance of race and class relations in determining one's access to forms of social support and resources remains an important factor in discussions of non-normative subject positions and practices.

The global LGBT movement of "coming out" for sexual minorities to be publicly visible is regarded as a political strategy for social inclusion. Yet, as I have already discussed in previous chapters, coming out is a privilege that is not afforded to all of my participants. Susan James (1992: 60) describes the importance of self-esteem where a stable sense of self and confidence that one is worthy to participate in political life is necessary for agency. In some of my participants, the fear of being prosecuted for being a 'bad' mother, a lesbian and a sexual deviant, points to a lack (or loss) of self-esteem that is also derived from past punitive consequences due to a disclosure of their intimate practices. James also states that being marginalized based on factors such as race, class, gender and sexuality hampers one's ability to develop one's full potential as citizens to exercise demands for rights.

These observations further sharpen Warner's criticisms by questioning who stands to benefit from marriage equality rights and who continues to remain at the fringes of progressive family movements. Moreover, neoliberal states value the family as the first line and primary site of social support and self-reliance. The reinforcement of marriage as the key site of family support continues to absolve the state from providing services to individuals who may not have the kinds of family or social support to rely on. In this regard, any progressive and radical strategy for social inclusivity of reproductive rights has to move beyond marriage as the hallmark

of ‘family’ and re-center the focus to a practice-based approach of family by redistributing rights and privileges to people who engage in mutual systems of caregiving, love and devotion, but who may not have access to heteronormative or homonormative ideals of marriage, or extensive social networks of support.

Additionally, in an anti-welfare state like Singapore, researchers have to be careful to avoid engaging in defensive research by making claims that lesbian families embody state ideals of family stability and intensive mothering and therefore deserving of equal citizenship rights. The mainstreaming of queer motherhood into middle-class practices of heteronormativity may be strategic in legitimizing lesbian-led households, but it continues to reinforce privileged narratives of middle-class stability and self-reliance as definitive of a ‘proper’ family. It excludes the reproductive practices of those who, due to their class positions, material and social circumstances, struggle to even be recognized as ‘good’ citizens, much less family.

Anthropologists who examine transnational gay and lesbian movements have made the important observation that the rights-based language of LGBT activism is a privileged movement that represents the experiences of educated middle-class queers, with lack of access to these spaces cohering along the lines of race, gender, sexuality and class (Lewin and Leap, 2009). Through years of fieldwork, I noticed similar patterns of privileged access in LGBT activism and social scenes in Singapore. The more upwardly mobile and cosmopolitan participants are more likely to talk about individual rights than their less privileged and racial minority counterparts who speak of social entitlements through family and ethnic community. My interactions with less privileged and racial minority same-sex parents have thus made me aware that in terms of proxies to rights, not everyone can say what rights they have been excluded from but these people do know what they need, and should be socially entitled to, in terms of having a work-life balance, access to permanent and affordable housing, sustainable child and elderly parent care arrangements and being accorded equal respect and autonomy to choose who they can desire, love and share a life with.

By enforcing the image of heterosexual nuclear families as the only legitimate form of healthy relationships and family life, the state is complicit in enacting forms of structural violence upon the lives of citizens who, by virtue of their personal and structural circumstances, are not able to approximate those norms. Additionally, some of the participants’ narratives exposes the myth of “blood” family, as the first line of social support. Their experiences of rejection and inequalities demonstrates instead, the power of the heteronormative family to enact perpetual and/or potential forms of gender-based violence. In this regard, an inclusive society should

consider expanding the notion of social support beyond rigid definitions of biological family relations.

In concluding this dissertation, I attempt to underscore the importance of precision to the articulation of rights, needs and social entitlements among same-sex partners by thoroughly engaging in disparities through understanding roots of structural inequalities that people confront globally and locally as well as locating my own position in this system in my attempts to bridge these polarities through ethnographic methods.

Based on my research, I therefore make the recommendation that to promote a just and inclusive society, especially in a country where forming a ‘proper’ family nucleus has a strong bearing on citizens obtaining access to public goods and services, a cultural paradigm shift is necessary to rethink what constitutes family, and by extension, who belongs to ‘family’. For this shift to happen, the Singapore state and society needs to first address inequalities in gender through their heteronormative social policies, since the regulation of family norms has been marshaled through the control of women’s desires, bodies and sexual practices. In addition, the government must recognize all forms of desires and sexual practices as valid by recognizing gender, sex and sexual orientation as areas in which citizens are entitled to equal protection under the Singapore law and constitution.

Finally, if all roads lead to Rome, then this dissertation prescribes that all routes to reproduction and cumulative practices of caregiving lead to family, and by definition, equal citizenship worth. The state’s insistence on prescribing value, recognition and rewards to only ‘the natural path’ enacts a form of symbolic and material violence that erases all other practices and labors of love that queer individuals, same-sex partners and children engage in to be and become a family.

LIST OF REFERENCES

- Acker, Joan
 2004 "Gender, Capitalism and Globalization". *Critical Sociology*. 17-41.
 2006 *Class Questions: Feminist Answers*. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers.
- Adkins, Lisa
 2002 *Revisions: Gender and Sexuality in Late Modernity*. Buckingham [UK]: Open University Press.
- Agigian, Amy
 2004 *Baby Steps: How Lesbian Alternative Insemination is Changing the World*. Middletown, Conn: Wesleyan University Press.
- Alatas, Hussein
 1977 *The Myth of the Lazy Native: A Study of the Image of the Malays, Filipinos and Javanese from the 16th to the 20th century and its Function in the Ideology of Colonial Capitalism*. London: F. Cass.
- Alcoff, Linda M
 2006 *Visible Identities: Race, Gender and the Self*. London: Oxford University Press.
- Aljunied, Sharifah Zahra
 1979 "Ethnic Distribution of Employment in Singapore: The Malays." *Academic Exercise*, Department of Economics and Statistics, Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences, National University of Singapore.
- Altman, Dennis
 2001 *Global Sex*. Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press.
- Attorney-General's Chambers.
 "Part IV: Fundamental Liberties". *Constitution of the Republic of Singapore*. Singapore Statutes Online, accessed Mar 26, 2016 from <http://goo.gl/m6gEqT>
- Barlow, Kathleen, and Bambi L. Chapin
 2010 "The Practicing of Mothering: An Introduction". *Ethos*. 38 (4): 324-338.

Becker, Gary S

- 1960 "An Economic Analysis of Fertility" In *Demographic and Economic Change in Developed Countries*, ed. National Bureau of Economic Research. Princeton: Princeton University Press. pp 209-231.

Bell, David, and Jon Binnie

- 2000 *The Sexual Citizen: Queer Politics and Beyond*. Cambridge, UK: Polity.

