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SINGAPOREAN-INDIAN WOMEN IN WAITING (?): SINGLEHOOD, THE CALCULUS OF CARE AND GEOGRAPHIES OF BEING 'FAMILY'

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Declaration

I hereby declare that this thesis is my original work and it has been written by me in its entirety. I have duly acknowledged all the sources of information which have been used in the thesis.

This thesis has also not been submitted for any degree with any university previously.

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Singaporean-Indian Women in Waiting (?): Singlehood, the Calculus of Care and Geographies of Being 'Family'

Thesis Summary

The thesis provides a critique of the biopolitics of family in a globalising world. It examines how gender, sexuality and race are implicated in this biopolitics where practices of familial care become enshrined in a calculative technology that allows the state to connect often disparate members within a family. It is a biopolitics that destabilises the friction of distance and time, and enables people and places to become held together through the intimate practices of marriage and child-bearing within marriage. Specifically, the thesis engages with how single Singaporean-Indian women contest, negotiate and sometimes reproduce constructions of them as "women in waiting". In particular, it shows how the notion of singlehood as waiting is crucial to the abovementioned biopolitics of family.

The thesis argues for the need to take a more critical view of love and formations of "family" in a global era (Harker and Martin, 2012; Oswin and Olund 2010; Pratt and Grosner, 2006; Valentine, 2008). It focuses on the spatio-temporalities that inform and are informed by how we *become* family, and the implications this in turn has for how we become community. By locating singlehood at the nexus of caring relationships between the individual and intimate other, the thesis problematises the Singapore state's calculative and racialised biopolitics of family. It focuses instead on how the relationality of care between single Singaporean-Indian women, their parents and friends cannot be confined to such a calculative logic, and instead focuses attention on how community is constantly contested and negotiated. Drawing from in-depth interviews with single Singaporean-Indian women in Singapore, Melbourne

and London, the thesis re-centres race and the emotional aspects of care by interrogating how and why these women are portrayed as incomplete, occupying a cusp where they are perceived as waiting for marriage. The thesis shows how singlehood as experienced by the women is often more complex than the status of 'waiting to marry' that is implied in the state's biopolitics.

The thesis makes use of a feminist ethics of care to consider the ways in which care for the self and other are mutually intertwined, and pays attention to the moral context in which decisions are made about how to care. In this way, it foregrounds the spatial concepts of proximity and distance as well as the temporality that give rise to a transnational politics of waiting. The thesis makes use of punctuations to capture the multiplicity of spatio-temporalities inflected in the women's experiences of singlehood. Punctuations are used to reflect the speeding up and slowing down of single Indian women's lives as they balance their own need alongside their desire to care and be cared for by intimate others. They capture the women's experiences of care in terms of intensities rather than confining care to a zero-sum logic alone. Punctuations destabilise the mutually reinforcing binaries of single/married with being in Singapore or abroad. Through punctuations, it becomes possible to focus on the more elastic "present-ness" of being single across time and space, rather than see singlehood only ever as lack.

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1. Introduction

1.1 Starting Point: Breaking the Silence

I trace the reason for embarking on this thesis on singlehood to a conversation I had with May (not her real name). May, who is Indian and Singaporean, was in her late 30s, and at the time had been living abroad for almost 10 years in city X. Most of her family was based in Singapore, although her younger sister was married and living in city Y. May was single, financially well-off, independent and had a successful career. However, during our conversation, she shared that in spite of her successes in life so far, she did not feel as though she counted as an adult in the eyes of her parents. She shared a particular incident that stood out in her mind about the time she was expected to share a hotel room with her parents during a family gathering abroad. The incident drove home the point that her parents still saw her as a child, and that her younger sister, who was now married, would never be treated that way. When the incident took place, May had already been living abroad for two years. She had grown accustomed to living on her own, and making important decisions for herself. Decisions that included buying her own apartment in Singapore, and renting a place to live overseas where she would soon work at a new job. May was not averse to the idea of being married. She had been on dates with men, some of which had become relationships, but none of them had ever ended in marriage. May did not like talking to her parents or relatives about the details of her intimate relationships with the men she was dating. Yet her silence about these matters, and her unmarried status, marked her as having “failed” at this aspect of her life.

At the time May and I spoke, I remember thinking that while both our lives were different in many ways, our feelings about how we were treated because of our unmarried status were somewhat similar. I was in my mid-30s and based in Singapore. I had moved out of my parents' apartment and had been living independently for almost four years. At the time, I was two years into a relationship with my female partner. Although, I was in a committed relationship, I continued to be asked about when or whether I was going to marry. I was not out of the closet to my immediate family and many of my relatives, and so in their eyes, I was single. Like May, I too did not want to share information about my intimate relationship. I found being questioned about this aspect of my life, and judged as a failure very stressful and frustrating. Though I was gay and living in Singapore with my partner, and May was straight and living in city X, we both experienced the stresses of being "single" in different ways. We were often judged as not being proactive enough or too picky. And though our personal lives were sometimes complicated, like those of our married counterparts (balancing work, family and our personal lives), we were often still seen as 'kids' or women who did not have 'real' lives because we did not have our own families. We were expected to live with our parents until we were married and to care for them, and be cared for by them since we did not have families of our own to care for, or a man who would care for us. My conversation with May became the catalyst for thinking about whether there were other women going through experiences similar to ours. I wondered what the value would be in connecting with these other women to hear their stories. In what ways would their experiences be similar or different to May's and mine?

1.2 Critiquing the Biopolitics of Family in Mobile Times

Foucault writes that family is no longer just a model for good government in which how a father manages the family becomes the modus operandi for how a sovereign ought to behave. It has itself become an instrument for managing population. (Foucault (*trans.*), 2004: 105). It is through family that the state is able to implement techniques that discipline good behavior and responsibility in ways that minimize the self vis-à-vis the other (Foucault, 1990a, 1990b, 2003 (*trans.*); see also Legg, 2005). The self, in other words, becomes located within the family allowing for it to work toward a greater good of which it is seen to be a part of even as it cares for itself. According to Foucault the "care for self" means knowing "ontologically what you are" and "of what you are capable" (Foucault, 1987: 119). It is an approach to care that is "entirely centred on one's self, on what one does, on the place one occupies among others" (Foucault, 1987: 120). In Foucault's iteration of the correct care for the self, the latter is contextualized in terms of what the citizen, usually male, must do in both the private realm as head of the household and in the public or civic realm as a capable citizen (Foucault, 1987: 119). Such a framing of care for the self is one in which there is a clear separation of the public/civic realm and the private. Such an uncomplicated framing of care for the self is one which has often been criticized by feminists for not acknowledging the role played by women in the private realm which permits the male citizen to carry out his civic duties. This separation of public and private prevents care from being acknowledged in terms of a relationality between self and other. Instead, it perpetuates patriarchal norms of care that are exclusionary rather than complementary.

In writing this thesis on singlehood, my primary aim is to provide a critique of the biopolitics of family in the context of today's highly globalising world where individual mobility often results in more complex intimate relations and outcomes for familyhood. My intention is also to connect with feminist geographers' critique of how women are affected by a patriarchal framing of space in which care and intimacy are relegated to the realm of the private. Such a framing of space often results in women, who are more often than not the primary care-givers in families, being made invisible, their complex gender politics silenced. My research aims to contribute to feminist literature that remains critical of how and why women's intimate lives and their relationships of care become located in the realm of the private (Bondi and Domosh, 1998; Duncan, 1996; Richardson 1996). Specifically, the thesis argues for the possibility of an alternative spatio-temporal framework for understanding care and intimacy by focusing on the lives of single Singaporean-Indian women. It analyses the specific spatialities and politics encountered and produced by gender, sexuality and race as they relate to the intimate lives of these women. By focusing on singlehood and relationships of care as experienced by single Indian women, the thesis unpacks the gendered and racialised politics underlying familyhood and care. It brings together literature on the feminist critique of the biopolitics of family and postcolonial feminist literature on identity politics and community.

In particular, the thesis engages with how the biological construct of family is used as a strategic tactic to produce a biopolitics of family that the Singaporean state uses to anchor individuals to place, and fix fluid identities in increasingly mobile times. The thesis argues that such a tactic is grounded in the possibility that identity can extend from individuals and coalesce hierarchically into something larger: family, ethnic

community, and nation as a result of gendered familial roles and practices of care that connect the emotional to the biological in strategic ways. However, the thesis also iterates that the biopolitics of family this gives rise to is centred on marriage and procreation within marriage, and relationships of care that do not accurately portray the intimate lives of highly educated single Singaporean-Indian women. It attempts to question how and why this happens by taking a relational approach to engaging with the practices of care between single Singaporean-Indian women and intimate others, and the emotional struggles that emerge as these caring relationships unfold around notions of duty, responsibility, and what it means to be a good Indian daughter. The thesis argues that being a good Indian daughter can often be stressful for the women because it means balancing what the women want for themselves against what they believe is expected of them by the state, the Indian community and their parents. A key point that the thesis tries to make, however, is that being a good Indian daughter cannot be seen as something that takes away from the women being able to live the kind of lives they want to live. By emphasizing this point the thesis iterates the need to pay attention to how race is constructed and reproduced as part of the biopolitics of family in Singapore. By focusing on how spatio-temporally contingent relationships of care cannot be neatly categorised into those that matter (family as an outcome of marriage) and those that do not (friendship and intimacy outside the confines of legal marriage), the thesis remains cautious of state and community constructions of what it means to be family. Instead, it focuses on the practices and politics that underpin how we *become* family and how friendships offer an alternative dimension to single women's intimate lives that may prove useful to also understanding how we become community. In this way the thesis remains critical of state biopolitics and discourses of familyhood that allow for the reterritorialisation of disparate members of the

transnational family and a bounded notion of ethnic community that remain crucial to the state's nation-building project. These, the thesis argues, are more often than not dependent on a strategic prioritization of intimacy that is located in heteronormativity and the socio-legal practice of marriage.

Feminist geographers remained critical of how such tactics of socio-biological reproduction produce a particular formation of family that continues to marginalise women (Hartmann, 1998; Jackson, 1996; Richardson, 1996; Yuval-Davis, 1997). They critique how state discourses and practices of family operate to make biological continuity and connectivity possible through the bodies of women who are often constructed as vessels caring for and carrying the blood of the nation (Ahmed, 2004; Nash, 2005; Nast, 2002). It is the myth of blood stemming from biological reproduction, flowing from one citizen into another over time and space that ascribes meaning to nationality *jus sanguinis*. Race, blood and nationality thus become intimately intertwined, and gender and sexuality become co-opted to maintain the relevance of statist definitions of family, community and nation (Ahmed, 2004; Lubheid, 2009; Nast, 2002, 1998; Yuval-Davis, 1997; see also Anderson, 1983). The construct of family becomes anchored in the practice of biological reproduction between a man and a woman connected through the socio-legal practice of marriage. It is a strategic practice that locates an individual's most private, intimate and emotional life in the public domain, enabling it to be used in the government of population (Legg, 2005; Foucault, 2004 (*trans.*)). The site of biological reproduction is, therefore, where the chrysalis of identity takes form, and is nurtured through practices of care between individuals tied one to the other, becoming part of a larger whole: family, community, nation.

As researchers both within and outside of geography have continued to become more critically engaged with the notion of family, the idea that it comprises more than who we are related to by blood may seem like less and less of a novelty (Friedman, 1998; Plummer, 2003, 2001; Valentine, 2008; Weeks 1998; Weeks *et al*., 2001). Such a critique is grounded in a feminist appraisal of hetero-patriarchal constructions of family as a state project in which discursivities of gender, race and sexuality are strategically applied and become situated within the natural/ scientific discourse of sex, blood, race and genes (Nash, 2005, 2003; Nast, 2002, 1998; Povinelli, 2006). I argue that such a critique of family is particularly powerful at a time when individuals are more likely to be living outside their countries of birth with people they may not be biologically related to. It has implications for the how place-based belonging is ascribed in a rapidly globalising world. These constructions of belonging such as the nation and ethnic community are dependent on the belief that it is possible for individuals to be connected by blood, and for this connectivity to become internalized and then transmitted 'up-scale' (e.g. from the individual, to family, community, and nation). For example, Nash (2005) writes that the "flexible practice of kinship in which the meanings of 'nature' or 'blood' are performatively produced", and that the "mutual naturalizations of kinship across scales of family, nation and humanity, shapes what can legitimately cross the boundaries of the nation-state and what is recognised as legitimate by the state" (Nash, 2005: 451).

Given the transnational context that migrants find themselves in, the strategic deployment of social discursivities such as race, gender, and sexuality for the state's placed-based project of identity building becomes crucial. Much of the work in

migration by feminist geographers has, therefore, proven integral to revealing how women are implicated in the state's strategic portrayal of relationality to keep the transnational family intact. Work by feminist geographers in migration research has, for instance, shown how female migrants are more likely to experience exclusion because of gendered familial roles. Women who are more often than not the ones who are expected to provide care in the family, find the labour they perform is often viewed as unproductive as it is tied primarily to the private sphere (McLaren and Dyck, 2004). The literature shows how it is women who are often expected put their lives on hold for the benefit of the heteronormative transnational family, and consequently the nation because care and intimacy are strategically located in the private sphere which is seen to be their domain (Olavarria, 2006; Shen, 2005; Yeoh and Willis, 1999, 2004). By drawing attention to such gendered roles, feminist scholars in migration research offer a critique of masculinist portrayals of mobile women, and reveal how these portrayals are rooted in patriarchy. They show how men and women encounter the mobile world differently, given that expectations of each of them are different. As a result, migrant women are more often than not seen as trailing spouses, and often forced to de-skill when the family migrates (Kofman, 2004; Kofman and Raghuram, 2006; Man, 2004; Purkayastha; 2005; Raghuram, 2004; Raghuram and Kofman, 2004). The state reinforces existing patriarchal norms by putting in place control mechanisms that reinstate the gendered view of citizenship. These include immigration laws and the migration point system, that force women with skills of their own, to migrate as dependents. 'Women unfriendly' welfare policies have led to a demand for foreign domestic workers to perform the work that working women cannot do. By implementing migration and employment policies that value this type of work, the state further institutionalises the low status of

social reproduction (Calavita, 2006; Huang and Yeoh, 2003; Silvey, 2004a; Yeoh and Huang, 1998).

Seen in this light, much of the existing migration research that is focused on women stems largely from a critique of the masculinist discourse regarding what constitutes work, and patriarchal notions of men and women's roles and identities within the family. The situation is further problematised by various other matrices such as class and racial-ethnic ideologies which continue to be forged transnationally through international labour networks and the discourse of the nation-state. As Silvey (2004a: 498) argues, "gender and difference are understood as crucial in defining the identities of migrant groups, and migrants are understood to participate in producing their own identities in the context of power relations and 'community' politics that shape the possibilities of migrants as subjects".

State, community and family efforts to ensure the survival of the transnational heteronormative family, therefore, have significant implications for migrant women's lives. These efforts are grounded in a biopolitics of family premised on marriage between a man and a woman, where each plays specific roles in meeting the financial and emotional needs of the family unit, and by extension hold together the transnational geobody of the nation-state. It is a biopolitics of family in which, I argue, single women more so than men are cast as "waiting" by their families, their community and the nation. These unmarried women are seen as particularly dangerous as their bodies are portrayed as a wasted potential, vulnerable to sexual pollution or disuse (Bieri and Gerodetti, 2007; Gallo, 2006; George, 2005; Willis and Yeoh, 2003).

Within the literature on migration, single women are generally portrayed as not being constrained by similar responsibilities as their married counterparts. Research on mobile single women, therefore, tends to also be rooted in a patriarchal and heteronormative bias that presents the lives of single women as less demanding than those of their married counterparts. Nevertheless, there is also literature that engages with how single women are required to undertake other familial responsibilities such as contributing to the household income, filial piety and their *duty* to marry (Esara, 2004; Gaetano, 2008; George, 2005; Thang *et al.*, 2002; Williams, 2005; Willis and Yeoh, 2003). The thesis aims to speak back to existing research within migration in which single women are seen as more footloose and able to escape the familial gaze and expectations of them to behave in certain morally prescribed ways (Hardill, 1998; Thang *et al.,* 2002; Willis and Yeoh, 2003). While it is true that the women find room to negotiate more space for themselves by migrating, there is also a desire to connect with family and perhaps also maintain intimate ties with their family abroad even though these same ties are sometimes seen by the women as constraining and limiting when they are in their home country. By engaging with the experiences of single women in Singapore and overseas, the thesis examines how time and space 'open up' for the women to differing extents in Singapore and abroad.

1.3 Background, Research Aims and Questions

The resident Indian community in Singapore currently comprises 9.2% (Singapore Department of Statistics (DoS), 2011a). While this ethnic community is labeled "Indian" in government policy and rhetoric, the community comprises more than individuals with roots in India. In fact the community more accurately comprises a

multiplicity of individuals of South Asian descent that include but are not limited to Tamils, Gujaratis, Punjabis, Sikhs, Sinhalese among others. By focusing on single Singaporean-Indian women, the thesis remains critical of the essentialisation of race implied in constructions of the Indian community as homogenous, 'traditional' and one in which Indian women are expected to marry, have children within those marriages and fulfill gendered care roles as mothers and daughters. By taking a multi-sited approach, the thesis also draws attention to singlehood as part of a transnational politics of waiting (see Chapter 2) and the spatio-temporalities these produce between the three cities of London, Melbourne and Singapore, where the women I interviewed are based. Rather than singlehood being seen only as "not married" or "freedom from marriage", the thesis engages with singlehood as an emotional struggle that takes place over time and space as part of the caring relationships that develop between single women and intimate others they may or may not be biologically related to. In this way the thesis provides an alternative to the portrayal of singlehood as 'lack' within the prevailing biopolitics of family where marriage seems the only rational end-goal. To fulfill the above agenda the thesis is guided by three key research questions.

1) What does being single mean for Singaporean-Indian women? How are their experiences of singlehood impacted upon by social discursivities such as gender, sexuality and race? In what ways are these experiences the result of a state and community sanctioned biopolitics of family? In answering this question, I analysed different aspects of singlehood that extended to the women's work lives, dating, sexual intimacy, care-giving, friendship and family. My aim is to show how singlehood is more complex than can be

encapsulated in the phrase “not married”. Instead of seeing single women as “women in waiting” the thesis asks how and why they are seen as waiting, and by whom?

2) What does the context of these women’s single status reveal about the caring relationships they share with intimate others (family, lovers and friends)? For instance, how do the women balance caring for their parents, who want to see them married, against a desire to live the kinds of lives they want to live? What are the strategies deployed by single women to manage the pressures they face to marry by their parents, the Indian community and the Singapore state? What role do friends play in their ability to do so? In attempting to answer these questions, my aim is twofold: Firstly, I aim to critically interrogate the notions of care and responsibility that underpin the prevailing biopolitics of family in which the legitimacy of family is more often than not located in heteronormativity and maintained through the socio-legal practice of marriage. Secondly, my intention is to critically engage with the spatio-temporalities that underpin the geographies of waiting. Here I refer primarily to waiting as premised on a linear construction of time and space and the implications these have on how care is conceived. How might an alternative, more relational approach to care, provide an alternative to portrayals of them as waiting?

3) What are the alternative spatio-temporalities of singlehood that these women’s contestations and negotiations reveal? How do they allow for a deconstruction and problematisation of singlehood as more complex than the status of “not married” allows? How do these challenge the biopolitics of family and

problematise constructions of them as "women in waiting"? How does this result in a transnational politics of waiting that draws upon the similarities and differences of being single in Singapore, London and Melbourne? In answering this question, my aim is to problematise state and community biopolitics of family that have become crucial for holding together disparate bodies in an era of heightened mobility. This is a biopolitics in which race, gender and sexuality are strategically deployed to fulfill the identity-building objectives of the state and Singaporean-Indian community. By deconstructing and problematising singlehood as experienced by Singaporean-Indian women, the thesis aims to provide a critique of the existing biopolitics of family in Singapore and focus instead on how a relational approach to caring for the self and other produces alternative spatio-temporalities of singlehood that destabilise the linearity of time and space implied in waiting.

To answer these questions, I interviewed 39 graduate Singaporean-Indian single women who were based in Singapore, London and Melbourne. By consulting this group of women for their opinions about singlehood, my research aims to provide these women with avenues for sharing their experiences and by doing so, provide greater insight into their everyday lives and how they cope with balancing the desire to live the kinds of lives they want to live alongside their desire to love and be loved by intimate others.

1.4 The Way Forward

There are a total of eight chapters in the thesis. In the seven chapters that follow I unpack further the complexities of a single life as experienced by graduate single

Singaporean-Indian women based in Singapore, Melbourne and London. In Chapter 2, I review three broad categories of literature on the biopolitics of family, the critique of the biopolitics of family and the politics of waiting respectively. With respect to literature that critiques the biopolitics of family, I focus primarily on literature that problematise constructions of family, feminist engagements with care, and postcolonial feminist critique that captures the potentially racialising elements of the biopolitics of family. Drawing from these bodies of work, I then explain in detail the conceptual framework for my thesis. I introduce the possibility for a transnational politics of waiting grounded in a more relational calculus of care that draws from a feminist ethics of care, and is different from the state's biopolitics of family which is rooted in what I call a calculative technology of care. Chapter 3 engages more directly with the Singaporean-Indian community and aims to provide insight into why the thesis focuses on this particular group of single women. Prior to the three substantive analytical chapters, I provide the methodology that has guided the research process. I explain how and why I made use of my insider status to conduct in-depth, face-to-face, semi-structured interviews with women based in Singapore, London and Melbourne (Chapter 4).

The subsequent analytical chapters are guided by three key issues. The first issue pertains to how singlehood as experienced by Singaporean-Indian women is often more complex than what the status of "not married" conveys. Instead, it needs to be contextualized within a biopolitics of family that is not only gendered and heteronormative but also highly racialised. I engage with how single Indian women's bodies are implicated in and perpetuate discourses of race crucial to the existing imagination of the Singaporean nation. How do the women navigate, produce and

contest these co-optations of their racialised single bodies as they encounter their intimate lives (Chapter 5)?

The next issue pertains to how single women invert the state's logic of pragmatism by engaging in a feminist ethics of care that distances their singlehood from a discourse of lack that is the result of a biopolitics of family in which heteronormative marriage is prioritised. The thesis shows that there is a spatio-temporality to how wanting to love, care and be responsible for another exists alongside the need to insert the self more directly within the state's calculative technology of care (Chapter 6).

In the last of the analytical chapters, I engage specifically with the possibility of alternative spatio-temporalities grounded in a more relational approach to care. Such a production of space draws attention to a transnational politics of waiting between single women and intimate others who may or may not include individuals they are related to by blood. The thesis focuses on how singlehood is punctuated by emotional intensities of caring for the self and other. These practices of care are influenced by and have an impact on the production of time and space by focusing on the relational. In this way the thesis destabilises linear representations of time and space that give rise to a zero-sum logic of care and result in marriage being the rational end-point for single women (Chapter 7). Finally, I conclude by providing a summary of the key ideas raised in the thesis and how these contribute to and expand further on existing research by feminist geographers that remains critical of the biopolitics of family and care, and focuses instead on the geographies of friendship and intimacy by foregrounding the integral role that race plays in framing our understanding of being family and community in an increasingly mobile world (Chapter 8).

Chapter 2: Singlehood and the Transnational Politics of Waiting: A Feminist Critique of the Biopolitics of Family and Calculative Technologies of Care

2.1 The "Problem" of Single Women and the Biopolitics of Family

Feminist research has continued to iterate that care is a crucial part of the biopolitics of family as it enables the performance, practice and concretization of the 'myth of blood' that connects disparate members of the 'family' both nuclear and national (Nash, 2003; Ong, 1996; Yeoh *et al.*, 2005). More often than not, familyhood becomes located within care and the practice of marriage, thus allowing for the state to successfully locate the self within larger groups that seemingly fold one into the other: individual, family, community and nation. This is significant in an age of migration and increasing mobility where more and more individuals live near people they are not related to by blood. I argue that this is a crucial state tactic that needs to be unpacked using a feminist lens.

Pratt and Yeoh (2003: 162) for example point out that a "descent-based theory of nation (that) firmly locates national belonging in familial reproduction" is highly "gendered in very significant symbolic ways" (Pratt and Yeoh, 2003: 162) because it results in the strategic reduction of women's bodies to cellular levels as a means of maintaining racialised national boundaries (see also Nash, 2005; 2003; Nast, 2002; 1998; Yuval-Davis, 1997). More often than not it is the heterosexual family as signified in "marriage, procreation and the traditional, middle-class nuclear family (that) is commonly held up as a model of good citizenship, necessary for ensuring national security and a stable social order" (Richardson, 2000: 80; Rich, 1980; for contrast see Harker and Martin, 2012; Oswin and Olund, 2010). Such constructions of

family, citizenship and nation have particular implications for single women who represent a challenge to the state's attempts to "control women's labour power…by excluding women from access to some essential production resources". The state is able to do this "by restricting women's sexuality…relegating it to the private sphere (where it) does not count in debates of citizenship." (Hartmann, 1998: 387). Given the above articulations of family, citizenship and the nation that are more often than not tied to heteronormativity and marriage, I argue that single women present a 'problem' to the state and its biopolitics of family.

The rest of the chapter is divided into four thematic sections in which I engage with the feminist critique of three broad categories of literature. The first and second sections (2.2 and 2.3) engage with the literature on the biopolitics of family in an increasingly mobile world. In section (2.2), I analyse how the biopolitics of family has been dealt with in the migration literature where the biologically constructed notion of family plays a crucial role in limiting the boundaries of citizenship through hierarchical and spatially inflected articulations of care and responsibility. I iterate that while gender is often examined in-depth, sexuality and race have not sufficiently been unpacked. To address the issue of sexuality, I engage with research that contests the biopolitics of family by providing an alternative framing of intimate life not located in the hegemony of marriage, heteronormativity and procreation (2.3). Next, I draw from research by postcolonial feminists researchers in which they have critiqued the strategic way in which Asian femininities are portrayed as traditional, docile and conservative, and 'suited' for care-giving within the context of family (2.4) to fill the gap on the discursivity of race. Finally in section (2.5), I draw from existing geographical literature on singlehood and waiting, paying particular attention to how

single women are portrayed in the migration literature, and how this reinstates spatial and metaphorical binaries that serve only to see their single status as lack, and reproduce the notion of them as waiting to 'escape' the pressures of marriage by going abroad. Following the overview of the literature, I provide a conceptual framework for the thesis in section 2.6, and connect this framework more concretely to my research aims and the example of single Singaporean-Indian women. I iterate how a relational approach in terms of a feminist care ethic allows for singlehood to be reclaimed from its position of lack as posited within the biopolitics of family. In particular, I show how single Indian women care for intimate others and themselves in ways that allow their singlehood to become punctuated, thus drawing attention to a transnational politics of waiting connecting the state, Indian community, the women and intimate others across time and space.

2.2 Biopolitics of Family in a Mobile World: Transnational Families, Care, and Responsible Citizenship

Discourses of family tied to practices of care are often used as strategic state tactics for connecting the disparate members of the family in terms of a hierarchy of emotions and responsibility (Ahmed, 2004; Lubheid, 2009; Massey, 2004; Nash, 2005, 2003; Nast, 2002; Wilkinson, 2009). Massey critiques this as the "Russian doll geography" of responsibility in which the "accepted understanding (is) that we care first for, and have our first responsibilities towards, those nearest in." (Massey, 2004:9; see also Valentine, 2008). Here the notion of nearness is tied to practices of intimacy that the state in particular co-opts to tie individuals together using a myth of blood that stems from biological reproduction. Such a metaphor of blood has particular implications for women's bodies that carry and care for the blood of the

family and the nation. These are ties that withstand the distance of time and space as implicated in much of the transnational families literature (Huang and Yeoh, 2005; Yeoh *et al*., 2005, Parrenas, 2005; Waters, 2005, 2003). They hold people and places together through intimate practices, such as marriage, child-bearing within marriage and caring for one's family, in ways that destabilize the friction of distance and time.

Research on the transnational family, and debates about citizenship have critically engaged with how gender and heteronormativity are implicated in the biopolitics of family. The literature on migration has tended to focus, for example, on how gender roles within family influence the mobility of men and women differently in an effort to keep the emotional and physical reach of the hetero-patriarchal family intact. The different expectations of male and female citizens are not just brought about by the state but are also linked to a patriarchal discourse that is reinforced by society (e.g. community and family). In other words, "the processes of constructing the nation, and the meanings associated with the 'national scale', are connected to the politics of gender and difference as the play out in migration processes" (Silvey, 2004a: 493). The responsibilities of citizenship are, therefore, ultimately shaped by both the state and society's gendered view of what it means to be a citizen (Calavita, 2006; Yeoh and Willis 2004), and this is often linked to a key state concern of keeping the nation connected transnationally through practices of the hetero-patriarchal family that connect across space and time. This has resulted in men being traditionally viewed as more mobile than women, and being accorded greater spatial freedoms to fulfill their economic duties to family and country (Yeoh and Willis, 1999, 2004; Olavarria, 2006; Shen, 2005).

For instance, research has centred on how men are portrayed as more mobile given their duties as economic providers to their families and countries. This gendered role situates men in the public sphere and gives them opportunities to be ‘in the world’ (Yeoh and Willis, 1999, 2004; Olavarria, 2006; Shen, 2005). Part of men’s ability to survive better than women lies in the existing global norms of masculinity that allow them certain moral transgressions. Shen (2005), Mills (2003) and Zhang (2001) argue that mobile Chinese businessmen are able to deal with the difficulties of being away from their families and the hardship of working and living abroad by consuming alcohol and the “commodified bodies of women” (Zhang, 2001 in Mills, 2003: 54). These liaisons do not detract from “men’s abilities to fulfill their obligations as husbands to their wives back home” (Yeoh and Willis, 2004: 159). In fact, having local mistress in China, in the case of Singaporean Chinese businessmen, is seen as a way of preserving their virility for the sake of their families and careers (doing it for family and nation) (Yeoh and Willis, 2004: 159). In a similar vein, Taiwanese men’s masculinity in the context of the marital and sexual economy, is dependent on their ability to juggle family and sexual relationships with mainland Chinese women where they are posted. This sexualised portrayal of men links masculine power to men’s ability to access “women’s sexual labour” (Mills, 2003: 54), and portrays men as physically and emotionally mobile and fluid compared to women who are expected to remain steadfast, stationary and sacrificial in their commitment to family and their marital relationships (Shen, 2005). In addition, the literature has also engaged with how men have used overseas employment as a means of acquiring material and symbolic capital to claim adult masculine status at home and establish themselves as responsible and marriageable householders (Mills, 2003: 53). Left behind men on the other hand have not been able to fulfill their traditional role as provider, and have

been made to renegotiate their status and authority within the household (Gallo, 2006; Gamburd, 2002; George, 2005; Mills, 2003; Parrenas, 2005). For example, husbands whose wives leave home to work (particularly overseas), are often viewed by their communities as not only being unable to provide for their wives economically, but also sexually. It is believed that 'their' women travel abroad "in search of more gratifying economic and sexual stimulation" (Gamburd, 2002: 193; Gallo, 2006). As such, a man who is unable to provide for his family and instead, has a wife who leaves home and country to find work is almost immediately stripped of his masculinity and virility. For instance, left behind Sri Lankan men whose wives work as maids in the Middle East often find their competence as breadwinners and lovers devalued (Gamburd, 2002). Similarly, Keralan women who work as nurses overseas become key breadwinners within both the immediate and extended family while left behind men "become downwardly mobile, both economically and socially" (George, 2005: 19). Malayali husbands' immobility as they wait to get "called" by their working wives in Italy, strips them of their masculinity. They are seen as having no control over their wives who remain unaccounted for in a foreign land, living in another man's house as foreign domestic workers (Gallo, 2006: 362).

Women, on the other hand, are linked to the realm of family where they are portrayed as moral protectors of the hearth. They find themselves situated within the confines of the private space of home whether this is home at the scale of the family, the community or the nation. While men are portrayed as "entrepreneurs – as creators – of transnational business networks (forming) empires of expatriate workers sustaining transnational corporations" (Yeoh and Willis, 2004: 149), women "represent the 'authentic voices' of a culture, and are 'constructed as the symbolic

bearers of the collectivity's identity and honour, both personally and collectively' (Yuval-Davis, 1997). They were expected to nourish the nation's "heartware" (Yeoh and Willis, 1999) by leaving with their husbands overseas to keep their family together. If they could not relocate with their husband abroad, they were expected to withdraw from work and become the equivalent of single parents back home to look after their families in Singapore (see also Yeoh and Willis, 2005; 2004; 1999). Where women have been able to migrate for work as pioneer migrants, much of the research has tended to focus on how they continue to balance their familial duties by handing over the task of mothering to another woman (whether other-mothers within the extended family (Parrenas, 2005 and Schmalzbauer, 2004) or the foreign domestic worker (Yeoh and Huang, 1998). Overall, it is socially more acceptable for men to be absentee fathers than for women to be absentee mothers. Women's mobility is, therefore, curtailed by expectations placed on them by the extended family and community to be good mothers regardless of where they may be spatially located. Women's reproductive labour whether 'here' or 'there' continues to be confined to the domestic sphere as care-givers, whether this is in the instance of elite women giving up their jobs to become re-domesticised or as paid care-givers in case of foreign domestic workers. Ho's (2006) study of skilled Chinese women migrants in Australia highlights how they become re-domesticated without the help of a maid, or help from the extended family like they would in their own home country. They experience a loss of economic freedom as they are now forced to leave the workforce. She argues that "…while international migration is often a 'career move' for men, for women, who frequently migrate as dependent spouses, commonly subordinate their own careers to facilitate their family's re-settlement" (Ho, 2006: 499; see also Yeoh, Huang and Lam, 2005; Clark and Huang, 2006; Yeoh and Willis, 1999).

The responsibilities of citizenship are, therefore, ultimately shaped by both the state and society's gendered view of what it means to be a citizen (Calavita, 2006; Yeoh and Willis 2004). The combined effect of state, community and family often results in constructions of men and women that are gendered and sexualised in ways that maintain a strategic construction of the heteronormative family that proves crucial to holding the disparate members of the nation-state together in an increasingly mobile world. Such a strategic use of gender and sexuality often results in migrant women in particular being seen as suppliers of reproductive labour. They are rarely if ever viewed as primary economic contributors, and often find citizenship difficult for them to attain (Yeoh and Khoo, 1998:159; see also Purkayastha; 2005; Man, 2004). Feminist migration scholars have, therefore, argued that female migrants are doubly excluded by the practices of the nation-state. Firstly, the work that women perform is often viewed as unproductive labour as it is tied primarily to the private sphere. Female migration is, therefore, seen as secondary and subordinate to or divorced from labour markets. Secondly, with reference to skilled migrant workers, women are excluded as they are often not recognised as the head of family (Kofman, 2004).

In an attempt to address this critique researchers have begun to draw more attention to the emotional aspects of citizenship (Ho, 2009; 2008) and the spatialities that inform what might be called the "geographies of responsibility" (Massey, 2004) or "geographies of intimacy" (Harker and Martin, 2012; Oswin and Olund, 2012; Pratt and Grosner, 2006). Ho (2009; 2008), for example, shows in her work how the emotional representations and subjectivities of citizenship amongst overseas Singaporeans based in London, debates about citizenship become emotionally charged and gravitate towards socio-biological constructions of family that legitimate

strategic practices of familial responsibility and care the state requires to ensure that overseas citizens remain tied to the nuclear and national home. Both Ho's papers make significant contributions to the existing literature on transnational Singapore and more broadly to debates on citizenship, belonging, identity, the family and the importance of emotions in understanding the how these elements combine and congeal to provide an understanding of the politics of belonging and their use in galvanizing individuals across multiple scales and straddling the transnational spaces between Singapore and London through the emotional connection of family. What is missing from her work is sufficient critique of how the discursivities of heternormativity or race are also implicated in the transnational biopolitics of family (see Oswin, 2010a, 2010b for critique of heteronormativity in Singapore).

This thesis on single Singaporean-Indian women aims to engage with how women contest, negotiate and sometimes reproduce these gendered roles that have become crucial to the abovementioned biopolitics of family. It is a biopolitics of family in which care is often seen as oppressive particularly for women who tend to take on the primary role of care-givers within the family. Instead the thesis analyses the complex choices the women make in deciding how to care for their parents from a distance and near at hand as part of and alongside caring for themselves. By locating singlehood at the nexus of relationships between the individual, parents, friends, the ethnic community and state in three cities (Singapore, London and Melbourne), the thesis contributes to existing literature on the gendered aspects of care within the family, but also locates this within a broader critique of the biopolitics of family and how sexuality and race are implicated in this biopolitics.