Bennett, Linda Rae

- 2005 *Women, Islam and Modernity: Single Women, Sexuality and Reproductive Health in Contemporary Indonesia*. London: RoutledgeCurzon.

Berlant, Lauren and Michael Warner

- 1998 "Sex in Public" *Critical Inquiry* 24(2), Intimacy, pp 547-566.

Berry, Chris, Fran Martin, and Audrey Yue

- 2003 *Mobile Cultures: New Media in Queer Asia*. Durham: Duke University Press.

Betts, Russell Henry

- 1975 *Multiracialism, Meritocracy and the Malays of Singapore*. PhD Thesis. Department of Political Science: Massachusetts Institute of Technology.

Bhabha, Jacqueline

- 2006 "'Not a Sack of Potatoes': Moving and Removing Children across Borders." *Boston University Public Interest Law Journal* 15(2): 197-218.

Biblarz, Timothy J. and Evren Savci

- 2010 "Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Families". *Journal of Marriage and Family*. 72: 480-497

Birch, David

- 1998 "Constructing Asian Values: National Identities and 'Responsible Citizens'". *Social Semiotics*. 8 (2-3): 177-201.

Blackwood, Evelyn

- 1995 "Senior Women, Model Mothers, and Dutiful Wives: Managing Gender Contradictions in a Minangkabau village". In *Bewitching Women, Pious Men*. eds. Aihwa Ong and Michael Peletz. pp124-158.
- 2005 "Wedding Bell Blues: Marriage, Missing men, and Matrifocal follies". *American Ethnologist*. 32 (1): 4-19.
- 2010 *Falling into the Lesbi World: Desire and Difference in Indonesia*. Honolulu, HI: University of Hawaii Press.

Blackwood, Evelyn and Saskia Wieringa

1999 *Female Desires: Same-Sex Relations and Transgender Practices across Cultures*. New York: Columbia University Press.

2007 "Globalization, Sexuality and Silences: Women's Sexualities and Masculinities in an Asian Context". In *Women's Sexualities and Masculinities in a Globalizing Asia*. Edited by Saskia Wieringa, Evelyn Blackwood, and Abha Bhaiya. New York: Palgrave Macmillan. pp 1-20.

Blake, Judith

1968 "Are Babies Consumer Durables? A Critique of the Economic Theory of Reproductive Motivation." *Population Studies* 22(1): 5-25.

Boellstorff, Tom

2005 *The Gay Archipelago Sexuality and Nation in Indonesia*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

2007 *A Coincidence of Desires: Anthropology, Queer studies, Indonesia*. Durham: Duke University Press.

2008 *Coming of Age in Second Life: An Anthropologist Explores the Virtually Human*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Bouquet, Mary

2000 "Figures of Relations: Reconnecting Kinship Studies and Museum Collections". *Cultures of Relatedness: New Approaches to the Study of Kinship*. Cambridge edited by Janet Carsten. pp167-190.

Bourdieu, Pierre

1977 *Outline of a Theory of Practice*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.

1990 *The Logic of Practice*. Richard Nice, trans. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.

Briggs, Laura

2006 "Making 'American' Families: Transnational Adoption and US Latin America Policy" In *Haunted by Empire: Geographies of Intimacy in North American History*. ed. Ann L. Stoler. Durham: Duke University. pp 344-65

Brown, Ivana

2011 *A Sociological Analysis of Maternal Ambivalence: Class and Race Differences among New Mothers*. PhD Dissertation, Dept of Sociology, Rutgers University. Accessed May 5, 2016 <http://hdl.rutgers.edu/1782.1/rucore10001600001.ETD.000057506>.

Brown, Rita Mae

1972 "The Woman-Identified Woman." *The Ladder* (Winter): 13.

Butler, Judith

1993 *Bodies that Matter: On the Discursive Limits of Sex*. London: Routledge.

1999 *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*. New York: Routledge.

2002 *Antigone's Claim: Kinship between Life and Death*. New York: Columbia University Press.

Calhoun, Cheshire

- 2000 *Feminism, the Family, and the Politics of the Closet: Lesbian and Gay Displacement*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Carsten, Janet

- 1995 "The Substance of Kinship and the Heat of the Hearth: Feeding, Personhood, and Relatedness among Malays in Pulau Langkawi." *American Ethnologist: The Journal of the American Ethnological Society*. 22: 223-241.
- 2000 *Cultures of Relatedness: New Approaches to the Study of Kinship*. Cambridge [England]: Cambridge University Press.
- 2004 *After Kinship*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.

Cedaw Committee

- 2007 39th Session, Summary Record of the 803rd meeting- Consideration of reports submitted by States parties under article 18 of the Convention: 3rd Periodic Report of Singapore. UN doc. CEDAW/C/SR. 803 (A)

Chee, Soon Juan

- 2008 *A Nation Cheated*. n.p.: Singapore.

Chou, Wah-Shan

- 2000 *Tongzhi: Politics of Same-sex Eroticism in Chinese Societies*. New York: Haworth Press.

Chua, Beng Huat

- 1995 *Communitarian Ideology and Democracy in Singapore*. London: Routledge.
- 1998 "Racial Singaporeans: Absence after the Hyphen". In *Southeast Asian Identities: Culture and the Politics of Representation in Indonesia, Malaysia, Singapore and Thailand*. ed. Joel S. Kahn. New York: St. Martin's Press.

Chua, Grace

- 2013 "3 Girls who Shaved Head Bald for Charity told to Wear Wigs in School by Principal". *The Straits Times* Aug 2, accessed Mar 15, 2016 from <http://www.straitstimes.com/singapore/3-girls-who-shaved-head-bald-for-charity-told-to-wear-wigs-in-school-by-principal>

Clammer, John R

1998. *Race and State in Independent Singapore, 1965-1990: The Cultural Politics of Pluralism in a Multiethnic Society*. Brookfield, VT: Ashgate.

Colen, Shellee

- 1986 "With Respect and Feelings": Voices of West Indian Child Care and Domestic Workers in New York City. In *All American Women: Lines that Divide, Ties that Bind*. ed. Johnetta B. Cole. New York: Free Press. pp 46-70.
- 1995 "Like a Mother to them": Stratified Reproduction and West Indian Childcare Workers and Employers in New York". In *Conceiving the New World Order: The Global Politics of Reproduction* by Faye Ginsburg and Rayna Rapp (eds). Berkeley: University of California Press. pp 78-102.

- Collier, Jane F., and Sylvia J. Yanagisako
1989 "Theory in Anthropology since Feminist Practice". *Critique of Anthropology*. 9(2), p 27-37
- Collins, Elizabeth F and Ernaldi Bahar
2000 "To Know Shame: *Malu* and Its Uses in Malay Societies" *Crossroads: An Interdisciplinary Journal of Southeast Asian studies*. 14 (1): 35-69
- Collins, Patricia Hill
2000 *Black feminist Thought: Knowledge, Consciousness, and the Politics of Empowerment*. New York: Routledge
- Cruz-Malave, Arnaldo, and Martin F. Manalansan
2002 *Queer Globalizations: Citizenship and the Afterlife of Colonialism*. New York: New York University Press.
- Culley, Lorraine and Nicky Hudson
2006 "Public Perceptions of Gamete Donation in British South Asian Communities"
Research Report. *Economic Social & Research Council*. De Montfort University: Leicester, UK. Accessed Mar 15, 2016 from
<http://www.dmu.ac.uk/documents/research-documents/health-and-life-sciences/reproduction-research/endopart/gamdonreport.pdf>
- Davies, Sharyn G.
2007 "Hunting Down Love: Female Masculinity in Bugis South Sulawesi" In *Women's sexualities and masculinities in globalizing Asia* eds. Saskia Wieringa, Evelyn Blackwood, and Ābhā Bhaiyā. New York: Palgrave Macmillan. pp 139-158.
- de Beauvoir, Simone
1953 *The Second Sex*. New York: Knopf.
- Department of Statistics, Singapore
2010a *Census of Population 2010 Statistical Release 1: Demographic Characteristics, Education, Language and Religion*, accessed May 15, 2016.
https://www.singstat.gov.sg/docs/default-source/default-document-library/publications/publications_and_papers/cop2010/census_2010_release1/cop2010_sr1.pdf
- 2010b *Census of Population 2010 Statistical Release 2: Households & Housing Key Findings on Household Size & Structure*, accessed May 15, 2016
https://www.singstat.gov.sg/docs/default-source/default-document-library/publications/publications_and_papers/cop2010/census_2010_release2/findings.pdf
- 2015a *Latest Trends*. <http://www.singstat.gov.sg/statistics/latest-data#16> ,accessed May 15, 2016
- 2015b *Population Trends 2015*. Ministry of Trade & Industry, Singapore.
http://www.singstat.gov.sg/docs/defaultsource/defaultdocumentlibrary/publications/publications_and_papers/population_and_population_structure/population2015.pdf, accessed May 15, 2016.

Devan, Pamela

2010 *Butch, Femme and Other Labels in the Singaporean Lesbian Community: Should We Escape the Heteronormative Gender Binary?* Masters Thesis. Department of Sociology, National University of Singapore.

di Leonardo, Micaela

1987. "The Female World of Cards and Holidays: Women, Families, and the Work of Kinship" *Signs*. 12(3), pp. 440-453

Djamour, Judith

1959 *Malay Kinship and Marriage in Singapore*. London: Athlone Press

Duggan, Lisa

2015 "Queer Complacency without Empire" *Bully Bloggers*. 22 September. bullybloggers.wordpress.com/2015/09/22/queer-complacency-without-empire.

Edelman, Lee

2004 *No Future: Queer Theory and the Death Drive*. Durham: Duke University Press.

Edin, Kathryn, and Laura Lein

1997 *Making Ends Meet: How Single Mothers Survive Welfare and Low-wage Work*. New York: Russell Sage Foundation.

Edin, Kathryn, and Maria Kefalas

2005 *Promises I Can Keep: Why Poor Women Put Motherhood before Marriage*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.

Eugene Dili Liow

2012 "The Neoliberal-Developmental State: Singapore as Case Study". *Critical Sociology*. 38 (2): 241-264.

Florida, Richard L

2002 *The Rise of the Creative Class and how it's Transforming Work, Leisure, Community and Everyday Life*. New York, NY: Basic Books.

Foucault, Michel

1980 *Power/knowledge: Selected Interviews and other Writings, 1972-1977*. ed. Collin Gordon. New York: Pantheon Books.

1988 *The History of Sexuality Vol 3: The Care of the Self*. New York: Vintage

1990 *The History of Sexuality Vol 1: An Introduction*. trans Robert Hurley. New York: Pantheon Books

1991 "Governmentality" in *The Foucault Effect: Studies in Governmentality*. eds. Graham Burchell, Collin Gordon and Peter Miller. Chicago: University of Chicago Press. pp102-3.

1994 *The Birth of the Clinic: An Archaeology of Medical Perception*. New York: Vintage

Freedman, Maurice

1962 Chinese Kinship and Marriage in Singapore. *Journal of Southeast Asian History*. Vol 3, No. 2, p 65-73

Gershon, Ilana

- 2011 "Un-friend my Heart: Facebook, Promiscuity, and Heartbreak in a Neoliberal Age". *Anthropological Quarterly*. 84 (4): 865-894.

Gillies, Val

- 2006 *Marginalised Mothers Exploring Working Class Experiences of Parenting*. Hoboken: Taylor & Francis Ltd.

Ginsburg, Faye D., and Rayna R. Reiter

- 1995 *Conceiving the New World Order: The Global politics of Reproduction*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Glenn, Evelyn Nakano

- 2004 *Unequal Freedom: How Race and Gender Shaped American Citizenship and Labor*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press

Goffman, Erving

- 1963 *Stigma: Notes on the Management of Spoiled Identity*. Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall.

Goh Chok Tong

- 1994 "Moral Values: The Foundation of a Vibrant State" *Prime Minister's National Day Rally Speech*, accessed Mar 15, 2016 from <http://www.nas.gov.sg/archivesonline/data/pdfdoc/1994NDRenglishspeech.pdf>
1999 "First World Economy, World-Class Home" *National Day Rally Address*. Ministry of Information, Communications and the Arts. August, 22.

Goh, Chor Bon and S. Gopinathan

- 2008 "The Development of Education in Singapore Since 1965". In *Toward a better future education and training for economic development in Singapore since 1965*. Washington, D.C: World Bank.

Goh, Daniel P.S.

- 2009 "Eyes Turned towards China: Post-colonial Mimicry, Transcultural Elitism and Singapore Chineseness" In *Race and Multiculturalism in Malaysia and Singapore*. ed. Daniel Goh P.S. London: Routledge

Goh, Daniel P.S. and Phillip Holden

- 2009 "Introduction: Post-coloniality, Race and multiculturalism" In *Race and Multiculturalism in Malaysia and Singapore*. ed. Daniel Goh P.S. London: Routledge

Gopinathan, S

- 1980 "Moral Education in a Plural Society: A Singapore Case Study". *International Review of Education*. 26 (2): 171-85.
1991 "Education". In *A History of Singapore*. eds. Ernest CT Chew and Edwin Lee. Singapore: Oxford University

Goy, Priscilla

- 2015 "Changing Singapore Family and what it Spells for the Future" *The Straits Times*. June 13. Accessed May 15, 2016 from <http://www.straitstimes.com/opinion/changing-singapore-family-and-what-it-spells-for-the-future>

Gramsci, Antonio

- 1971 *Selections from the Prison Notebooks of Antonio Gramsci*. New York: International Publishers.