2.3 Contesting the Biopolitics of Family: Choice, Sexuality and Intimate Citizenship

A significant body of work has emerged in response to the critique of intimate life as centred solely around marriage, heteronormativity and procreation. This body of work offers much in terms of alternative approaches to the conceptualisation of family and the possibility of a more expansive engagement in which family formation is not centred around heteronormativity or marriage alone (Giddens, 1992; Plummer, 2003, 2001; Weeks, 1998; Weeks *et al.,* 2001). At first glance this research seems to focus on and draws out the complexities that underpin intimate life in ways that cannot be confined to the public/private divide. Nevertheless, I argue that though commendable in their call for alternative intimacies to be recognized, at their crux lies a rationale that fails to question the finite and linear logic of time that perpetuates care's commodification and justifies the public/private spatial binary. For example, Plummer (2003)'s research on intimate citizenship questions the perceived artificial divide between the two spheres of public and private. He iterates that "intimate citizenship recognizes emerging intimacy groups and identities, along with their rights, responsibilities, and need for recognition in emerging zones of conflict, and suggests new kinds of citizens in the making" (Plummer, 2003: 66). Through intimate citizenship he offers the possibility of a more representative and inclusive engagement with intimacy by calling for a pluralized public sphere, one in which there is no need for framing the intimate within the private sphere alone. Plummer articulates the need for "a new language that can be accepted into the public sphere…that can name all the new relationships…to gain a sense of the newly emerging and often conflicted roles within families and the moral dilemmas that result." (Plummer, 2003: 104). Such a language recognizes not just intimate

relationships grounded in heteronormativity but is more expansive in its inclusion of alternative sexualities and family formations.

Similarly, in his book on the transformation of intimacy Giddens (1992) makes a case for pure relationships and plastic sexuality made possible because gender equality has meant that women and men are now more than ever on equal footing in terms of education and income. He argues that men and women are now in relationships not because they have to but because they want to. In such a scenario sexuality/sex is not tied to reproduction alone and marriage is not necessary. Women, for example, have a choice since they are no longer limited by home and child rearing causing relationships to be negotiated and not enforced. This, he argues, changes power relations making relationships more of a 'pure' nature and allowing for the democratization of personal life. At the centre of Giddens argument is the notion that "there has been a long-term shift towards the ideal of the democratic egalitarian relationship between men and women, men and men, women and women. At the centre of this ideal is the fundamental belief that love relationships and partnerships should be a matter of personal choice and not of arrangement or tradition" (Weeks *et al*., 2001: 24). Week's *et al*. call this "families of choice" where family takes the form of a constellation of "kin-like…relationships based on friendship" that "might also incorporate selected blood relatives". Whatever the form they take, Week *et al.*'s argument is centred around the idea that family is something people "participate" in, and that individuals "feel a sense of belonging in and through them". Individuals, therefore, have a choice who they "include and the kinds of relationships they define as significant".

Feminists have critiqued Giddens' argument iterating that the circumstances in which such choices are made (often by women and sexual minorities) are less than optimistic or autonomous. For instance, while women may choose not to marry, the normativity of heterosexuality often means those who choose singlehood or not to marry are often marginalized and seen as lacking. The focus on autonomous choices individuals can make as a result of the distancing of intimacy from traditional objectives of marriage, family and reproduction dilutes the intense politics that underlie the privileging and disempowerment of women that result from the gender and sexual complexities woven into the production of heterosexuality (Jackson, 1996; Richardson, 1996; VanEvery, 1996). Given this, I argue that there is a need to extend the intimate as more than a juxtaposition of individual choice vis-à-vis state-centric discourses of family and responsibility. Instead, there is also a need to consider the intensities of care that underpin the care relationships and intimate decision-making involving the state, community, intimate others and the individual herself. By focusing on the intensities of care between the self and other, my objective is not to valourise individual choice or reify the disciplining effects of state and community discourses. In this way the thesis resonates with feminist iterations of how care and the emotional often cannot be confined to a public/private divide where public equals the state and private the individual (McDowell and Dyson, 2011; Thien, 2005; Wilkinson, 2009). Rather than seeing family only as a disciplining strategy for the state, the thesis contributes to existing literature such as work by geographers like Harker and Martin (2012) and Oswin and Olund (2010) in which they espouse the need for geographies of intimacy that question the biopolitics of family by drawing from a feminist ethics of care (see section 2.6), thus allowing for more critical view of

care, love and formations of "family" in increasingly mobile times (see also Massey, 2004; Pratt and Grosner, 2006; Valentine, 2008).

2.4 Race, Nation and the Biopolitics of Family: A Postcolonial Critique.

Race continues to play a crucial role in shaping our understanding of power relations (Appadurai, 1996; Bhabha, 1994; Delaney, 2002; Dwyer and Crang, 2002; Kong, 1999; Liu, 2000; Louie, 2006; Ong, 1999; Puwar, 2000). While some may argue that as a discursive practice, race appears to be less relevant amidst calls for an engagement with post-race research (Nayak, 2006), and greater focus on the transnational (deracialised), neo-liberal, and often middle-class global citizen who straddles multiple physical and socio-cultural locations (Florida, 2002; Hannerz, 1993; Sassen, 1991), others iterate that it remains important in increasingly mobile times (see for example, Bunnell, 2002; Catungal and Leslie, 2009). As more individuals live away from their countries of birth, the ability to produce and internalise contingent forms of power/knowledge that maintain racialised loyalties over time and space become crucial. I argue that this is made possible through a reliance on biological reproduction to tie individuals to each other regardless of their location in space.

Race is a strategy for unification and governance. It becomes a metaphor for the temporal – representing tradition, blood, roots, and is tied to historicity (the event – that symbolises the birth of a nation). For example, geographers have critically analysed how Asian nationalisms hinge on the strategic use of race to moderate the desire to modernise, while holding on to tradition as a tactic for distinguishing the postcolonial Asian nation from its Western counterpart (Ong, 1999; see also Bunnell,

2002; Yeoh and Willis, 2004; 1999 and also Bhabha, 2009). The symbolic meaning of blood that is the essence of roots, kinship and biological connectivity between individual bodies becomes internalised literally and figuratively. This thesis engages with how the social constructedness and the (biologically) symbolic value of race are reproduced not just at the level of the state, but also become a crucial means by which individual self-identification takes place. It analyses how race is internalised and performatively reproduced, thus putting in place a racialised biopolitics of family.

Feminist researchers have critiqued how biological reproduction becomes a state project, and the social constructions of nationality, ethnicity and gender become situated within the natural/scientific discourse of sex, blood, race and genes that implicate women (Kobayashi and Peake, 1994; Nash, 2005, 2003; Yuval-Davis, 1997). Postcolonial feminist researchers in particular have been critical of the strategic way in which Asian femininities are portrayed as traditional, docile and conservative (Puwar and Raghuram, 2003), and 'suited' for care-giving (Kofman and Raghuram, 2006; Raghuram and Kofman, 2004), thus often reproducing an essentialising framework in which to understand 'race'. Using such a framework, results in, for example, mobile single women being seen as dangerous because their bodies are portrayed as vulnerable to sexual pollution, and less suitable for marriage and family life in the Asian context (see Gallo, 2006; George, 2005; Willis and Yeoh, 2003). Single women are often seen as lacking agency, and oppressed into care-giving roles within the family. By focusing on how single Singaporean-Indian women want to care for their parents, and how caring for their parents is not just something they are 'disciplined' into doing by the state and Indian community, but how these caring relationships are located at the nexus of state, community, parents, and the

women themselves, the thesis remains critical of such an easy pathologising of race (Puwar, 2004). It engages with the spatio-temporal context in which single women experience dating, sex and family life, and shows how discursivities such as gender, sexuality and race are contested and negotiated in complex ways that reveal the discursive contradictions that underpin the reproduction of an 'Indian way' of caring or being family (see also Raghuram *et al*., 2009; Raghuram, 2009).

2.5 Space, Time, Waiting and (im)Mobility: A Feminist Perspective

Feminist geographers and non-geographers have theorised the simultaneity of time and space by focusing on the relational and mutually constituting aspects of the two instead of merely taking a linear approach (Adam, 2004, 1990; Davies, 2001; Frosh, 1995; Massey, 2005, 1993; Probyn, 2001). For example, Massey (2005) iterates the need for space to be "open" and that we see time and space in terms of their four-dimensionality, rather than space as instantaneous connections that frame it as representation (Massey, 1993:155). Massey critiques this association of space with representation arguing that representation "is seen to take on aspects of spatialisation in the latter's action of setting things down side by side; of laying them out as a discrete simultaneity. Representation thus means taking the time out of things, lending space not only the character of discrete multiplicity but also the characteristic of stasis" (Massey, 2005: 23). These iterations of time and space owe much to the postmodern turn in geography which, coupled with increasing mobility, has given rise to multiple and simultaneous subjectivities that transcend being 'here' or 'there', and "now" and "then", and identity being always in a process of "becoming", constituted around a plurality of power centres (such as race, gender, nationality, class and sexuality) (Laclau, in Hall, 1992: 278). Such a line of inquiry is crucial to a feminist

geographers' understanding of time and space as it asks us to consider the power relations that underpin how time and space are conceptualized and made use of in the lives of individuals in an increasingly globalising and mobile world (Katz, 2004; Levitt and Glick-Schiller, 2004; Massey, 1991; Pratt, 2004; Pratt and Yeoh, 2003)

This framing of time and space as simultaneous is what makes a critical analysis of waiting possible. At first glance, waiting seems to keep space and time apart, favouring the former over the latter. Waiting perpetuates an in-built hierarchy that places time before space as it re-instates the active and progressive aspects of the temporal, and stasis or passivity of space. Waiting represents a 'now-ness' of space, and the progress of time from the here/now/lack to the there/end-goal/completeness. Waiting, therefore, produces hierarchies that segregate people and places into those that matter and those that do not, those that have arrived and those that have not, making it an intrinsically political endeavour that gives space meaning through some socio-political developmental logic of how time ought to progress (Adam, 1990; Schweizer, 2008). Waiting makes sense because time and space are seen as separate, and there is a linearity of progression implied in time passing that allows one to get from one place to another. Geographical engagements with waiting have criticised the in-built hierarchy that waiting produces, arguing that waiting casts those who wait as incomplete as though there were some natural trajectory to development in which the current experiences of individuals reflect a wasted time, and the spaces that represent and symbolise this waste or lack in their lives as inconsequential (Doel, 2003; Jeffrey, 2008; Massey, 2005).

Feminist geography's critique of waiting (Conlon, 2011; Mountz, 2011) is grounded in its questioning of this separation of time and space which has become more even more important in the current climate of increasing mobility and the rise of the transnational subject. By asking instead that we take a relational approach which interrogates the politics behind how time and space are produced through difference and exclusion (Glick-Schiller, 2004; Katz, 2004; Massey, 2005; Pratt and Yeoh, 2003), feminist geographers continue to highlight the myth of constructing subjects as "waiting". For instance, Katz (2004) draws our attention to the politics of place within the context of mobility by arguing that geographers need to draw on the commonalities and connectivities that subjects share and in doing so connect disparate places through the same social processes. Such a strategy practices a fluid, approach to space that is politically responsive, and questions the logic of progression that is perpetuated in waiting because time and space are seen as distinct rather that relational constructs. Similarly, Levitt and Glick-Schiller (2004) devise a transnational social field that enables researchers to question methodological nationalism, and the "neat divisions of connection into local, national, transnational and global" (p 1010). Instead of hierarchical space and the seeming natural progression from one scale to another, they highlight the importance of politics in how scale is constructed and iterate that "all are local in that near and distant connections penetrate the daily lives of individuals lived within a locale" (p 1010) (see also Devasahayam *et al.*, 2004; Marston, 2000; Silvey, 2004b).

Feminist geographers have also highlighted the uneven ways in which different individuals and groups are positioned within networks of time-space flows and connections. For example, in theorizing power-geometry, Massey (1999) responds to

Harvey's (1990) time-space compression which she argues is a masculinist portrayal of transnationalism, globalization and the indiscriminate impact of mobility in speeding up individual lives. The concept of power-geometry thus highlights the need for the impact of globalization to be socially differentiated and for us to think of the politics that underpins how connectedness is experienced and how this in turn influences how (im)mobility is constructed and experienced (see also Cresswell, 2011; 2010; Yeoh and Huang, 2011). Taking heed of this critique, researchers involved in migration research have written in great depth about the political underpinnings of the research they conduct by highlighting the importance of structures such class, gender, race and nationality in explaining how migrant subjectivities are constituted (Delaney, 2002; Donato *et al*., 2006; Dwyer and Crang, 2002; Lapp *et al*., 2010; Olavarria, 2006; Peavy and Smith, 1994; Puwar, 2000; Silvey, 2006; Walsh; 2007; Woods *et al*., 1995). While not directly mentioning the issue of waiting, this body of work is important as it makes us consider why someone may be considered "waiting".

For instance, within the context of migration research the stillness and emptiness of waiting grounded in a linear conception of time and space continues to be implied in work that engages with how women in particular "wait". The earlier section on the biopolitics of family shows how waiting is implied within the context of how gender roles influence whether or not one is suitable for a mobile life. Men, for instance, are portrayed as more mobile given their duties as economic providers to their families and countries (Yeoh and Willis, 2004; see also Olavarria, 2006; Shen, 2005). Women, on the other hand, are linked to the realm of family where they are portrayed as moral protectors of the hearth anchored both physically and emotionally to the private space

of home whether this is home at the scale of the family, the community or the nation. As such, women are more often than not the ones confined in time and space as they wait for others (Lapp *et al*., 2010; Woods *et al*., 1995; Peavy and Smith, 1994).

Migration research on single women has also tended to construct them as waiting. Here single women across the skilled and unskilled labour divide wait to "escape" somewhere else to become someone else (Gaetano, 2008; Walsh, 2007) and is largely a result of the tendency to locate them within the sphere of social reproduction. They are portrayed as being able to "escape", as being more footloose than their married counterparts when it comes to making decisions about their mobility as they are perceived to be less encumbered by responsibilities to husband and children, therefore, making it easier for them to move for the purpose of work (Gaetano, 2008; Hardill, 1998; Thang *et al*., 2002; Willis and Yeoh, 2003). The in-built linearity of time and space implied in waiting is compounded because the only way single women can escape the pressure to marry is by going somewhere else (abroad) to engender more time and space for themselves. In this the literature perpetuates the binary of here/there and home/away rather than considering the politics that underpin the (im)mobilities of singlehood both at home and abroad. In addition, it may be argued that this research on single women is often rooted in a calculation of care that presents their lives as less complicated than those of their married counterparts. The latter perpetuates the notion of "costs" grounded in the framing of time and space as linear in which finite time is something one could run out of. It is a cost, that is grounded in a zero-sum logic of care that often results in family life being costly for women who are likely to face being in the financial and emotional red of care more so than men. It is a logic of care in which single women are only seen to be able to

diminish the costs to themselves by “escaping” abroad (Brennan, 2002; Esara, 2004; Gaetano, 2008; Mahalingam and Leu, 2005; Thang *et al*., 2002; Williams, 2005; Willis, and Yeoh, 2003).

For example, Williams research on female migrants from Eastern Indonesia in search of work as foreign domestic workers (FDWs) in neighbouring Asian countries shows that “the appeal of transnational migration was the opportunity to escape from family constraints and live in a different community overseas for an extended period” (Williams, 2005: 406). Her contribution to family income through work overseas as an FDW “fits with the local notion of femininity [duty of daughter to look after family welfare] (and)…serves to loosen the grip of male kin’s control over the women’s spatial movement” (Williams, 2005: 406). Where the literature has focused on women migrating as skilled labour, the focus has been on how educated women migrate to escape familial pressure to marry. Thang *et al.* (2002) for instance, discuss how young single Japanese women who have left their homeland for jobs in Singapore escape economic recession, build on professional capital and escape gender discrimination in the workplace and social pressure to get married in Japan. Migration overseas is seen as part of a process of self-discovery with the women becoming more empowered through their integration with the local community (Thang *et al.*, 2002).

The myth of escape is nevertheless revealed in research that engages with how single migrant women’s freedom overseas is short-lived and how in some instances the familial and communal gaze extends from home to discipline in ways that mitigate these freedoms (Esara, 2004; Gaetano, 2008; Velayutham and Wise, 2005; Willis and Yeoh, 2003). For instance, Gaetano (2008) and Esara (2004) discuss the experiences

of single women migrating from rural to urban locations. Their papers reveal how single women experience greater freedom from parental gaze, become economically independent and are able to 'makeover' themselves from rustic peasants to modern girls, expanding labour market options, developing confidence and enhancing social status (Gaetano, 2008: 630). However, in Esara's paper this freedom is curtailed as filial piety and the patriarchal norms of Thai society require many of them to marry and become parents with responsibilities towards both their own families and that of their parents. As a result, while mobility has accorded women certain freedoms, these are only temporary. Willis and Yeoh's paper on Singaporean migrants in China argues that the decision for single women to migrate is not solely an individual process but takes into account opinions of other family members as many of them still live with their parents prior to migration. "Female migrants reported objections to their mobility by family members more than male migrants" due to mothers' concerns about safety of daughters and also parental concerns about the issue of marriage. That is, how living abroad would diminish their daughters' opportunities for meeting appropriate spouses (Willis and Yeoh, 2003: 108). Nevertheless, one may argue that the abovementioned research perpetuates the binary of home and abroad because it provides only one side of the story, the experiences of women leaving home and rarely includes the experiences of their left behind counterparts. In this way the existing research tends to entrench the binary of home and abroad and fails to engage with the (im)mobilities of singlehood that may serve to disrupt waiting. By constructing single women as waiting, the complexities of living a single life not tied to achieving an end-goal marriage become peripheralised. I iterate that we should instead be asking questions about why and how single women are constructed as waiting, and by whom?

2.6 Conceptual Framework: Feminist Ethics of Care and a Transnational Politics of Waiting

In this section of the chapter, I argue for the use of a feminist ethics of care to problematise the biopolitics of family which rooted primarily in what I call a calculative technology of care. This technology of care co-opts a script of love and is grounded in the state's intergenerational logic of payback and produces a biopolitics of family in which care is more likely to be seen only as a cost that may be 'recuperated' through marriage. As Bauman iterates "care for the other" or "love motives" becomes "one of the most insidious of the many shapes of domination", it "blackmails its objects to obedience" (Bauman, 1992 in Sevenhuijsen, 1998: 18). This calculative technology is based on a zero-sum game of care that produces a climate in which women in particular are constrained by expectations of them to make calculative decisions about care and intimacy as a prelude to perceived payback in the future (Glen, 2010; Teo, 2011; Yeoh and Willis, 2004, 1999). It is this notion of the payback for care that makes marriage seem the only logical outcome, and single women seen as waiting. Care's costs can only be re-calibrated from the negative to the positive when care is re-located from the private sphere, where it need not be acknowledged and accounted for, to the public through the socio-legal practice of marriage (Hartmann, 1998). It is only after marriage that intimate life can be re-located from the private sphere, where it need not be acknowledged and accounted for, to the public sphere where it becomes possible to make legal claims on the state and one's family. The result is a scenario in which singlehood is seen as "not married" as all other forms of singlehood (happily single, living in a straight long-term relationship, being in a same-sex long-term relationship) cannot possibly count (see also Gordon, 1994; Reynolds and Wetherell, 2003; Rich, 1980). This is because,

I argue, the calculative technology of care draws from a linear rather than relational conception of time and space. It is one that limits the extent to which care for the self and other can simultaneously take place, and thus rationalises that care time and space given to caring must be 'recuperated'. Care for the other is instead seen as a burden that inhibits women in particular from fulfilling personal desires (i.e. live the lives they want to live) since often it is women who fulfill the role of primary care-givers.

A feminist ethics of care calls for us "to lead a moral life which includes obligations to myself and my family and people in general" (Gilligan, 1982: 21; Li, 1994). "Nothing is clear 'once and for all' – the importance of the interpretation is such that ethical problems appear to be more questions of judgment than attainable 'truths". What is important in the process of decision making is consideration of the problems "in relation to the circumstances of time and place" thus "giving rise to the 'maturity of the interdependence' of female ethic orientations" (Leccardi, 1996: 177). A feminist ethics of care is, therefore, highly political because it focuses on the relational and asks that we consider the context in which moral decisions are made (Sevenhuijsen, 1998; Toronto, 1993). It provides an alternative framing of care that focuses on the relational nature of care and how this comprises not only on the needs of the other but also one's obligation to the self (see also Sevenhuijsen, 1998; Toronto, 1993). It is grounded in a "specific cognitive style, rationality and ethical orientation" (Leccardi, 1996:177) and allows for "simultaneous activities and overlapping temporalities" (Davies, 2001: 137). A feminist ethics of care might, therefore, distance care from a zero-sum rhetoric where it is seen in terms of gains and losses that are based on a premise of finite time and space. Instead of care for the other taking away time and space for the self, a feminist care ethics argues that part of

wanting to live the lives we want to live includes caring for others even as we care for themselves. It focuses on the moral context in which we struggle to make decisions about how to care for others, and how we manage what we want for ourselves simultaneously. A feminist ethics of care, therefore, asks that we consider how care is encountered and negotiated between individuals who care for each other, and by doing so produces time and space as relational. By drawing upon a feminist care ethic to produce a more complex engagement with care, this thesis raises critical questions regarding responsibility and care for the self and other, and how these influence the ways in which we think of and "do" family that need not lead to marriage being the only rational choice for women.

By engaging with Singaporean-Indian graduate women's experiences of singlehood abroad and in Singapore in terms of the moral struggles that play out as part of the caring relationships between themselves and intimate others, I aim to show how it becomes possible to problematise state and community-centred discourses and strategies that legitimate a certain type of family biopolitics that is not only gendered and heteronormative but also racialised. I do this by focusing on the intensities of care that play out across time and space as part of the complex relationships between the single Singaporean-Indian women, their parents and friends. Specifically, I iterate that while the existing work in the migration literature on Singapore touches on the gendered aspect of family life and its relevance to the Singapore state's project of nation-building in mobile times, the role race plays in the survival of the multi-racial Singaporean nation needs to be further unpacked from the perspective of ethnic minority communities such as the Singaporean-Indians. I examine the women's experiences of singlehood within the context of how they balance the Singaporean-

Indian community and Singapore state's expectations of them to marry alongside the intensities of care that exists in relationships that unfold between themselves, their parents and intimate others as they fulfill their duties as daughters, mothers and citizens. In this way, the thesis re-centres race alongside gender and sexuality while problematising the biopolitics of family that emerges at the nexus of state, community, intimate others and the self.

In the analytical chapters that follow, I show how engaging with singlehood in terms of a transnational "politics of waiting" (Jeffrey, 2008) might prove more productive for destabilising the existing biopolitics of family in which singlehood must necessarily be seen as a lack. I argue that such a focus on a politics of waiting is intrinsically feminist in outlook as it is committed to destabilising binaries by taking a relational rather than linear approach to time and space. This relationality becomes evident when singlehood is understood in terms of the caring relationships that unfold between single women and intimate others. In this way I show how singlehood is more than the constant worry of not being married, and expose the fallacy of waiting as an "empty" space between two ends of the binary comprising lack and completion (in this case single vs. married). Similar to Mountz (2011) and Conlon (2011), I argue that instead of seeing waiting as a space of stillness in which nothing happens, more needs to be done to unpack what is taking place in "in-between spaces" of, in this instance, single and married thus enabling an analysis of how time and space are implicated by and implicated in constructions of waiting.

While single Singaporean-Indian women are no different in the eyes of the state which sees all single women as shirking their national duty to marry and procreate, I

argue that they also face the added burden of being an aberration in the eyes of the Singaporean-Indian community. These intense expectations for Indian women to marry often mean that marriage is highly prioritised as marker of a successful life. Specifically, I show how the Singapore state and Singaporean-Indian community work together to co-opt the bodies of single Indian women to further place-based identity-making objectives grounded in a biopolitics of family. The thesis reveals how the women, through mutually caring relationships involving intimate others, contest, negotiate and sometimes reproduce this biopolitics of family. Single graduate Singapore-Indian women have been chosen, because of the peculiar circumstances in which they find themselves, having to balance being modern women 'who have it all' and being traditional bearers of their community and nation's culture (see Chapter 5). The pressures both they and their mothers in particular face in accounting for daughters' single status results in a different dynamic of care. It is a dynamic of care that emerges out of the inter-dependent relationships of care between two generations of women constrained by duties of social reproduction that are racially tinged. My aim in this thesis is, therefore, to interrogate how single Indian women make decisions about when, whether and whom to marry given the complex balancing act that involves not only fulfilling their desires as individuals, but also meeting the expectations of the Singapore state, the Indian community and their parents of them to marry and have children of their own.

By framing my research on single Singaporean-Indian women in terms of the intensities of care that are grounded in a feminist care ethic, I am able to show how singlehood is more complex than being unmarried. In this way it becomes possible to step away from a zero-sum logic in which single Singaporean-Indian women in

particular must necessarily be in the red given both the Singapore state and Singaporean-Indian community's expectations of them to marry and perform their duties as *good* citizens and daughters. Marriage no longer becomes the only rational choice, and instead what we see happening is a "doing" of family and experiencing of singlehood that problematises constructions of family and community that are tied to a myth of blood and reinstate the essentialisation of race. Specifically, I argue that care needs to be understood in terms of the complex spatialities that inform the moral context of when and how a feminist care ethics is enacted between the women, their parents and friends, allowing them to enjoy, and in some instances cope with being single as well as the primary care-givers in their families and as members of a community that is often perceived as traditional in Singapore (Chapter 6).

Considering care in terms of the relational and non-linear, and focusing on the intensities of care that play out between the self and other, enables me to critically examine how these women's experiences of singlehood are reflective of alternative spatio-temporalities of singlehood that are emotionally grounded and perhaps more reflective of the transnational politics of waiting between the women, intimate others, their community and the Singapore state. It is a politics of waiting that destabilises the hierarchies of care and geographies of responsibility that reify the state and community over the individual. Rather than single women being seen as waiting, a transnational politics of waiting draws attention to the relationality of care, and the moral context in which intimate decisions are made by single women who share caring relationships with others they may or may not be biologically related to. What impact might this have on the prevailing biopolitics of family that have become exceedingly crucial in an era of heightened mobility? By focusing on the intensities

of care, the thesis resonates with feminist research that is critical of how intimate ties bind, and the spatio-temporalities these give rise to (see also Valentine, 2008). The thesis, therefore, argues for the possibility of singlehood to be accepted as a legitimate mode of being, one that is imbued with the power to destabilize the descent-based theory of the nation by forcing us to ask critical questions about the context in which individuals make decisions about how to and whom to love, thus eventually *becoming* family (see Chapter 7).

Chapter 3: Race, Gender and Nation: Single Indian Women in Globalising Singapore

3.1 Marriage, Fertility and Singlehood in Globalising Singapore

In Singapore's most recent 2010 population census the Department of Statistics (DoS) reported that "the proportion of singles had increased between 2000 and 2010, with the increase more prominent for the younger age groups. Among Singapore citizens age 30-34 years, the proportion of singles rose significantly from 33 per cent to 43 per cent for the males, and from 22 per cent to 31 per cent for the females" (DoS, Press Release, 12 January 2011). As reported in the earlier 2000 census, singlehood continued to be most prevalent amongst citizen males with lower educational qualifications and graduate citizen females. For example, according to the same press release cited earlier, "at age 40-44 years, 24 per cent of citizen males with below secondary qualifications were single compared to 13 per cent of university graduates. For citizen females, 23 per cent of graduates aged 40-44 years were single in 2010, compared to 11 per cent among females with below secondary qualifications". The problem of the rising number of singles in the eyes of the state may, therefore, be linked to female hypergamy which is seen as the primary reason why lowly educated men and highly educated women find it most difficult to marry (Jones, 2012; 2004).

Singlehood in Singapore is constructed as a problem that needs to be understood alongside Singapore's low fertility rate, and the imperative to marry and have children ("New Push for Singles to Date", *The Straits Times*, 12 August 2010; see also Jones, 2004; Jones and Gubhaju, 2009). While the number of marriages year-on-

year has seen an increase in recent years, between 2009 and 2010 there was a decline from 26,081 marriages to 24,363 (see Table 3.1). This is reflected by a crude marriage rate which has hovered between 6.4 to 6.6 per 1,000 resident population between 2005 and 2009, and declined more recently to 6.1 in the year 2010. Together with the rising number of singles, the issue of late and non-marriage amongst Singapore citizens has become a key concern for the government given the potential impact low fertility could have on the country's economic growth and development. This is primarily because, in Singapore, individuals are encouraged to start families only after marriage. The rising number of singles, therefore, has implications for the country's fertility rates and its supply of locally born talent (i.e. skilled labour).

Table 3.1: Number of Marriages, Singapore

Year	Number of Marriages
2005	22,992
2006	23,706
2007	23,966
2008	24,596
2009	26,081
2010	24,363

Source: Key Indicators on Marriages and Divorces, 2005-2010, (DoS, 2010b)

In a city-state with aspirations to maintain a strong economy tied to a burgeoning tertiary sector and knowledge-based economy, the Singapore government has continued to iterate the importance of developing a stable and talented pool of human resources. In the wake of the government's global city vision[1], the government has

[1] It is a vision constituted in the late 1990s where the city-state is seen as an "economically dynamic, socially cohesive and culturally vibrant" place to live, work and play (Dr Aline Wong, then Senior Minister of State for Education, 1998 quoted in Teo *et al.*, 2003:167).

adopted a two-pronged approach in providing the solution for growing Singapore's talent base. The first has been to promote family life and marriage through a myriad of campaigns and policy initiatives. These include the implementation of the Family Matters Committee, the Romancing Singapore Campaign, and pro-natalist population policies (National Family Council, 2009; 2006; 2004; PEC, 2002; see also Cheng, 1996; Heng and Devan, 1992; Lazar, 2001). However, alongside the encouragement of Singaporeans to marry and have children is a second strategy; that of the open-door talent migration policy. The government sees this policy as a panacea for the city-state's low fertility rates which could potentially make it difficult to sustain a secure pool of skilled labour (Yeoh, 2006; Yeoh and Chang, 2001; Yeoh and Lin, 2012). Comparing Singapore to Japan, Minister Mentor Lee Kuan Yew, the city-state's founding Prime Minister impressed upon the need for the country to keep its doors open to foreign talent. He stated that "without educated foreign residents, Singapore faces the threat of a declining economy with a shrinking labour force" ("MM: Foreign Talent is Vital", *The Straits Times*, 14 August 2009).

> "To shut them (foreign talent) out is to risk an unwelcome scenario similar to that confronting Japan's greying population: 'They refuse to accept immigrants, so their economy is feeble and lacks vitality."
>
> \- Minister Mentor Lee Kuan Yew, 2009

However, the open-door migration policy has caused a great furor amongst Singaporean citizens who see this policy measure as one that has been implemented at their expense. A recent article in the national paper, The Strait Times, cites the increase in Singapore's foreign population as "the most serious policy and political

misstep of the last decade" ("Forging Ahead with Guidance for Continuity", *The Straits Times*, 3 August 2012). Many Singaporeans perceive that foreigners in Singapore as taking jobs from Singaporeans, causing inflation in the housing market and placing great stress on the country's public infrastructure network ("The Little Reddening Dot", *The Straits Times*, 14 July 2012). The government's migration policy is seen by many as merely being a stop-gap measure that is more concerned with attracting and keeping foreign talent than addressing the structural issues that have resulted in marriage and family life seeming less attractive (e.g. work-life balance, gendered family roles, cost of living issues, competition for jobs and school placements). As a result, despite the campaigns and policies implemented, fertility rates have continued to decline (see Table 3.2). Over the past 20 years from 1990 to 2010, TFR has fallen from 1.83 to 1.15. Coupled with the political backlash against the open-door migration policy, the issue of why Singaporeans are not marrying and having children is more likely to be of greater concern in the future.

Table 3.2: Singapore's Total Fertility Rate

Year	Total Fertility Rate
1960	5.76
1970	3.07
1980	1.82
1990	1.83
2000	1.60
2005	1.26
2006	1.28
2007	1.29
2008	1.28
2009	1.22
2010	1.15

Source: Yearbook of Statistics Singapore, 2011 (DoS, 2011c)

Given the above concerns over rising singlehood and late/non marriage, I argue that more research needs to be done on the topic of singlehood in Singapore. Specifically, I argue in this thesis that the singles "problem" in Singapore is not one that is benign in terms of race, gender and sexuality. State biopower in Singapore depends on a calculative technology of care to produce a particular type of "family biopolitics" (Ong, 1996; 1995; Foucault, 2004 (*trans.*)). Given the multiracial construct of the Singaporean nation, I contend that this has crucial implications for ethnic minority women like Singaporean-Indian women, who are seen as having to play their part in maintaining the makeup of Singapore's multi-racial population.

The rest of this chapter is divided into four sections. In the first section (3.2), I provide the historical background regarding the relevance of race in Singapore's multi-racial nation-building project. I show how this has resulted in a biopolitics of

family, and question the implications this has for Singaporean-Indian women. By analysing ministerial speeches and media discourse, I set the background in which to ask and answer the following questions in subsequent analytical chapters: "what is the place of single Singaporean-Indian women within the rhetoric of nation-building in globalising Singapore, and how are they implicated in Singapore's particular type of 'family biopolitics'?". In the next section (3.3), I engage more specifically with data on marriage within the Singaporean-Indian community. In analysing this data, I set the context in which to ask questions about Indian women's experiences of singlehood, and the pressure they face to marry from within their community. The thesis, therefore, aims to fill a gap in the existing research on marriage and issues of low fertility in Singapore by focusing specifically on singlehood, and how the discursivity of race impacts upon how single women make decisions pertaining to their intimate lives. Given the fact that in Singapore, it is often highly educated women who more likely to marry later in life (Jones, 2012; Jones and Gubaju, 2009), the thesis focuses on how graduate Singaporean-Indian women cope with being single in a community where marriage is seen as part and parcel of the natural progression in a woman's life. In the third section of the chapter (3.4), I engage specifically with the issue of inter-ethnic marriage. I show how the changing socio-economic circumstances of single graduate Singaporean-Indian women could possibly translate to more leeway when making decisions about their intimate lives in terms of marrying outside their ethnic group. However, by anlaysing the data on inter-ethnic marriages amongst Indians in Singapore, I show that Indian women's ability to marry outside the community seems limited. What might the implications of such limitations be on their experience of singlehood and views on marriage? I conclude the chapter (3.5) by summarising the key arguments made in the chapter,

and set the stage for the methodological and analytical discussions that follow in the remaining chapters of the thesis.

3.2 Race, Gender and Nation: The Biopolitics of Family in Globalising Singapore

Feminist scholars have argued that the relevance of race in state constructions of the nation cannot be fully understood without critically engaging with how women's bodies and their gendered roles in family are often co-opted for these objectives (Ahmed, 2004; Anderson, 1983; Lubheid, 2009; Nash, 2005; Nast, 2002; Yeoh and Willis, 2004; 1999; Yuval-Davis, 1997). In this section of the chapter, I engage specifically with how intimate decisions about when to marry, whether to marry and whom to marry are made by Singaporean-Indian women who are an ethnic minority, and who, I argue, play an important role in the state's ability to ensure the continued relevance of its multi-racial nation-building ideology.

In 1963 Singapore gained independence as part of the Malaysian Federation and later became a fully independent nation-state when it was asked to leave the Federation in 1965. The circumstances in which these two moments of independence occurred have made it necessary for the Singapore state to link the birth of the nation to a racialised starting point. In 1963, Singapore's independence was linked to the coming together of multiple races fighting for independence from the British. The driving force behind the fight for independence was a belief that the then colonial masters could not be relied upon to defend the local population against the Japanese during World War II. In 1965, Singapore's removal from the Federation also occurred under the shadow of race. One of the key issues behind its removal was an unwillingness by the Federation government to follow a policy of meritocracy in which all races would be treated

equally. Instead the Bumiputera Policy was implemented, giving special privileges to the indigenous ethnic Malays who made up the majority of the citizens in the Federation and were seen as the original "sons of the soil".