Grewal, Inderpal, and Caren Kaplan

- 2001 "Global Identities: Theorizing Transnational Studies of Sexuality". *GLQ (New York, N.Y.)*. pp663-679.

Hack, Karl

- 2012 "Framing Singapore's History". *Studying Singapore's Past: C.M. Turnbull and the History of Modern Singapore*. ed. Nicholas Tarling. Singapore: NUS Press

Halberstam, Jack (Judith)

- 1998 *Female Masculinities*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press
 2005 *In a Queer Time and Place: Transgender Bodies, Subcultural Lives*. New York: New York University Press.
 2012 *Gaga Feminism: Sex, Gender, and the End of Normal*. Boston: Beacon Press.

Hall, Stuart

- 2006 "Introduction: Who Needs Identity?" In *Questions of Cultural Identity*. eds. Stuart Hall and Paul du Gay. London: Sage Publications, pp 1-17.

Haraway, Donna Jeanne

- 1997 *ModestWitness@Second-Millennium. FemaleMan-Meets-OncoMouse: Feminism and Technoscience*. New York: Routledge.

Hays, Sharon

- 1996 *The Cultural Contradictions of Motherhood*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.

Heng, Geraldine and Janadas Devan

- 1995 "State Fatherhood: The Politics of Nationalism, Sexuality, and Race in Singapore". In *Bewitching women, Pious men: Gender and Body politics in Southeast Asia*. Aihwa Ong and Michael Peletz eds. Berkeley: University of California Press pp 195-215

Hine, Christine

- 2015 *Ethnography for the Internet: Embedded, Embodied and Everyday*. London, New York: Bloomsbury Academic

Hing Ai Yun

- 1998 "Delinquent daughters' struggle for autonomy, morality, pleasure ... and motherhood". *Sojourn*. 13 (2): 263-284.

Hirschman, Charles

- 1986 "The Making of Race in Colonial Malaya: Political Economy and Racial Ideology." *Sociological Forum*. 1(2) 330-361
- 1987 "The Meaning and Measurement of Ethnicity in Malaysia: An Analysis of Census Classifications." *The Journal of Asian Studies*. 46(3), 555-582

Hochschild, Arlie Russell and Anne Machung

- 1989 *The Second Shift: Working Parents and the Revolution at Home*. New York, N.Y.: Viking.

Hoe, Pei Shan

- 2014 "Sex Change Operations Dwindling in Singapore". *The Straits Times*. Dec 30, accessed Mar 15, 2016 from <http://yourhealth.asiaone.com/content/sex-change-operations-dwindling-singapore>

hooks, bell

- 1984 *Feminist Theory from Margin to Center*. Boston, MA: South End Press.

Housing Development Board (HDB)

- 2015 "Single Singapore Citizen Applicants", accessed Mar 15, 2016 from <http://www.hdb.gov.sg/cs/infoweb/residential/buying-a-flat/resale/single-singapore-citizen-scheme-or-joint-singles-scheme>

Howell, Signe

- 2006 *Kinship of Foreigners: Transnational Adoption in a Global Perspective*. New York: Berghahn Books.

Hussaini, Chairul Fahmy.

- 2009 "Tahap Kebrobokan Melayu Membimbangkan –Amaran Dr Yaacob: Keadaan Lebih Sukar Ditangani Pada Masa Depan Jika Masalah Keluarga Pincang yang ada Sekarang Tidak Diatasi." *Berita Minggu*. Dec 6.

Ibrahim, Rozita and Zaharah Hassan

- 2009 "Understanding Singlehood from the Experiences of Never-Married Malay Muslim Women in Malaysia: Some Preliminary Findings". *European Journal of Social Sciences*, 8(3), 395-405.

Info-communications Development Authority of Singapore

- 2016 "Household Access to Broadband, 2004-2014". *Infocomm Usage: Households and Individuals*, accessed Mar 15, 2016 from <https://www.ida.gov.sg/Tech-Scene-News/Facts-and-Figures/Infocomm-Usage-Households-and-Individuals>

Inhorn, Marcia

- 2006 "He won't be my Son: Middle Eastern Muslim Men's Discourses of Adoption and Gamete Donation". *Medical Anthropology Quarterly*. 20: 94-120

James, Susan

- 1992 "The Good-Enough Citizen: Citizenship and Independence". *Beyond Equality and Difference: Citizenship, Feminist Politics and Female Subjectivity*. eds. Gisela Bock and Susan James. London: Routledge

Jamil, Nurhaizatul J

- 2009 *Perempuan, Isteri, dan...: Embodied Agency and the Malay Women of Contemporary Singapore*. Master of Social Science Thesis, Department of Sociology: National University of Singapore

Kafer, Alison

- 2003 "Compulsory Bodies: Reflections on Heterosexuality and Able-bodiedness." *Journal of Women's History* 15.3: 77-89
2013 *Feminist, Queer, Crip*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press

Karim, Wazir Jahan.

- 1984 "Malay Wives and Midwives" in *Social Science and Medicine* 18 (22):159-166 (A)

Kawash Samira

- 2011 "New Directions in Motherhood Studies". *Signs*. 36 (4): 969-1003.

Keeler, Ward

- 1987 *Javanese Shawdow Plays, Javanese Selves*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

Kessler-Harris, Alice

- 1993 *Out to Work: A History of Wage-Earning Women in the United States*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Khoo, Betty L.

- 1972 'The Outsiders: New Nation Looks at Lesbianism in Singapore', *New Nation*, October 16.

Kimport, Katrina

- 2012 "Remaking the White Wedding? Same-Sex Wedding Photographs' Challenge to Symbolic Heteronormativity" *Gender and Society*. 26(6): 874-899

King, Katie

- 2002 "There Are No Lesbians Here: Lesbianisms, Feminisms, and Global Gay Formations". In *Queer Globalizations: Citizenship and the Afterlife of Colonialism*. eds. Arnaldo Cruz-Malave and Martin F. Manalansan IV. New York: New York University Press. pp 33-45.

Kok, Xing Hui

- 2016 "Parliament: Unwed Mothers to Get 16-Week Maternity Leave, Children to Qualify for Special Savings Account." *The Straits Times*. 12 April, accessed April 19, 2016 from: <http://str.sg/4keo>

Kong, Lily, and Brenda S. A. Yeoh

2003 *The Politics of Landscapes in Singapore: Constructions of "Nation"*. Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press.

Kranichfeld, Marion L

1987 "Rethinking Family Power". *Journal of Family Issues*. 8 (1): 42-56.

Lai, Franco

2007 "Lesbian Masculinities: Identity and Body Construction among Tomboys in Hong Kong" In *Women's sexualities and masculinities in globalizing Asia* eds. Saskia Wieringa, Evelyn Blackwood, and Ābhā Bhaiyā. New York: Palgrave Macmillan. pp 159-79

Lareau, Annette

2003 *Unequal Childhoods: Class, Race, and Family Life*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Law, Francis

2016 "Campaign on Fertility Issues Criticized as 'Distasteful and Intrusive'" *TODAY*. Feb, 04. Accessed 15 Mar, 2016 from <http://www.channelnewsasia.com/news/singapore/campaign-on-fertility/2486498.html>

Lawler, Steph

2000 *Mothering the Self: Mothers, Daughters, Subjects*. London: Routledge.

Lee, Hsien Loong

2007 "Parliamentary Debate on Amendments to the Penal Code 377A". Speech presented at the Parliament House, Singapore. October 23.

2007 "National Day Rally Speech." Singapore Government Press Release, Ministry of Information, Communication and the Arts, Singapore

Lee, Kiat Jin

2006 "Chinese and Malays in Singapore." in *Race, Ethnicity and the State in Malaysia and Singapore*, edited by Lian Kwen Fee. London, Boston: Brill. pp 169-189

Lee, Kuan Yew

2000 *From Third World to First: The Singapore story, 1965-2000*. New York: HarperCollins Publishers.

Lee, Kuan Yew and Fook Kwang Han

2011 *Lee Kuan Yew: Hard Truths to Keep Singapore Going*. Singapore: Straits Times Press.

Lee, Pearl

2014 "NUS Prof's Comments on Lesbians Spark Protests from Past and Present students" *The Straits Times*. Feb 28, accessed Mar 15, 2016 <http://www.straitstimes.com/singapore/nus-profs-comments-on-lesbians-spark-protests-from-past-and-present-students>

Levine, Phillippa

2003 *Prostitution, Race and Politics: Policing Venereal Disease in the British Empire*. New York: Routledge

Lewin, Ellen

1993 *Lesbian Mothers: Accounts of Gender in American Cultures*. New York: Cornell University Press.

1995 "On the Outside Looking in: The Politics of Lesbian Motherhood" In *Conceiving the New World Order: The Global Politics of Reproduction* by Faye Ginsburg and Rayna Rapp (eds). Berkeley: University of California Press. pp 103-121

2009 *Gay Fatherhood: Narratives of Family and Citizenship in America*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Lewin, Ellen, and William Leap

2009 *Out in Public: Reinventing Lesbian/Gay Anthropology in a Globalizing World*. Chichester, U.K.: Wiley-Blackwell.

Leyl, Sharanjit

2015 "Singapore at 50: From Swamp to Skyscrapers". *BBC*. February 28, accessed Mar 15 from <http://www.bbc.com/news/magazine-31626174>

Li, Tania

1989 *Malays in Singapore: Culture, Economy, and Ideology*. Singapore: Oxford University Press.

Lian, Kwan Fee

2006 "The Political and Economic Marginalization of Tamils in Malaysia". In *Race, Ethnicity and the State in Malaysia and Singapore*, edited by Lian Kwan Fee. London, Boston: Brill.

Liew, Warren Mark

2014 "Sex (education) in the City: Singapore's Sexuality Education Curriculum. *Discourse: Studies in the Cultural Politics of Education*, 35:5, pp705-717.

Lister, Ruth

2003 *Citizenship: Feminist Perspectives*. Washington Square, N.Y.: New York University Press.

Luis, Ernest

1999 "Oh No Oh No". In *The New Paper on Sunday*. Singapore Press Holdings. May 16

Mahmood, Saba

2005 *Politics of Piety: The Islamic Revival and the Feminist Subject*. New Jersey: Princeton University Press

Mamo, Laura

2007 *Queering Reproduction in the Age of Technoscience*. Durham: Duke University Press

Manalansan, Martin F.

2003 *Global Divas: Filipino Gay Men in the Diaspora*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.

Manap, Mastura

2010 *The Interplay of Structure and Culture in Intergenerational Underdevelopment: The Case of Working Poor Malays in Singapore*. Master of Social Science Thesis. Department of Sociology: National University of Singapore

Manderson, Lenore

1996 *Sickness and the State: Health and Illness in Colonial Malaya, 1870-1940*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Manderson, Lenore, and Margaret Jolly

1997 *Sites of Desire, Economies of Pleasure: Sexualities in Asia and the Pacific*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Maulod, Nur Adlina and Nurhaizatul Jamil

2009 "Because Allah Says So! Faithful Bodies, Female Masculinities in the Malay Muslim Community of Singapore" In *Contemporary Studies in Homosexuality in the Muslim World*. ed. Samar Habib. Santa Barbara, CA: Praeger. pp 163-192

Mauzy, Diane K, and Robert S. Milne

2002 *Singapore Politics Under the People's Action Party*. London: Routledge

McCall, Leslie

2005 "The Complexity of Intersectionality." *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society* 30:1771–1800.

McRuer, Robert

2006 *Crip theory: Cultural Signs of Queerness and Disability*. New York: New York University Press

Middleton, Karen

2000 "How Karembola Men become Mothers". In *Cultures of Relatedness*. ed. Janet Carsten, pp. 104–127. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Milner, Anthony

2012 "Singapore's Role in Constituting the 'Malay' Narrative". In *Studying Singapore's past: C.M. Turnbull and the History of Modern Singapore*. ed. Nicholas Tarling. Singapore: NUS Press

Ministry of Health

2004 "Human Cloning and Other Prohibited Acts". *Legislation and Guidelines*. Accessed Mar 15, 2016 from https://www.moh.gov.sg/content/moh_web/home/legislation/legislation_and_guidelines/human_cloning_andotherprohibitedpracticesact.html

Ministry of Social and Family Development

2014 "Home Ownership Plus Education (HOPE) Scheme". July 30, accessed Mar 15, 2016 from <http://app.msf.gov.sg/Assistance/Home-Ownership-Plus-Education-HOPE-Scheme>

Moghadam, Valentine M.

2000 *Gender and Globalization: female labor and women's mobilization*. Normal, IL: Illinois State University Women's Studies Program.

Moore, Henrietta L.

1994 *A Passion for Difference: Essays in Anthropology and Gender*. Bloomington: University of Indiana Press

Moore, Mignon

2011 *Invisible Families: Gay Identities, Relationships, and Motherhood among Black Women*. University of California Press

Muñoz, José Esteban

1999 *Disidentifications: Queers of Color and the Performance of Politics*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

Murray, Alison J

1999 "Let Them Take Ecstasy: Class and Jakarta Lesbians." In *Female Desires: Same-sex Relations and Transgender Practices Across Cultures* ed. Evelyn Blackwood and Saskia Wieringa, pp 139-156. New York: Columbia University Press.