Since independence, the Singapore state has continued to rely upon a strategic deployment of race to maintain an imaginary of a "separate-but-equal" (Yeoh and Huang, 2004) multi-racial nation. It is an imagination in which multiple races come together to form a nation of "Singaporeans" comprising a specific proportion of Chinese majority (just over three-quarters of the population), followed by the Malay (15%), Indian (7%) and finally the Others (2%). The Others category comprises ethnicities that do not fall under the category of Chinese, Malay or Indian ethnic communities. CMIO is, therefore, an imagination of the nation in which multiple races come together in a more or less fixed ratio to make up the Singaporean nation. More significantly this nation is built on a multi-racial ethos in which race plays a crucial role not only in designating the authentic make-up of the nation, but also becomes the "problem" that has to be overcome. It is a problem that accrues from having to bring together disparate ethnic groups by re-iterating the mantra that each has an equal chance at success alongside the economic growth, modernisation and development of Singapore regardless of their majority or minority status. The result for Singapore has been a construction by the state of an ideal multi-racial population that makes up the nation. It is a population that comprises a specific make-up of individuals representative of the country's four founding races of Chinese-Malay-Indian-Other (C-M-I-O) in which they each remain separate but equal (Chua, 2006; 2005; 2003; Ho, 2006; Yeoh, 2004; Yeoh and Huang, 2004). Such a separate-but-equal strategy requires the strategic deployment of racially inflected policies that are

grounded in a principle of meritocracy in ways that suggest how race both matters and yet does not because it is a "problem" that can be overcome with good governance. Singapore's CMIO brand of the multi-racial nation, therefore, needs to thrive because it is the belief in its success, in the face of racially derived adversity, that ties members of the nation together.

Given the above context of the multi-racial nation, family as a socio-biological construct remains especially crucial to the Singapore state's successful management of the nation in the current era of globalisation and enhanced mobility. The state has had to put in place a particular biopolitics of family. It is one in which a rhetoric of marriage and procreation operates in ways that "produces consent" and results in self-discipline that governs the conduct of educated women in particular, in the interest of ensuring the biological and economic survival of the family in its biological, communal and national form (Ong, 1996; Yeoh, Huang and Lam, 2005; Oswin 2010a; 2010b). It is one in which the right kind of family can only be one rooted in marriage between a man and a woman that perpetuates a particular ethnic, class and sexual imaginary of the ideal nuclear family in which educated daughters beget offspring crucial to maintaining the talent pool required for Singapore to realise its global city vision, and remain relevant in a highly mobile and competitive international labour market. In such an environment, the Singapore government has had to put in place policies that encourage the ease with which foreign and local talent can maximise economic gain through waged work and the accumulation of material wealth within a transnational context (Yeoh and Lin, 2012; Yeoh and Chang, 2001). For instance, in order to attract and maintain such a talented pool of human resource, the government has had to employ strategies that promote 'flexible citizenship (Ong,

1999). This includes moving away from highly territorialised notions of the nation and putting in place strategies that promote 'long-distance nationalism' (Pratt and Yeoh, 2003).

For example, a key change took place on 1 April 2004 allowing children of female Singaporean citizens born overseas to claim citizenship by descent. Prior to this, citizenship by descent could only be claimed by male citizens. Women could only claim citizenship by registration for their overseas born children. By allowing citizenship by descent for both men and women the government has acknowledged that, unlike in the past, women were not considered to be opting out of Singaporean society. Whilst in the past, the out-migration of citizens signified the inability of the nation-state to guard its boundaries, the current state rhetoric reflects the belief that all transnational citizens (male or female) symbolise the global reach of Singapore's human resource base and should, as such, be considered "our people" and that "we have to look after them" (the then Deputy Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong, quoted in Tan, 2008:78). Singaporeans overseas are seen as part of the national family who needed to be looked after. In return, they too could help ensure the economic survival of the nation by providing the much needed human resources Singapore requires to meet the demand for talented labour in an age of globalisation. The state's policy to allow for descent via female citizens can, therefore, be read as an attempt to combat the effects of declining fertility rates. The change in citizenship policy gives more children born outside of the nation-state's borders the option to "return home" to the national family.

By calling its daughters and their offspring back to the fold, the state is in effect able to redefine/redraw and encapsulate the boundaries of the nation differently including the possibility for more transnational and inter-ethnic families to become part of the nation. In the eyes of the state, such a strategy is, however, not without difficulties. Former Prime Minister Goh Chok Tong said in his parliamentary speech on Singapore 21 on 5 May 1999, that the challenge ahead for Singapore is in how to make the "shared Singaporean DNA" strong enough to withstand the challenges of being a country "made up of different tribes". The possibility for distinct tribes to exist plays into the myth of race made natural through biological reproduction. Yet Goh's speech also highlights the importance of realising that race can be strategically and flexibly deployed, making it possible to create in newcomers to Singapore "the same sense of belonging to Singapore as the thorough-bred Singaporeans". While Goh's speech may be seen as essentialising race, there is an implied flexibility in that this essence is one that can be transferred to others over time and across space by cultivating of a sense of belonging that stems from the commonalities that exist in "our different ancestral heritage as well as our common Singapore heritage", thus creating "the Singapore tribe".

Similarly and more recently, Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong mentioned in his 2011 Chinese New Year message that a great deal of Singapore's success is tied to its ability to balance the drive towards modernity as reflected in government's economic objectives and its desire to achieve global city status, while holding on to what makes it Asian and Singaporean. This Asian and Singaporean core is what PM Lee iterates is necessary in order for the nation-state to survive in a rapidly globalising world.

> "Some Singaporeans are concerned about the rapid changes in our society, and feel a sense of dislocation and unfamiliarity. We will manage the pace of change, so that we keep our bearings, sense of place, and sense of belonging. But we cannot stay static. Singapore has to keep up with the world, or else we will stagnate and decline. Even as we change, we must hold fast to certain constants: the core values which help Singapore to succeed; the heritage and cultures which make us Asian and Singaporean; and the national cohesion and spirit which enable us to surmount crises together. This means we have to preserve a Singaporean core in our society. We need immigrants to reinforce our ranks, but we must maintain a clear majority of local-born Singaporeans who set the tone of our society, and uphold our core values and ethos. We are managing the inflow of foreigners who want to live and work here. Many want to become permanent residents and new citizens, but we will only select those who can add value to Singapore."
>
> - PM Lee's Chinese New Year message, The New Paper, 2 February 2011 http://news.asiaone.com/News/AsiaOne%2BNews/Singapore/Story/A1Story20110202-261588/2.html

The above excerpt points to the importance of core values that remain steadfast in rapidly changing times. These core values are tied to the heritage and cultures that tie Singaporeans to their roots. Preserving a core that comprises a clear majority of "local-born" is seen as a way to maintain these roots as it is through these locally born Singaporeans that the values and traditions of Singapore are passed down. The relevance of family and the passing down of tradition and values is intimately linked to a discourse of blood that ties people to place. It is also reflected in the fact that it

forms a core tenet of Singapore's Shared Values. The latter form the basis for developing a Singapore identity grounded in common values that all racial groups and faiths can identify with. They include:

1) Nation before community and society above self

2) Family as the basic unit of society

3) Community support and respect for the individual

4) Consensus, not conflict

5) Racial and religious harmony

http://infopedia.nl.sg/articles/SIP_542_2004-12-18.html

These shared values emphasise a family-centred communitarian ideal as part of the national ethos. Such an ideal places the needs of the individual as secondary to that of the collective (family, community, nation). The communitarian national ethos is one that relies on a construction of family that is largely based on a "nostalgic view of femininity" and decision-making is often hierarchical (patriarchal) with "individual desires (being) usurped by the 'greater good' of the family" (Stivens, 1998: 17 in Yeoh, Huang and Lam, 2005: 309). Even where individual rights are mentioned (value no. 3), this is in relation to how the community can rally around and "support and have compassion for the disadvantaged individual who may have been left behind by the free market system" (http://infopedia.nl.sg/articles/SIP_542_2004-12-18.html).

The importance of a particular biopolitics of family and the crucial role it plays in enabling the Singapore government meet the challenges of building and maintaining the boundaries of the nation in transnational and global times cannot be denied. It is a

biopolitics that enables the state to bring together Singapore's ethnically and religiously diverse nation by making use of family as the crucible in which the ideals and values that unite all Singaporean's are incubated and passed down. It is a hetero-patriarchal family that features in these shared values as reflected in the government's implementation of policies and campaigns such as the Family Matters Committee, the Romancing Singapore Campaign, and housing policies to aggressively promote marriage and a particular heteronormative family life rooted in the socio-legal practice of marriage between a man and a woman (see also Oswin, 2010a; 2010b). It is through these and other government initiatives and policies that the state has been able to firmly entrench the heteronormative family and marriage within the city-state's social landscape. Family is, therefore, practised, embodied and conceptualised through marriage, child-birth and a rhetoric of inter-generational responsibility. It becomes a powerful tool for forming sanguineous links between the individual and larger groups such as the family, community and nation.

Both Goh and Lee's speeches reflect the complex ways in which race, time, space and belonging are implicated in constructions of the nation. What remains unsaid but is certainly implied, is the role women's bodies play in making the abovementioned discourse possible. Women's bodies act as symbols of home and hearth (in this case the Singaporean nation), becoming an important way of rooting potential citizens (foreign-born offspring) to the mother nation (Singapore). Women's bodies also transmit the genes that produce the Singapore DNA that forms the Singaporean tribe. Their offspring become the key to tying the gene pool of the nation together across space. Their bodies symbolise the mother nation and, therefore, become the site where the new transnational Singaporean tribe is formed.

As more single Singaporean women inter-marry with foreigners and bear offspring whose genetic make-up straddle different ethnic and national identities, maintaining the Singapore DNA becomes more challenging. On the one hand, as Singapore strides towards its objective of being a global city, the notion of a robust Singaporean DNA is tied to new citizens and possible change to the existing population make-up as more Singaporean women meet and marry men who may be foreigners. On the other hand, this presents a potential threat to existing constructions of the Singaporean DNA in terms of its multi-racial identity, one that the state has grounded in a very specific ethnic breakdown of the population, and where the separate but equal nature of the nation's four founding races – Chinese, Malay, Indian and Other (Eurasian) remains crucial to how the nation is imagined by Singaporeans. It is this complexity that the thesis aims to analyse. What are the implications of the state's need to maintain its strategic articulation of the racialised Singaporean nation for single women in ethnic minority communities? What are the roles of ethnic minority communities like the Singaporean-Indian community, and ethnic minority women like Singaporean-Indian women, in maintaining such an imagination of the Singaporean nation?

3.3 Single Singaporean-Indian Women and the Pressure to Marry

The Singaporean-Indian community is fairly diverse in terms of cultural and religious practices, the majority of Indians in Singapore practise Hinduism (59%). Islam is the second most practiced religion amongst the Indians accounting for 22%, and Christianity 13%. (DoS, 2010a). According to the religious teachings of Hinduism, marriage is seen as an important rite of passage for the spiritual growth of individuals,

particularly women. Hence many Hindu parents see it as their duty to ensure that their daughters are married (Kumari, 2004; Marimuthu, 1997; Mukherjee, 1983; Thomas, 1964). In Singapore, the importance of marriage in the Indian community is reflected in the tendency for marriages to be arranged, or for potential brides and grooms to be sought out through networks of family and friends (Balwantram, 1992; PuruShotam, 2004; Ramdas, 2012; Talbani and Hasanali, 2002). A study by Chan (2001) on attitudes towards family life in Singapore, also supports the view that marriage and family life are important amongst Singaporean-Indians. His study showed that Indians and Malays in Singapore were more likely than the Chinese to have traditional views about family and marriage. Indians and Malays were also less likely than the Chinese to favour alternative family life-choices such as cohabitation before marriage and unmarried individuals having children. Chan's study also showed that increasing education levels have resulted in changing attitudes towards family. As individuals become more highly educated, they are less likely to have traditional views about family and marriage. The data in his study, however, did not provide further information in terms of breakdown by ethnic group and education levels. Through interviews with graduate single Singaporean-Indian women, this thesis aims to provide some insight into how highly educated women from this community experience singlehood, and how this impacts upon their views of marriage and family life.

Figures from the 2010 Statistics of Marriages and Divorces (DoS, 2010b) reveal that the total number of resident[2] marriages in Singapore between an Indian bride and groom has seen a decline from 1013 in 2000 to 927 in 2010 (DoS, 2010b). There has

[2] Resident marriage refers to a marriage where either or both the groom and bride are residents. Resident population comprises Singapore citizens and permanent residents (DoS, Statistics on Marriages and Divorces, 2010: 45).

also been an increase in the median age of marriage amongst Indians over the past ten years, with a greater increase in the median age of marriage for Indian brides than grooms. For instance, the median age of marriage for resident Indian grooms rose from 29.5 year in 2000 to 30.0 years in 2010. In comparison the median age of marriage for Indian brides saw a slightly higher increase from 26.6 years in 2000 to 27.5 years in 2010 (DoS, 2010b: 29). The figures show that over the past ten years it has become more likely for Indian women rather than men to marry later in life.

In their 2009 paper, Gubhaju and Jones (2009:244) cite three main reasons for why education may temper decisions whether or when to marry. These include "delayed entry into the immediate post-education years", "ideational change, opening up a wider range of perceived possibilities for the life-course" and "better jobs and higher salaries" which are likely to affect women's economic independence in particular, thus lowering their incentive to marry. Men's gains from marriage are also lowered as "women become less specialized in child-rearing and home production". Given this, it is likely that highly educated women marry later in life because they are more likely to want to focus on career development before marrying, and that even when they do want to marry, they find it more challenging to meet and marry men they perceive as suitable spouses. In either instance, it may be argued that it is the belief that economic security and success at one's job cannot come without some perceived cost to a balanced family life that has resulted in women marrying later (Jones, 2012).

Table 3.3 Resident Female Graduates by Ethnicity

Ethnicity	2000	2010
Chinese	100,570 (84.8%)	231,887 (75.4%)
Malay	2,908 (2.4%)	9,936 (3.2%)
Indian	11,843 (10.0%)	39,212 (12.7%)
Other	3,351 (2.8%)	26,616 (8.7%)
Total	118,673 (100%)	307,652 (100%)

Source: Census of Population, 2000, 2010 (DoS, 2000, 2010a).

Table 3.3 above shows that amongst the growing number of female graduates in the resident population between 2000 and 2010, the proportion of graduate women who are Indian by ethnicity has seen an increase from 10.0% to 12.7%. At present there is no data available on the median age of marriage for the resident Indian community broken down by educational status and sex. By conducting interviews with single graduate Singaporean-Indian women, this thesis aims to provide some insight into how educated Indian women view singlehood, and how they make decisions about when to marry, whether to marry and whom to marry. Given the perception that remaining unmarried is often viewed as taboo for women in this community, how do they cope with the pressures they face from their parents, the Indian community and the Singapore state to marry? In this way, the thesis aims to contribute to the shortfall of research on singlehood amongst the Indian community in Singapore. Specifically, I provide insight into how the women balance, for example, wanting to focus on their careers, living independently, wanting a fulfilling dating and intimate life before marriage alongside expectations of them to marry. What are their views of their single status, and how do they rationalize not being married to themselves and others?

While the expectation of them to marry persists, the reality is that as these graduate women excel in their careers and become financially independent, they are more likely to postpone the age at which they marry, or not marry at all. The result is an outcome in which young graduate Indian women today are more likely to marry later, than their mothers. They are more likely to be focused on their careers, be willing to travel or relocate for work, and live lives not tied to the physical space of their parents home. I argue that highly educated Singaporean-Indian women's experiences of singlehood are more complex because they play an important role as symbolic bearers of tradition and also represent the success modernity and development has brought to the nation and the Indian community. Given the duality of their roles, what are the constraints and liberties single Singaporean-Indian face when it comes to decisions pertaining to their intimate lives? Beyond state and community politics, I argue, that there is also an emotional aspect to their racialised experiences of singlehood that also needs to be unpacked and analysed. For example, how do single daughters and mothers care for each other and balance expectations of them to be *good* mothers and daughters by both the Singapore state and the Indian community? The thesis attempts to answer this question and others by examining singlehood as an experience that is located at the nexus of care between single Indian women and intimate others. It focuses not just on the economic rationale behind intimate decision-making, but also the emotional rationale behind how these decisions are made. In this way the thesis shows how single Singaporean-Indian women through their relationships with intimate others are able to contest, negotiate and problematise the existing biopolitics of family.

3.4 Inter-ethnic marriages and Nation: The "Problem" of Single Indian Women in Globalising Singapore

The CMIO model of nation-building is one where the island-state's four "separate-but-equal" founding races (Chinese, Malay, Indian and Others) remain the building blocks of the Singaporean national identity (Yeoh and Huang, 2004: 317). This imagination of the Singapore nation is one in which the perceived separateness of each ethnic group is crucial because it is only by keeping the groups separate that the state is able to put in place a system of meritocracy that sees each of group as being treated equally (Chua, 2006; 2005; 2003; Teo *et al.*, 2003; Yeoh and Huang 2004).

However, as Singapore tries to attract a more fluid group of mobile elites, the call by former Prime Minister Goh Chok Tong for multiracial Singapore to imagine itself as four overlapping circles rather than a mosaic of pieces is worthy of note. It is an imagery that draws the focus to similarities and 'Singaporeaness' while minimizing the consciousness of ethnicity (Goh Chok Tong in Yeoh and Huang, 2004: 336). Such an imagination of the ethnic groups in Singapore as overlapping rather than separate circles that draws on the unifying force of nationality has become especially necessary as the transnational flows of people into and out of Singapore become more complex. This is primarily because it has become more challenging to hang on to the historical relevance of ethnic consciousness in terms of CMIO while at the same time having what then Minister for Trade and Industry, George Yeo called a "big Singapore mentality" that celebrates diversity (Chang, 2006:62), a key strategy in Singapore successful achieving its global city vision.

The complex nature of the Singapore nation's ethnic consciousness in an increasingly globalising era is reflected for instance in the fact that despite Singapore's

increasingly transnational nature, reflected in the increasing number of foreigners (non-resident and new citizens and PRs), the country's ethnic breakdown has more or less remained the same (see Table 3.4) as a result of the state's controlled approach to extending PR and citizenship to foreigners (see also Jones, 2012; Ho, 2006; Yeoh, 2004). For example, the Channel NewsAsia website reported that in the Malay version of his National Day Rally Speech in 2010, PM Lee Hsien Loong articulated that the immigration policy will not upset the mix of races in the population and that the mix is stable and contributes to the country's racial and religious harmony. He also mentioned in the same speech in Malay that "it is not easy attracting Malay or *pribumi* talent from Southeast Asia, but Singapore must keep trying" (Channel NewsAsia, 2010). The above statements are pertinent as they show how the issue of maintaining the ethnic mix in Singapore is a politically pernicious one that required the PM to allay the concerns of the Singaporean Malay ethnic minority who have seen their share of the population decline as more foreigners of "Indian" and "Other" ethnic groups rise.

Table 3.4: Ethnic Composition of Resident Population, (DoS, 2011)

Ethnicity	1990	2000	2010
Chinese	77.8	76.8	74.1
Malay	14.0	13.9	13.4
Indian	7.1	7.9	9.2
Other	1.1	1.4	3.3

Source: Population Trends, 2011a, DoS

In such a context it is not unusual to find that the pressure to marry stems from a "family biopolitics" (see Ong, 1996) that results in a self-disciplining of members to produce the right kind of family (Oswin, 2010a; 2010b) to maintain the separate-but-equal nature of each ethnic group that makes up the Singaporean nation. In order for

this distinction to be unproblematically maintained, individuals need to be willing to marry only within their own ethnic group. Data from the Department of Statistics on marriages shows that the number of inter-ethnic resident marriages has increased from 2724 in 2000 to 4928 in 2010 (DoS, 2010b: 30, 47). These include marriages under both the Muslim Law and the Women's Charter (non-Muslim Law). Inter-ethnic marriages[3] accounted for almost 20% of the total marriages that took place in 2010. In 2000, inter-ethnic marriages only accounted for 12% of the total number of marriages (DoS, 2010b: 30, 47). Table 3.5 shows the breakdown of inter-ethnic marriages by the ethnicity of brides and grooms for 2010. The data in the table show that Chinese and Caucasian men, and women from the Others category are more likely to be married to a spouse from outside their ethnic group. For all ethnic groups accept the Malays and Others category, men are more likely than women to marry outside their ethnic group. In the instance of the Malays, inter-ethnic marriages were more likely to be to an Indian-Muslim spouse under Muslim Law. In terms of inter-ethnic marriages involving an Indian bride and groom almost half of these marriages were under Muslim Law and involved marriage between an Indian and Malay bride or groom. This is not uncommon in Singapore where there is a significant Indian-Muslim population and where it is fairly common for marriages between Indians and Malay Muslims to take place.

[3] The figures for inter-ethnic marriages include both resident and non-resident brides and grooms. Resident population refers to Singapore citizens and permanent residents. However non-resident brides and grooms make up less than 10% of the total. For instance, in 2010 there were 401 non- resident inter-ethnic marriages accounting for only 8% of the total number of inter-ethnic marriages that year. I have decided to make use of the combined figures of resident and non-resident inter-ethnic marriages to maintain consistency between the data in Tables 3.4 and 3.5. The breakdown of inter-ethnic marriages by ethnicity of brides and grooms is not available for the resident population alone.

Table 3.5: Inter-ethnic Group Marriages[4] by Ethnic Group, 2010

Ethnicity	Brides	Grooms
Chinese	984	2078
Indians	303	628
Eurasians	81	93
Caucasians	79	794
Malays	756	632
Others	2725	703
Total	4928	4928

Source: Statistics on Marriages and Divorces, 2010 (DoS, 2010b: 36, 53)

While it is not certain how educational qualifications impact upon an individual's propensity to marry outside their ethnic group, it is worth noting that brides and grooms with university degrees were more likely to do so compared to any other category of educational qualification (e.g. primary, secondary, polytechnic). For example, the 2010 statistics on marriages and divorces shows that there were 1380 graduate brides and 1342 graduate grooms out of a possible total number of 3550 inter-ethnic marriages (DoS, 2010b: 44). While there is no data available for inter-ethnic marriages broken down by education level and ethnic group, the increase in the number of inter-ethnic marriages involving an Indian bride or groom cannot be denied.

The number of inter-ethnic marriages involving an Indian bride or groom, has increased from 349 in 2005 to 487 in 2010 representing an almost 39.5% growth over

[4] The data includes both resident and non-resident inter-ethnic marriages. Breakdown by resident marriages alone is not available. The data combines marriages under the Women's Charter (non-Muslim marriages) and marriages under Muslim Law. The number of inter-ethnic marriages under Muslim Law with an Indian spouse has remained more or less stable . This is primarily because it is common marriage practice in Singapore for inter-ethnic marriages under Muslim Law between Indian and Malay Muslims.

five years [5] (DoS, 2005; 2010b). These include inter-ethnic marriages under both the Women's Charter and marriages under Muslim law. A large part of this growth is attributable to Indian grooms marrying non-Indian brides rather than Indian brides marrying non-Indian grooms (see Table 3.6).

Table 3.6: Inter-ethnic Marriages[6] Under Women's Charter Breakdown by Ethnicity of Spouse for Indian Brides and Grooms

Ethnicity	Indian Bride	
Groom	2005	2010
Chinese	21	30
Indian	782	799
Eurasian	6	8
Caucasian	37	31
Malay	3	4
Others	37	45
Total inter-ethnic	**104**	**118**
Total Marriages	**886**	**987**
	Indian Groom	
Bride	2005	2010
Chinese	127	140
Indian	782	799
Eurasian	9	8
Caucasian	11	12
Malay	26	31
Others	72	178
Total Indian inter-ethnic	**245**	**369**
Total Indian Marriages	**1027**	**1168**

Sources: Statistics on Marriages and Divorces, 2005 and 2010 (DoS, 2005, 2010b).

For example, of the 487 inter-ethnic marriages under the Women's charter in 2010, Indian grooms were more likely to marry outside their ethnic group (369 vs. 118 for

[5] The number of inter-ethnic marriages under Muslim Law with an Indian spouse has remained more or less stable . This is primarily because it is common marriage practice in Singapore for inter-ethnic marriages under Muslim Law between Indian and Malay Muslims.

[6] Data includes both resident and non-resident inter-ethnic marriages involving an Indian spouse. Data for resident population alone not available.

Indian brides). Indian brides were more likely to marry Chinese, Caucasians and "Others"[7] while Indian grooms were more likely to marry Chinese brides and "Others". The increase in the number of marriages between an Indian bride or groom with a spouse from the "Others" category could, therefore, be used as evidence to argue that as the transnational flows of people (both foreigners and Singaporeans) into and out of Singapore become more complex, it seems logical that there is an increased propensity for Singaporeans meeting and marrying individuals from a much wider grouping of ethnicities outside of the traditional, Chinese, Malay, Indian and Other (Eurasian) ethnic categories. However, the fact that fewer Indian women seem to marry outside their ethnic community points to an outcome in which it is more likely that single Indian women are not experiencing the same kinds of liberties in terms of whom they can marry, when and whether or not they marry. For instance, between 2005 and 2010 inter-ethnic marriages involving an Indian bride showed hardly any increase in comparison to the total number of marriages that took place between those years. In 2005, inter-ethnic marriages involving an Indian bride accounted for 11.7% of the total marriages involving an Indian bride. This showed a slight increase to 11.9% by 2010. By contrast, for Indian grooms, inter-ethnic marriages accounted for 23.9% in 2005 and increased to 31.6% of total marriages involving an Indian groom by 2010.

By interviewing single Singaporean-Indian women based overseas and in Singapore, this thesis aims to provide some insight into these women's views on how the issue of race impacts upon their experiences of singlehood and how they make decisions about whom to date and possibly marry. While it may seem that inter-ethnic

[7] The category "Others" refers to "all ethnic groups excluding Chinese, Indian, Eurasian, Caucasian and Malay (Department of Statistics, 2009: 6). It is plausible that the category may include individuals of non-Chinese East Asian descent, Middle Eastern or Latin American descent.

marriages have become more prevalent in Singapore, this thesis shows how racialised perceptions of gender impact upon who Indian women can marry, and whether they themselves are seen as suitable for marriage. In later chapters of the thesis I engage, for instance, with how it can impact upon single Singaporean-Indian women's abilities to date and be optimistic about dating. How does this influence their views and optimism about marrying both within and outside their ethnic community. To what extent are the women and their parents reproducing a racialised biopolitics of family? Such a biopolitics is grounded in an imagination of Singaporean families who are distinctly Chinese, Indian, Malay or Other rather than inter-ethnic. What are the implications of such changes for the Singapore state's construction of the CMIO multi-racial nation? How is the Singaporean-Indian community implicated in the contestations and reproductions of race by the women and their parents? These are some of the questions I attempt to answer in this thesis.

3.5 Setting the Stage: Graduate Single Singaporean-Indian Women Destabilising the Biopolitics of Family

So far the chapter has shown how race plays a crucial role in the biopolitics of family in Singapore. I have shown how the multi-racial imagination of the Singapore nation has depended thus far on the separate-but-equal CMIO formula. It is a formula that seems to imply that men and women need to marry within their own ethnic groups in order for the biologically produced myth of race to continue to be relevant to the state's nation-building project. As Singapore globalises, the tendency for inter-ethnic marriages has become greater, and yet the data shows that Indian women are less likely to marry outside of the ethnic group. What roles do the Indian community and Singapore state play in maintaining the gendered and racialised biopolitics of family

in Singapore? How are single Indian women and their parents implicated in this biopolitics? How do they balance expectations of them to marry alongside the desire to live the kinds of lives they want to live?

As the women achieve higher levels of education and they become more mobile in terms of their ability to live and work abroad, it becomes possible for many of them to imagine a different future for themselves. It is a future in which they might experience greater financial independence and personal freedom. And yet, my interviews reveal that the women are constrained not just by state and community constructions of how they ought to behave or what they ought to strive for (marriage, family, children). There are also instances when they too were guilty of reproducing constructions of what it means to be the ideal Singaporean-Indian woman. In the next chapter I engage specifically with how I went about conducting the research. By doing so, I make a case for insider research and how it allowed me to unpack some of the strategic ways in which the women reproduced, contested and negotiated constructions of singlehood through everyday experiences of working, dating, socialising with friends, and caring for themselves and intimate others.

Chapter 4: Methodology

4.1 Rationalising the Research: Making the Personal Political

The starting point for this thesis, as mentioned earlier, is a personal one rooted in an emotional connection I made with another woman (May). We had both experienced having our intimate lives judged. Though May and I saw our lives and ourselves as more than our unmarried status, to others in our extended family and the Indian community in Singapore, our singlehood was more often than not a point of conversation. There were inevitably questions about when we would get married, whom we were dating, and why we were taking so long to find someone. I began to wonder why the concern over our unmarried status? What did being "single" mean? Afterall, May and I were not single in the same way, and yet there were similarities in terms of how we felt marginalised because of our unmarried status. It was this question that led me to craft a thesis proposal around the topic of singlehood amongst graduate Singaporean-Indian women.

I decided I would interview graduate Singaporean-Indian women professionals based in London, Melbourne and Singapore to find out the similarities and differences in terms of how they experienced singlehood. By situating my research in Singapore and abroad, my aim was to analyse and problematise the effects of state and community biopolitics of family by unpacking the spatialities of proximity and distance, and see what impact these have on the ways in which individuals became family. I selected two overseas sites in order to be able to interview a larger group of single Singaporean-Indian women. London and Melbourne were chosen because these were cities where I had more contacts and was more likely to find women to interview.

Given the intimate nature of the questions I would be asking, it proved helpful to find interviewees through my own networks and those of friends who could vouch for me, and introduce me to suitable interviewees. The two cities of London and Melbourne also turned out to be cities where more single Indian women were based. This is primarily because many of them had either studied in Australia and the UK, and were thus more likely to pick these cities as places to work in later on in life. These are women mostly from middle-class families whose parents were financially independent and could afford to send them abroad to study. They chose cities where the primary language of communication is English. As such, these were global cities, they were familiar with or felt comfortable being in. The women living abroad also shared that their parents had thought it was a good idea that they go abroad and gain some 'overseas experience'.

While these cities represent different social and cultural geographies, state discourse in Singapore as reflected for example in the "Go Regional" campaign of the 1990s in which Singaporeans were encouraged to go overseas to work, has resulted in the construction of a binary of home and overseas that amalgamates overseas as one spatial entity. Time spent overseas is meant to be short-term and eventually Singaporeans are encouraged, if not expected, to return home to their nuclear and national families in Singapore (Teo *et al*., 2003). By analysing how the women experienced singlehood as an outcome of relationships that straddles home and abroad, and by connecting between the similarities and differences in the women's experiences of singlehood in the three cities, my aim is to problematise the biopolitics of family and the ways in which the binary of home and away are made tangible through such a biopolitics.

By engaging with these highly educated women’s experiences of being single, my aim was to also interrogate how class is implicated in and also problematic for performances of tradition and modernity and the role ethnic minorities play in the maintenance of scripts that depend on gendered familial roles for women that enable the continued reproduction of the “respectable (Indian) family” (Oswin, 2010b). I interviewed only financially independent women, who were university graduates and currently employed. In some instances, the women may have been in postgraduate school or training to make a career switch but even in those instances, all the women I interviewed were not dependent on someone for financial support. I interviewed 39 women based in the three cities (see Appendix A). They were asked similar questions about the experience of being single and how these experiences changed or remained the same over time and space. The questions touched on a range of topics which included their dating and sex lives, relationship experiences, friendship, family, and their work lives (see Appendix B for aide memoire).

By interviewing only graduate women, my aim was to engage with the impact a higher level of education would have on the women’s attitudes towards singlehood and marriage. In this way my aim was to fill a gap in the earlier study by Chan (2001) in which he argues that higher educational levels result in individuals having less traditional views of family (see Chapter 3 of the thesis). To what extent is this argument relevant to the Indian community and Indian women more specifically? By researching graduate Indian women's experiences of singlehood, my aim is to analyse the complexities they face in having to balance certain expectations of them to fulfill traditional roles as Indian wives and mothers against a desire to live the kinds of lives they wanted to live (Bhopal, 1997; Nagar, 1998; PuruShotam, 2004). As women with

higher levels of education, they were more likely to marry later in life because they were more focused on their careers, travel, and meeting new people rather than marriage (Jones, 2012; 2004; Jones and Gubhaju, 2009). How did the women's proximity to their families and community impact upon their experiences of singlehood? Who were the people who questioned them about their singlehood? In what ways was being a single Indian woman in Singapore similar or different to being single abroad? What were the emotional tensions they experienced as they balanced expectations of them to marry alongside a desire to live the kinds of lives they wanted to live?

As I embarked upon my research journey, I found myself being asked why I was doing this research on single Singaporean-Indian women. What was the point of focusing on such a specific minority? Aren't the experiences of all single women the same? Why was I focusing on educated middle-class women? Weren't less well off or less educated women likely to be more marginalised? These were all valid questions, and I did not necessarily have an answer for them at the time. I began to feel guilty and worried that others might see this as an indulgent exercise in navel-gazing. Yet I was also angry with myself for not confidently claiming the right to speak for myself and others like me. I began reading literature on feminist research methodology and the important role emotions played in the process of research (Ahmed, 2004; Bondi, 2005; Sharp, 2009; Thien, 2005; Toila-Kelly, 2006; Wilkinson, 2009). These enabled me to find some of the answers to the questions I had been posed and helped me to conceptually frame my desire not to be silenced. I found the differences feminist geographers drew between affect and emotions liberating because in interrogating the differences, they embraced a commitment to centering the personal and the

subjective, making room for a multiplicity of voices no matter how marginal. For instance, in critiquing how emotions in geographies of affect are "relegated to *immediacy, immanence* and the *virtual* in the everyday lived environment" (author's emphasis), Toila-Kelly (2006: 213) argues that "what is occluded in the writing on affect is sensitivity to 'power geometries' and an acknowledgement that these are vital to any individuals' capacity to affect and be affective." By conducting the research on single Indian women from the inside, my aim is to draw upon my knowledge and experience of being situated within such power geometries. I began to embrace my position as an insider, and focused on how my emotions could be used productively to meet my objectives.

The rest of the chapter is divided into four parts. The next section (4.2) provides a broader engagement with feminist methodology and the issues surrounding the politics and ethics of speaking for the other. Following that, I make a case for conducting research from the inside (4.3). I discuss how I went about doing this and what my rationale was for adopting such a strategy. In the penultimate section of the chapter (4.4), I engage with the challenges that I faced and the steps I took to address them. What were some of the constraints I faced in setting the limits to my research and what were the ethical considerations? This is followed by the final section (4.5), in which I summarise my key arguments and reiterate my reasons for making use of this method.

4.2 Feminist Methodology: The Politics and Ethics of Speaking for the Other

One of the perennial concerns of feminist researchers pertains to the right to speak for others. Staeheli and Nagar have argued that feminist scholars "conducting fieldwork

in social contexts far removed from their own, grappled with questions of power, privilege, representation and essentialism" and feel "paralysed by countless ethical and political dilemmas that their commitments generate(d)" (Staeheli and Nagar, 2002: 167). This concern over the right to speak for another has its roots in the postcolonial feminist critique of feminist researchers from the North (West) for colonizing and dominating the field which invariably is the South, representing it as "inferior (less developed)" and so are "complicit in the perpetuation of power structures that maintain difference" (Staeheli and Lawson, 1994:98; see also Mohanty, 1988). But rather than resulting in paralysis, they argue that what is required is a critical examination of how we may speak for others "productively across social and geographical boundaries in ways that allow us to maintain our commitments and responsibilities to more than one 'world' " (Staeheli and Nagar, 2002: 168). Such a critical examination is grounded in a complex understanding of the field as a political site, and reflexivity as more than identity-based (Miraftab, 2004; Nagar, 2002; Nast, 1994). Distinctions such as West and the Orient may, therefore, be construed as too simplistic given "the multiple positions occupied by academics as they operate in their fields" (Staeheli and Lawson, 1994: 98). Even when one conducts research "at home" the politics of navigating home is still riddled with the power relations that come with the intersectionality of multiple discursive axes that can never completely be teased apart (Nagar, 2002; Valentine, 2007).

In wanting to break what might be perceived as a deadlock over who gets to speak for whom, feminist researchers argue that one is never only ever an insider or outsider, and it is this complexity that makes the field a political and ethical minefield. Nast calls this "negotiating the worlds of me and not-me" a state of betweeness (Nast,

1994:57). She writes that “even where differences in the field are small, because we are positioned simultaneously in a number of fields we are always, at some level, somewhere, in a state of ‘betweeness’, negotiating various degrees and kinds of differences – be they based on gender, age, class, ethnicity, ‘race’, sexuality, and so on.” (Nast, 1994: 57). It is this awareness of the state of “betweeness” and self-reflexivity that enables feminist scholars to participate in research that is committed to political engagement that stems from an interrogation of the political basis of knowledge production (Katz, 1994; Kobayashi, 1994; Miraftab, 2004; Nagar, 2002; Nast, 1994). This political engagement is not merely about saving an exoticised other but “identifying objectives based upon concerns to overcome shared experiences of oppression levied, for example, through patriarchy, racism, and capitalism” (Nast, 1994: 57). Nast argues that these shared experiences between the researcher and researched are grounded in a politics of relationality in which “relational qualities between the researcher and researched inform research agendas and knowledge claims, (regarding) how our work affects and is affected by the communities and places we study” (1994: 54). These words reflect the importance of being aware that “politics and research are multiply positioned” (Staeheli and Lawson, 1994: 98). There is, therefore, a need to be aware of the context in which the research is conducted, how one is positioned within that context, and one’s relationality to those one studies. Such a relational framing of the research process requires us to embrace the emotional aspects of research, and how these can be political and powerful motivational forces for researchers to connect with the individuals they research.