National Population and Talent Division

2012 "Marriage and Parenthood Trends in Singapore" *Occasional Paper*. Prime Minister's Office. Singapore. June, 28. Accessed 15 Mar 2016 from http://www.nptd.gov.sg/portals/0/news/Occasional%20Paper%20on%20MP%20Trends%20For%20Media%20Briefing%2028%20Jun%202012_w%20annex.pdf

Nelson, Julie A.

1993 "Gender and Economic Ideologies". *Review of Social Economy*. 51, 287-301.

Ng, King Kang

1999 *The Rainbow Connection: The Internet & The Singapore Gay Community*. Singapore: KangCubine Publishing Pte. Ltd

Ochiai, Emiko

2008 "Gender Roles and Childcare Networks in East and Southeast Asian Societies" in *Asia's new mothers crafting gender roles and childcare networks in East and Southeast Asian societies*. eds. Emiko Ochiai and Barbara Molony. Folkestone, UK: Global Oriental.

2009 "Care Diamonds and Welfare Regimes in East and South-East Asian Societies: Bridging Family and Welfare Sociology". *International Journal of Japanese Sociology*. 18 (1): 60-78.

Omar, Haryani

2003 "Tidak suka lelaki sebab egoistik, tidak sensitive." *Berita Minggu*. 18 May.

Ong, Aihwa

- 1987 *Spirits of Resistance and Capitalist Discipline: Factory Women in Malaysia*. Albany: State University of New York Press.
- 1995 "State versus Islam: Malay Families, Women's Bodies and the Body Politic in Malaysia." In *Bewitching Women, Pious Men*. eds. Aihwa Ong and Michael Peletz. Los Angeles: University of California Press.
- 2005 "Graduated Sovereignty in Southeast Asia" In *Anthropologies of Modernity: Foucault, Governmentality, and Life Politics*. ed. Jonathan X. Inda. Malden, MA: Blackwell. pp 83-104
- 2006 *Neoliberalism as Exception: Mutations in Citizenship and Sovereignty*. Durham [N.C.]: Duke University Press.
- 2010 "Introduction: An Analytics of Ethics and Biotechnology in Global Space" In *Asian biotech: ethics and communities of fate*. eds Aihwa Ong and Nancy N. Chen. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.

Oswin, Natalie

- 2010 "The Modern Model Family at Home in Singapore: a Queer Geography". *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers*. 35 (2): 256-268.
- 2014 "Queer Time in Global City Singapore: Neoliberal Futures and the 'Freedom to Love'" *Sexualities*. 17 (4): 412-433.

Park, Shelley M

- 2013 *Mothering Queerly, Queering Motherhood: Resisting Monomaternalism in Adoptive, Lesbian, Blended and Polygamous Families*. Albany, NY: SUNY Press.

Peletz, Michael G

- 1995 "Neither reasonable nor responsible: contrasting representations of masculinity in a Malay society". In *Bewitching Women, Pious Men*. eds. Aihwa Ong and Michael Peletz. Los Angeles: University of California Press. pp 76-123.
- 1996 *Reason and Passion: Representations of Gender in a Malay Society*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- 2012 "Gender, sexuality, and the state in Southeast Asia". *The Journal of Asian Studies : Review of Eastern and Southern Asia and the Adjacent Pacific Islands*. 71 (4): 895-917.

Pelka, Suzanne

- 2009 "Third-Party Reproduction: Creating Kinship through an Intent to Parent". *Anthropology News*. 50 (2): 8-12.
- 2010 "Observing Multiple Mothering: A Case Study of Childrearing in a U.S. Lesbian-Led Family" *Ethos* 38:4. 422-440

PERGAS

- 2014 "PERGAS' Response to HPB's FAQ on Sexuality" *Media Statement*. February 11, accessed Mar 15, 2016 from <http://www.pergas.org.sg/media/MediaStatement/Media-Statement-Pergas-response-to-HPB-FAQ-on-Sexuality.pdf>

Phillips, Robert

- 2012 "Singaporean by Birth, Singaporean by Faith: Queer Indians, Internet technology, and the Reconfiguration of National and Sexual Identity". In *Queer Singapore: Illiberal Citizenship and Mediated Cultures*. Audrey Yue and Jun Zubillaga-Pow, editors. Pp. 187-196. Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press. pp 187-196
- 2013 "We aren't really that different: Globe-hopping Discourse and Queer Rights in Singapore". *Journal of Language and Sexuality* 2(1): 122-144.
- 2014 "And I am also gay: Illiberal Pragmatics, Homonormativity, and LGBT Activism in Singapore". Manuscript solicited for special issue of *Anthropologica* - "Queer Anthropology/l'anthropologie queer" 56(1): 45-54.

Philomin, Laura

- 2015 "Changes to the Singapore Family could see Policy Tweaks" *TODAY* May 23. Accessed 15 May, 2015 from <http://www.todayonline.com/singapore/changes-spore-family-could-see-policy-tweaks>

Plummer, Ken

- 1995 *Telling Sexual Stories: Power, Change, and Social worlds*. London: Routledge.
- 2001 "The Square of Intimate Citizenship: Some Preliminary Proposals". *Citizenship Studies*. 5 (3): 237-253.

Povinelli, Elizabeth A., and George Chauncey

- 1999 *Thinking Sexuality Transnationally*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.

Pratt, Mary Louise

- 1992 *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation*. New York: Routledge

Purushotam, Nirmala S.

- 1997 *Negotiating Language, Constructing Race: Disciplining Difference in Singapore*. Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter.
- 1998 "Between Compliance and Resistance: Women and the Middle-Class Way of Life in Singapore." In *Gender and Power in Affluent Asia*. ed. Krishna Sen and Maila Stivens 127-66. London: Routledge

Rahim, Lily Zubaidah

- 1998 *The Singapore Dilemma: The Political and Educational Marginality of the Malay Community*. Singapore: Oxford University Press.

Rapp, Rayna

- 1987 "Toward a Nuclear Freeze? The Gender Politics of Euro-American Kinship Analysis." In Jane F Collier and Sylvia J Yanagisako, eds. *Gender and Kinship: Essays Toward a Unified Analysis*. pp 119-131. Stanford: Stanford University Press

Rich, Adrienne Cecile

- 1980 "Compulsory Heterosexuality and Lesbian Existence". *Signs*. 5(4), Women: Sex and Sexuality. 631-660.

Rodan, Garry

1989 *The Political Economy of Singapore's Industrialization: National, State, and International Capital*. New York: St. Martin's Press.

Roff, William R

1967. *The Origins of Malay Nationalism*. New Haven: Yale University Press.

Rosaldo, Renato

1980 *Ilongot Headhunting, 1883-1974: A Study in Society and History*. Stanford, Calif: Stanford University Press.

Roseberry, William

1989 *Anthropologies and Histories: Essays in Culture, History, and Political Economy*. New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press.