Feminist researchers have long iterated that emotions are part and parcel of the context in which this knowledge is produced, and that emotions play a crucial role

informing our “understanding of the relationship between the self and the places of our (en)actions” (Thien , 2005: 453). Sarah Ahmed (2004: 11), similarly argues that “what moves us, what makes us feel, is also what holds us in place, or gives us a dwelling place”. How we feel, our emotional subjectivity is, therefore, contingent upon how we are (em)placed in society. Rather than seeing the subjectivity of emotions as problematic, feminist geographers have supported the need for “emotional geographies (that) are underpinned by theories of social difference, attentive to the exercise of power and diverse cultural perspectives, and create spaces for reflexivity by recognising that positionality in terms of ethnicity, race and gender, for example, signifies bodies unequally and therefore influences their affective capacities” (Lobo, 2010: 100; see also Toila-Kelly, 2006). How do our emotions produces space and how does space impact on our emotional experiences? How do our emotions, therefore, inform our subjectivity and how do they incite us to act or not act? Rather than seeing emotions as problematic because of their subjectivity, feminist geographers have argued that it is this very subjectivity of emotions that play out during the research process that makes feminist research political (Bondi, 2005; Sharp, 2009; Thien, 2005; Wilkinson, 2009).

It is for this reason that I support the arguments made by feminist scholars that there is value in considering our emotional motivations for (un)speaking discursivities that hold us in place as subjects within an ethnic minority (Kanuha, 2000; Kobayashi, 1994). Kobayashi, for example, argues that there is much to be gained from the work of scholars working from within their community. I am particularly moved by her words, “I use my research as a basis for struggles of which I am a part” (Kobayashi, 1994:78). The process of research can thus be empowering for the insider researcher

when one sees "the struggle to overcome racism as a transformation of (oneself) as much as it is a transformation of the social norms and practices through which racism occurs" (Kobayashi, 1994: 73). Specifically, I was motivated by a desire to understand what and why I was feeling the way I did about my so-called single status. Were other Singaporean-Indian woman encountering similar experiences? What could we learn from each other? As a feminist geographer, I was driven by the desire to make sense of these emotional experiences conceptually and to understand how these informed the spatio-temporalities of being single (Ahmed, 2004; Kanuha, 2000; Wilkinson, 2009). Through the process of speaking with other women, I made emotional connections over what it meant for each of us to be single in our community. There was a sense that we were not alone in our experiences of singlehood and this proved to be both empowering and comforting. These connections between myself and the women I interviewed support earlier arguments made by feminist scholars that research subjects are never just "passive: objectified, mute, and lacking any source of power vis-à-vis the researcher" (Miraftab, 2004: 597). It is this potential for connecting with another that is the primary motivation for why feminist value the emotional, and how I have chosen to justify my use of insider research because of the emotional connections I was able to make with the women I interviewed. These connections proved crucial for conducting research on the experiences of singlehood in terms of the emotional relationships that played out between single Indian women and the intimate others they cared for.

4.3 Speaking from the Inside: Emotions and Discursive Contradictions

Feminist scholars have written about the importance of paying attention to the situatedness of knowledge (Haraway, 1988). Individuals, whether researcher or

researched, therefore, speak from within the various discourses they have access to. As a result, the language we speak cannot be treated as a "transparent window into internal experience or understandings" (Hardin, 2003:538). There is a need to pay attention to the context in which these utterances take place. Butler (1993; 1990), in writing about gender, theorises that the self is constantly produced and regulated by discourse. She argues that the gendered self has no ontological status and is something we are constantly in the process of "doing". Under such circumstances of constant "doing", it is challenging to essentialise the self in terms of fixed identity categories. Nevertheless, these are categories, Butler argues, that are learnt and performed even though they have no ontological status of their own.

I argue that a researcher researching as an insider can be beneficial, if one considers how the insider researching her community is already privy to an "inherited (and) shared language" and is aware of the "social and cultural frameworks in which stories are communicated (that) are not incidental, but instrumental to what can be articulated in the production of experience" (Hardin, 2003: 537). Given the multiple ways in which identity is performed (Butler, 1993; 1990; Goffman, 1959; Jenkins, 2004), an insider conducting researching on her own community has knowledge of social customs and conditions that are an essential part of the context that shapes discourse and the performativity of the self. She is also aware of the constraints faced in trying to alter the script and perform the self differently (Gedalof, 1999). Insiders doing research on their community are, therefore, intimately aware of the complex context in which the utterances that inform performativity of the self occur. Knowing the context in which we are emplaced can be a powerful tool in which to begin unpacking

such complexities that are part and parcel of the fictitious biology that inform productions of the self and give meaning to juxtapositions of self and other.

However, in speaking from my position as insider, I was also in danger of reproducing ways of speaking that serve to tighten the knots already present in the discursive chains that bind myself and other single Indian women. It is here that I found Pratt (2004)'s "politics of contingency" useful for the purpose of my research. Taking a Foucauldian approach Pratt argues that contingency holds the key to destabilizing power relations. Discursive practices are never repeated entirely the same; they are contingent upon the spatio-temporality of the contexts in which they occur. They are performed and uttered in our daily interactions with others, and "are never stable given understandings of social difference" (Valentine, 2007: 13). Focusing on the intersectionality between race, gender and sexuality, my objective was to show how the opportunity for politics lay in being able to shed light on the discursive contradictions, and how these inform attempts to perform the self (Kobayashi, 1994; Kobayashi and Peake,1994; Pratt, 2004).

As an insider, I was able to use my knowledge and experience to be more critical of what the women were telling me about their experiences of singlehood in order to reveal the discursive contradictions that existed in their narratives. I realised it would be necessary to interview single Singaporean-Indian women based both within Singapore and abroad in London and Melbourne. The purpose of using multiple sites was drawn from my own experiences as a single Indian woman based in Singapore, who had similar and yet different experiences of being single in Singapore compared to May, with whom I had spoken to. In attempting to show how the hegemony and

biopolitics of family connects across these cities in similar and different ways, my aim therefore was to contest the 'here/there' binary that is often perpetuated in much of the existing migration literature. By taking a multi-sited approach, I was able to show how emotional responses to singlehood were tied to practices of care that were influenced by notions of distance and proximity that connected the women's experiences of singlehood in terms of intensities of care they experienced between themselves and intimate others. By focusing on the emotional politics that play out at the nexus of care across time and space, I was able to focus on the possibilities and constraints of being single in ways that problematised the existing biopolitics of family and how the biopolitics of family has been engaged with in more recent literature on family and migration in Singapore that has tended to be more state-centric (Ho, 2009; Willis and Yeoh, 2003; Yeoh and Willis, 2005; 2004; 1999; Yeoh, Huang and Lam, 2005; see Oswin, 2010a; 2010b; Ho, 2008 for critique).

As an insider doing research on single Singaporean-Indian women, I was also driven by a desire to (un)speak the language of race I had inherited. It is a language in which race is essentialised by the state in strategic ways to reproduce Singapore's multi-racial success story (Chua, 2005; Yeoh, 2004; Yeoh and Huang, 2004). Researchers have pointed out that this essentialisation of race is far from benign. It has instead produced a sentiment of racial equality that does not seem to extend to the treatment of non-national others because of the strategic affixing of ethnic boundaries around national and non-national not just by the state but also by Singaporeans themselves (Ho, 2006; Yeoh, 2004). For instance, Yeoh (2004: 2437) writes that "the authentic Singaporean multi-racial Singapore is kept intact (because) racial boundaries have continued to be defined, reified and reinforced through official ascription and a range

of institutional mechanisms ranging from language policy in schools to housing policy and community self-help". These modes of control reproduce race, allowing it to be used as a category to control and discipline more complex multiplicity of ethnicities in, for instance, the South Asian community (PuruShotam, 1998; Rai, 2004).

For the purpose of my thesis, I interviewed only women who self-identified as Indian. In this way, I was able to show how the disciplining of ethnic identification is not merely a state endeavour but also extends to individual ethnic communities and the members within these communities and how they perceived, reproduced, challenged and sometimes contradicted the discursitivity behind how racial categories are constructed. By studying how Singaporean-Indian women and their parents experience singlehood and how intimate decisions pertaining to when, whether to and whom to marry were made, my aim was to show how race impacted not just upon gender roles within the community but also had implications for how and whether or not such racial boundaries could continue to be maintained in the way they are imagined by the state's CMIO separate-but-equal strategy (see Chapter 3). In other words, how do ethnic communities themselves govern racial and national boundaries in transnational times through the discipline of intimate decision-making? How are women (daughters and mothers) implicated in this biopolitics? How do they challenge it?

Drawing from a tradition of feminist methodology, I embraced my positionality and how this informed and motivated my research agenda (Katz, 1994; Kobayashi, 1994; Nagar, 2002; Nast 1994; Staeheli and Nagar, 2002). For example, in her paper on

conducting insider research on the Canadian-Japanese community, Kobayashi (1994: 76) argues that "political ends will be achieved only when representation is organized so that those previously disempowered are given voice" and that "it matters that women of color speak for and with women of color". Moreover, by working within my own cultural community, it is possible to gain "legitimacy, access, an insider's view of cultural practice, and the potential to achieve political ends more effectively" (Kobayashi, 1994: 74). This strategy was particularly important given that some of the questions I asked required women to share information about their intimate lives – dating, sexual intimacy and caring. 39 in-depth semi-structured interviews were conducted with Singaporean-Indian women who were single. Each interview lasted from an hour to two-and-a-half hours. The women interviewed were aged between 24 and 55 years. Interviewees were identified mainly through initial contacts (friends based in Singapore and/or working in one of the global city sites), followed by snowballing (i.e. through the contacts given by the interviewees).

I made use of an informal matrix to guide me in selecting suitable women to interview. For instance, it was important that the women be aged between their mid-20s and late-50s as this was likely to be the age-group where women were most likely to feel the pressure to marry. Also, I interviewed only women who had received higher education, were employed and financially independent. I interviewed women who had at least a bachelors degree. Many of the women also had postgraduate degrees and were employed in professional or executive positions (teachers, doctors, lawyers, managers, bankers etc). For these women, the decision whether or not to marry was never made out of concern for their financial future. Rather, they made decisions about their intimate lives guided by other concerns such as emotional

responsibility to their parents and emotional compatibility with potential partner/spouse. These were women who were guided by a strong desire to continue being able to live the kinds of lives they wanted to live after marriage.

It was important to use friendship networks to secure these interviews given the intimate nature of the questions I planned to ask. By using a snowballing technique, I was able to interview friends of friends who fit within my informal selection matrix guided by age, and whether they were based abroad or in Singapore (see Table 4.1 for matrix by age-group and city). While I was unable to get an equal number of interviewees for in both Melbourne and London, the total number of overseas interviewees numbered 17. This was almost half of the total number of interviewees conducted. 22 out of the 39 interviews conducted were with women based in Singapore.

Table 4.1: Number of interviewees broken down by age-group and city

Age	Singapore	London	Melbourne
20s	3	1	5
30s	11	4	4
40-50s	8	2	1
Total	22	7	10

By interviewing women who were my friends, or friends of friends, it became easier to conduct the interviews because I was able to obtain the trust that was needed in order to garner responses to such personal questions. In some instances, interviews were also conducted within my own friendship circle. In these instances, I was sure to make clear the optional nature of the interview. In many instances, women who were my friends also wanted to talk about their experiences. In wanting to maintain the

atmosphere of trust, I decided not to conduct interviews with the women's mothers, although this might have proven useful for the purpose of my research. In this way, the women felt secure in speaking to me openly about their thoughts on and experiences of being single Indian women. There was a sense of community that we shared as single women who faced similar pressures to marry. There was a desire amongst the women to share their stories with me. These were stories that were emotionally charged, tempered with the joy, anger and heartbreak over the successes and challenges of living a single life.

The fact that I was perceived to be an insider – a single Singaporean-Indian woman who was just like them – meant that the women were more comfortable sharing the details of their single lives. Often, at the end of interview sessions, the women would thank me for giving them a chance to share their experiences. The interview process provided time and space for them to reflect upon important issues like responsibility to family, who constitutes family, and the importance of friendship and care. Some of the women said that the questions I asked had given them more to think about regarding what it meant to be single in Singapore. In this way, the process of research was not just one in which I was extracting information from an interviewee but more of a sharing session in which we learnt more about each other. For instance, at the end of the interview session, after the tape recorder was turned off, some of the women asked to hear about my experiences. In sharing my story with them, I was open and candid about my own experiences. If they asked about whether or not I was seeing anyone, I was truthful about my relationship status and sexuality. I felt it was important that I leveled the playing field between us. It would not have been possible for me to remain secretive about the details of my intimate life after they had shared

theirs with me. The intimate nature of the questions asked also mean that in some instances, friendships were formed between myself and some of the women, and we continue to meet intermittently, either in person or online, to chat about our lives. The emotional connections we had made through the interview process had thus developed into friendships.

4.4 Researching Emotions and Emotional Research: The Challenges of Insider Research

There were, nevertheless, challenges to conducting research from the inside. One of the challenges was whether or not I was in danger of overplaying the connections I had made with the women I had spoken to based on perceived emotional commonalities between us. While I embraced my positionality and the situatedness of knowledge as an active political strategy for doing research about my own community (Haraway, 1988; Moss, 2002; Valentine, 2002), there remained a danger that there could be differences between my interpretation of what was being narrated to me and how the women actually felt. For instance, there was the issue of how each of us understood and experienced singlehood differently. The word single itself was complex and highly contested amongst us. In the state discourse and policy documents in Singapore, it referred to the status of not being married. But in reality, what I found out in my search for potential interviewees was that there were women who were dating, in long-distance relationships, gay women and so forth who agreed to be interviewed. In some instances, I myself was asked to clarify what I meant by the term "single". For the purpose of my research, I decided to clarify that what I meant by the term single was the status of not being married. By doing so, I would be able to problematise and challenge state constructions of singlehood as not married

and consider the ways in which these coincided with how the Indian community viewed single women. Would there be opportunities for women like ourselves to connect over our marginal position as single women in the Indian community, in spite of the multiplicity of ways in which we each experienced being "single"? Rather than seeing the differences in our experiences of singlehood as problematic, through my conversations with the women, I began to see moments when we felt empowered through the process of sharing our stories with each other (see also Young, 1990).

I also became more conscious of my responsibility to present our stories fairly while at the same time not losing my critical ability to step back and consider the larger implications of these stories to the research I endeavored to undertake. It was here that the feminist practice of self-reflexivity proved crucial in helping me to be more conscious of my own positionality, and the multiple identities I had as researcher, ethnographer, personal-self, insider, and outsider (Bhaskaran, 2004; Dyck, 2002). There was a need to recognise that "commonality is always partial, and that difference is the historical condition that results in racism and sexism" (Kobayashi, 1994: 76). Adhering to Kobayashi's caution, I became more conscious of who I was speaking for, what I was speaking about and how I was speaking for them. Kobayashi (1994: 78) argues that these questions "cannot be answered upon the slippery slope of what personal attributes – what color, what gender, what sexuality – legitimize our existence, but on the basis of our history of involvement, and on the basis of understanding how difference is constructed and used as a political tool".

I became more aware of my own personal history as a single Singaporean-Indian woman and spent a great deal more time reflecting on my own feelings about the

ways in which singlehood was constructed by the Indian community and how this made me feel. I drew from Bondi (2005)'s work on how strategies used by psychotherapist could be useful for geographers engaging with emotions. While I myself was not a trained psychotherapist, I found her suggestions about being aware of my own feelings while conducting the research critical. It enabled me to empathise with the women I interviewed while being careful not to engage in transference. By being more self-aware, and I was able to see more clearly the ways in which our experiences were similar yet different. These differences enabled me to remain emotionally detached when necessary, and yet the similarities we shared allowed me to empathise with the women. I also made it a point not to chime in with my own anecdotes and experiences while the women were sharing their stories. In this way, I tried not to influence how they told their stories and what they told me. I made a conscious attempt not to share my experiences unless they asked me, and most of this sharing took place only when we had concluded going through the questions in my Aide Memoire (see Appendix B).

I was also more careful about how I went about interpreting the interview transcripts. When analysing the interview transcripts, I broke the interviews into component sections that I colour-coded to differentiate between different key themes. I arranged the data according to three key themes. The first was the theme of singlehood/married. Here, I included data pertaining to the women's responses to dating, intimacy, sex and their thoughts on marriage and their experiences of the pressure to marry. The next theme was that of family/friendship. Here, I included aspects of our conversation that engaged with the caring roles they shared between family, friends and intimate others and how they balanced their sense of

responsibility to these others and themselves. The final theme touched on issues of race and nationality, and how the women perceived the impact of these on their experiences of being single (see Appendix C for excerpts from selected interview transcripts by theme). In engaging with all three themes, I drew upon not just the women's personal and family lives but also aspects of their work life and how these themes cross-cut and connected with each other. By separating them according to themes, I was able to see these connections more clearly. Next, I collated the interview snippets by theme into separate documents so that I was better able to compare what the women were saying. It became easier to discern the effect (if any) of age as well as the women's location by comparing what they said regarding each theme category. I also read up extensively not just on how race, gender, family and singlehood were being conceptualised in the academic literature on Singapore but also analysed what was being said in policy documents, government websites and local news sources. When going over the transcripts, I carefully considered how I might be using terms like "single", "family", and "race" and how these might be different from the women's own interpretations. By being more self-aware, I was able to see more clearly where we differed in terms of our experiences and understanding of being single in Singapore. By drawing upon these differences, I was able to think about how each of our responses to intimate situations were contingent upon the specific spatio-temporalities we found ourselves in. I began to see that we were each guilty of reproducing the scripts we had been taught about how to care, love and be loved, and yet the differences also showed that it was possible to challenge this language we had inherited. This awareness proved powerful for the process of untangling the discursive contradictions that underpinned our understanding and utterances of race, gender and sexuality (see also Chapter 5).

4.5 The Relationality of Research: The Emotional Politics of Seeing the Self in the Other

A feminist methodological approach to research pays close attention to the issue of positionality and the importance of context in the field. Knowledge is, therefore, situated and changes as the context in which the data is being gathered also changes. In such a research context, reflexivity is a key component requiring the researcher to contemplate and be aware of the issues surrounding power and knowledge (Miraftab, 2004). This is because "power is intimately tied up with the construction, constitution, and production of knowledge through research" and as such, "the context within which research can take place also needs close inspection" (Moss, 2002:8). Given such 'situated knowledges' (Haraway, 1988), both researcher and researched can never fully know each other: who is inside and who is out. But even as I acknowledge that the challenges of disentangling insider/outsider status are problematic and change according to contextual circumstances (Gilbert, 1994; Kobayashi, 1994; Miraftab, 2004), I have also tried to make a case for doing research from the inside.

Through insider research, I have chosen to embrace the emotional aspects of doing research. Rather than shying away from criticisms of insider research as problematic because of emotional subjectivity, I argue that it is this very nature of the subjective that gives this method its strength. It allows the researcher to speak from within a community, and provides opportunities for building community around the similarities and differences shared between researcher and interviewees. It acknowledges the importance of speaking from the inside, particularly when choosing

to remain silent can sometimes be too high an ethical price to pay in the name of objective research (DeLyser, 2001: 442).

In justifying my use of insider research, I have also attempted to engage with issues pertaining to the simultaneity of subject-object position when doing research from the inside. I have shown how such a relational position could prove key to being able to successfully unpack the discursive contradictions that underpin how gender and race are constructed. I argue that in order to be critically engaged with such constructions there needs to be greater awareness of the contingent nature of our emotional experiences and utterances. On the one hand, the emotional ties I shared with the women I interviewed were based on similarities grounded in our shared histories and experiences of singlehood. Yet the differences in our personal histories also mean that our experiences are never quite the same. It is this ability to see the connections and also the differences between self and other that, I argue, produces the relationality that makes possible an emotional politics that can be powerful and liberating.

Chapter 5: When Race Counts: Singaporean-Indian Women, Tradition, Modernity and (not) Marrying for Nation and Community

5.1 Race, Gender, Nation and Geography: Singapore's CMIO Strategy

In a world where it is becoming increasingly common for individuals to work and live away from their places of birth, women's reproductive bodies mark the symbolic boundary where pollutive elements can enter to dilute the ethno-nationalistic core of a group's identity. Feminist researchers argue that gender and race feature significantly in such a discourse as it is women's bodies that have continued to be appropriated for often racialised national-building projects (Ahmed, 2004; Nash, 1993; Yeoh and Willis, 2004; 1999; Yuval-Davis, 1997). These are bodies that are also seen as problematic when they do not procreate, thus causing the demise of national and ethnic communities through a lack of biological regeneration. According to Yuval-Davis, women play a key role in the construction of the nation as it is "women (and not just) the bureaucracy and intelligentsia who reproduce nations, biologically, culturally and symbolically" (Yuval-Davis, 1997: 2). From a genealogical dimension of origin, women's bodies construct the "exclusionary/homogeneous" vision of nation in terms of their reproductive capacities. From a cultural dimension, women carry the "'burden of representation', as they are constructed as the symbolic bearers of the collectivity's identity and honour, both personally and collectively" (Yuval-Davis, 1997: 45). From a civic dimension, women are also seen as transgressors of the nation when they marry an 'outsider' or they start a family outside the boundaries of the nation with a non-citizen (Yuval-Davis, 1997: 21). Through women's bodies and the act of procreation, the state therefore deploys a tactic of race that it uses to control its population both within and outside of its borders. This chapter of the thesis engages

with how the state situates national identity within the racialised and enclosed biological space of its citizens' bodies, and by doing so is able to extend its reach through the biological reproduction of its national "race". Procreation within the socio-legal practice of marriage, allows offspring borne by its female citizens to become legally acknowledged.

In Singapore, the discursive strategies of race, gender and sexuality play a crucial role in the Singapore state's multi-racial nation-building project (Chua, 2003; Yeoh and Huang, 2004; Oswin 2010a; 2010b). As mentioned in Chapter 3, race is a critical discursive strategy that locates the birth of the Singapore nation. It is a nation formed around the notion of an ideal racialised geobody comprising four founding races: Chinese, Malay, Indian and Other (CMIO). This racialised ideal serves as a reminder of how Singaporeans came together to gain independence from the British, and later from the Federation of Malaysia. It is a model of nation-building in which the island-state's four "separate-but-equal" founding races remain the building blocks of the Singaporean national identity (Yeoh and Huang, 2004: 317). It is an imagination of the Singapore nation structured around a specific breakdown of the multi-racial population in which the ethnic Chinese form almost three-quarters of the population, followed next by the Malay, Indian and Other (Eurasian) ethnic groups. The maintenance of the separateness of each of these ethnic groups has implications for marriage and family life in Singapore. In order for these ethnic groups to remain separate in the way they are constituted in the national imaginary, it would appear as though Singaporean men and women must marry and produce children within the boundaries of their ethnic groups, thus keeping these groups separate and culturally distinct. Nevertheless as Singapore opens its doors to more foreigners, and as more

Singaporeans live and work abroad, the number of inter-ethnic marriages has shown a significant increase (see Table 3.5 in Chapter 3). While the CMIO formula of nation-building in itself does not discriminate against inter-ethnic marriages, it has produced a national imaginary in which the social discursivity of race seems neatly defined and distinguishable (i.e. Chinese, Indian, Malay and Other). Each of these categories seem to have clearly marked boundaries that could arguably be seen as coming under siege, resulting in the necessity for tighter population control, and renewed pressure for the local populous to reproduce itself in order to maintain this multi-racial imaginary. It is in the midst of this perceived change to the make-up of the population, that we see the importance of marriage, children and a strategic gendered, racialised and heteronormative biopolitics of family play out.

There is a double consciousness[8] (Gilroy, 1993) between nationality and ethnicity that remains intact as race takes on an essential character, thus allowing for the maintenance of distinct yet hybrid, and hyphenated identities in the form of Singaporean-Indian, Singaporean-Chinese, Singaporean-Malay. It is an essentialisation that is made possible through a strategic deployment of tradition and modernity. For example, essentialism and constructionism are overlaid in a palimpsest (Nayak, 2006) that produces a more flexible and adaptable strategy of race that makes it possible to differentiate between Singaporean-Indian and non-Singaporean Indian. There is a strategic deployment of tradition that is dependent on a reproduction of essentialised notions of gender and race through inherited cultural practices that take place at the site of the biological family within the ethnic group

[8] In his book *The Black Atlantic*, Gilroy writes, analyses and responds to what he perceives to be a double consciousness Black Americans experience in the US at the nexus of ethnic and national identity. He offers a "Black Atlantic" – hybrid, transnational, transcultural formation of black identity, a creolisation of black and white. It springs from "the desire to transcend both the structures of the nation state, and the constraints of ethnicity and national particularity" (Gilroy, 1993: 19).

(Ahmed, 2004; Yuval-Davis, 1997). These practices in ethnic minority communities like the Indian community become an important representation of the 'Asianess' of Singapore and the state requires the constant reproduction of the "I" in order for the CMIO national imaginary to continue to be relevant. Yet, such a deployment of tradition is not easy and often becomes a challenge particularly for women in the ethnic community who must maintain their role as 'cultural bearers' of tradition (Yuval-Davis, 1997) even as they fulfill their roles as citizens of a modern nation with aspirations to become a global city.

In the following sections of the chapter, I show how ethnic minority women like Singaporean-Indian women are seen as problematic because their bodies destabilise the tenuous but strategic pairing of nationality and ethnicity. By engaging with the narratives of graduate Singaporean-Indian women, I reveal how the contradictions underpinning modernity and tradition as deployed by the Singapore state and the Singaporean-Indian ethnic community become revealed at the site of these women's bodies. Specifically, I focus on how race is produced in ways that perpetuate complex, and often contradictory constructions of tradition and modernity by the Singapore state and Indian community, thus problematising the essentialisation of the Singaporean-Indian community as 'traditional' and their women as oppressed and lacking agency in making choices about intimate and family life. By focusing on the experiences of these single Singaporean-Indian women living and working in Melbourne, London and Singapore this chapter aims to re-centre race by linking it to "the contingency of biological categories which are chosen according to social and cultural criteria in specific material circumstances which suggests that 'race' is a geographical and historical construct whose specificity and effects must be named"

(Peake and Schein, 2000:135). Specifically, I analyse how social constructions are indeed political, where the body is constructed for ideological ends (Kobayashi and Peake, 1994: 225) by both the Singapore state, and the Singaporean-Indian community, thus allowing for a feminist reading of the geographies of race to take place.

Specifically, the thesis shows how graduate single Singaporean-Indian women represent the successes of modernity as all graduate single women do in Singapore regardless of their ethnicity. They are emblematic of the rise of the middle class, universal education and meritocracy in Singapore giving all citizens, regardless of their gender or race, equal opportunities to climb the social ladder and be 'in the world', i.e. global citizen with opportunities to experience working and living outside Singapore. However, even as more spaces "open up" (Massey, 2005) for these women, they are also constrained, because of their perceptions that they are expected to behave in socially appropriate ways as the bearers of the cultural symbols and traditions of the nation, and their ethnic community. This role is tied to what it means to be good daughters and mothers and locates the women within a particular 'traditional' framework of care, where the ideal female citizen and member of the Indian community is one who marries within the community and produces children within that marriage. The intense pressure the women and their mothers face because of their daughters' single status is, however, not merely one-sided. I show that in performing their roles as good daughters and mothers, the women are also able to contest and negotiate the expectation of them to marry. The thesis, therefore, shows how the Indian community comprises individuals who are actively involved in

negotiating and contesting what it means to be members of this community and by doing so, it engages with the complexities entailed in 'becoming' community.

The rest of the chapter is divided into four sections. In the next section (5.2), I analyse the strategic ways in which the Singapore state and Indian community deploy modernity and tradition. This has resulted in single Singaporean-Indian women constantly experiencing not only a double consciousness (of ethnicity and nationality) but also double exclusion as members of the nation and the Singaporean-Indian community. The following two sections engage with the discursive contradictions that underpin the Singapore state and Indian community's constructions of modernity and tradition that are crucial to the production of a gendered, racialised and heteronormative biopolitics of family. By engaging with these contradictions, my aim is to distance the women from their position of being doubly excluded by the state and their community. In section 5.3, I analyse how the women's single status represents modernity's successes and failures and how this is tied to the strategic yet contradictory ways in which modernity and tradition are produced by the Singapore state. In section 5.4, I analyse how single Indian women and their mothers reproduce, contest and negotiate the Indian community's constructions of what it means to be a good Indian woman. Together, the two sections show how the women and their mothers' rationales behind decisions about when to marry, whom to marry, and whether or not to marry are complex ones that cannot be disconnected from their desire to balance what is important for themselves as individuals alongside their desire to care for each other. It is in undertaking the emotional act of balancing their own needs alongside those of the other that the contradictions underpinning the state's discursive use of gender, race and sexuality are unveiled. In the final section

(5.5), I set the stage for the next analytical chapter, where I make the case for framing care in terms of a feminist care ethic. I iterate that it is by contesting and negotiating the double exclusion they face by the Singapore state and Indian community, that the women show that singlehood is more than just "not married" or "waiting to marry". Instead, what unfolds are intensities of care that are a product of the enabling and constraining ways in which the women care for themselves and intimate others, and in the process reveal the fictive basis of the biopolitics of family in Singapore.

5.2 Re-centering Race: Double-Exclusion and Discursive Contradiction

In recent times, it has been argued that race has become de-centred by neoliberal politics that supports the principle of non-racialised equality. Here, the middle-class ideology of liberal individualism discourages racial identification but, instead, preaches equal opportunity to material goods based on the efficient workings of the capitalist market to which every labouring body has the right to access (Mitchell, 2006; Pratt, 1997; Winant, 2006; Winddance, 1996). By taking a non-racial approach, space opens up by connecting bodies that are unmarked and equally able to access the middle class capitalist dream. In Singapore, however, the pursuit of economic growth tied to the rise of the middle-class as symbols of modernity may also be read as a threat to the nation's survival in increasingly global, mobile times. It is a process that requires the strategic use of race and gender grounded in specific constructions of tradition and modernity, and has specific implications for minority ethnic women like those of the Singaporean-Indian community.

I argue that graduate Singaporean-Indian women are treated as the figures of exception by the Singapore state. Their success, which is reflected in higher levels of

education and success in their careers, make them markers of Singapore's successful multi-racial policy, in which "even" women from traditional and ethnic minority communities like the Indian community are able to benefit from the state's ambition of modernity and economic development. The racialised construction of tradition located in the body of Indian women marks the site of difference, and the ability for this difference to be overcome by the fairness of state policy based on meritocracy rather than racially-based affirmative action. The bodies of these women represent modernity's arrival as a result of the women's ability to function as cosmopolitan citizens comfortable anywhere in the world. And yet these women's bodies are also emblematic of tradition's survival through the passing down of inherited cultural practices through the women's performances of being good Indian daughters and mothers. The survival of the ethnic minority community, and the multi-racial nation-state become tied to each other through the reproductive bodies of women who must marry and produce children within the boundaries of their ethnic community. Indian women who marry and become mothers are thus crucial for perpetuating Singapore's meritocracy-based success story by ensuring the survival of its multi-racial (separate-but-equal) nation. They are required to marry and produce offspring within marriages to Singaporean-Indian men and when they do not, their single status consequently becomes problematic as their bodies now mark a site of lack or potential pollution for the multi-racial Singaporean nation and Singaporean-Indian community when they do not marry, or marry outside the community.

The act of marriage is also crucial as it symbolises all Singaporean women's ability to enjoy a level playing field when they marry as this signifies the possibility for them to 'have it all'. For women, this means a balanced and successful life is one in which

they not only have success in their careers but also in their personal lives. Success in one's personal life is equated to being married and having children – a family of one's own. All single women reflect a failure on the part of the state to ensure a level playing field in which women may have success in both these aspects of their lives. The expectation of Singaporean-Indian women to marry and have children by both the state and the Indian community, however, creates a particularly stressful situation where single Singaporean-Indian women and their mothers are thought to be constrained by the need to balance being emblems of modernity and tradition. This, I argue, results in their double exclusion by the state and their community's construction of ideal citizenship and communal membership in multi-racial Singapore.

Graduate single Singaporean-Indian women are, therefore, excluded on two counts: their bodies are used as symbols of tradition and the exception that needs to be overcome (even minority ethnic women 'have it all') (section 5.3). And yet the survival of the multi-racial nation and Indian community also depends on Indian women continuing to enact the mores of tradition through marriage and child-bearing (section 5.4). Single Singaporean-Indian women, therefore, do not count in the eyes of the state (as all single women do not) for not having completed their national duty by balancing career and family life successfully. They also do not fit in constructions of the Singaporean-Indian community as 'traditional' and 'conservative' until they are married and produce a child within that marriage.

In the sections that follow, I show how the women believe they are viewed as 'too modern" by Singaporean-Indian men, thus making them less suitable for the local

Indian marriage market. Single Singaporean-Indian women are seen as problematic not just by the state for not performing their national duty by marrying and having offspring to ensure the survival of the multi-racial Singapore. Their unmarried status potentially spells the demise of the Singaporean-Indian community, not just in numeric terms but also through the dilution of the community which is often essentialised in terms of race. Single Indian women's success in their careers and their ability to live and work abroad (i.e. social and economic mobility) render their exceptional traditional bodies invisible, even as their traditional and racialised bodies are needed to represent modernity's success by playing the role of good Indian daughters who 'have it all' (career, financial success and family life through marriage to a Singaporean-Indian man). In the next two sections, I analyse the narratives of single Singaporean-Indian women based in Melbourne, London and Singapore and engage with the discursive contradictions that underpin the strategic deployment of gender and race in the state's desire to maintain a Singaporean nation that is both traditional and modern. I attempt to reclaim space for these doubly excluded women by focusing on the ways in which the women contest, negotiate and sometimes reproduce these subjectifications of them as traditional or modern, and thus lend voice to their experiences and elucidate their agency.

5.3 The Singaporean State and Singaporean-Indian women who (do not) have it all: Singlehood as Modernity's Success and Failure

Women have continued to play a significant role in the construction of Singapore as a modern nation-state. Lazar (2001) calls this "strategic egalitarianism" as women are co-opted into the nationalist project by the government and granted equality contingent upon their "meeting particular nationalist objectives" (Lazar, 2001: 59).

Women are seen as integral to the state's ability to achieve its modernising and developmental goals. They play a direct role in the control of Singapore's population, which would impact its most important resource – its people. On the one hand, their duties as citizens include their duties in the public sphere (i.e. their economic bodies). On the other hand, in the private sphere, they are required to fulfill crucial duties in social reproduction, providing the country's future human resources and serving as primary care-givers within the Singaporean family.

The portrayal of single women as lacking takes place as a result of the seeming inability of their intimate lives to 'cross over' from the private to public through the socio-legal practice of marriage. Thus while these women may be dating, or in long-term relationships with significant others, and though they may have other duties as primary care-givers for their parents, they believe they do not count in the eyes of the state and Indian community. I attribute this sense of not counting to the zero-sum logic of care that sees space and time as linear, and makes the separation of public and private possible. It is a zero-sum logic that lends credence to care's calculative technology, and results in marriage being seen as the only valid end-point for these women. In Singapore, marriage and childbirth within marriage provide women with access to special tax rebates for the cost of having children, and tax relief on their maid levy should they hire maids to do domestic work in their homes. They are also able to benefit in terms of a dual income, which enables them to ease the burden of care as they can now afford to 'out-source' some of the care-giving responsibilities to someone else (live-in maids, day-care centres for the children and the elderly, after-school activities) (Heng and Devan, 1992; Wong *et al*., 2004). Feminist geographers have argued that in reality, the women's lives cannot be separated so neatly into

public and private divides (Bondi and Domosh, 1998; Duncan, 1996; McDowell, 1993a; Wright, 2010). By locating the emotional in the private sphere alone, an important aspect about how women make decisions about their intimate lives essentially becomes unaccounted for.

Like all single women, single Singaporean-Indian women are also seen as problematic for the Singapore state that remains concerned about low marriage and fertility rates (their duties in the private sphere). As mentioned in Chapter 3, the rising number of singles is seen as a burden on the state because of the potential impact low fertility could have on the country's economic growth and development. Single women reflect the uneven playing field for women which often results in the postponement of marriage. They do this in order to be better able to focus on their careers (their duties in the public sphere) before settling down to domestic life, hoping in this way to cope better with the double burden of their duties in both spheres (Jones, 2012; Jones and Gubaju, 2009). In this section and the next, I show how single graduate Indian women employ both a zero-sum logic of care to rationalise when and whether or not to marry in ways that contest the biopolitics of family, alongside a logic of care that is less linear and calculating, and perhaps more emotionally derived. I iterate that their reasons for doing so stem mainly from the racially contingent ways in which they and their mothers encounter expectations of them to be good Indian women in the eyes of the state and the Singaporean-Indian community.

The narratives of both Diana and Lakshimi below highlight the situation in Singapore as less than conducive for women to marry and have successful careers. The women

perceive that it would be difficult for them to maintain a career and simultaneously be wives and mothers because they will not be able to set aside sufficient time to manage both successfully. To some extent, these narratives reproduce the gendered familial roles of women iterated by the state in Singapore (Huang and Yeoh, 2003; Yeoh, Huang and Willis, 2000). In this instance, the expectations of women to be the primary care-givers in the family is the reason women like Diana and Lakshimi use to rationalise delaying marriage or not marrying at all.

> "I was asked whether I was intending to get married and I think the point being that if I was intending to get married and have children, then I could commit less time to my career...So I think they (employers) assume that certain women decide that they want to achieve as much as they can achieve and they can only do that by remaining single because they are not going to be able to find somebody who is going to share equal responsibility looking after the family."
>
> - Diana, 36, Singapore

In Diana's case, the acceptance that it would be difficult for women to find men who are willing to share equal responsibility in the home is indication of the distinct separation of public and private spheres, and resulted in her employers and she herself employing a zero-sum logic as to why she ought not to marry. By not marrying, Diana is better able to focus on her career and has now become a very successful and well-paid consultant in the health sector. Similarly, Lakshimi shared,

> “The women who are in the higher echelons of management tend to be the ones who clock in very long hours, and sometimes it makes me wonder, ‘You have kids, a husband and you are here on the desk everyday till 10 o’clock. When do you see your husband, when do you see your kids?’ ”
>
> - Lakshimi, 43, Singapore

Lakshimi believes that her married colleagues who are successful in their careers cannot possibly be good parents or spouses because they are absent mothers and fathers. Lakshimi and Diana’s experiences at work reflect the lack of an even playing field because women are expected to be successful in their careers as well as fulfill care-giving roles at home. Moreover, there is an perception that the achievement of this balance between work and family life cannot easily be attained. As such, women like Diana and Lakshimi are expected to make a choice. While the notion of the successful developmental state is one where women can ‘have it all’, in reality the achievement of Singapore’s developmental goals, therefore, seems to have come at a price. As men and women’s labouring bodies contribute to the national economy, the survival of the Asian family steeped in gendered familial roles seems to have come under threat (Yeoh and Willis, 2004; 1999) and these women are seen to have ‘lost out’ on the ability to ‘have it all’. Yet, by making use of the same zero-sum logic that underpins state policy to encourage individuals to marry, single women who are financially well off are able to distance themselves from a position of lack that constructs them as women in waiting. Diana and Lakshimi are wealthy enough to afford maids of their own. They live in private property that they have purchased

independently[9]. They do not see themselves as waiting to marry, instead they see themselves as living and enjoying successful lives without marriage. In their eyes they have made the, most logical and beneficial decisions for their career development and financial needs.

As the women become older and more financially independent, they also iterate how marriage only makes sense as a means of obtaining legal recognition and commitment for one's children and future care needs, and as a means of securing companionship and ensuring personal development and growth as an individual.

> "V: Personally, I feel that girls don't need guys. We can be independent. If I had no boyfriend, I would be happily single. I really don't think there's much of a difference.
>
> K: But is marriage important for you?
>
> V: Yeah because I want children. It would be weird to have children without getting married. Even though they still do it in some countries. But I think it's a good thing to have that commitment on paper if you want to have children. And eventually I see myself having children so I want to get married.
>
> K: Why is it important that people be married before they have children?
>
> V: Because I feel that marriage is a commitment and having a child is a very big thing. So you must have that kind of security of being married, having it on paper, making it official."
>
> \- Veni, 27, Melbourne

[9] In Singapore an individual's ability to purchase private property (landed homes or private apartments usually with condominium facilities) is a marker of wealth. Private property is values at 3-4 times more than public housing. The majority of Singaporeans (85%) live in public housing flats.

Veni's narrative shows that marriage is more than companionship, because one could have someone to come home to without having to get married (i.e. a boyfriend). To her, marriage is more of a legal act that gives women commitment on paper, security in terms of ensuring both parties are legally bound to care for children and family. For Veni, in her 20s the issue of marriage remains crucial because she believes starting a family of her own remains a possibility in the future, and requires legal recognition as a form of security for any children she might have. To some extent, her need to feel secure through marriage is a response to the calculative technologies of care located in a zero-sum game. For example, in Singapore, single mothers under the age of 35 years cannot purchase a public housing flat. This is part of the Singapore state's efforts to concretise the hegemony of marriage and the heteronormative family. In order for individuals under the age of 35 to become eligible to purchase public housing flats, they must be legally married or constitute a family unit (i.e. purchase with parents or siblings) (Oswin, 2010b; Teo *et al.*, 2003; see also www.hdb.gov.sg). A Singaporean individual who is single can only purchase a public housing flat on their own or with another single at the age of 35 or older (see also Wong *et al.*, 2004). State notions of what constitute the ideal family mean that women like Veni, though financially independent, may not consider having a child without "making it legal" first. Yet, marriage to Veni is also an emotional commitment. She is currently in a relationship with someone who is much younger than her. Veni may not be single, but she is waiting to marry, waiting for the right time to tell her mother that she will marry a man younger than her. Her emotional commitment to their relationship is reflected in her desire to marry him, and 'come out' about the relationship.

Sunita (aged 42) living in Singapore believes human beings are wired to "attach" themselves to someone for the long term, but that marriage is not a necessary end-goal of that practice. According to her, the reasons we seek individuals to pair with may initially be sparked by a "chemical trigger" called love. Emotions, in her opinion, play an important role in terms of why people may get together initially, but eventually these die out and what takes its place is the desire to be with someone who helps you grow as an individual.

> "Being in love or falling in love is probably very much an illusion – just a long temporary state triggered very much by chemicals in the body that trigger different emotional states and changes in hormones...But I think if you were in a relationship long enough, you would see that after some time, the idea of staying together wouldn't really be an emotional thing. Rather (it becomes) a necessity, someone to grow with, to help each other grow as individuals."
>
> - Sunita, 42, Singapore

For someone older like Sunita, marriage or child-bearing no longer need consideration, she is more concerned about companionship and having someone to grow old with. Sunita's stable job and financial independence have resulted in her primary concern not being one of whether or not to marry, but how to develop as a person, and how a partner in the short or long term may help her achieve personal development. Whether abroad or in Singapore, single Indian women like Veni and Sunita because of their financial stability, high levels of education and their age, are able to rationalise the need for marriage in ways that are not linked to care as a zero-sum game alone. Rather the trigger is more emotional and changes in terms of its

emotional intensity over time. Veni and Sunita's experiences show how regardless of whether they are based in Singapore or abroad, women may have different emotionally-grounded reasons for why they ought or ought not to marry: feeling secure in one's relationship, the excitement of love and companionship as one gets older. Veni and Sunita's experiences reveal the complexities of dating and deciding when and whether to marry. In some ways their 'discipline' reinstates the biopolitics of family. Veni wants to make it legal, she knows that financial security and recognition by the state can only come with marriage. And yet, there is also an emotional element to the decisions they make that contests care's calculative technologies. It is about being with the person who is right for you, even if that means waiting (Veni) or not waiting (Sunita) to marry.

Single women's bodies become representative of modernity's failure as more women delay marriage or never marry, their bodies symbolise a wasted potential for producing stable, heteronomative families, as well as the inability to cultivate Singapore's own talented labour pool in order to meet future economic goals. Educated and financially successful graduate Indian women at the top of their careers, nevertheless, signify modernity's success because these women become poster girls for the Singapore state's implementation of its policy of meritocracy in which all individuals, regardless of their ethnicity, are able to achieve success as long as they are willing to work hard. These women serve as evidence of tradition's exception in that they symbolise the possibility that *even* women from traditional and conservative communities like the Indian community can excel in Singapore, and thus become proof of the Singapore state's successful nation-building and developmental efforts that are premised on the notion of racial equality that has enabled all citizens

regardless of race to achieve upward class mobility. Highly educated single Indian women with financial means seem to be caught in a double-bind because they must necessarily reproduce constructions of themselves as ‘traditional’, ‘conservative’ and ‘docile’ in order for the Singaporean state to successfully overcome what is seen to be the challenge of balancing both modernity and tradition as it strives to become a global city. Here, tradition and Asian are racially essentialised in ways that put in place a biopolitics where state and community expectations of women influence Indian women’s own views of what an ‘ideal’ woman is.

For instance, while going abroad to live and work is proof that women from traditional communities like the Indians could possibly ‘have it all’ (education, career, family, physical and social mobility), the rise in the median age of marriage amongst Indian women and falling marriage numbers in the community (see Chapter 3) might also be seen as indicative of Singapore’s failure to become a modern global city where gender equality is practised. The situation is further complicated by the fact that these women’s successes in achieving higher education and their careers have come at a price because they perceive that this is often the reason why they are unmarried. They believe they are unable to meet and marry suitable men because they are now deemed “too modern”. As a result of their perceived modernity, the women believe that they are judged harshly, particularly within their own community, where they are viewed as unsuitable brides because they are too independent, “opinionated” and scare off Indian men. According to Revati,

> "...my friends say, maybe if you shut up, more guys will like you. Cos I am very argumentative, very opinionated, I know that and Singaporean guys get scared..."
>
> - Revati, 31, London

Revati, like Meena (see below), believes that their inability to meet suitable Indian men is because there is a sense within the community that being a good and traditional Indian woman is key to being able to successfully secure a husband. Indian women's bodies are marked as traditional not just in terms of physical appearance but also in terms of how they behave. From Revati's point of view, she is deemed unsuitable because she does not know how to play the role of a submissive woman. In Meena's experience it is the disjuncture between how she looks and the way she behaves that limits her marriageability.

> "Fair and pretty girls can wear Western attire. If you have a darker skin tone, or are not so good-looking and dress in Western attire, you are a 'meena rock' (racist depiction of a lower class Indian or Malay woman who dresses in Western attire and is uncouth), you know? She is perceived to be rowdy"
>
> - Meena, 36, Singapore.

Meena's narrative reveals her belief that there is an essentialisation of race taking place within the community. It is reflected in her belief that women are constructed as suitable for marriage based on their looks. She believes her dark complexion leaves little room for her to play the role of a "modern" Indian woman. Meena believes that her darker complexion results in her being judged as lower in class, and unsuitable for

marriage. She feels she must conform to communal expectations of her to be dressed traditionally because of the way she looks, lest she be seen as poorly brought up and unsuitable for marriage.

In Tania's experience, her dark complexion also becomes a marker of tradition, because it differentiates her from Chinese women whom she believes are seen as more modern by Indian men.

> "(My friends and I) we'll joke about *antha jaathi* (the 'other race' in Tamil, referring to the Chinese). So we will comment on them. The men (Indian men), treat Indian women very weird(ly). They won't even fraternise with you. You say 'hi' and they look at you and think 'Oh my god, she's talking to me?'. With the *antha jaathi* women, the Indian men are all friendly, all sitting so close. God knows what they are doing. So it just gets me irritated. I mean why are you (the Indian men) so particular? But they're so scared that we will want to marry them."
>
> - Tania, 44, Melbourne

The modernity of Chinese women marked by their physical appearance results in a racialisation of women by Indian men in terms of who they may consider suitable for dating. Tania believes the reason Indian men do not want to date her is because they see Indian women like her as traditional, and unlikely to date unless the relationship was certain to end in marriage. The narratives of Revati, Meena and Tania show how single Indian women believe that Singaporean-Indian men do not find them suitable

because they are not traditional enough or do not fall within conventional norms of what makes an Indian woman suitable for marriage.

Sunita and Veena's experiences, conversely, reveal perceptions that Indian women are less likely to be able to marry outside their ethnic group, not because they do not want to, but because they believe non-Indian Singaporean men are too "traditional" and thus not "modern enough" to be open to inter-ethnic marriages.

> "I think they (people in New York where she completed her graduate school) are more open...Yeah, and they appreciate different kinds of beauty. They will say, 'Oh look at the colour of your skin, it's so beautiful'. Here (Singapore), it is the direct opposite. I was just telling my friend, that should not matter, the environment should not matter, we should be strong enough to know who we are, feel good about our bodies, in our bodies, but what to do, we are human and that's something we have to work through."
>
> \- Veena, 36 Singapore

Veena's narrative reflects the embodied nature of difference. While what constitutes being suitable for marriage in terms of how one looks and how one may behave is seen as racially constructed, there is a very real and emotional way in which Indian women encounter and embody being single in terms of their physical desirability. Veena, who currently lives in Singapore but spent two years in New York City completing graduate school at Columbia University, shares how in New York she was told that the colour of her skin is beautiful. Both she and her friend feel "sexless" in Singapore. For Sunita, the way she looks and behaves places her in a double bind.

She shares that Singaporean-Chinese men "don't necessarily always find Indian women attractive" and "Indian men who are very conservative don't approach you". She said,

> "I think definitely being an Indian in Singapore, a woman, does make it harder to meet people...I think that you are limited in terms of who you can go out with."
>
> - Sunita, 42, Singapore

The above narratives show how women's racially marked bodies become the site where modernity's successes and failures play out simultaneously. The women encounter a more exciting social life, are able to date outside their ethnic group and see this as being representative of the Singapore state's drive to become a modern city-state where women can 'have it all'. Yet the perceptions also reveal an essentialisation of race in which the problem faced by Indian women is one that lies within the community, which is often seen in Singapore as 'traditional' and conservative (Chan, 2001). I argue that this construction of the community as conservative and traditional is an important aspect of the Singapore state's biopolitics of family. This racialised biopolitics allows the four ethnic groups C-M-I-O to stay separate and distinct. And yet it is also a biopolitics that enables women to rationalise what makes it difficult for them to marry. In some instances the women see themselves as having become 'too modern' for the traditional Asian men (Indian and non-Indian), while in other instances the colour of their skin becomes a marker of tradition, thus making them unsuitable for marriage outside the community. The complexities of how race is embodied and constructed by the state makes singlehood

more complex than captured in the notion of 'waiting to marry'. For many of the women, part of living the lives they want to live means having a successful career and being in relationships while holding on to the possibility of perhaps marrying some day. The above narratives show that while Indian women can 'have it all' in terms of work and emotional/sexual fulfillment, the notion of what 'having it all' constitutes is also mitigated by a racialised biopolitics of family that enables the women rationalise why they may or may not be suitable for marriage.

In the following section, I specifically engage with how single Singaporean-Indian women and their mothers reproduce, negotiate and contest racialised constructions of modernity and tradition produced by the Singaporean-Indian community. By doing so my aim is to highlight how community is implicated in the biopolitics of family and how the racialised biopolitics of family may be contested and made more complex when we consider the spatial politics of 'becoming community'.

5.4 Good Indian Mothers and Daughters: Doing Modernity and Tradition for Community

In Singapore, race as part of the nation-building discourse draws its legitimacy from being able to scale down to the level of the body of the individual citizen by drawing on socially constructed biological ideas of blood and kinship (Nash, 2005; Yuval-Davis, 1997). It is the success of this form of social constructivism that results in marriage and child-bearing between Indian men and women in Singapore becoming crucial for the maintenance of the boundaries of what constitutes the Singaporean-Indian community (see PuruShotam, 2004 for the importance of marriage in the Indian community; and Velayutham and Wise, 2008 for similar arguments outside the

Singaporean context). Specifically, I show how the community, similar to the Singaporean state (as discussed in the earlier section), makes use of women's racially marked bodies to do this. In this instance, their bodies are used to symbolise the successful biological regeneration of the myth of 'race'. Discourses of race, gender and sexuality are made natural when the communal constructions of Indian women as good daughters and mothers become tied to specific ways of performing tradition that require marriage and the moral policing of single women by others and themselves in order for the boundaries of the community to remain intact. This is similar to arguments made elsewhere about women's maternal authority and subsequent independence in the South Asian community as tied to the growth and maintenance of traditional family systems (Bhopal, 1997; Nagar, 1998; PuruShotam, 2004; see also Velayutham and Wise, 2005; Wise and Velayutham, 2008).

To this end, within the Singaporean-Indian community, marriage and child-bearing are seen as integral aspects of women's independence and without them, no matter how accomplished, a woman is still seen as a child. Women's status in the community is thus tied to ensuring they are married and have children of their own. The excerpts below taken from the interviews with women based abroad and in Singapore reflect the crucial role marriage plays in giving Indian women independence and respect in the community. Without marriage, the women are seen as children and "belonging" to their parents' household. In spite of their financial independence and success in their careers, these women do not count.

> "(with marriage comes) social respect... Where your opinions count. When you get invited to places, it's based on the fact whether you are married or not.

If you are a woman and not married, the invite goes to my parents and not to me."

- Shal, 36, Melbourne

For women like Shal, who is gay and in a relationship with a long-term partner, this can be quite frustrating. Despite the fact that she is living the life she wants to live, abroad with a partner and financially independent, she still does not, in her opinion, have any social respect within her community and shares how wedding and other social invitations are never addressed to her, but to her parents. She is not seen as independent off them until she is married. This is in spite the fact that Shal is financial independent and had already moved out of her parents home. Similarly, Shanta (below) shares how women who are single are viewed as children because their single status locates them in a position of lack, an immature individual who does not have the right to make decisions about her own life.

"...Our society is not really that great on single people. If you are single, the first thing they think is that something is really wrong with you. There is a negative connotation still, like I mean even my dance teacher for that matter, the first thing she will do if there are single people in our (classical Indian dance) company, who are above 30, she'll say, 'The problem with that child is...', her sentence begins with 'The problem with that child is...' and you know there is a negative connotation..."

- Shanta, 24, Singapore

Single women's experiences of being treated like children are further exacerbated when their own mothers articulate concerns about their daughters' single status, and the need to marry to ensure they have someone who will take care of them. They believe that their daughters need to be taken care of regardless of how successful their daughters are in their work and financial life. Gayatri for instance says that her mother constantly worries about her single status. Her father, on the other hand, takes a more laid back approach. One might argue that this is because her mother's status in the community is tied more to Gayatri's marital status. As a stay-at-home mother, Gayatri's mother will only be deemed a good mother when Gayatri is married and has children of her own.

> "Mum is always worrying. My younger cousins are all married. She's just worried that I will be single and there will not be someone to take care of me."
>
> - Gayatri, 33, Singapore

Tania's mother feels the same way. Although Tania (aged 44) has many friends in Melbourne, her mother tells her, "If you had someone, it will be better, then I can die peacefully". Tania says that her brother is also concerned about her single status. He thinks that Tania is likely to make poor decisions about her finances because she lives alone in Melbourne, and has no one to advise her. He is worried that she will become a burden on him. Tania's brother views her as someone who is incapable of making the right decisions about her future, and her mother would rather see her in a relationship so she knows there is a man other than Tania's brother to take care of her.

Whether their daughters are in Singapore or abroad, mothers do not stop worrying about who will care for their daughters. They believe that even though their daughters are capable of looking after themselves financially, and have friends they can call on, these do not count because only a husband will provide the security that comes from knowing there is someone to care for their daughters in the future. For Tania and Gayatri's mothers, there is a sense that time is running out for their daughters, and soon they will not be able to find someone to care for them. Single daughters, on the other hand, do not see themselves as individuals who need looking after by a prospective spouse. For instance, Revati (aged 31) based in London, cannot understand how her mother can say things like "just get married" as though it was something Revati could jump into so nonchalantly. Ever since she turned 28, Revati's mother has not stopped asking Revati about whether or not she has found someone to marry. Revati on the other hand is frustrated because she believes her mother's words are incongruent with what her parents had taught her all along, that "women can be anything". Revati feels she cannot switch gears the way her mother wants her to. She realises that her inability to do so might result in others in the community judging both her and her mother for not performing their roles as good Indian daughters and mothers.

Revati's experience and the narratives below show how the notion of *goodness* as perceived by the community translates to marriage as being necessary and appropriate for all Indian women (Bhopal, 1997; Kumari, 2004; Marimuthu, 1997; Nagar, 1998; PuruShotam, 2004; Talbani and Hasanali, 2000; Ramdas, 2012). And yet the notion of being good is not just about how one performs goodness for the community, but about a desire for daughters to care for the mothers and mothers for their daughters.

As a result, Indian mothers and daughters need to rationalise marriage and singlehood by performing tradition and modernity simultaneously as they balance being good mothers in the eyes of their single daughters against being good mothers in the eyes of the community. For instance, on the one hand, mothers understand the need for their graduate daughters to focus on their careers, and are even supportive of their daughters desire to live abroad. They tell their daughters they understand the need to prioritise careers and lament the "disaster" of divorces as a reason why it is better to take one's time before marriage. But, on the other hand, the pressure from the community in terms of what constitutes being a good Indian mother means that they have to ensure their daughters complete an important rite of passage (marriage and child-bearing).

Gina (aged 37) living in London says that her mum was supportive of Gina's decision to live in London because she could see Gina was unhappy in Singapore. Her mother understood that living in London would be better for Gina as "there were more opportunities outside Singapore and that the experience would definitely be more beneficial from a career perspective". However, that did not stop her from worrying about the fact that Gina might "die a spinster". Similarly, in Singapore both Shanta and Gayatri share how their mothers also find ways to rationalise their daughters' single status to themselves and others in the community by saying it is important to take the time to develop their careers, and also that they ought not to rush into marrying the wrong man and risk the marriage ending in a divorce.

> "…I think it shakes her security a bit not having an answer. I guess maybe if I was dating somebody, she would have some kind of an answer. I think her de

facto answer is that I have set up my business and I am pursuing my career, so that seems to be her answer at most functions. That gives her security, then I am happy."

- Shanta, 24, Singapore

"My mum will say, 'Actually, it is a good thing you are single. You know, looking at the marriages now, that are falling apart.' "

- Gayatri, 33, Singapore

Being a good mother in the eyes of the Indian community, however, is also dependent on the different ways in which tradition is also performed. What constitutes a successful woman in the community is, however, tied to woman's marital status and successful mothering. One has to have brought up daughters well so that they embody suitable traits that will make them good Indian wives, who will in turn have Indian offspring of their own. Often this means mothers are forced to perform tradition in the presence of the extended family, making proclamations over their concern for daughters' single status. Sheena gave this example,

"We were at a restaurant for mum's birthday. There was a cake out and when mum was about to blow out the candles I said, 'Mum, you've got to make a wish.' And she says out loud, 'My only wish is that my daughter gets married' and she blows out the candles. I am like, 'Mum, if you say it out loud it doesn't happen.' I was mortified, all my relatives were there."

- Sheena, 37, Singapore

> "My mother told her friend (when they were at an Indian wedding), 'My daughter doesn't believe in marriage and all that'. So I said, it is not a matter of not believing. The institution of marriage is something I believe in but like I said, if it happens, it happens, I am not going to go all out to look for it at this point."
>
> - Meena, 37, Singapore

The narratives above show that it is Sheena and Meena's mothers who face the brunt of questions about their daughters' unmarried status and feel the need to perform the role of traditional mothers who cannot be blamed for their modern daughters. Sheena's mother, for instance, is forced to make a public exclamation that she does not understand nor is she supportive of, Sheena's unmarried status. In Meena's case, it is easier for her mother to tell others that Meena does not believe in marriage as this lays blame on the institution of marriage itself, and not Meena's perceived unsuitability as an Indian wife, or her own inability to fulfill the role of a good mother in the eyes of the community.

However, as daughters become older, their single status becomes such a source of stress for mothers that remaining unmarried is deemed even less suitable than marrying an unsuitable man . Gina in London shared,

> "...in today's context, I think the single Indian woman will always have that invisible brick over the head... (in) a recent conversation I had with my mum, some of her old-fashioned friends have actually said to her that it's okay for

women to get divorced as long as long as they have a kid out of the marriage. I was thinking, what on earth? It's okay to be married to a twat and have his kid, as long as you get to exercise your uterus' function? That's so sad. But that's where there are certain social elements in Indian circles which need rectifying completely."

- Gina, 37, London

Gina's mother thinks it would be better for Gina to have a marriage that ended in divorce and get a child out of that marriage than not have children at all. For Gina's mother it would be inappropriate for Gina to have a child out of wedlock. Similarly, Meena and Kala in Singapore share that their mothers would be supportive of them marrying outside their ethnic group. When they were younger, their mothers would have been less open to the idea of an inter-ethnic or inter-religious marriage. But as both Meena and Kala approach 40, their mothers have had to change their tack.

"It came to the point where mum said, 'Even divorcees are okay with me'. There was a point when she said, 'He must be Hindu, single, educated, preferably Telegu', you know that kind of thing. But now it has changed a little bit. At one point, she said, 'Even a Muslim would be okay'."

- Meena, 37, Singapore

"...my (older) sister has a Chinese boyfriend. So initially when she had the Chinese boyfriend, then there was a bit of an issue, but now I think she's totally used to the idea, so I think if I brought anyone home, my sister has already sort of paved the way for me."

- Kala, 38, Singapore

Given the above narratives, one might be tempted to argue that the women's mothers are now more open to their daughters marrying outside the community, and were more accepting of divorce, something that ought to have seemed less suitable because of their conservatism. Yet in the daughters' eyes, their mothers' reasons for being more "open" stem more from a concern for their daughters' unmarried status than a greater acceptance of difference. The fact that the mothers were more concerned about what others might say about their daughters' unmarried status is evident in the experiences of single women based abroad, where more often than not, their chastity is questioned by extended family members and friends, and their mothers are held accountable.

> "...She (the friend, Indian and female) said 'Where're you staying?' So I said, 'I am staying at John's house (Caucasian male friend)'. And I think I said "John" (name of male friend) and she said, 'You're staying in a man's house? A white man? Does your mother know you are staying with a white man?' "
>
> - Tania, 44, Melbourne

> "Well, there are people who say, 'You're sleeping around.'
>
> Q: They ask you?
>
> A: Not me. They ask my mum. They say, 'Your daughter must be sleeping around.'
>
> Q: What does your mum say?
>
> A: I don't know Maybe she sounded hurt, but actually I was shocked to hear it from an aunt who had 4 daughters who were young and I was thinking, 'Are

> you not thinking about the repercussions of what you're saying?' I didn't know what to say, I was quite shocked."
>
> \- Lata, 34, London

Tania and Lata's experiences show how the communal gaze (Velayutham and Wise, 2005) can prove problematic for single Indian women and their mothers. In Tania's case, the gaze of the community followed her to Melbourne through a Singaporean-Indian friend who queried her choice to stay at a male Caucasian friend's home. In Lata's case, the gaze of the community extends from Singapore via her mother reporting to her what others in the extended family are saying about her unmarried status, and her living abroad on her own. The out-migration of single daughters is thus problematic for Indian mothers, who must balance nurturing suitable female Singaporean-Indian citizens symbolising Singapore's successful drive to modernity by ensuring their daughters 'have it all', while at the same time ensuring daughters marry suitably for the state and the community, thus producing good Indian daughters and citizens. As such, even as the women and their families embrace and perform being modern Singaporean-Indian women (see earlier section), there is also a sense that a good Indian woman is a daughter, or mother who is able to embrace tradition as reflected through the practice of marriage, while ensuring oneself or one's daughter is suitable for marriage within the community (marrying a Singaporean-Indian man).

Just like their mothers, daughters also contest and negotiate modernity and tradition as constructed by the Indian community, revealing the discursive contradictions beneath. However, there is a geography to how this takes place. For single women in

Singapore, there is a sense that one ought to keep one's singlehood and dating life less visible so as not to cause one's mother to "lose face" in the community.

> "I think it has always been a problem because when you live at home, I guess people are concerned about where you are. And often I've had to hide the (dating) relationship in a sense, so I haven't always, not at all to just have openly go out with someone, and I've obviously had to lie on occasion when I'm not coming back or when I've gone away on a holiday and it's not that I've wanted to but I think sometimes, I mean I think my ideal is to be honest, but I also have to weigh being honest with my parents against seeing what they are going to gain from that."
>
> - Sunita, 42, Singapore

Sunita has found it necessary to keep who she's seeing a secret from her mother. This is primarily because Sunita has decided that marriage is not on the cards for her, so rather than having to answer questions about whether or not anyone she may be in a partnership with is the man she plans to marry, she prefers to keep the relationship hidden from her mother. The secrecy, she says, is necessary to protect her mother. Sunita plays the role of the good Indian daughter who is saving herself for marriage, so that her mother will not be hurt or embarrassed by Sunita's sexual relationships with men she does not plan to marry. Women in Singapore and overseas (Lata, Tania) are thus both affected by the communal gaze but the fact that women like Sunita are more likely to be living with their parents in Singapore means that playing the good daughter involves keeping their relationships with men secret. For women like Lata and Tania, the gossip and questioning persist because they do not live with their

parents. Without parental accountability, it is more difficult to play the role of the good Indian daughter. As such, for many of the women abroad, there is a need to counter the rumours about their unbridled sexuality and cavorting with men by distancing themselves from potentially pollutive circumstances. Veni said,

> "...generally I think Indians are more conservative in their thoughts and actions. Whereas other nationalities like Australians are very liberal. So I guess the culture has made me not want to do certain things. Like I don't drink, I was never taught to drink. It's just my culture or maybe my religion. So here the Aussies drink but I don't."
>
> - Veni, 27, Melbourne

Often for the women abroad, this means reproducing certain essentialisms about conservatism, tradition and being Indian. For instance, the women assert that Indians are less liberal as Veni shares, or that cultural practices and language are hurdles that are too important for Singaporean-Indian women to consider marrying a Caucasian man. As Lata pointed out,

> "I think long term, a Caucasian man will never really be able to understand, will probably only be able to understand me at a very superficial level because I think I am still quite strongly Asian, or Indian. I speak the language, I write the language, I watch the movies, listen to the songs. I think I am, my self-identity, there's a lot of Indianess or Asianess about it that I think if I went out with someone who is Caucasian, there will be quite a strong part of me they wouldn't understand...I have actually, once I made it quite clear to a colleague

recently at work that I am quite racist, I would only go for someone who is Indian...I might flirt with someone who is Caucasian and things like that (but not marry him)…"

- Lata, 34, London

These strategic essentialisms (Spivak, 1988) are in the form of iterations of conservatism that enable them to differentiate themselves culturally from the Caucasian men they date. While the women may be more open to dating Caucasian men, in the long run, they would prefer to marry men who are "more like them" (i.e. Indian). Women like Lata and Veni, therefore, reproduce tradition in ways that essentialise race. By maintaining that Caucasian men are less likely to understand "their ways". they are able to rationalise to themselves that it would be better not to become too involved with a Caucasian man, and so reduce the likelihood of more serious relationships developing with these men. The women also strategically essentialise race through narratives that communicate how they see themselves as less traditional than their non-Singaporean South Asian counterparts.

"I guess their (Indians from India) outlook is not as Westernised as mine and I know this because the first question they ask is, 'Which part of India are you from?' And when I say, 'I am not from India'. They ask, 'But you are Indian?' I say, 'Yes'. They ask again, 'But you are not from India?' .So they are more interested in India, in anyone who is from India, because they want to feel closer to someone who is from India..."

- Letisha, 31, Melbourne

Because they are from cosmopolitan and multi-racial Singapore, Singaporean-Indian women see themselves as less insular and less traditional (they do not marry according to caste) than their non-Singaporean counterparts from India. For example, Letisha's impression of "Indians from India" as being more inward-looking and more likely to mix only with other Indians from India is not uncommon amongst Singaporean-Indian women based abroad and in Singapore. There is a sense amongst Singaporean-Indian women that having lived and grown up in a multi-racial country like Singapore, they were more open to mixing with others who are of a different race than the Indians from India are. Indians from India are seen as more likely to stick to their own kind, and as a result more likely to marry within their caste, a practice that is seen as very traditional amongst women like Lakshimi, who said that caste no longer matters as much in Singapore.

> "I met a friend who had a colleague who was an Indian from India..she said well her parents would never agree to her marrying a foreigner. It would have to be someone of the right caste...we've become somewhat bastardised in Singapore, you know we have married different races, people who have come from Tamil Nadu may have married a Gujarati, you know we have become so mixed here...(there aren't many) Indian(s) in Singapore who can say which village or which caste they came from, very few perhaps. So in Singapore I guess people have never really looked (at caste)...."
>
> - Lakshimi, 43, Singapore

The above examples show how the hybrid Singaporean-Indian identity is differentiated from its originating source (India where most Singaporean-Indians can

trace their ancestry to) by casting the "original" as traditional, and yet at the same time hanging on to the traditions that reproduce the essentialisation of race and allow for the differentiation of Indians from Chinese, and Malays in Singapore. Nevertheless, it is important to note that in Lakshimi's narrative, though she mentions that Singaporean-Indians may be more open to marrying outside their caste, she does not speak about marrying outside the ethnic community.

The narratives above reveal the complex ways in which mothers construct modernity strategically to be more supportive of their daughters. For instance, mothers rationalise that given the short-lived nature of marriages today, it would be better to stay single. In some instances, they echo what their daughters say in their conversations with other members of their community about the need to prioritise career before marriage. The narratives of Indian mothers and their single daughters who are themselves members of the Indian community, reveal how community is constantly the process of being made, constituted and reconstituted through the contestations and negotiations between mothers and daughters who rationalise daughters' single status to each other. Single Indian women and their mothers, therefore, occupy an in-between space where they face modernity and tradition simultaneously whether in Singapore or abroad. They are required to embrace modernity even as they hold on to tradition by policing themselves and each other in ways that account for the single daughters' unmarried status. They represent Singapore's success story, where the drive to modernity and economic development has meant a level playing field not just in terms of gender equality but also meritocracy such that all Singaporeans regardless of their race or gender can benefit. In the case of Singaporean-Indian women, their worth within their community and

that of their mothers' is also tied to marriage and child-bearing and having someone to care for them (i.e. husband or children).

Single Singaporean-Indian women are thus required to embrace tradition through marriage and child-bearing not only for themselves, but also for their mothers because in the eyes of their community, they and their mothers do not count until they are married and have children of their own. In the eyes of the Singapore state and the Indian community, their success as graduate women as reflected in their careers, financial life, and ability to contribute to Singapore's talented labour pool, are offset by their inability to marry. To rationalise their single status, I have shown how mothers and daughters perform tradition and modernity through a strategic essentialisation of race in an effort to play out their roles as good Indian women and 'modern' and 'cosmopolitan' Singaporean citizens simultaneously. What drives this rationale is a desire to do what is right for both themselves and for each other. On the one hand, middle-class mothers want their daughters to be able to live the lives they want to live, they want them to have 'overseas experience' as they believe this is what will bring them success in the context of today's global economy, but they also need to allay their own concerns about their daughters' future care needs. On the other hand, daughters need to balance independently making decisions about when to marry, whom to marry and whether or not to marry while at the same time considering how their unmarried status makes their mothers look in the eyes of the community. In playing out these mutually interdependent and intertwined caring roles, the women and their mothers reveal the how race is contested and negotiated through a strategic use of tradition and modernity to justify their single status, and in the process reproduce and sometimes problematise the lines that define the

boundaries of their community as traditional. The women's narratives allow us to question and destabilise the essentialism and constructionism that underpin the racialised biopolitics of family in Singapore because they reveal the 'myth of community' as comprising clearly defined ways of 'being Indian'. Instead, through the process of analysing these narratives and the concept of communities as 'always becoming', the thesis challenges the racialised biopolitics in which the hegemony of marriage and appropriate family life is rooted.

5.5 Doubly Excluded but not Disempowered

In this chapter, I have engaged primarily with the ways in which graduate single Singaporean-Indian women are doubly excluded as a result of the strategic and yet contradictory ways in which tradition and modernity have been employed in identity-making tactics for constructing the Singaporean nation and the Indian community. I have shown how race is contested and negotiated through constructions of modernity and tradition as they women rationalise their single status to themselves and others. Graduate Singaporean-Indian women's single status prove problematic for the state because it is at the site of their unmarried bodies that the unequal playing field for women, and the challenges to the state's racialised biopolitics of family become unveiled. Indian women's bodies allow the Singaporean state to perpetuate the multi-racial success story that is Singapore through the upward class mobility of women from ethnic minority communities that are perceived as traditional and conservative. Yet these women's bodies are seen to threaten the racially inflected hegemony of a marriage that allows the term "Singaporean-Indian" to remain germane in the current globalising era. By doing so the thesis has attempted to draw attention to how race is implicated in state biopolitics of family.