Ryan-Flood, Róisín

2009 *Lesbian Motherhood: Gender, Families and Sexual Citizenship*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.

Ryan, Maura

2009 "Beyond Thomas Beatie: Transmen and the New Parenthood" in *Who's Your Daddy? And Other Writings on Queer Parenting* (ed.) Rachel Epstein. Canada: Sumach Press.

2013. "The Gender of Pregnancy: Masculine Lesbians Talk about Reproduction". *Journal of Lesbian Studies*. 17 (2): 119-133.

Sahlins, Marshall

2013. *What kinship is - and is not*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.

Salleh, Saini

2007 "Suami Kumpul Pelbagai Bahan Bukti" *Berita Minggu*. 22 April p5

Sayoni

2010 "Report on Discrimination against Women in Singapore based on Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity". Draft submitted to CEDAW for the 48th CEDAW Session

Scheper-Hughes, Nancy

1992 *Death without Weeping: The Violence of Everyday Life in Brazil*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.

Schneider, David N

1968 *American Kinship: A Cultural Account*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall

1984 *A Critique of the Study of Kinship*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan

Searle, John R

1979 *Expression and Meaning: Studies in the Theory of Speech Acts*. Cambridge, Eng: Cambridge University Press.

Seow, Yun Rong

- 2015 "Mum am I a boy or a girl? Singapore transgender individuals open up about struggles". *The New Paper*. Dec 13, accessed Mar 15, 2016 from <http://www.tnp.sg/news/singapore-news/mum-am-i-boy-or-girl-singaporean-transgenders-open-about-struggles>

Shaharuddin, Maaruf

- 1988 *Malay Ideas on Development from Feudal Lord to Capitalist*. Singapore: Times Books International.

Siau, Ming En

- 2014 "'Disappointed' MP criticizes HPB for it's FAQ on sexuality" *TODAY*, accessed May 15, 2016 from <http://www.todayonline.com/singapore/disappointed-mp-criticises-hpb-its-faq-sexuality>

Siddique, Sharon

- 1990 "The Phenomenology of Ethnicity: A Singapore Case-Study". *Sojourn: Journal of Social Issues in Southeast Asia*. 5 (1): 35-62.

Sidel, Ruth

- 2006 *Unsung Heroines: Single Mothers and the American Dream*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Skeggs, Beverley

- 1997 *Formations of Class and Gender: Becoming Respectable*. London: SAGE.

Sontag, Susan

- 1977 *On Photography*. New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux.

Stack, Carol

- 1974 *All Our Kin*. New York: Harper and Row

Stimpfl, Joseph

- 1998 *Who shall we be? Constructing Malay Identity in a Singapore Secondary School*. PhD Thesis. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Dissertation Services UMI no: 9120139
2006 "Growing Up Malay in Singapore" In *Race, ethnicity, and the state in Malaysia and Singapore*. ed Lian Kwan Fee. Leiden: Brill.

Strathern, Marilyn.

- 1988 *The Gender of the Gift: Problems with Women and Problems with Society in Melanesia*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
1992 *Reproducing the Future: Anthropology, Kinship and the New Reproductive Technologies*. New York: Routledge.

Straughan, Paulin T, Angelique Chan and Gavin Jones

- 2009 "From Population Control to Fertility Promotion: A Case Study of Family Policies and Fertility Trends in Singapore" *Ultra-low Fertility in Pacific Asia: Trends, Causes and Policy Dilemmas*. eds. Gavin Jones, Paulin Straughan, and Angelique Chan. Routledge, London, pp. 181-203.

Stryker, Susan

- 1994 "My words to Victor Frankenstein above the village of Chamounix". *GLQ (New York, N.Y.)*. 1: 237-254.

Sullivan, Maureen

- 2004 *The Family of Woman Lesbian Mothers, Their Children, and the Undoing of Gender*. Berkeley: University of California Press

Sun, Shirley Hsiao-Li

- 2012 *Population Policy and Reproduction in Singapore: Making Future Citizens*. London: Routledge.

Suratman, Suriani

- 2003 *Studies on Malay Families and Households in Singapore: A Critical Assessment*. Singapore: Dept. of Malay Studies, National University of Singapore.
- 2004 "Problematic Singapore Malays – The making of a portrayal." *Seminar Papers No. 35*. Department of Malay Studies, Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences, National University of Singapore.
- 2011 "Gender Relations in Singapore Malay Dual-Income Households: (Un)Changing Views and Practices" *Islamic and Civilisational Renewal*. 3(1): 90

Swettenham, Frank Athelstane

- 1948 *British Malaya: An Account of the Origin and Progress of British Influence in Malaya*. London: G. Allen and Unwin.

Tan-Jacob, Irene L N

- 2006 *A Qualitative Analysis of Stepfamily Formation in Singapore*. Master Thesis. Dept of Social Work, National University of Singapore.

Tan, Chris Kok Kee

- 2009 "'But They are Like You and Me': Gay Civil Servants and Citizenship in a Cosmopolitanizing Singapore". *City & Society*. 21.1: 133-154
- 2011 "Go Home, Gay Boy! Or, Why Do Singaporean Gay Men Prefer to "Go Home" and Not "Come Out"". *Journal of Homosexuality*. 58, Issue 6-7.

Tan, Ern Ser

- 2015 "Class and Social Orientations: Key Findings from the Social Stratification Survey 2011" In *IPS Exchange Series*. No. 4, July 2015. Accessed Mar 15, 2016 from http://lkyspp.nus.edu.sg/ips/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/2015/07/Class-and-Social-Orientations_final_web_2707151.pdf

Tan, Kenneth Paul

- 2007 "Imagining the Gay Community in Singapore". *Critical Asian Studies*. 39: 179-204.

Tan, See Kam and Michael Lee

- 1999 "Singapore gays go to West Hollywood: on doing research on minority representation in Singapore". In *AMIC-SCS-SOAS Conference on Asian Media and Practice: Rethinking Communication and Media Research in Asia*, Singapore, Jun 11-12, Singapore: Asian Media Information and Communication Centre

Tang, Shawna

- 2012 "Transnational Lesbian Identities: Lessons from Singapore?" in *Queer Singapore: illiberal citizenship and mediated cultures* by Yue, Audrey, and Jun Zubillaga-Pow. Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press.

Tarling, Nicholas

- 2012 *Studying Singapore's Past: C.M. Turnbull and the History of Modern Singapore*. Singapore: NUS Press

Taylor, Anne Christine

- 1996 "The Soul's Body and Its States: An Amazonian Perspective on the Nature of Being Human". *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute*, 2, 201-15
2000. "Le Sexe de la Proie: Représentation Jivaro du lien de Parenté". *Question De Parenté*. 309-333.

Taylor, Janelle S.