Graduate single Indian women's ability to live and work abroad, their financial independence and the ability to climb their respective career ladders are signs of Singapore's modernity and its economic and social development, where even women from minority ethnic groups like the Indian community stand an equal chance of succeeding. However, their single status is also the site, the lynchpin that destabilises such an essentialisation of race. The Singapore state's use of race as part of its separate-but-equal nation-building strategy is likely to face more challenges as more Singaporeans work and live abroad, possibly meeting and marrying individuals who are not of similar ethnicity, and as more foreigners from India, China and the Malay Archipelago enter the island nation-state making the maintenance of the ethnic portion of the double consciousness connecting nationality and ethnicity more of a challenge. Single Indian women thus occupy a highly political position at the nexus of modernity and tradition, waiting at the cusp of being counted, something that cannot happen until they marry. Yet their unmarried status is not an entirely disempowering one because it is at the site of their bodies that "race", which is crucial to the nation-building efforts of the state, and identity-making processes that inform what it means to be Indian community, lose sway. In this way the thesis has attempted to contribute to postcolonial feminist literature that remains critical of the essentialisation of race that underpins much of the research that engages with state and community tactics in identity-making.

In this chapter, I have shown how discursive contradictions that play out at the nexus of caring relationships between Indian mothers and daughters enable us to challenge and problematise the way national and ethnic identity inform what constitutes the

ideal family in Singapore. In the next chapter, I expand further on how caring relationships between graduate single Indian women and intimate others can be better understood by framing care in terms of a feminist ethic, where the needs of the self and other are seen as mutually dependent and intertwined. I engage with how there is a geography to when and how the women enact such a care ethic towards their parents and others they may not be biologically related to. In this way I make a case for the possibility of a more expansive notion of 'family' and further challenge the state's biopolitics.

Chapter 6: Is Blood Thicker than Water?: Single Singaporean-Indian Women and the Geographies of Being 'Family'

6.1 Proximity and Distance: The Biopolitics of Family and Care in Transnational Times

Globalization and increasing mobility in an age of migration have critically impacted conceptualizations and practices of care – from the intimate spaces of the family to more expansive scales such as the national and the global (Esara, 2004; Gallo, 2006; George, 2005; Parrenas, 2005; Yeoh and Willis, 2005; 2004; 1999; Yeoh, Huang and Lam, 2005). Feminist geographers have played a crucial role in this project, foregrounding the relationality of proximity and distance, and re-thinking care and responsibility not just in relation to those biologically proximate, but to others who may be sanguinarily distant, but with whom we share common histories and day-to-day intimacies that connect across multiple spatio-temporalities (Lawson, 2007; Massey, 2004; Milligan and Wiles, 2010; Nash, 2005; Valentine, 2008). In this chapter, using the relational approach as my conceptual starting point, I bring together the literature on geographies of care and the transnational family to engage with the politics of proximity and distance, and ultimately call to question the state's biopower (Foucault, 1990a; 1990b; 2003; 2004 (*trans.*); Legg, 2005; Ong, 1996; 1995) which is often predicated upon care-giving and care responsibilities within particular socio-biological constructs of the family and marriage (Parrenas, 2005; Williams, 2005; Willis and Yeoh, 2003; Yeoh and Willis, 2005; 2004, 1999).

The key argument I make in the chapter, is that women play these roles not just as a result of oppression by the Singapore state and Indian community alone. Rather, the

women and their mothers also act out of a concern for each other, and in doing so, reveal certain discursive contradictions in biopolitics of family that are critical to fulfilling the identity-building objectives of the Singapore state and Singaporean-Indian community. By engaging with when and how a feminist care ethic is deployed, I show, in this chapter, how the calculative technologies that are part of the state's biopolitics may be tempered. As mentioned earlier in Chapter 2, this calculative technology co-opts a script of love and is grounded in the state's intergenerational logic of payback linking most adult children and their elderly parents in Singapore. For example, the state uses filial piety as a way of urging children to look after their elderly parents. This calculative technology is most obvious when one visits government sponsored websites such as www.thinkfamily.sg homepage and reads the caption "Your parents have loved you unconditionally. Now show them how much you care. Join the Filial Piety Facebook page". The rationale behind inter-generational obligation and "payback" is rooted in the filial piety – love calculus, and can be extremely repressive for both parents and their children. On the one hand parents whose children are unable to care for them in old age are made to feel "unloved" by their children; on the other hand, children who do not provide emotional and/or financial care for their parents are seen as ungrateful, and unloving.

In this chapter, I engage with how this happens, and why a calculative logic alone is not sufficient to understand the complexities that underpin the caring relationships between single Indian women and intimate others. Rather than view singlehood as a lack, the this chapter discusses the possibility of singlehood as a legitimate mode of being by considering the geographies implicated in care-giving relationships between single women, their parents and friends. By locating singlehood within the framework

of a feminist ethics of care, in which care is understood in terms of an interdependent relationship that ties the self to the other, the chapter engages with how single Singaporean-Indian women live the lives they want to live even as they realize that this often entails a struggle to balance caring for themselves and intimate others. It is a struggle that cannot be explained only in terms of a zero-sum logic of care and allows for a more complex understanding of singlehood than 'waiting to marry' (Ramdas, 2012).

By engaging with how single Indian women and intimate others care for and consider each other's needs, I argue for a more agential framing of care and notions of responsibility. It is an articulation of care that steps away from understanding care only in terms of the price paid by the women. In this chapter I engage specifically with the importance of considering more than individual gains made and losses incurred in the performance of care by engaging with the possibility for mutually caring relationships to develop between the women and intimate others they may or may not be biologically related to. To this end, the discussion in this chapter enables the thesis to respond to the call by Bunnell *et al*. (2012) that geographers must consider friendship as a way to problematise how intimate relations and ethnic affiliations are used to reproduce familial, communal and national identities (see also Bowlby, 2011; Friedman, 1998).

There are four remaining sections to this chapter. The next section (6.2) provides a more in-depth engagement with the workings of a feminist ethics of care as an alternative to the calculative zero-sum logic of care. Such an ethics of care promises a more expansive conceptualization of care that inserts the needs of the self more

concretely alongside that of the intimate other, rather than seeing care as a zero-sum game. The following two sections provide a more nuanced analysis of single Indian women's relationships of care in Singapore and abroad in terms of how they care for their parent(s) (6.3), and the role of friendships with other single women (section 6.4). In these sections, I engage with how caring for another can be both enabling and constraining and that this may be better understood by framing care spatially in terms of both the physical and relational distances that exist between the women and those they care for. The chapter concludes (6.5) with a discussion of how a feminist ethics of care allows for a more expansive notion of family and a more agential framing of care, that problematises the calculative technologies that underpin the biopolitics of family. This provides the analytical bridge linking this chapter to the next one where I offer an alternative non-linear way of framing the spatio-temporalities of singlehood through the use of punctuations.

6.2 A Feminist Ethics of Care: Critiquing Care's Calculative Technology

Foucault argues that the state's ability to put in place a biopolitics of family results in the disciplining of good behaviour and responsibility on the part of the individual through the care of another he/she is sanguinarily related to (Foucault, 1990a, 1990b, 1987, 1997, 2004; see also Legg, 2005). Care becomes a crucial part of the biopolitics of family as it enables the performance, practice and concretization of the 'myth of blood' that connects disparate members of the 'family'. More often than not, familyhood becomes located within care and the practice of marriage, thus allowing for the state to successfully locate the self within larger groups that seemingly fold one into the other: individual, family, community and nation (Nash, 2003; Ong, 1996; Pratt and Yeoh, 2003; Yeoh *et al.*, 2005). Feminist scholars argue that it is often

women who take on a large part of these care duties, their bodies symbolizing vessels caring for and carrying the blood of both the nuclear and national family (Glen, 2010; Yuval-Davis, 1997). Feminist geographers, in particular, have engaged with how a relational approach to care, draws attention to the importance of place not just as a backdrop against which to understand care, but also how care provides critical insights into how place (e.g. notions of home and the nation) itself is constructed, and in turn is influenced by and influences access to care and the development of caring relationships (Lawson, 2007; Milligan and Wiles, 2010; Thien and Hanlon, 2009). They have iterated the need to be more critical of how relationships of care and notions of responsibility appear to gel in ways that place our emotions in a hierarchy often valuing some relationships over others (Massey, 2004; Valentine, 2008; Wilkinson, 2009).

I argue that such an emotional hierarchy is made possible by the biopolitics of family where care is often subjected to a zero-sum logic. Women, as primary care-givers, are expected to make calculative decisions about care and intimacy as a prelude to perceived payback in the future. It is this notion of the payback for care that makes marriage seem the only logical outcome as it is only marriage and bearing children within marriage that care's costs can be re-calibrated from the negative to the positive. It is only after marriage that intimate life can be re-located from the private sphere, where it need not be acknowledged and accounted for, to the public sphere where it becomes possible to make legal claims on the state and one's family (Glen, 2010; Hartmann, 1998; Teo, 2011). Such a conceptualisation of responsibility and care draws from a linear rather than relational conception of time and space. It is one that limits the extent to which care for the self and other can simultaneously take

place, and thus rationalises that time and space given to caring must be 'recuperated'. Care for the other is instead seen as a burden that inhibits women in particular from fulfilling personal desires (i.e. live the lives they want to live) since often it is women who fulfill the role of primary care-givers. By focusing instead on how women struggle to make decisions about care, the chapter focuses on the complexities that inform the formation of intimate life, and thus calls to question how individuals become family.

Instead of the zero-sum logic in which care is seen as given or taken, I ask that we consider the relationality of care (see for example Massey, 2004; Raghuram *et al.* 2009). In this chapter I analyse how such a relationality of care may be thought of in terms of the intensities of care that play out at the nexus of three key expectations : (1) the state's expectations of children to look after their parents as they age, (2) communal expectations of single daughters to marry and provide emotional care for their parents, and (3) the relationality of care between the women and their parents, specifically the women's own expectation and desire to care for their parents. These are intensities of care that are more complex than a zero-sum logic of care. As such, I ask that we use a feminist care ethic in which care for the self and other are seen as intimately intertwined. It focuses on the moral context in which individuals struggle to make decisions about how to care for others, and how this is managed alongside what they want for themselves. A feminist ethics of care, therefore, asks that we consider how care is encountered and negotiated between individuals who care for each other, and by doing so produces time and space as relational. These individuals may be members of the same family or friends.

By situating my research on the caring relationships between single Indian women, their parents, other family members and friends in a transnational setting comprising Singapore, Melbourne and London, I analyse how the possibility of being simultaneously 'here' and 'there' contributes to an understanding of the relationality of care, and multiple ways of *being* 'family' involving single Indian women, and intimate others in their lives. What results is a destabilization of care for the women based abroad as located only in the familial through transnational practices of care, as those physically closest to the women are oftentimes not those they are related to by blood. In this way I add to the critique of state-centrism found in transnationalism and the transnational families literature (Ong, 1995; Pratt and Yeoh, 2003; Yeoh, Huang and Lam, 2005) while at the same time destabilising a key premise in the latter body of work which sees family (particularly in the Singaporean context) as those sanguinarily proximate (Ho, 2009; Yeoh and Willis, 2004, 1999). The chapter also suggests a more agential framing of care and notions of responsibility. Rather than seeing care only as oppressive and taking away from the women's personal freedom as a result of expectations of single women by the Singaporean state and Indian community to provide care for their parents, I provide an alternative engagement with care that focuses on the women's own desires and expectations that they will care for their parents, and how friendships enable them to experience care differently. This desire to care, distances care and familyhood from the calculative biopolitics of the state. Instead caring for the other (parents and friends) becomes a strategy for experiencing, coping with and imagining singlehood as more than the lack of not being married and having no one to care for oneself.

In the rest of this chapter I engage with the differing extents to which single Indian Singaporean women are able to contest and negotiate *being* family in Singapore and abroad. I reveal how a transnational life does to some extent provide greater opportunities for experiencing care relationships outside the norms of reciprocity derived from calculative technologies that privilege blood alone. However, I also show how single Indian women in Singapore become more aware of the importance of friendship and the role it plays in allowing them to care for themselves. The result is a destabilization of family and kinship as constructed by the state where "natural relatedness – through blood or genes" promotes the "selective performance" of "relations that matter" (Nash, 2005: 452) for the women abroad and those women based in Singapore, though for the latter this occurs to a lesser extent.

6.3 Blood: The Transnational Experience of "Being Family" and a Feminist Ethics of Care

In Singapore, women's care-giving role within the family is further intensified by state emphasis on the need for families to take on the mantle of care for the elderly. The Singapore state has continued to iterate that it is not a welfare state, and while there are avenues for assistance from voluntary organizations, the primary responsibility for care lies with the individual elderly citizen and his or her family (Chan, 2001). As such, on a day-to-day basis most elderly Singaporeans rely on a range of sources for their care needs, but the intensity and responsibility of care is more often than not experienced more acutely within the sphere of the family. The state, however, is not singularly responsible for shaping the discourse surrounding care, family and women's central role in care-giving. Community discourses about women in society as wives, mothers and primary care-givers also work alongside the

state. For example, a study by David Chan (2001) commissioned by the Ministry of Community Development, Youth and Sports (MCYS) in Singapore, revealed that Singaporean Indians were more likely to have traditional views about family and marriage. This thesis however, remains critical of such an easy pathologising of the Indian community in Singapore, and asks instead that we consider the moral context in which single Indian women, for example, struggle to make these complex decisions about caring for their parents both close at hand and from a distance (see for example Puwar and Raghuram, 2003; Puwar, 2004).

The pressure single Indian women experience as primary care-givers for their parents occurs at the confluence of gender, geography, and marital status. Each of these factors influences how they encounter and experience the calculative technologies of care. In analyzing these factors I engage specifically with the extent to which the insertion of both physical and relational distance influences the pressures they encounter. Whether in Singapore or abroad, the women I interviewed shared how they were often seen by their parents as more available than married siblings, and more dependable as emotional care-givers than male members of the family. The women I interviewed shared that they were often seen as more available by their mothers than their married siblings, and more suited to emotional caring compared to male members of the family. This created a sense of oppressiveness in which the women felt they were being hemmed in from all sides with no room to breathe. The oppressiveness of care was impacted not just by the women's marital status or their gender. To some extent, it was also affected by where the women lived. For single Indian women based in Singapore, this translated to being an available listener for their mothers every night after work. However, for the women based overseas there

was a sense of having more control over the extent to which they were emotionally available.

Nevertheless, the availability of other (female) siblings helped to lessen the intensity of care for the women based in Singapore. For example, Lakshimi who lives in Singapore, shares care-giving responsibilities with her sister who is divorced. Lakshimi owns the house next to her father and lives there on her own. Together, she and her sister who also lives on her own, take turns caring for him. Lakshimi shared that a large part of their care-giving duties centred around taking her father for doctor's appointments, having a meal with him, and celebrating special occasions with him. Similarly, sisters Sunita and Nirmala, both single, also shared care-giving responsibilities for their mother.

> "We do different things with her, like my second sister goes with her every Sunday to our old market in Farrer Road – it's something that they do, and I with her more often to the nursery and to Little India…so we do different things at different times. And maybe they do more things with her when I'm out of the country. Yeah but when we do the dinners we always go together."
>
> - Sunita, 42, Singapore

Both Sunita and Lakshimi enjoy spending time with their parents, and look forward to doing things together as a family. Lakshimi's father a widower was in his 80s and Sunita's mother, a widow, was in her mid-70s. Both their parents require help getting to and from doctor's appointments and are dependent on their daughters to accompany them for social events and family gatherings. They are dependent on their

daughters to pay for their medical bills also. Yet rather than feel trapped into having to care for their parents, both Lakshimi and Sunita shared this was something they were happy to do. For Lakshimi and Sunita, the fact that they had sisters who worked and were based in Singapore made the pressures that are sometimes entailed in care-giving less oppressive as they could count on their sister for help, both financially as well as emotionally. Their sisters were also happy to take turns spending time with their parent so they would each have time for themselves.

However, for some of the women in Singapore it was more difficult to carve out time and space for themselves in a similar manner. They shared that having to articulate the need for personal space and time, often resulted in intense feelings of guilt. For example, Meena whose mother lives with her in Singapore said there were days when all she wanted was time to herself after work, some quiet after chatting all day with demanding clients. But she found this difficult to achieve as her mother, who would have spent all day alone at home while Meena was at work, would now be dying for some company. Meena felt guilty that her conversations with her mother were often, in her words, “constipated”. She shared how she really did not want to hear about the latest soap opera, or know about the details of conversations between her mother and her friends at the community centre where Meena’s mother volunteers. Meena felt she needed more space.

Similarly Gayatri in Singapore, felt she was often the only person her mother would turn to for emotional support. Gayatri’s mother was not dependent on her for financial support. Gayatri’s father still owned a business from which he made a living, though he was semi-retired and spent most of this time at home. Gayatri shared that the fact

her mother relied on her rather than her father or brother for emotional support often resulted in Gayatri choosing to spend time away from home where she lived with her parents to give herself the distance she needed to be “sane”.[10]

> “G: I just don’t like the fact, even when I go back home…she’s (mum) always worried about something. …Nagging in that sense, a bit annoying…And sometimes she will tell me (complains) about my brother. So that’s why I am out most of the time.
>
> I: So you need the distance…
>
> G: To be sane…”
>
> - Gayatri, 33, Singapore

Gayatri, therefore, felt like she constantly needed to be there to listen to her mother and console her about issues that were worrying her. It is this need for physical distance that Revati, based in London, also talked about. She shared that the physical distance was a welcome reprieve as it meant not having to take on her parents’ (especially her mother’s) emotional “stresses”.

> “In Singapore I live with my family, I feel like I couldn’t have my life selfishly, I had to think about others, always had to think about my family. If there was a problem for the family, including like about my brothers and stuff it would be my problem too and I think I just wanted to have a time where I

[10] Access to privately owned government-subsidised housing, for example, is only available only to married couples. Without access to cheap housing, many single individuals find moving out of their parents’ homes financially prohibitive. They would have to purchase non-subsidised housing which costs, on average, 3-4 times more than unsubsidised private housing (www.hdb.gov.sg). See also, Oswin (2010).

just had me, and myself and I…It gave me the freedom to do that, the space to breathe and develop my own stuff…"

- Revati, 31, London

While the narratives above seem to indicate that it is women who are expected to take on care-giving roles, in some instances it is the women themselves who are also complicit in the gendered and racialised portrayal of themselves as they often saw themselves, and not their siblings (if any), as the only legitimate source of care. For example Sheena shares,

"I have sort of grown up with this feeling that I am responsible for other people's happiness. I am not sure if that is an Indian woman thing or an Asian woman thing…"

- Sheena, 37, Singapore

Sheena's thoughts seem to reproduce arguments made elsewhere that communities of South Asian descent are ones in which women's maternal authority and subsequent independence are tied to the growth and maintenance of traditional family systems (Bhopal, 1997; Nagar, 1998; PuruShotam, 2004; see also Velayutham and Wise, 2005; Wise and Velayutham, 2008). I argue that the women's desire to care for their parents cannot only be understood within these expectations of care but need also to be further unpacked in terms of not just having to care, but also wanting to care for intimate others in their lives which include not just their parents but also their

siblings. For example Diana aged 36 and based in Singapore said that taking on the responsibility her mother would be a responsibility to my sisters also. Diana enjoyed spending time with her mother. She saw most of her caring for her mother in terms of "moral support" or "being there for her".

This desire to care is something the women abroad also spoke about. For example, Revati based in London similarly shared that although she no longer felt she was "on-call" 24-7 for her mother, she continued to be concerned about her mother's well-being. She would call her mother on a weekly basis to talk to her over the phone, and it was often she who took the initiative to send cards from London on birthdays. Lata, based in London also said that she sent health supplements to her mother in Singapore and did research over the internet to advise her mother on health related matters. Even though both women were far away it was often they whom mothers turned to when they needed to discuss something that was troubling them.

> I think it is more the emotional side of things. When my mum found out my brother was marrying someone who is not of the same religion…I (was the one) offering support, a lot of counsel, counseling over the phone, because she couldn't speak to my brother, even though he was in the next room. I had to speak to my brother (for her).
>
> \- Lata, 34, London

For Revati and Lata there was a desire to care for their mothers even though this was something they often felt pressured to do in Singapore. The physical distance from Singapore meant that they could choose when and how they would care for their

parents. As such the pressures of care-giving were not as intensely experienced because there was a sense of being able to choose, and of wanting to care rather than having to. The distance from Singapore also changed the dynamics of the care relationship between daughters and parents as it enabled single daughters to better appreciate how their parents cared for them when they were in Singapore. It was not just the case of daughters only caring for their parents but rather that their parents too performed care-giving roles. Being away allowed the women to become more aware of the interdependent relationship of care they shared with their parents. For instance, the women became aware of how their mothers in particular cared for them on a day-to-day basis (e.g. cooking, laundry, cleaning) now that they lived on their own and were more likely to have to do these chores for themselves. For some of them, mother's visits became an opportunity to be spoiled as she would do the marketing and prepare home-cooked meals for them. Living away from their parents, the women became more aware of the reciprocal and interdependent lives they shared with parents. This is not something they necessarily appreciated in Singapore. As a result they became more patient and more generous in terms of making quality time for them when they spoke over the phone or spent time together during visits.

> It's just like when you live together you argue, fight, quarrel but I don't mean it. I'm just tired. So yeah but when I am here I appreciate them more and they appreciate me more. So they are more loving and in that sense it has improved.
>
> - Veni, 27, Melbourne

Most of the women I interviewed did not have parents who were dependent on them financially. Even when they were the primary care-givers for their parents, this was mostly in terms of providing emotional care as many of their parents were not critically ill. Nevertheless care-giving proved to be more difficult for the women in Singapore who lived with their parents (Gayatri) and did not have siblings to help out than those who owned their homes and were able to retreat these private spaces or had siblings who stepped in to help (Lakshimi and Diana). These physical and relational distances meant that the women did not feel an intense pressure when caring for their parents. Instead they were able to enjoy caring relationships with parents and their siblings. For the women based overseas, there was more likely to be a change in the care dynamics between themselves and their parents compared to when they were in Singapore. The change in dynamic is brought about by the propensity for a more interdependent care relationship as the women became more aware of the ways in which they too were dependent on their parents for care. Being overseas also made it easier to experience wanting to care rather than having to because the physical distance meant not being 'on-call' all the time. Instead, their brothers and fathers also took on some of these responsibilities on a daily basis. Distance in both forms gives single women the space to encounter caring relationships in a more expansive way.

The above narratives show that the calculative technologies of care never dissipate entirely. For women like Meena and Gayatri, being the sole emotional care-giver for their mothers (because their siblings are less willing to step up), often makes care seem more oppressive, and they women seem to deploy a calculative logic in which they find the need to carve out space for themselves by staying out or retreating in front of the television. Nevertheless, other women spoke of a desire to care, though

this was more likely when the relational and/or physical distances between the women and their parents increases. While one might argue that the desire to care, serves merely to prove biopolitics is at work, for many of the women it was not just the discipline of payback alone that informed the desire to care. Instead, the women saw the caring relationships between themselves and their parents as reciprocal and an important source of companionship.

In this section of the chapter I have compared both the experiences of women in Singapore and those abroad to show how it is not just a case of single women 'escaping' the pressures of care-giving by going overseas. Such an articulation of the women's experiences is one that reinstates a calculative logic. Instead I have argued that while life for women based in Singapore can certainly be more stressful, in some instances, for those who live on their own in Singapore or have siblings or friends who are part of their care circle, the pressures of care-giving are certainly lessened. In the following section I include the role of friendships and how these friendships also enable the enactment of a feminist ethics of care that may further our understanding of care in ways that destabilize notions of care-giving as grounded in biological constructs of family alone.

6.4 Water: Friendship and Care Beyond the Familial

This section of the chapter analyses how friendship offers possibilities for single Indian women to lessen the intensities of care through the enactment of caring relationships between themselves, their friends and parents. The ability to experience care through friendship is, however, affected by physical distance as proximity to family often means the women were more likely to call on family members for help

when they lived in Singapore. This is primarily because of the women's geographical proximity to their families, and the pervasiveness of state and community discourses, rhetoric and practices of care that sees family in Singapore primarily as comprising individuals who are biological related. Consequently, the women abroad shared that they were more likely to become reliant on family members to do things for them when they lived in Singapore. Once they moved overseas, they were more likely to rely on friends for physical and emotional support. Tania, aged 46 who lived in Melbourne said that she found it strange to ask people she was not related to for help. She believed that "the Asian mentality is that you don't want to inconvenience people" who were not your family. There is a sense that you could only inconvenience people who were related to you by blood. This sense that biological family were responsible for each other 'no matter what' is what resulted in a strained relationship between Tania and her younger brother who thought Tania would "would make a big financial mistake and be a burden to him". Similarly, Lisa aged 33 and also based in Melbourne experienced the kindness of a friend who opened her house to her when she had no place to go.

> "I had problems with a housemate after a couple of months so I was living a nomadic lifestyle. So having a friends network (helped)…."
>
> - Lisa, 33, Melbourne

The mutual dependency between the women that comes with living abroad and independently of their parents enabled them to encounter caring relationships between themselves and others whom they were not related to by blood but whom they eventually came to see as "family".

> "They (my friends) are always there for me. Like there was this time I was very sick. I got the flu bug. I was extremely sick. I got my friends to stay over to take care of me. So I guess they are replacing my family. I would say they are my family here in Australia."
>
> - Veni, 27, Melbourne

For women like Veni and Lisa, being away from their families meant having to rely on friends for both their physical and emotional care needs. They were able to develop deep bonds with friends by spending more time with them on a day-to-day basis through activities like cooking and watching television. Life overseas thus allowed for the formation of intense friendships and greater opportunities to enact practices of care with people who were not members of their family. For the women overseas, friends while not the same as family, become a type of surrogate family. They wanted to spend time with each other, and be there for each other. Though it may be argued that caring relationships amongst friends entered into because they were perceived as mutually beneficial, there was nevertheless a sense of community amongst the women, of wanting to look out for each other and about genuinely being concerned about someone they were not biologically related to. In most instances these were usually other Singaporean women who had become an important source of emotional support particularly when the women first move abroad. This included day-to-day physical and emotional caring as well as maintaining intimacy by keeping abreast of what is happening in each other's lives. For Lisa and Veni who were currently in their first year living in Melbourne, friendships with other Singaporean women enabled them to feel close to home.

In some instances, though not always, these group of friends also included other Singaporean-Indian women. For instance, women like Sangeeta (aged 30) based in Melbourne explains that in Melbourne she has listed her friend Shal who is single, Indian and Singaporean as an emergency contact. For Revati in London and Veni in Melbourne, friends who were sometimes other single Indian women were an important strategy for carving out space for themselves and also caring for their mothers. They believed that when their mothers met these friends, it would make them feel more assured that their daughters were in the company of other Indian women and behaving within the excepted norms of the community. Revati also shared that allowing her mother and friends to meet became a way to care for her mother as her mother would now be updated on aspects of her intimate life and thus feel closer to her in this way. However, she was able to control the information her mother received because her friends could be trusted to be discreet. They would not provide her mother with all the details of her dating or sex life.

> "They (parents) are closer to my friends in Singapore, my mum will call my friends and say, have you spoken to Revati? Whereas in Singapore, they never even met them because I wanted to keep a clear line between friends and stuff. Whereas now when I go back all my friends pop over the first day and my mum is best friends with all of them and talking to them...
>
> - Revati, 31, London

> "They (my parents) came in June. My friends all of them came and saw my parents, hung out with them. So my mother is really happy that I have a support network..."
>
> - Veni, 27, Melbourne

The notion of family is now "expanded" and includes friends who keep in touch with each other's families when they return to Singapore for visits. Friends become surrogate daughters linking mothers in Singapore to the lives of their biological daughters by proxy. What develops is a more intimate relationship between parents, single daughters and their friends. While they were living in Singapore, there was a stricter separation of 'friends' and 'family', as friends are considered part of their private life outside of family.

For the women in Singapore, friendship is also important. They relied on friends as confidantes - someone they turned to for emotional support and to alleviate the pressures they experienced as primary emotional care-givers to their parents. They also shared that these friends played an important role acting as a kind of 'informal' family to depend on.

> D: …I think family is important, it just is. It is the structure that you go to. And it may not have to be formal family, it can be informal, or the structure that you consider your family. It does not have to be blood family but it is the structure that doesn't change no matter what. It is the support you go to when

> you cannot go elsewhere and it's the people you need to look after and the people who will look after you.
>
> - Diana, 36, Singapore

Diana's narrative above shows that she too, like Tania in Melbourne, believed that family are the people who take you in when you have nowhere to go. However, for Diana this notion of family is one that also included friends also. However, despite an awareness of the importance of friendship, compared to the women abroad, women like Diana in Singapore seemed less able to rely on friends for support on a day-to-day basis as many of their friends were busy fulfilling care duties for parents who lived in Singapore. For the women based abroad, there were more opportunities for close friendships to develop because they had to rely on friends rather than family, and on a day-to-day basis they did not have to perform care-giving roles, thus giving them more time to spend with friends. While, it is uncertain whether or not these friendships made overseas will continue to be as intense when the women abroad returned home, it nevertheless allowed the women to experience and perhaps imagine a more hopeful picture of their future as single women who might possibly be able to turn to friends for support rather than only relying on one's biological family.

For the women in Singapore there was a constant worry about what would happen as they grew older, and marriage seemed less likely. There is also an underlying fear of

loneliness and having fewer friends to rely on as they cannot discount the possibility of their existing single friends marrying in the future given the pressure to marry faced by women in the Indian community.

> I: So who do you confide in?
>
> M: Nobody.
>
> I: Not even close friends?
>
> M: I don't want to bother them. They have family, they've got things to do…
>
> - Meena, 37, Singapore

> "It was a fairly difficult time when your friends around you were getting married – in a sense I had some worries and I wondered, 'Would I lose my friends? Will I not have anybody to be with?' "
>
> - Nirmala, 46, Singapore.

Both Nirmala and Meena shared that it was difficult to include friends in their care as most of their friends were married and busy caring for their own families. Over time, Nirmala has managed to build a support network of friends through her single sister Sunita. However, in Meena's case this has proven to be more difficult. Having single female friends is thus an important way for many single women to find support and maintain a more positive outlook about their single lives. Because Indian women are more likely to be married than not, for the single Indian women based in Singapore, friendships tended to be with both Indian and non-Indian single women. Through

these friendships the women were able to find someone to talk to who was going through similar life experiences as they were. As Sunita shared,

> "I am happiest with my family in terms of companionship. With my girl friends, we love talking about issues that we are going through and about our philosophies, about life and love and stuff like that. And with girls, you can talk, you know, for hours and hours and it's still fine. You can be yourself and talk about everything that concerns you."
>
> - Sunita, 42, Singapore

For the women abroad, it seems easier to meet other single women to form friendships with, as many of the women they met abroad were single. While it is uncertain whether or not these friendships formed abroad will continue to be as intense when they women return to Singapore, it nevertheless paints a more hopeful picture for these single women as they experience firsthand the possibilities of living a more optimistic single life. Sree in London for instance shared,

> "I had so many groups of friends, so I didn't feel there was something lacking seriously in my life. I didn't feel the need to go out and look for someone actively...Even my sister who came to visit me in London, was surprised I had not met someone or was not married."
>
> - Sree, 26, London

Sree's positive experience of singlehood in London was largely a result of the wide circle of friends she had there. She was enjoyed spending time with them cooking,

hanging out at each other's homes and did not feel the need to be more proactive about dating. As a result of these friendships she did not feel like her life was lacking in any way. Lisa (aged 33) who is taking a part-time Masters course in education while working in Melbourne shared how having friends in Melbourne are important to her, and that she keeps in touch with these friends, even after they have returned to Singapore.

> "Emotionally, I think that's really good because we get together and share about anything. Like if work or family or studies are stressing us out. We talk about it, you get feedback and advice. And those who have gone back home, we keep in touch."
>
> \- Lisa, 33, Melbourne

Veena (aged 36) now based in Singapore similarly shared how living in New York helped her realise the importance of being open to meeting new people. For Veena it did not matter whether or not the people she met were individuals she would date. Her main focus is on making friends and learning through the experiences of friends. She said

> "Every new person is a potential friend. And it is another person to share our journeys with, to encourage and support. I have also become very appreciative of people in my life and what they have gone through in their lives just being present with them, letting them speak, tell their story, I think it is valuable."
>
> \- Veena, 36, Singapore

The narratives above show how friendships formed abroad and in Singapore provided the possibility of experiencing care outside the biological family. For the women abroad there were, however, more opportunities for such friendships to form with strangers they met while abroad, and in this way perhaps provide more opportunities for destabilising care's calculative technologies that privileged 'blood' alone. Friends also became a way to care for their parents by connecting their lives abroad with their parents' lives in Singapore. The women were able to maintain constructions of 'good' Indian daughters and thus care for their parents by ensuring their parents did not 'lose face' in Singapore. Through these relationships involving single daughters, parents and friends, it became possible to maintain moral boundaries put in place by communal expectations of single Indian women to behave appropriately while living apart from their family – women who were caring daughters who sent news home with their friends, women who were not having sex before marriage; women who were 'waiting to marry' even though in reality this might not have been the case. The relationships between single women, their friends and parents thus reflect the need to think of community as always in the process of becoming. Rather than the scalar hierarchies of self, family, community and nation folding neatly one into the other, what section has shown is how family, and community are constantly negotiated and contested through relationships of care, that cannot be accounted for using a zero-sum logic or essentialised by race alone.

6.5 Race, Feminist Ethics of Care and the Transnational Strategies of Being 'Family'

This chapter has attempted to destabilise the calculative technologies that underpin biopolitics of family in Singapore in which blood (family) becomes privileged over

water (friends). The transnational context in which I locate my research is crucial for uncovering the relevance of geography in grasping how familyhood is constructed and contested. By using the framework of a feminist ethics of care, I have drawn attention to the relational context in which single Indian women struggle to make decisions about how they care for others. I make the point that how the women care for another cannot be accounted for using a calculative technology alone. In this way it becomes possible to destabilise state biopolitics of family in which single women become located within oppressive frameworks of care. This is not to deny the oppressive potential care can have, but rather to argue that relationships of care are more complex than can be captured in the linearity of a zero-sum logic of care. Women are not just disciplined to think of care as (their) duty alone. In some instances these caring relationships are relational, and reflect how the women want to care and see this care for the other as a practice of love and companionship that cannot be separated from the care of the self.

By focusing on how distance and proximity feature in care-giving practices and the relationships that develop from these practices, I have also attempted to de-intensify the pressures of care that are part of its calculative technology. I have shown how physical and relational distances provide single Indian women with the opportunity to imagine the possibility of life as a single woman in more enabling ways through the caring relationships that develop between family, friends and the women themselves. In this way my research speaks back to much of the migration literature in which single women are seen as more footloose and able to escape the familial gaze and expectations of them to behave in certain morally prescribed ways (Hardill, 1998; Thang *et al.,* 2002; Willis and Yeoh, 2003). While it is true that the women find room

to negotiate more space for themselves, there is also a desire to connect with family and perhaps also maintain some of these expectations of them as a way to show their love and care. What results is an opening up of time and space to differing extents in Singapore and abroad when the women encounter care as interdependent relationships that are difficult to disentangle in terms of what they do for themselves and what they do for an intimate other (family or friend).

The chapter also contributes to literature by feminist geographers that engages with relationality of care. By situating my research on the care relationships between single Indian women, their parents and friends in a transnational setting comprising Singapore, Melbourne and London, I bring together geographical literature on care and the transnational family, thereby analyzing how the possibility of being simultaneously 'here' and 'there' contributes to an understanding of the relationality of care, and multiple ways of *being* family. What results is a destabilization of care for the women based abroad as located only in the familial through transnational practices of care, as those physically closest to the women are oftentimes not those they are related to by blood. In this way I add to the critique of the biopolitics of family found in the transnational families literature. The result is a destabilization of family and kinship as constructed by the state where "natural relatedness – through blood or genes" promotes the "selective performance" of "relations that matter" (Nash, 2005: 452).

By comparing the differing extents to which single Indian Singaporean women are able to contest and negotiate *being* family, I have revealed how physical and relational distances allow for a more expansive encounter with care. Life for single

Indian women in Singapore does indeed seem more limited. The pressure of living in Singapore intensifies the effects of the calculative technologies of care, often making it difficult for single Indian women to enact a feminist ethics of care grounded in mutually interdependent relationships of care between family, friends and single women themselves. This is especially so when they women do not have sufficient support from others when it comes to care-giving. The women often put in place a distinct separation of friends and family as a strategy to move from the emotional red to black, creating more opportunities to enact a care for the self, thus in some ways reproducing a calculative logic. This calculus is, however, one that is different as it destabilises the state and community biopolitics of family in which marriage is used to rationalise that women ought to marry so that they have someone to care for them in the future. In the end single Indian women in Singapore and abroad perhaps learn that while it is possible that no one will care for you like your own blood, there are indeed possibilities to be cared for by others in spite of this.

In the next chapter I introduce and make use of punctuations as a concept to engage with the alternative spatio-temporalities of singlehood that emerge from a non-linear and relational engagement with care. Rather than singlehood being constructed as a lack when juxtaposed against marriage as the logical end-point in a zero-sum logic of care, I make a case for unpacking the transnational politics of waiting that are part and parcel of the process of being single. I expand further on the importance of a feminist care ethic by showing how it allows for the centring of the relational aspects of time and space in the often emotional process of intimate decision-making, thus representing singlehood as more than waiting.

Chapter 7: Women in Waiting?: Singlehood, Marriage, and Family in Singapore

7.1 Marriage and Compulsory Heterosexuality: Singlehood as "Waiting"

Juxtaposed against marriage, familism and "compulsory heterosexuality" (Rich, 1980), singlehood is more often than not seen as a lack that plagues women more than men. Terms like "old maid", "biological clock", and "shelf-life" refer more to women than they do to men as it is often "women's lives, their experiences and their relationships (that evolve) in the shadow of (this) powerful but often tacit set of regulations about appropriate forms of desire and intimate partnership" (Reynolds and Wetherell, 2003: 489; see also Gordon, 1994; Thang *et al.*, 2002; Walsh, 2007; Willis and Yeoh, 2003. For contrast, see Nicholson, 2008). Single women are thus cast as, "women-in-waiting" as they have yet to complete what is seen as an important rite of passage. In Singapore, the imperative to marry and procreate has created a climate in which single women face great social pressure to marry. Single Indian women in Singapore are no different in the eyes of the state which sees all single women as shirking their national duty to marry and procreate, but also face the added burden of being an aberration in the eyes of the Singapore Indian community and their parents (PuruShotam 2004).

Thus far I have shown how single Indian women's practices of care destabilise the biopolitics of family in Singapore. It is a biopolitics that produces a geography of responsibility in which the individual is disciplined to care for those "closest in". Thus far I have shown how single Indian women's practices of care are not limited solely to those they are biologically related to. In this way the thesis is resonant of feminist geographers' critique of the biopolitics of family. They argue that it is a

biopolitics that reproduces a hierarchy of intimate life in which the hegemony of the hetero-patriarchal family is re-instated (Massey, 2004; Nash, 2002; Nast, 2002; Wilkinson, 2009). As Ahmed points out "(w)ithin familial narratives, proximity in a spatial sense, as an effect of contact, gets collapsed with proximity as an ideological position (we are alike on the grounds of character, genetics or belief – this likeness become an 'inheritance'), which is crucial to the naturalisation of heterosexual love as a familial plot" Ahmed, 2004: 128).

By showing how graduate single Singaporean-Indian women have found it possible to locate care and solidarity with others they are not related to biologically, I champion a call for not merely recognising the possibility for alternative forms of family. I ask that we also focus on the process of how these women enact being family with intimate others. I iterate that our focus should not be on which families count and which do not, or why they may or may not be counted. Rather I ask that we focus on practices of care that bind individuals to each other, and how this contributes to the call for a more complex "interrogat(ion) of the technology of marriage" (Constable, 2009: 54). In this way I make room for the possibility of portraying single women's lives as more complex than the lack of not being married. I have engaged specifically with the experiences of singlehood at the nexus of caring relationships between these single women and intimate others. I argue that the experience of singlehood cannot be divorced from a feminist ethics of care in which the needs of the self and other are seen as intimately intertwined. A zero-sum logic of care seems limiting because what drives these women and their parents is a desire for each to live the kinds of lives they want to live while still caring for the other. Often

this involves not just the women and their parents, but also single women's friends who become part of a larger more expansive calculus of care.

In this chapter I focus on exactly how such a calculus of care engenders the possibility of alternative spatio-temporalities of singlehood. I do this by analysing how single graduate Singaporean-Indian women themselves experience and view their single status in terms of dating and opportunities for sexual intimacy, and how this not something they experience only as a prelude to an end-goal of marriage. These are women who are not merely waiting for the right man to come along. Everyday they live lives that are emotionally laden, and tied to mutually caring relationships with intimate others that result in a multitude of feelings that include but are not limited to joy, love, excitement, longing, regret, anger, frustration and boredom. They are actively making decisions about the present and future, realising that these decisions affect not only themselves but intimate others also. They and intimate others become part of a non-linear calculus of care that pulsates and fades giving rise to geographies that cannot be confined to the zero-sum logic that pervades the biopolitics of family in Singapore.

Drawing from the women's experiences of singlehood in terms of issues like dating, sexual intimacy and the decision to choose singlehood, I critically interrogate women-in-waiting in ways that disrupt the in-built binary of "lack" associated with singlehood, and completeness that can only come with marriage and having a family of one's own. In this way the women destabilise constructions of them as "losing out" because their future care needs may not be met without marriage. They also challenge constructions of them as parasite singles (Thang *et al.*, 2002) caring more

for themselves than for others by choosing to remain single. Such portrayals of singlehood are, I argue, grounded in a zero-sum logic of care. They are based on a linear understanding of time and space where care is often seen as something that is given or taken. Singlehood is seen as a lack and portrayed in a negative light. By advocating a feminist care ethic in which care is seen as mutually intertwined, I ask instead that we focus on the context in which care and other intimate-decisions are made.

By framing the women's geographies of singlehood in terms of punctuations it becomes possible to focus on both the possibilities and limitations single graduate Singaporean-Indian women face in destabilising the existing biopolitics of family in Singapore. Focusing on punctuations allows me to interrogate the politics of waiting implied in the constitution of singlehood as a struggle between state, community, family and the individual across space (where the women are) and time (their life-rhythms or reproductive timing). I focus on how these graduate women's experience of singlehood are punctuated by contestations and reproductions of structures such as gender, race and the hegemony of heteronormativity that pervade the discourse of marriage and family in Singapore. This allows me to posit an alternative geography of singlehood that distances itself from the zero-sum logic used by the Singapore state and Indian community. The resultant geographies represented in punctuations aim not to prioritise individual choice or reify state and community discourses of family and care, but to focuses on the spaces of possibility that emerge when one makes room for the emotional, and considers how it tempers and gives rise to a relational framing of care. In the earlier two chapters, I engage respectively with constructions of singlehood in terms of a racialised biopolitics, and how the relationality of care

tempers constructions of and the experience of singlehood in terms of the women's care relationships with intimate others. In this chapter, I engage more concretely with spatio-temporalities that are implicated in such a relational, non-linear framework of care. I argue that the complex and emotional interplay of these mutually caring relationships may benefit from an articulation of singlehood in terms of punctuations that reflect the intensities of care that play out between the women and intimate others.

The rest of this chapter is divided into three sections. The first section (7.2) analyses the calculus of care in terms of punctuations that reflect the intensities of care between single women and intimate others. In particular, I show how punctuations centre the emotional and foreground the struggles that women experience as part and parcel of a decision-making process grounded in a feminist care ethic. By centring the emotional, punctuations allow for a framing of the multiplicity of singlehood's spatio-temporalities, and not just the linear geographies implied in singlehood as waiting. The second section (7.3) engages with the actual specificities of punctuations. Specifically, I show how punctuations act as tools to both divide and connect spaces based on the women's emotional experiences of singlehood as a speeding up and slowing down of time. For instance, there is a sense that their biological clocks are ticking and that time is running out for them to start a family of their own. Yet there is also a sense that singlehood is a possibility that stretches out ahead of them punctuated by the excitement of dating, meeting someone new, or having a sexual encounter. There are times when it seems that being single in Singapore versus London or Melbourne is distinctly different and, at other times, the concerns, and frustrations connect across these different spaces through the women's

experiences of singlehood in terms of the relationships they share with intimate others – friends, parents and lovers. I make use of a metaphorical full-stop, comma, and exclamation point to reflect the speeding and slowing down, tightening and relaxing of singlehood as experienced by women. These allow for alternative modes and spatio-temporalities of singlehood to exist, and gives rise to more complex and elastic representations of waiting which disrupt the spatial binary of Singapore and abroad, and discursive binary of "lack" and "completeness" associated with singlehood and marriage respectively. Finally (7.4), the paper closes with a summary of the key arguments and makes a case for punctuations to illustrate the complex spatialities and temporalities of singlehood, and a transnational politics of waiting.

7.2 Why Punctuate?: Making Space for the Emotional and Foregrounding the Struggles in an Intimate Single Life

Punctuations enable us to understand the central role emotions play in the care calculus. These emotions are iterated in terms of a constellation of care intensities that pulsate and fade across space and time. They do not divide emotions into those that matter and those that do not. By focusing on the moral context in which intimate decisions about caring are made, they distance the women from a zero-sum logic in which singlehood is seen as lack. Instead our focus is drawn to the tensions that play out at the centre of these relationships. These intensities allow for care to be framed in terms of the emotions that are part and parcel of caring for another. Rather than thinking of care as something that takes time and space away from the self as we care for another, I posit that the use of punctuations to mark care in terms of emotional intensities allows for a more flexible and elastic conceptualisation.

In Chapters 5 and 6 I show single women's lives are tied to caring relationships between themselves and intimate others. Often they struggle with balancing their own needs alongside those of their parents, particularly their mothers. I have also shown how mothers need to balance the desire to see their daughters happy while at the same time fulfilling their duties as good mothers in the eyes of the Indian community. I have shown how intimate decision-making is a more complex and emotional process than what is implied in a zero-sum logic of care. Single Indian women and intimate others struggle on a day-to-day basis to make the right decisions for both themselves and others. These emotional struggles, I argue, represent the everyday-ness and present-ness of singlehood as arrival. The kinds of complex spatio-temporalities that are produced at the nexus of a multitude of emotions that cannot be contained within a zero-sum logic alone.

Punctuations thus echo existing feminist research that is aligned with geography's "emotional turn". Feminist iterate that this emotional turn is linked to "feminist epistemology, objectivity and rationale", and is part and parcel of feminist politics and what feminist argue as disrupting the possibility for discrete oppositional domains of public and private (Wright, 2010: 819; see also Bondi and Domosh, 1998; Duncan, 1996; Sharp, 2009; Thien, 2005; Wilkinson, 2009). To this end, punctuations provide a way to transcend the public/private divide by showing how emotions cut across time and space, producing spatio-temporalities that cannot be confined in the separate spheres of public and private. Such a transcendence is crucial because life is more complex than the binary of public and private domains can capture. It is the inability to capture such complexities that often results in women's emotional labour being unaccounted for or less valued (McDowell and Dyson, 2011). By making use

of punctuations my aim is to highlight the central role emotions play in how decisions are made about intimate life: whether to marry, whom to date, whether or not one chooses to have a sexual relationship with another. These decisions are not made in a vacuum, they are not made using a zero-sum logic of costs and gains alone. Instead these are decisions individuals emotionally struggle to make.

The notion of struggle is crucial because it challenges the framing of individual choice as antecedent or in competition to the needs of the other. It sees not individual gain as juxtaposed against the reified power of the state and other larger groupings like one's ethnic community. In this way punctuations by centring the emotional, destabilise the Russian doll metaphor of prioritising the emotional in terms of a hierarchy in which a state-centric biopolitics of family is prioritised. Instead, I focus on the liberties and constraints individuals experience when making decisions about their intimate life. My research shows, therefore, that how we live, love and care is not merely an individual project, but is influenced by our emotional relationships with others. These relationships cannot be rationalised using a zero-sum logic alone. Instead, I advocate a feminist care ethic as it more ably reflects the emotional struggle, and moral context in which individuals make decisions about their intimate lives.

Punctuations, therefore, reveal that single women are never "just waiting" to marry. By seeing singlehood only as just waiting to marry, we ignore the complex lives these women live. These are often emotionally laden as the women struggle to balance their own needs against those of intimate others. By making use of punctuations, my aim is to show how the emotional produces multiple spatio-temporalities of singlehood that

contest and reproduce structures such as gender, race and heteronormativity that pervade the discourse of marriage and family in Singapore. These emotions permeate the caring relationships between single Indian women and intimate others stretching across time and space. They result in intensities of care that are sometimes knotted and sometimes unravel to ease the tension found within the ties that bind the self to an intimate other. The resultant spatio-temporalities of singlehood are more complex than can every be contained within a geography of waiting.

Graduate single Singaporean-Indian women are, therefore, never just waiting. They are constantly living their single lives making decisions for themselves, and fulfilling their responsibilities to others. By focusing on how emotions speed up and slow down the spatio-temporalities of singlehood, it becomes possible not just to see singlehood as a lack. These women are instead making active decisions now that implicate, and are implicated not just by their parents, the Singaporean-Indian community and the Singapore state but also by themselves, their lovers and friends. What occurs is an overlapping of the spatialities and temporalities of singlehood that stretch across Singapore, Melbourne and London even as it differentiates between home and abroad. Punctuations, therefore, offer us a way to interrogate the transnational politics of waiting embedded in how and why these emotional ties between the self and other impact upon the women's intimate lives. They allow us to better capture the friction, elasticity and cohesion implicated in the process of arrival. They destabilise the notion of marriage as the end goal, the marker indicating when a woman "has arrived". Punctuations focus on arrival because through them it becomes possible to contest the notion that single women are waiting, waiting for a man to

marry, and in the case of single Indian women for independence and freedom that can only come with marriage.

7.3 Punctuations: The Spatio-temporalities of Intimacy that Make Up Care's Calculus

The experiences of graduate single Singaporean-Indian women both in Singapore and overseas reveal a multiplicity of possibilities for a life not tied to an end-goal of marriage even as some of them hold on to the possibility of marriage some day. In this section of the chapter I engage with alternative modes and geographies of singlehood that reveal a more spatially and temporally textured experience of waiting in which it is not just a never-ending "..." stretching between single/lack and married/completeness. Instead, there are subtle complexities that disrupt the hetero-patriarchal discourse of singlehood and waiting, and the binary of here/now/lack and there/end-goal/completeness. These geographies emerge as a result of complex emotionally driven experiences of singlehood that underpin the women's rationalisation of being single. For example, there is excitement, anger, regret, longing and acceptance punctuating the women's experiences of singlehood. These emotions often take place concurrently as the women consider their desire for social and sexual intimacy through dating and friendship. What becomes clear is that while the pressure to marry remains, marriage may not be foremost on the women's minds when making decisions about their dating and sexual lives.

On a day to day basis these women are busy living lives at work, with friends, their families and not just thinking about their unmarried status. In fact many of the women shared that marriage was not something they wanted to rush into. Instead they shared

how they were looking for someone who understood them, and would allow them to continue living the kinds of lives they wanted to live. For some of the women, their single status was a source of regret particularly when they thought that it hampered the possibility for them to start families of their own. But this regret was also tempered by the possibility of having a "family" life with parents, their siblings, and friends to support and care for them. The women were, therefore, able to find emotional fulfillment without marriage and biological offspring of their own.

In the next three sub-sections (7.3.1 - 7.3.3), I engage with the women's narratives of singlehood in terms of the decisions they make about dating, having children and sexual intimacy. I show how these are not decisions they make alone. Rather what evolves are emotional intensities of care that play out between the women and intimate others as the women make these decisions. In the remaining sections of this chapter I show how these intensities of care shape the spatio-temporalities of their singlehood, and complicate the bifurcation of home and away as distinct physical spaces. By situating this research in Singapore, London and Melbourne, I show how these emotional responses operate across time and space through punctuations, that put in place a transnational politics of waiting. It is a politics premised on a relational logic that allows the women to challenge the binary logic of single/married; home/away and lack/completion that currently exists.

For instance, there is the "now" of just dating represented by a metaphorical exclamation-mark, a "!" that draws attention to the excitement and possibilities of meeting new people, both friends and lovers. This punctuation marks a break from life as it was before in Singapore, and new possibilities. It draws attention to how the

women are able to enjoy the "now-ness" of singlehood and makes a clear distinction between singlehood as experienced in Singapore versus abroad. And yet even as they encounter new possibilities, the women's continued hope of marrying in the future is marked by a pause, a comma - ",". And finally, there is a metaphorical full-stop as reflected by the experiences of gay single women for whom marriage does not apply to according Singapore's laws. Punctuations, therefore, offer a more complex representation of the life-rhythms that underpin the politics of waiting as experienced by single Indian women both in Singapore and abroad. They mark the emotional intensities of care the women experience in Singapore and abroad.

These punctuations mark the intensities that reflect what it means to be single and balance one's needs as an individual, alongside one's role as a daughter, friend, lover, member of the Indian community and citizen of Singapore. In some instances there is a sense that time is running out for oneself, and that there is no space for oneself. In other instances there is an acceptance that perhaps marriage is not necessary or does not even apply. Rather than having to endure waiting as a constant never-ending temporality, the women interviewed pointed to more varied experiences that allow for a more textured and responsive interpretation of waiting. I critique the metaphorical "..." implied in waiting and puts in its place a question-mark, a "?" to signify the possibility for a multiplicity of punctuations that underpin the politics of waiting that reflect waiting's elasticity, how it stretches and shrinks, and thus allows for a more sensitised inclusion of time and space. Punctuations thus provide the tools for conceptualising the "now-ness" of singlehood even as it acknowledges the role life-rhythms and space play in speeding up and slowing down single women lives.

7.3.1 Dating and Singlehood: Here and There are (not) so different

The women's experiences of dating and socialising reveal an important spatial component where it seems easier for them to enjoy singlehood overseas than in Singapore. This is primarily because the geography of singlehood is further compounded by the fact that the hegemony of marriage is less evident away from Singapore. Lata in London shares how she is made to feel bad about her single status in Singapore. She says being single in Singapore is different because her friends love to bring up the subject of marriage and the fact that she ought to get married. She is made to feel marginalised, as though she has lost out on something important. Her married friends behave as though marriage somehow raises their status vis-à-vis single individuals, and that being married is better than being single. There is anger and hurt underlying her words when she said somewhat sarcastically:

> "In Singapore maybe I might feel a bit more conscious of being single if I was in an environment where there were only couples. And everyone else is married. It's as though they've imbibed something. The next day they tell you, 'You should get married'. Because it's the best thing to ever happen to them... I don't think we (single women) try to separate ourselves from them. They separate themselves from us and suddenly they feel, 'Oh you're single and we're married.' "
>
> - Lata, 34, London

The women living abroad also shared how married friends they encountered overseas did not treat them differently. Women like Senita, Sasha and Kavita in Melbourne and women like Sree and Revati in London have single and married friends. While it

is perhaps easier to meet up with single friends, Sree shared that her married friends in London were happy to hang out with her as a couple or independently of each other. For these women, the experience was different in Singapore. Revati (aged 31) said that in Singapore, “Once you’re married, that’s it. I’ve got married. I just need my kids. Whereas they’re (couples in London) still interested to live and explore new things.”

> “I guess when I was back in London I had a close friend who was married in London and a close friend who was living with her boyfriend. I didn’t feel a great striking difference between them except for the fact that when they went home they had someone to be with whereas I didn’t...So I never really felt a great difference.”
>
> - Sree,26, London

The difference between Singapore and being abroad is further compounded by the fact that the women were constantly faced by the possibility of bumping into someone they knew, a member of the extended family or a close friend who might inform others in the community that they had been seen socialising with an unknown man. Vishal (aged 26) based in Singapore, for instance said that though her mother knows she about her current 3-year relationship, both she and her mother tell friends and members of the extended family that she is not seeing anyone, and that she is single because her boyfriend has yet to make their relationship official with a proposal. Senita in Melbourne shared similarly,

"I think in Singapore, the social circles you run in are very small and very interlaced. You end up finding someone who knows this person, or that person. It's 4 degrees of separation and it just gets a bit awkward. But here it's just interesting and easier to find somebody that nobody knows, somebody new and different. There's a bit more privacy because it isn't someone anyone knows or might find out about."

- Senita, 24 Melbourne

For many single woman home and away become distinct in that going abroad enables them to escape the pressure to marry that seems pervasive in Singapore. Selma (aged 40) in London says that in London she is "left to her own devices" had she lived in Singapore her parents would have pushed for her to marry and probably arranged a marriage for her. Being abroad also allows them to escape the fear that sometimes tinges the dating experience in Singapore as Vishal and Senita share. While the "smallness" of Singapore may be escaped by going abroad, this does not mean that one necessarily gets to escape the biopolitics of family altogether. Lata shares that even though she has physically left Singapore, she has not escaped her community. She hears from her mother that others are talking about her being a "loose woman" because she is living abroad as a single woman and must be "sleep around" away from the watchful eyes of her parents. Veni similarly talks about how she has had to keep her relationship with a man several years younger than her a secret even though she now lives in Melbourne where he is based. Veni left Singapore to pursue a further degree, and is now based there also. Her relationship with him began while she was still in Singapore, but had to be kept secret because of his age. In Singapore, this meant locking the doors during Skype conversations with her boyfriend, and living in

fear that her mother would find out about the relationship, and disapprove. In Melbourne, things are easier because she and her boyfriend are not separated by distance, but also because they are able to date more openly without anyone knowing. Nevertheless, Veni still has to keep the relationship hidden from her mother and continues to face questions about when she will get married, and whether or not she would like her mother to arrange a marriage for her. The excitement of dating and happiness that the women like Veni experience being in a relationship is dampened by the fact that the dating relationship often has to be hidden initially especially if it is unclear whether the relationship will culminate in marriage.

The women's experiences of singlehood are, therefore, tempered by the emotions that play out between themselves and intimate others. Going abroad may seem like a clear break a "!" from being questioned about, and pitied or treated differently for being single. And yet this freedom and relief abroad may be short-lived as in some instances the fear and hurt persist because the women worry about how their parents are viewed by the Indian community back home. Veni worries about her mother being embarrassed by her relationship with a younger man, whilst Lata feels space constricting even when she is in London because she continues to be judged from afar. The "!" now becomes tempered with "," as they women's experiences of singlehood become tempered by the desire not to embarrass their parents.

Nevertheless, there is no denying the excitement the women experience in being single abroad. The women feel their lives are speeding up, and there is a sense of being more positive about their singlehood. They are less conscious of their single status and able to enjoy dating and living a single life primarily because they now live

in cities where singlehood is not as stigmatised. They are more likely to encounter individuals who have, for now, chosen not to 'settle down' and are instead focused on more immediate objectives such as their careers and meeting new people to widen their social network. Being abroad can thus be liberating for these women because marriage is no longer on the forefront of their minds and they learn, as Revati in London shares, that it is possible to lead a happy life in spite of being single, and enjoy meeting new people or dating even if this does not end in them finding a boyfriend. Gina, 37 in London also shared how being single is accepted as nothing out of the ordinary in London. She said that people in London assumed that singlehood is a choice, and that such a rationale of choosing singlehood does not exist in "Asian social structures".

> "It's almost accepted, if you're single, you must have a good reason for it. It's by choice. That's accepted, it happens that you could choose to be single. Whereas in the Asian social structure, if you're single there must be something wrong with you. You can't be single by choice, it's because nobody has chosen you. That's why you're single. There must be something terribly wrong with you."
>
> - Gina, 37, London

Rather than a stigma, their single status is a social cache allowing them to meet new people for the purpose of widening their circle of friends and enjoying new experiences which is crucial to surviving as newcomers in Melbourne and London. Dating becomes a project in itself, not tied to the outcome of securing a suitable

marriage partner. The women speak of the joys of dating and learning more about themselves and others through the process:

> "With a lot of the guys I date, I think. 'That's not what I am looking for right now.' I am enjoying being single. But if I meet the guy who is right I may make an effort, but I'm not thinking about that now. After moving to London, I may have a 6 month relationship here and there. It doesn't matter. (What is more important) am I at peace with my life?.The difference between me now and me before is I sort of want to figure out life as well. And it's beyond being single."
>
> \- Revati, 31, London

Moreover, the women abroad are also more likely to date because they find it easier to meet men who are likely to ask them out. As Tania shared,

> "I met some of these fellas at church. When I walked in, I was like a breath of fresh air. Of course being female, I enjoyed the attention, wallowed in it (laughs). I am not shy to say it. I enjoyed it and I got a lot more attention there then I got in Singapore."
>
> \- Tania, 44, Melbourne

The women abroad like Tania, iterate that they get more attention from men abroad than in Singapore and that overall, the men are more interesting and confident about chatting them up. Singlehood becomes a more exciting experience overall because the women enjoy and welcome the attention. Living overseas also brings an added

dimension as it is now possible for them to have sexual encounters away from the gaze of their parents and the extended family. This would not have been possible had they been living in Singapore because as single women, it would not have been culturally acceptable for them to move out of their parent's homes. They would have been expected to live with their parents until they were married.

> "If I was in Singapore I would be living with my parents so the chances of me bringing home a boy or staying out late is much less. Here I can do anything I want, I could come back at 6 o'clock in the morning if I wanted to, so yeah I think if I was in Singapore it would be so much different ...plus here I live by myself so I don't have to worry about my father or mother being on my back."
>
> - Kavita, 28, Melbourne

With more men to date, and a greater possibility for sexual encounters, the women's single lives become more exciting. Singlehood takes on a more positive outlook and the women become more hopeful. The excitement of singlehood revs up with the suspense of what might happen next. Singlehood is marked by hope and possibility; it is marked by "!". One might thus become tempted to think that the promising single life abroad is one that is not constrained. But what the women also shared was that there was a sense of not wanting to engage in meaningless sexual encounters or date indiscriminately either. As seen in Revati's narrative earlier, the women were also looking for self-development, and not just the excitement of sex and dating. They were looking for companions who understood them and would give them the space they needed to be their own person. For some of the women this meant taking things slowly, and not jumping into a sexual relationship just because they could. For

example, Tania, Sangeeta and Lata thought the dating scene overseas was "too liberal". They were not interested in "one-night-stands" or casual sex. They spoke of religion and ethics, and about not having been brought up "that way". Care for the self in terms of wanting to do what is acceptable in terms of their own personal life ethics sometimes meant slowing down the seemingly fast paced single life they experienced abroad. For instance, Tania and Lisa in Melbourne shared how their religious beliefs prevented them from engaging in sexual relationships before marriage. In Lata and Sangeeta's case it was more about what was ethically and culturally acceptable for them as women brought up in Asian (Indian/non-Western) families,

> "I am not going to say I lived by anybody else's moral code of ethics but I have my own rules. I tend to try and get to know someone very well emotionally first before getting intimate with someone. I don't allow myself to be intimate with someone unless there has been a lot of talking before"
>
> - Lata, 34, London

> "There might be good guys coming there, but the ones that I've encountered all just want to have fun and then move on."
>
> - Sangeeta, 30, Melbourne

For some of the women not having casual sex was not a result of their religious, cultural or ethical leanings. Instead, their approach to sex was more pragmatic. For these women, sex was something they shared with someone they were more serious about. And since there was a sense that the time in which they could meet the right

man, marry and have children was running out, there was no point in wasting time having sex with men who were not interested in getting married eventually. These narratives show that singlehood needed also to be understood as more than merely the opportunity for uninhibited dating or sexual encounters. For many of the women it is about the struggle to live the kinds of lives they want to live. It is about being able to date and have sexual encounters if one chooses to, and it is also about balancing that ability to choose for oneself not to marry for now, against the desire to possibly be married someday. The desire to marry someday did not mean the women wanted to rush into a serious relationship with someone who was unsuitable. In others words, in spite of s sense that time could possibly be running out, the women iterated that the desire to meet someone suitable was more important than "settling" for the next man who came alone. As such, waiting while being a product of state and community discourses and expectations of marriage, can also be seen as a self-imposed act of agency. For these women who have experienced more opportunities to date overseas, it is about being sure of what you wanted and not settling for men perceived as "second-best. It is not the clichéd waiting of the single "old-maid" who has been left on the shelf.

> "Back in the day I never even thought about kids, wanting a family, I was just thinking about having fun. But now when I meet someone, I'm not just thinking about having fun, I'm actually thinking long term, 'Are you going to be a suitable husband for me? If not, go away.' "
>
> - Kavita, 28, Melbourne

The women abroad seem more able to focus on the joys of dating and meeting new people, and take their time to meet someone whom they may or may not marry. They are able to enjoy dating without the pressure of marriage. The belief that London and Melbourne are places that do not expect women to marry or judge them for their singlehood, has meant that they are more able to wait for the right man to come along, even as they enjoy "not waiting" by focusing on dating. These women are happily single, and excited about the possibility of meeting new people and widening their social networks. For them, waiting is punctuated with a metaphorical exclamation-mark, a "!" that draws attention to the possibility of the now in London and Melbourne, signifying a temporary break in waiting – waiting to marry, to start a family or shoulder care-giving responsibilities expected of single daughters. This punctuation marks a break from life as it was before in Singapore, and new possibilities. It draws attention to how the women are able to enjoy the "now-ness" of singlehood and makes a clear distinction between singlehood as experienced in Singapore versus abroad. And yet in some ways I have also shown how singlehood abroad becomes punctuated by the desire to do what is right for themselves and others. As Revati shared,

> "Your parents are on your case and the saddest thing is you know it will make them happy if you got married. But you know, when you sit down and think about it, it's like, I don't want to be depressed the rest of my life either knowing that I made a compromise."
>
> - Revati, 31, London

For Revati, getting married would seem the right thing to do. It would make her parents happy. But she weighs her desire to make them happy against the possibility of being unhappy for the rest of her live knowing she had made a compromise. The "!" of being single in London is tempered by a concern over her parents' unhappiness over her single status. There is sadness and guilt knowing that perhaps this is something she could fix with marriage, and yet needing to live her own life prevents her from being able to do so. Being single abroad, therefore, does not mean one lives a carefree single life free from constraints. In a similar way, the lives of single women in Singapore also need to be considered in terms of the liberties and constraints that play out as they balance doing what is right for themselves against what they need, or want to do for intimate others. These are not women who just wait either. Through the use of punctuations I show how the lives of the women in Singapore and those abroad are connected in terms of experientially and emotionally produced spatio-temporalities singlehood marked by similar punctuations. Though there are opportunities for a more exciting and positive outlook toward singlehood abroad, this does not mean that the experiences of women in Singapore are entirely limited. By focusing on the notion of how women struggle to make intimate decisions in Singapore just as they do abroad, I show how these women's single experiences whether in Singapore or abroad are not just reflected by the notion of waiting as "...".

7.3.2 *Not Married and Not Waiting: No Time Left for Children but Who's Counting?*

In this section I engaged with how it is not merely a case of life always being better for single Indian women overseas. The women abroad and those in Singapore are connected by their concern that reproductive time is slipping away. However, this ought not to be seen as waiting to marry. Even as reproductive time slips away, the

women find their experiences of singlehood abroad, and in Singapore tempered by doing what is right for them now even is this means the possibility of a future without marriage or children. For instance, the sense of time slipping away connects the women abroad and in Singapore. Like Kavita in Melbourne mentioned earlier, women like Meena in Singapore and Tania in Melbourne (see below) are not passively waiting either. While they have not given up on the possibility of marriage in the future, they are resigned to the fact that singlehood is more likely to be a reality for them than not. They have come to terms with their singlehood, and are not waiting. Instead, these women's lives comprise time spent with friends and family. These women do not see being single as a future with the companionship of a partner. However, they shared that they regretted having missed the opportunity to have a child of their own.

> "But when I was 33 or 34 years old it really started to hit me then. And I think that is when I started thinking about kids. I have seen my immediate friends have kids but now that I am 37, I think it is too late. So then it started to hit me...in my mind I always thought it had to be husband first than children (for Meena there can be no children without marrying first)."
>
> \- Meena, 37, Singapore

> "I don't think I missed out on anything, maybe the only thing is having children because I was obsessed with having a baby from the time I was young. I never thought about who I was going to have the baby with There was never a man in the picture. Now, I am so obsessed with my nephew. But on the other hand, as a teacher I see the end product and then I go tsk… it is

> not easy (being a parent). Though when I was younger my thoughts on children and how life would be all rosy. I had that beautiful dreamy picture of a child. But they (the children) grow up."
>
> - Tania, 44, Melbourne

Both Tania and Meena felt sad because they believed that it was almost certain that they would not be able to have children of their own. Nevertheless, they have found ways to fill the gap by caring for children of intimate others. Tania for instance, admits she will miss not having a child of her own but pours all her affection on her nephew and rationalises that maybe having a kid of your own is not all it is cut out to be. Tania is not just waiting for a man. What is interesting about her narrative is that the obsession about having a child since she was young had very little to do with marriage. She merely wanted a child and knew that in order to have a child, there needed to be marriage first.

Meena also believed when she was younger, that she could only have sex with a man after marriage. However as became older, and it seemed she was less likely to marry, the idea of being mother without getting married first seemed less inappropriate. She began taking steps to enquire about the possibility of adopting a child. For Meena there was a need, in her words, "change her thinking", what she called "a mindset of husband first than children". Nevertheless in spite of her willingness to be a single parent, she was advised against adopting by the Ministry of Community Development Youth and Sports, the government agency that handles such requests. Meena shared,

> "They advised me not to because social services saw that my single-income was not high enough, especially since I had to look after my parents too. They said it would be very difficult. Because if my parents got sick, what would happen? They told me you need to work, then you'll have to get a maid, so it will be costly and then when are you going to find time for the kid?"
>
> - Meena, 37 Singapore

In Meena's case being told she cannot adopt a child was based on linear, zero-sum logic of care. Even though she had manage to convince her parents that it was okay for her to adopt a child as a single woman, and they were now willing to set aside time and play their part to help raise the child with Meena, the social services was more concerned that as a single parent and the primary caregiver of her parents, Meena would not be able to manage caring for her parents and the child. The decision by social services was made based on a linear logic of care in which Meena's duty was to her parents alone, and not so much what Meena herself needed, or how her parents could care for and wanted to be supportive of her. The financial and emotional cost of raising a child could only be borne more equitably if Meena were married and had a child within that marriage, thus preserving the cycle of intergenerational payback . If Meena became a mother without marrying first, the cost of her being a single parent may mean, from the state's perspective, that she could potentially be a burden on public resources. Meena's parents could possibly become a burden to the state if Meena was unable to care for them because she now had a child to look after. In the eyes of the Singapore state, Meena is financially better off without the burden of being a single parent. And yet for Meena these financial gains are tempered by the loss of not having a child of her own. Meena has since come to

terms with the fact that she will not be a mother (biological or adoptive). She is sad and disappointed about not have a child in her life. However, she finds comfort in caring for the children of her close friends. These are friends Meena has know since she was a teenager, whom she has kept in close contact with. Meena is, therefore, not waiting. She is not actively dating, or engaging in sexual encounters that may result in pregnancy, and the possibility having a child of her own. She believes it is too late, and so neither marriage nor dating is necessary.

Unlike Meena who tried the adoption route and failed, other single graduate Indian women in Singapore have decided that they do not want children of their own. They do not articulate a sense of loss about not having children. Instead, they rationalise that having a child in their late 30s and 40s would be irresponsible as they believe they will not be able to give the child a proper childhood as an older parent whose "energy level" may be "lower". In Sheena's case, she is at peace with her decision and only feels a momentary twinge when she sees her younger cousins in Singapore married and with children. This twinge is soon taken over by derision. She said,

> "My cousins who are married, I think they are "losers" (laughs) but then they have kids, and (it feels like) I am a little behind now. That biological clock is ticking, and you start thinking, 'Do I really want to have kids? Do I really want to adopt when you're 45?' "
>
> \- Sheena, 37 Singapore

For Sheena adopting in her 40s would not be an option, because she thinks she would be too old. Yet she is not sure she wants a married life and is unable to reconcile the

desire to hold off on marriage until she is sure, and still be able to have a child of her own before she is too old. To this end she, like Saras, hold on to the mindset that children need to be part of a heteronormative nuclear family legitimised through marriage. Saras, 53 in Singapore shared,

> “I will not adopt. It will be selfish. I would never adopt because I am a single person. I am still a bit of a traditionalist who believes that a child must be brought up by parents...I only know heterosexual world, so they must be brought up by a father and a mother, you know? So that she or he has two worlds. As a single person, I cannot give those two worlds. So why would I want to adopt? That's why I have never adopted. It would be terribly selfish to adopt.”
>
> - Saras, 53 Singapore

Saras decision not to adopt is driven by the notion of not being able to give her child a proper childhood that, she believes, can only come with having two parents (a father and mother). Her decision is made not just based on what she would like for herself, but about what would be best for her child. She believes at this age it is too late to be a single parent. Saras talked about how she might have considered adopting earlier on in life, but was unable to as she could not spare the time caring for a child when she was younger. She was busy caring for her elderly parents who were unwell. Now that her parents have passed on, Saras has accepted the fact that it is too late to adopt. She is now looking forward to the next stage in her life. She is excited about having more time to focus on doing service for the community. There are men in her life for companionship, and physical intimacy, but she is not waiting for a child or marriage.