- 2004 "Introduction" to *Consuming Motherhood*. eds Janelle S Taylor, Linda L. Layne and Danielle F. Wozniak. New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press. pp 1-18

Teo, Peggy, Kalyani Mehta, Thang Leng Leng and Angelique Chan,

- 2006 *Ageing in Singapore: Service Needs and the State*. Routledge, London.

Teo, Siew Eng and Victor Savage

- 1991 "Singapore Landscape: A Historical Overview of Housing Image" In *A History of Singapore*. eds. Ernest CT Chew and Edwin Lee. Singapore: Oxford University

Teo, You Yenn.

- 2009 "Gender Disarmed: How Gendered Policies Produce Gender-Neutral Politics in Singapore." *Signs* 34, no. 3 (2009): 533-58.
- 2011 *Neoliberal Morality in Singapore: How Family Policies Make State and Society*. In Routledge Contemporary Southeast Asia Series. New York: Routledge
- 2015 "Differentiated Deservedness: Governance through Familialist Social Policies in Singapore". *TRaNS: Trans Regional and National Studies of Southeast Asia*, 3, pp 73-93 doi:10.1017/trn.2014.16

Tham, Seong Chee

- 1989 "The Perception and Practice of Education". In *Management of Success: The Moulding of Modern Singapore*. eds Kernial Singh Sandhu, Paul Wheatley, and Hussein Alatas. Boulder: Westview Press.

The Straits Times

- 1992 "Girls' School Calls in Police over Lesbians Approaching its Students", 5 July.
- 1999 "Mother of All Ironies", 19 June.
- 1999 "It's a Boy...No, She Just Looks Like One." 19 September
- 2003a Government More Open to Employing Gays Now. 4 July.
- 2003b It's Not About Gay Rights—It's Survival. 9 July.
- 2014 "Timeline of NLB Saga", July 18 accessed Mar 15, 2016 from <http://www.straitstimes.com/singapore/timeline-of-nlb-saga>

TODAY

- 2015 "Decision to Retain Section 377A 'Carefully Considered, Balanced' 12 Dec, accessed Mar 26, 2016 <http://www.channelnewsasia.com/news/singapore/decision-to-retain/2341326.html>

Toh, Mavis

- 2008 "Two is Not Enough". *The Straits Times*. August 24.

Topley, Marjorie

- 1959 "Immigrant Chinese Female Servants and Their Hostels in Singapore." *Man* 59: 213-15

Trocki, Carl A

- 1990 *Opium and Empire: Chinese Society in Colonial Singapore, 1800-1910*. Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press.

Tsing, Anna Lowenhaupt

- 2005 *Friction: An Ethnography of Global Connection*. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press.

Turnbull, Catherine. M.

- 1977 *A history of Singapore, 1819-1975*. Kuala Lumpur: Oxford University Press.
1989 *A history of Singapore, 1819-1988*. Singapore: Oxford University Press.

Vignato, Silvia

- 2012 "'Men Come in, Men Go out': Single Muslim Women in Malaysia and Aceh". *Social Identities*. 18 (2): 239-257.

Vilaca, Aparecida

- 2005 "Chronically Unstable Bodies: Reflections on Amazonian Corporalities" *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute*. 11, 445-64

Warner, Michael

- 1991 "Fear of a Queer Planet." *Social Text* 29, 3-17.
1999 *The Trouble with Normal: Sex, Politics, and the Ethics of Queer Life*. New York: Free Press.

Warren, James Francis

- 2003 *Rickshaw Coolie: A People's history of Singapore, 1880-1940*. Singapore: Singapore University Press.

Weston, Kath

- 1991 *Families We Choose: Lesbians, Gays, Kinship*. New York: Columbia University Press.

Wiegman, Robyn and Elizabeth A. Wilson.

- 2015 "Introduction: Antinormativity's Queer Conventions". *Differences* 26, no. 1: 1-25.

Williams, Raymond

- 1977 *Marxism and Literature*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Wong, Theresa, and Brenda S. A. Yeoh

2003 *Fertility and the family: an overview of pro-natalist population policies in Singapore*. Singapore: Asian MetaCentre for Population and Sustainable Development Analysis.

Yanagisako, Sylvia Junko, and Jane Fishburne Collier

1994 "Gender and kinship reconsidered: toward a unified analysis". *Assessing Cultural Anthropology*. 190-203.

Yap, Mui Teng

2010 "Social Assistance Programmes in Singapore" in *Social Policy and Poverty in East Asia: The Role of Social Security*, edited by James Midgley and Tang Kwong Leung. London: Routledge pp 66-80

Yeoh, Brenda and Shirlena Huang

1995 "Childcare in Singapore: Negotiating Choices and Constraints in a Multicultural Society" *Women's Studies International Forum* Vol. 18 (4). Pp 445-461.

Yeoh, Brenda S. A

2003 *Contesting Space in Colonial Singapore: Power Relations and the Urban Built Environment*. Singapore: Singapore University Press.

Yue, Audrey

2007 "Creative Queer Singapore: The Illiberal Pragmatics of Cultural Production" *Gay and Lesbian Issues and Psychology Review*. Vol 3:3.

Yuval-Davis, Nira

2006 "Intersectionality and Feminist Politics." *European Journal of Women's Studies* 13:193–209

Zubillaga-Pow, Jun

2012 "The negative dialectics of homonationalism, or Singapore English newspapers and queer world-making" In *Queer Singapore Illiberal Citizenship and Mediated Cultures*. eds. Audrey Yue and Jun Zubillaga-Pow. Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press. pp 149-160

#WearWhite Muslim Brothers Rise Up Against PinkDot LGBT

2014 *Rilek1corner*, accessed May 17 2016, from

<http://rilek1corner.com/2014/06/20/wearwhite-muslim-brothers-rise-up-against-pinkdot-lgbt/>

VITA

AD MAULOD**Education**

- 2016. PhD, Cultural Anthropology, Purdue University
- 2012. M.Sc, Cultural Anthropology, Purdue University
- 2009. M. Soc. Sci, Sociology, National University of Singapore
- 2007. B. Soc. Sci (Honors), Sociology and Minor in Urban Studies, National University of Singapore

Publications

- 2016. "In bed with my informant and her lover/s" in *Sex and Ethnographic Encounters*. Richard J. Martin (ed). Bloomsbury Books (forthcoming)
- 2009. (with Nurhaizatul Jamil) "Because Allah Says So": Faithful Bodies, Female Masculinities in the Malay Muslim Community of Singapore" in *Contemporary Studies in Homosexuality and the Muslim World* in Samar Habib (ed). New York: Praeger
- 2009. *The Haunting of Fatimah Rock: History, Embodiment and Spectral Urbanism in Contemporary Singapore*. Master of Social Science Thesis. Dept. of Sociology, National University of Singapore