Women like Sheena, Tania, Saras and Meena make use of a temporal logic to exclude themselves from the discourse of waiting. They believe that it might be too late for them to have children of their own and use that to rationalise life without marriage. They believe they are past the age where they are able to have children, and marriage no longer seems to be on the cards for these women. For women like Tania, Meena, Sheena and Saras waiting is punctuated differently. There is a pause, a full-stop - "." - reflecting their acceptance that marriage may not be necessary given that it is no longer possible nor desirable for them to have children of their own so late in life. The full-stop reflects their acceptance of a future without children or marriage. As a result of the hegemony of childbearing within the heteronormative confines of marriage, they have taken themselves out of the "marriage market". By drawing from their extended family, and friends for social and emotional fulfillment, the women are able to fill in gaps that may potentially have existed as a result of not marrying and having children of their own. Singlehood is, therefore, not just an individual experience but also one tied to notions of care and responsibility to intimate others who make up "family".

7.3.3 *Choosing Singlehood: Sexually Intimate Relationships Without Marriage*

In the final sub-section, I engage with how it is possible for women to experience sexual intimacy and intimate life without an end-goal of marriage. The women's narratives about their experiences of singlehood reveal complexities that cannot be confined to portrayals of them as women in waiting. Some of them like Diana and Sheena enjoy being in sexually intimate relationships that are more long-term but not with an end-goal of marriage in mind. Diana and Sheena have not excluded the

possibility of marrying their current partners "someday" but are quite happy to maintain the status quo of being in long-term long-distance relationships.

Sheena has been in a 5-year relationship with a man 14 years her senior whom her parents know about but do not approve of. She moved out to live with him before he left for his posting overseas and then moved back in with her parents once he left. She still secretly maintains her relationship with him despite her parents' disapproval. She knows the relationship is unlikely to end in marriage and acknowledges that while she is open to meeting other people, she is not quite sure if she is willing to take it any further than dating. She enjoys her freedom when her partner is not around but also enjoys the fact that, for now, there is someone there for her.

> "We met about 4 years ago and he left – it's nearly a year now (that he's been overseas).. I think we are both commitment phobic. And I think I was too attached to my family. And they didn't think he was good enough. It made it harder for me to get close to him. In the sense that my family's feelings mattered so much, their approval mattered so much, so I wouldn't bring him home, I didn't make him feel safe. But I love being in a long-distance relationship with him. I just love the freedom. I go out when I feel like it. I can shop whenever I want. I don't have to think, 'Oh no, he's waiting. What's he going to think about me spending money on something? Do I have to divide my time between him and my parents? Or I haven't seen this friend in such a long time, can I go see my friend without him?' "
>
> \- Sheena, 37, Singapore

Sheena feels guilty about at having to keep the relationship hidden from her family and for not making her partner feel safe in the relationship. Yet she still enjoys being in the relationship and finds excitement in the fact that it is secret. She finds security in being in a relationship but also enjoys the freedom and space of not having a partner who lives in Singapore. She gets to do what she wants without having to report to him. She is not necessarily thinking about marriage or wanting children though that is something that sometimes crops up when she is at weddings and meets younger cousins who are married and starting families of their own. To Sheena's parents she is single. Sheena also considers herself single. Yet this is not the experience of a single woman who waits.

Diana's who lives in Singapore met her partner while in the US for a year. He is divorced and has children. They maintain a long distance relationship using Skype and, when possible, face-to-face visits. Diana's relationship is something only her mum and sisters know about, and not the extended family. Diana for instance shares how her life is pretty much the same in Singapore as it was before. She is able to spend time with friends, come and go as she pleases, yet enjoy the comfort of knowing there is someone "there for her" even though she does miss not having her partner around. For both Diana and Sheena marriage is not something they have given up on, however, it is not really a possibility for now either. Diana said:

> "I think that marriage is important, it gives you structure for commitment in a relationship but it need not be the equivalent of commitment in a relationship but I think in different contexts it means different things. So I think if you're younger, sometimes you don't need that security. If there were no children

> involved, I think that again you don't need the security of marriage. And if we were both residents in the same area we wouldn't need to contemplate that because then if it didn't work out, people are still in their home town. Whereas now in order to commit, somebody really has to move. There has to be big moves on both persons part. So you want to have some security (before you move) and I think marriage gives you that security whether in the social structure or legally or financially."
>
> - Diana, 36, Singapore

The irrevocability implied in the legal practice of marriage as envisaged by the heteronormative triumvirate has resulted in women like Diana and Sheena becoming less certain of taking the step toward marriage. Yet, their current relationships enable the possibility for an emotional and intimate relationship with men who are not their husbands in ways that stop them from dating other men and thus punctuate their experience of waiting differently.

Other women like Sunita and Lakshimi enjoy dating and sexual intimacy but cannot or do not want to marry at all. Sunita does not see herself as waiting to marry. She approaches her single status with a sense of excitement. She is not interested in marriage or having children of her own. She enjoys dating and being in physical relationships with men. Without the pressure having to find someone, she finds herself meeting and dating interesting men, men she thinks are "different".

> "I think they tend to be people who are not absolutely normal. What I mean, they are not conservative generally… I think I am attracted to people who are

> quite sexual in some way, because you know the durations in which I meet them are quite short and so usually the attraction for me has always begun with something physical, or some kind of sexual attraction then it leads to something."
>
> - Sunita, 42, Singapore

Sunita also finds emotional fulfillment from her family. She finds companionship living with three single sisters and her widowed mother in an apartment she owns with her sisters. She does not have children in her life, and believes that this does not mean her life lacking. Her intimate circle comprises her family and single friends whom she meets with regularly.

> "I've always lived with my family and I'm very close to my family, so I've had relationships but I've never felt like I wanted to be married, I like coming back home to what I'm most comfortable with. So in a sense, I've never looked for marriage. I think because I've never been lonely at home. I think if I were living by myself, it might be a different situation. It's kind of odd, and in a way, it's kind of ideal!"
>
> - Sunita, 42, Singapore

Lakshimi, 43 and gay in Singapore also no longer sees herself as waiting. She rationalises that marriage does not apply to her even though she does not see her life as any different from heterosexual couples in monogamous relationships. She shares how her encounter with her mother's Indian nurse reveals how she is seen as a woman in waiting but her own take on the matter is that she does not need to be

married whether in a gay or straight relationship to prove her commitment to her partner.

> "...I didn't want to tell her look I am single because I am gay…but in a relationship that is not heterosexual, does that mean that without marriage there is no commitment? And I have never been able to rationalise if I would need to go to Amsterdam or England or some part of the world where same sex marriage is legal because I need to be married because to me that's almost like what the heterosexual world has defined, commitment equals marriage. And so long as you are not married to someone, then there is no commitment."
>
> - Lakshimi, 43, Singapore

For women like Lakshimi and Sunita, it's a clean break, a metaphorical full-stop. They do not see themselves as "waiting" and believe that marriage is not something they are interested in. For Lakshimi, marriage is a heteronormative construct in Singapore and does not apply to her. She does not see herself as single, but in a committed relationship with her partner. Sunita does not want to be married. She enjoys being in relationships with men without the pressure of marriage. Sheena and Diana are focused instead on monogamous intimate relationships with men outside the confines of marriage. There is a pause, a comma - "," - reflecting their unwillingness to marry at this stage in their lives or the belief that life without marriage is possible even though they may not have given up on the possibility of marriage sometime in the future.

The narratives of the women in these three sub-sections show how single Indian women's lives in Singapore and abroad are more complex than can be explained by a narrative of waiting. These women are not waiting, even though in the eyes of the state and the Indian community, they may be seen as such. In some instances, they enjoy being able to date and experience sexual intimacy without the immediate or, some instances, a long-term desire for marriage. In other instances the biopolitics of family extends its reach across time and space, resulting in a more complex experience of singlehood. Nevertheless, the women's narratives reveal a desire and possibility for intimacy and companionship rather than marriage per se. But these desires exist as part and parcel of the caring relationships shared by the women, their parents friends and lovers (intimate others) who become these women's "family". Rather than a biopolitics of family that is centred on intergenerational payback, and state and community expectations of Indian women to marry, this chapter has attempted to show that the experience of singlehood from the perspective of the women themselves is more complex than can be encapsulated in "waiting". Punctuations, therefore, allow for a more apt depiction of the possibilities and constraints these women encounter and experience both in Singapore and abroad as part of the struggle to enact a feminist care ethics in which they balance caring for themselves and living the lives they want to live against how they need to and want to care for others. Singlehood is, therefore, not just about these women being unmarried or waiting to marry. Rather than waiting as "...", waiting is punctuated by emotional struggles marked by "!", "," and "." Waiting is no longer a the empty space between the two ends of lack and completion, single and married, home and away.

7.4 Punctuations and the Transnational Politics of Waiting

In this chapter I have shown that there is a difference in terms of the women's experiences of singlehood in Singapore and abroad. However, I have also attempted to show that the situation is more complex than that of Singapore being worse for single women, and abroad being better. Certainly the women enjoy singlehood abroad because they do not feel the pressure to marry, and are not surrounded by members of their community who expect them to marry. But the pressure to marry and the ability to enjoy singlehood needs to be understood as part of a calculus of care that is held together by the intensities of care between the women and intimate others. These intensities of care arise because of the emotional struggles that play out as the women and intimate others engaging in mutually caring relationships that are based upon a feminist care ethic. In this chapter I have shown how dating, the decision whether or not to have children, and engage in sexual intimacy can temper the spatio-temporalities of singlehood. A feminist care ethics asks that we consider the moral context in which the women make decisions about their intimate lives, and how this process of decision-making can be an emotional struggle that needs to be understood in terms of the women's desire to care for others as well as themselves.

Rather than only perpetuating the single/married or home/away binary this chapter has revealed more complex narratives of singlehood that rupture the expectation of monotony that is bound up with the biopolitics of family that produces a discourse of waiting which permeates the lives of single Indian women. Instead, of a constant monotony or passivity inscribed by the "..." in the discourse of waiting, the chapter shows there are possibilities for re-interpreting and disrupting the hegemonic rhythms in life in which the women must meet a man, marry and start a family of their own.

Both in Singapore and abroad single Indian women reproduce and disrupt the discourse of marriage and child-bearing. They struggle to rationalise whether marriage is necessary or applicable in the long run. By engaging with the spatio-temporalities of singlehood that play out at the site of these emotional struggles, I have tried to show how these are women are constantly making choices about how to live the best kind of live for themselves as well as others.

By using a multi-sited approach, I have also attempted to show how similarities and differences that make up the politics of waiting (Jeffrey, 2008) extend across time and space, and are part and parcel of the struggle to maintain relationships over time and space. This focus on emotional struggles draw our attention to the process of arrival, of "being" single. It distances us from the juxtaposition of a reified state and community against individual choice. Punctuations, therefore, show how intimate life and care are more complex than what is suggested in the strategic hierarchy of emotions that has become crucial to the perpetuation of a Russian doll metaphor of responsibility. This is a hierarchy of intimate life that discounts the emotional experiences of single women because without marriage, they never legitimately cross over to the side where the loving and caring relationships they are a part of become counted.

These single women's experiences show that such an attempt to confine the intimate within a linear zero-sum logic does not go unchallenged. In this chapter I have attempted to show how single Singaporean-Indian women's experiences of singlehood are never just about "waiting" to marry. What we see unfolding is a transnational politics of waiting that plays out through the women's enactment of a

feminist ethics of care. These are politics that have the propensity to challenge how we think about family, not just in terms of those biologically connected to us, but also in terms of the mutually intertwined relationships that emerge from the emotionally-charged spaces of intimate life and care.

Punctuations, therefore, provide a framework in which we may engage with the transnational politics of waiting that unfolds at the site of singlehood as a struggle between state, community, intimate others and the individual. Punctuations reflect the opportunities and constraints single women encounter as they contest, negotiate and sometimes reproduce the biopolitics of family that exists in Singapore. Through Singapore-Indian women's experiences of singlehood, existing constructions of the Singaporean nation centred on a gendered, racialised and heteronormative notion of the biological family become problematised. Punctuations reflect more clearly the intensities of care that make up the care calculus, and draw our attention to the emotional context in which intimate ties are constantly being formed. Rather than just waiting, these women's experiences point to singlehood as a legitimate mode of being, one that has the power to critically question how individuals eventually become family.

By making use of punctuations to highlight the rhythmic intensities that permeate singlehood as a complex process involving single Indian women and intimate others responding to state and community biopolitics of family, the thesis has attempted to heed the call by geographers to consider how time and space must be considered as inter-related and mutually influencing (Massey, 2005; May and Thrift, 2001). However by focusing on the emotional, the thesis argues for the need to take a

feminist approach when considering how time and space are connected. The thesis has shown that how we feel about our lives and the relationships we share with others play a crucial role in informing how we experience time and space. But time and space also impact upon our the emotional experiences that are an integral part of our intimate lives.

Chapter 8: Conclusion

8.1 Factoring Emotions into the Equation: Feminist Care Ethic and the Intensities of Care

In writing the conclusion, I remember conversations with May and Lana based in city X. May shared of how, over after-work drinks with single female friends, the conversation had turned to the topic of work. She and her friends talked about how single women ought to be recognised for the contributions they made at work. Like ethnic minority employees who contributed to the cultural capital of multinational firms in an era of globalisation, they believed single women made significant contributions in terms of their talent, time and the sacrifices they made, often at the cost of their personal lives. May and her friends saw themselves as a unique community of employees whose needs had not been recognised in the workplace. For example, while employers were more open to the idea of putting in place flexible employment policies that allowed mothers to return to work, the same flexible policies were rarely accorded to single women. Single women were not included as they were not seen as having families of their own. May and her friends believed that their responsibility and desire to care for intimate others did not count because those they cared for did not include a husband or children. Similarly, Lana based in city X also found her work and family life colliding, when she decided to return to Singapore before starting a new job. Lana's mother had to undergo an medical procedure, and though Lana's siblings in Singapore were able to handle the situation, Lana felt she needed and wanted to be there while decisions were being made about her mother's health.

May and Lana's stories highlight the complexities single women face in balancing their desire to live the kinds of lives they want to live (success in their careers, opportunities to date, and the possibility of marrying someday should they choose to), and their desire to care for intimate others in their lives (making time for their parents, siblings, friends and lovers). For the women I interviewed, May and Lana's narratives echo their own experiences. They reflect the ways in which the existing biopolitics of family and calculative technologies of care seem unable to the account for the emotional tensions that are part and parcel of decision-making in their intimate lives. Even when the emotional is included, it is to further the biopolitics of family by making use of the myth of blood and practices of care to legitimise ties in a scalar hierarchy that favours sanguinary proximity: individual, family, community and nation.

I have argued, instead, for the importance of acknowledging and accounting for the desire to balance caring for ourselves vis-à-vis intimate others (parents, friends, lovers, siblings) we may or may not be biologically related to in terms of intensities of care. Such a desire cannot be framed conveniently within a hierarchy because care can no longer be understood merely in terms of the gains and losses that produce and are produced by the linearity of time and space found in a zero-sum game. To this end, the thesis makes use of a feminist ethic to frame care. Such an ethic of care is one in which needs of the self and other are seen as intimately intertwined. It offers a means to destabilize the linear construction of time and space that is part of a zero-sum logic in which single women are seen as waiting.

By focusing on the moral context in which the self and other are simultaneously situated, it becomes easier to see how both are intimately intertwined. In such a context, care needs to be conceived in terms of a complex emotional calculus between single women, their families, friends, the Singaporean-Indian community and the Singapore state. It is for this reason that I argue for a care calculus that focuses on the intensities of care rather than care as a zero-sum game. I argue that it is crucial to think about the complex multiplicities of time and space that are implicated in how decisions are made about how to care and whom to care for. In such a context, the care practices that are part and parcel of being family become more complex. Singlehood for these women thus needs to be understood as part of a calculus of care in which the women themselves are located against their parents reproducing, contesting and negotiating constructions of them as waiting by the Indian community and the state. The fallacy of waiting is revealed as the women and their parents, in caring for each other, expose discursive contradictions thus destabilizing the natural discourses of race, gender and sexuality that, in the first place, cast these women's unmarried status as "lack".

8.2 Not the Biopolitics of Family but the Emotional Politics of Race: Desire Rather than Expectation

In attempting to engage with how single women balance the competing desires that come from wanting to care for intimate others and living the kinds of lives they want to live, I have argued for the need to focus on the context in which decisions pertaining to intimate life are made. Specifically, I have tried to show how race influences the experiences of singlehood because of the strategic role it plays in biopolitics of family that often results in Singaporean-Indian women facing intense

pressure to marry from the Singapore state, Singaporean-Indian community and their parents. As women who are part of a community where their authority and independence are tied to marriage and the growth and maintenance of traditional family systems, they are often placed in emotionally stressful situations in which they need to consider what they want for themselves against loving and caring for their parents. For instance, the experience of singlehood that Singaporean-Indian women encounter is impacted upon by a desire to fulfil their own needs (care for the self) alongside how this makes their mothers in particular look in the eyes of the Indian community (care for the other). For single daughters, this means being able to live the lives they want to live while fulfilling expectations of them to be good daughters who will eventually marry. For mothers, this means being supportive of their daughters' desires to live the kinds of lives they want to live while making sure that they have fulfilled their roles as good parents who have ensured their daughters will be cared for through marriage. As a result, Indian mothers and daughters often experience care in terms of intensities that cannot be confined to a linear logic of time and space or a zero-sum game of care.

The pressures that single Indian women and their mothers face regarding the daughters' unmarried status from the Indian community and the Singapore state, show how race matters. Race is used as a strategic discursivity that shapes the biopolitics of family in Singapore to fulfil state and community intensions to ensure population growth in a multi-racial nation, and the survival of the ethnic community respectively. The racialised double exclusion faced by the women is what, I argue, gives rise to a unique emotional relationship shared between mothers and daughters as they each balance what they desire for themselves against what they desire for the

other. Singlehood becomes more complex than waiting to marry, it becomes more complex than escaping the pressure to marry. Rather, singlehood as experienced by Singaporean-Indian women, becomes the site at which emotional geographies are revealed. These are emotional geographies that are produced by a racialised biopolitics of family in Singapore that cannot only be seen as disempowering for single Indian women. Rather, what I have tried to show is how these emotions enable us to ask critical questions about how we care for intimate others, and how these practices of care shape being family. By asking such questions, it becomes possible to challenge the racialised, gendered and heteronormative biopolitics of family that currently exist in Singapore. On the one hand, the location of care within the confines of family allows the Singapore state and Singaporean-Indian community to claim care for their respective agendas of nation and community building (see also Staeheli, 2003). The zero-sum logic of care is used, for instance, by both the state and Indian community to rationalise marriage between men and women to ensure intergenerational payback between parents and children can take place. On the other hand, the strategies employed by the single Indian women in negotiating the racialised biopolitics of family through caring relationships involving not only their parents but also their friends (both Indian and non-Indian single women), allows single women to imagine care and family beyond the confines of marriage. This has critical implications for both the state and Indian community which rely on constructions of family and community based on iterations of race and blood to maintain the biopolitics of family.

By analysing how singlehood is experienced, embraced, rejected and rationalised by single Indian women and their parents, the thesis has attempted to unearth the

discursive contradictions that underpin the ways in which race, gender and sexuality are deployed by state and community. Understanding the emotional relationship between single Indian women and their mothers and how they want to care for each other, has enabled the thesis to disrupt and reproduce these constructions of the appropriate way to be family and the role they play as ethnic minority women in the state and community's co-option of a particular family biopolitics that is crucial to the survival of a multi-racial Singaporean nation. On the one hand, the women and their parents find themselves immersed in a situation where race and gender are utilized by the state and community to co-opt their reproductive bodies to further the hegemony of heteronormativity through marriage that produces constructions of family, community and nation that are tied to procreation and blood. On the other hand, the women and their parents' enactment of an ethics of care in which they each consider the other individual's desire to live the kinds of lives they want to live reveals discursive contradictions that underpin these very constructions of race, gender and sexuality. These discursive contradictions are what allow us to interrogate the essentialism and constructionism that underpin the biopolitics of family in Singapore. Such a process is important as it enables us to distance the women from portrayals of them as waiting by challenging the hegemony of marriage as crucial to the constitution of appropriate family life.

To this end, the thesis has attempted to contribute to the existing body of work on the feminist critique of family as critical strategy that reproduces gendered, racialised, and heteronormative social relations to maintain a particular form of patriarchal governance (MacDowell, 1999; Panelli, 2004; Richardson, 2000; 1996). Foucault argues that this is a type of governmentality in which individuals themselves become

implicated in the process of mobilising and maintaining the biopolitical state (Foucault, 1990a, 1990b). The emotional aspects of individual life become co-opted for state purposes of keeping citizens connected, through, for example, the practice of marriage. In this way, individuals become easier to govern because their perceived connection to another by blood becomes a love motive that acts as a self-disciplining force. By focusing on how Indian women want to care for intimate others and balance caring for intimate others and themselves, the thesis has attempted to reclaim the emotional aspects of intimate life from the hetero-patriarchal biopolitics of family. Instead, the thesis is more reflective of feminist concerns with the emotional and has attempted to foreground the emotional ties that are part and parcel of the caring relationships shared by individuals who love each other, and how these connect and coalesce over time and space in ways that maintain as well as problematise the existing biopolitics of family. More significantly, the thesis has also shown how race plays a crucial role in informing our understanding of the moral context in which caring and emotional relationships play out between the self and intimate other that cannot be explained by using a zero-sum logic alone.

8.3 Punctuations and the Transnational Politics of Waiting

The focus on the emotional as that which plays out at the nexus between self and other, is a crucial aspect of this thesis on singlehood. Specifically, it shows how singlehood is complex and more than just an individual experience. Singlehood needs, instead, to be understood within the emotional context of how the Singapore state, Indian community, parents and the women themselves reproduce, contest, and negotiate the biopolitics of family. By focusing on singlehood as a negotiated and contested state of being, the thesis has shown how the emotional ties that bind give

rise to a transnational politics of waiting. Such a politics problematises the linear logic of time and space that constructs single women as waiting in the first place. It focuses instead on the multitude of rhythms and intensities of care that reflect a new calculus that cannot be accounted for using the zero-sum logic that currently governs the biopolitics of family where men and women must marry and play strategic gendered roles within the (transnational) family.

By interrogating the politics of waiting that unfold in single Indian women's lives the thesis also contributes to the critique of intimacy confined within the practice of marriage (Constable, 2009; Weeks; 2001). It also questions the heteronormative bias that underpin family formation by engaging with how these women's experiences of singlehood include balancing the expectation of them to play the role of good Indian daughters even as they encounter the possibility for same-sex relations, dating and sexual intimacy with men from outside their ethnic group, and female friends that become part of these women's 'families'. By engaging with the complexities inherent in the intimate lives of single graduate Singaporean-Indian women, I show that these women are never 'just' waiting. Instead their narratives show how they contest, and negotiate the state and Singaporean-Indian community's construction of family as legitimised through the socio-legal practice of marriage between a man and a woman.

Through these alternative possibilities for a single life, the thesis has shown how it is possible to live lives and imagine life possibilities that do not necessarily end in marriage. Yet the hegemony of marriage is also perpetuated as the women worry about the possibility of not having children of their own. In some instances, this

results in an acceptance that marriage is not on the cards for them. In others, the women continue to experience a multiplicity of single lives that include dating, being in long-term relationships and finding solace in their extended family. In this way, they contest and disrupt the state, Indian community and their parents' interpretation of marriage as a social-legal construct that legitimises families of a particular kind – comprising 'husbands' and 'wives' and their biological offspring. By rationalising how these constructions of marriage and family may not apply to them, the women are able to disrupt the discourse of waiting as reflected in the existing biopolitics of family.

The thesis has, therefore, attempted to show that Singaporean-Indian women's experiences of singlehood are never just ones of 'waiting' but are punctuated by how they contest and reproduce structures such as gender, race, and sexuality in ways that challenge and sometimes reinstate the hegemony of heteronormative marriage as constructed by the Singapore state and Singaporean-Indian community. By making use of punctuations, I provide a means to interrogate the transnational politics of waiting such that singlehood is not seen as only the lack of not being married. Instead, it becomes a legitimate mode of being in itself, one in which single women are making active decisions now that implicate and are implicated by a care calculus comprising not just their parents, the Singaporean-Indian community and the Singapore state but also by themselves, their lovers and friends.

By thinking in terms of a transnational politics of waiting and articulating these politics through punctuations that reflect the speeding up and slowing down of single Indian women's lives, this thesis also destabilises the multiple and mutually

reinforcing binaries of single/married with being in Singapore or abroad. Instead of seeing freedom and an appreciation of singlehood with living abroad (not waiting), and limitations and a lack of freedom in terms of living a single life in Singapore (waiting), this thesis has shown how waiting is punctuated in complex ways that allow for the multitude of rhythms and intensities that permeate and connect single women's lives across time and space through their emotional relationships with intimate others. By focusing on the emotional, the thesis aims to contribute to the existing body of work in feminist geography which has continued to draw attention to how time and space are equally important to the process of subject-making (Massey, 2005, 2004; Katz, 2004; Pratt and Yeoh, 2003) and the politics that surround constructions of (im)mobility (Yeoh and Huang, 2011; Cresswell, 2011; 2010; Giralt and Bailey, 2010). Continuing in this tradition, 'punctuations' are offered as a way in which to articulate the intensities of care that give rise to a transnational politics of waiting which may be used to frame Singaporean-Indian women's emotionally grounded and racialised experiences of singlehood across time and space.

Single Indian women struggle to make decisions that are emotionally laden, producing spaces more complex than can ever be represented in the linear framework of time and space that underpins waiting. They are, therefore, not 'just' waiting. Instead, they are living their single lives in the present, sometimes reproducing, and other times contesting and negotiating ways of being single that cannot be confined to waiting. They are living their lives now, even as they worry about others (parents, friends, lovers) and what the future holds for them, a future that may or may not include marriage. The thesis has attempted to provide alternative narratives of single Indian Singaporean women that are not rooted in ways that further reinstate single

women within patriarchal modes of social reproduction that see them only as ‘women in waiting’ – waiting for marriage or to start families of their own. Instead, it focuses on the ‘present-ness’ of being single and a transnational politics of waiting that problematises the hetero-patriarchal and racialised biopolitics of family and care.

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Appendix A: Summary Background of Interviewees by City

Melbourne

No	Pseudonym	Age	Education/Work	Sexuality/ "single" status	Living Arrangements	Family Background
1	Tania	44	Masters in education, Teacher	Straight, not dating	Bought her own place in Melbourne	Parents: Widowed mother, retired. Lives with younger brother in his flat. Siblings: Elder brother and sister married, both based in US. Younger brother, single and based in Singapore. All siblings working and financially independent.
2	Shal	36	Law degree, worked as a lawyer in Singapore and Melbourne. Putting herself through nursing school at time of interview	Gay and in a relationship.	Moved out of parents' home to live with her partner before moving to Australia where she is renting.	Parents: Father and mother working in Singapore. Parents living on their own in landed property with a domestic helper. Financially independent. Siblings: Two married brothers working and living in Singapore with their own families. All siblings financially independent.
3	Letisha	31	BA, editorial executive in a publishing company	Straight, not dating.	Renting an apartment in Melbourne. Co-owns the HDB flat with her mother in Singapore.	Parents: Mother divorced, mother currently living in Canada with boyfriend. Letisha occasionally sends money to her mother in Canada but they live their lives more or less independently off each other, for now. Siblings: Only child.

4	Kavita	28	MA, executive in a magazine company	Straight, in a relationship	Lives in apartment bought by parents	Parents: Father works in Singapore, mother retired. Parents live on landed property. Siblings: Elder brother married and living in Singapore. Younger sister Senita (see below), lives with her in Melbourne. All siblings financially independent.
5	Senita	24	Management degree, works in retail	Straight, dating	Lives in apartment bought by parents	See above (same as Kavita).
6	Devi	24	Vet Science degree, works as a vet	Gay, not dating	Renting in Melbourne	Parents: Father works in Singapore, travels frequently. Mother based in Sydney with her two younger siblings who are studying there. Mother homemaker. Siblings: younger brother and sister, still in school and financially dependent on parents.

7	Sasha	26	Early childhood education degree, Teacher	Straight, in a relationship	Renting in Melbourne, partner lives with her.	Parents: Father working, mother homemaker. Live on landed property in Singapore. Financially independent. Siblings: An elder brother who is married and living in the Philippines. Younger sister is single and still in school. Only younger sister is financially dependent on her parents
8	Sangeeta	30	Bachelors in Engineering Lecturing in Tafe University and working on her MBA concurrently	Straight, not dating	Renting in Melbourne	Parents: Retired, living in public housing flat in Singapore. Parents financially independent Sibling: Elder brother. He and his wife live with her parents. Brother financially independent.
9	Veni	27	Post-graduate Diploma in Education, teaching in Melbourne and completing her Masters in teaching concurrently	Straight, in a relationship	Renting in Melbourne	Parents: Both working, live in public housing flat. Financially independent. Siblings: Older sister, single, working, lives with parents in Singapore. Financially independent.
10	Lisa	33	BA, administrator in education sector. Concurrently completing Masters degree	Straight, not dating	Renting in Melbourne	Parents: retired, based in Singapore. Living in landed property. Financially independent. Siblings: Elder brother, married with children, living and working in Dubai.

Singapore

	Pseudonym	Age	Education/Career	Sexuality/ “single” status	Living arrangements	Family Background
1	Diana	36	Masters in Medicine, Doctor. Lived in Melbourne and Washington D.C. for a year each completing her medical fellowships, before returning to Singapore recently.	Straight, in a long-distance relationship	Living with her mother at the time of interview, but owns her own private apartment which was being rented out at the time.	Parents: Mother widowed based in Singapore. Lives on landed property, financially independent. Siblings: Elder sister, single, living in New York. Younger sister, married sister living in the UK. Both sisters working and financially independent.
2	Veena	36	Just completed her MBA in Columbia, NYC, recently returned to Singapore. Activist, looking for permanent work.	Straight, not dating	Living with parents.	Parents: Father and mother retired, living in a public housing flat Singapore. Financially independent. Sibling: Younger brother based in New Zealand, has a Chinese girlfriend.

3	Lakshimi	43	BA, private banker. Travels frequently for work in the region and Australia.	Gay, in a relationship	Lives in the house next door to her father, which she bought.	Parents: Father is a widower, living in landed property. Lakshimi pays for his medical and living costs. She has also hired a lived in maid for her father. Siblings: Three siblings, older siblings. A sister, married and living in KL, another sister divorced and living in a private apartment in Singapore, an older brother (estranged) lives on his own, divorced also. All siblings financially independent.
4	Sheena	37	BA, media and communication executive. Based primarily in Singapore for work.	Straight, in a long-distance relationship	Moved out of parents' flat to live with her boyfriend. But later moved back in with her parents when he left for an overseas posting. In a long distance relationship with him.	Parents 2 brothers, older aged 39 based in the US, younger aged 35 based in Singapore, parents in Singapore, retired dad, 68 and mum housewife, 65, public housing, lives with parents

5	Meena	37	BA, social worker, Based primarily in Singapore for work.	Straight, not dating	Lives with her mother in a public housing flat they co-own.	Parents: Separated, father retired, mother homemaker. Father lives with his mother. Mother lives with Meena. Parents financially dependent on Meena and her brother. Sibling: Elder brother, divorced, remarried recently. Lives in his own public housing flat with his wife.
6	Shanta	24	BA, runs her own events company. Travels frequently for work in the region.	Straight, not dating	Lives with her parents	Parents: Father, working, mother homemaker. Live in public housing flat. Financially independent Siblings: Younger brother, lives at home, not married and financially dependent on parents.
7	Jay	24	BA, activist, waiting to start postgraduate school. Waiting to start a postgraduate degree abroad.	Straight, not dating	Lives with her parents	Parents: Father working, mother homemaker. Living in landed property. Siblings:2 younger sisters financially dependent on parents. Still in school.
8	Gayatri	33	BA, teacher. Waiting to start Masters degree in education in Melbourne.	Straight, not dating	Lives with her parents	Parents: Father retired, mother homemaker. Financially independent. Living in public housing flat. Siblings: Elder brother, married, has his own place.

9	Kala	38	BA, management position in insurance firm. Travels frequently for work.	Straight, not dating	Lives with mother and sister. Kala owns a private apartment which she currently rents out.	Parents: Mother widowed, lives in landed property. Financially dependent on Kala though house belongs to her mother. Sibling: Elder sister, single. Lives with mother and Kala in family home. Sister does not have permanent employment and is financially dependent on Kala.
10	Sunita	42	BA, administrator. Travels in the region for work.	Straight, dating	Lives with mother and 2 single sisters. One of whom is Nirmala (see below).	Parents: Mother widowed, homemaker, lives in private apartment bought by Sunita and her sisters. Mother financially dependent on her children. Siblings: Youngest sibling, her brother is married and living in the US with his wide. 2 sisters older than her and single. Siblings financially independent.
11	Nirmala	46	BA, teacher. Does not travel much for work.	Straight, not dating	Lives with mother and 2 singles sisters. One of whom is Sunita (see above).	See above (same as Sunita)

12	Shireen	33	BA, social worker. Based primarily in Singapore for work.	Gay, in a relationship	Lives with her partner though visits and sometimes stays with her parents on weekends.	Parents: Father and mother both retired. Live in landed property. Financially independent. Siblings: Younger brother, single, living with parents. Employed, financially independent.
13	Bethany	41	BA, analyst in human resources. Based primarily in Singapore for work.	Gay, dating	Renting her own place, though sometimes stays with person she is currently dating.	Parents: Mother, widowed, retired, living with her elder sister. Financially dependent on children. Siblings: Elder brother, and two elder sisters all divorced and living on their own. Financially independent.
14	Jema	39	Postgraduate medical degree, doctor. Based primarily in Singapore for work.	Straight, not dating	Lives with her parents	Parents: retired, living on landed property. Sibling: Brother married and lives on his own.
15	Saras	53	MA, researcher, activist and consultant. Travels frequently for work.	Straight, not dating	Lives in a public housing flat she owns.	Parents: Deceased, looked after both of them while they were alive. Parents were dependent on her. Sibling: Sister married, lives with her family.

16	May	55	PhD, Lecturer. Based primarily in Singapore for work.	Straight, not dating	Lives in landed property she inherited from her deceased parents.	Parents: Deceased. Siblings: Sister deceased, brother married and lives with his family in Singapore.
17	Alice	40	BA, works in the arts sector. Based primarily in Singapore work.	Straight, not dating	Lives with her parents in a public housing flat.	Parents: Retired. Dependent on her and her siblings financially. Siblings: Elder brother and sister married and living with their families. Only Alice lives with their parents.
18	Marsha	33	Masters in management. Works as manager within the education industry. Moving to Melbourne soon for work.	Straight, not dating	Lives with her parents. But studied and worked abroad in London and Australia for three-and-a-half years. Been back in Singapore for 4 years now.	Parents: Both retired. Living in public housing flat. Not financially dependent on her. Siblings: Married, lives with her family.
19	Grace	33	BBA, media and news. Based primarily in Singapore for work.	Straight, not dating	Lives with her parents	Parents: Father and mother working. Financially independent. Sibling: Younger sister, single and living with parents also.

20	Mona	42	Degree in management currently looking for new job, previously in admin and HR.	Straight, dating	Rents an apartment with a friend.	Parents: Mother widowed and retired. Lives with her unmarried sister. Mother is dependent on children. Siblings: 6 siblings. Mona and her sister whom their mothers lives with are single. Mona's other five siblings are all married with children.
21	Vishal	26	BA, research in government agency. Based primarily in Singapore for work.	Straight, in a relationship	Lives with her parents	Parents: Father and mother are working. They live in a private apartment. Siblings: Elder sister, also single (see Livy below). Sister lives with parents too.
22	Livy	32	PhD, lecturer. Based primarily in Singapore for work.	Straight, not dating	Lives with her parents	See above (same as Vishal)

London

	Pseudonym	Age	Education/Career	Sexuality/ "single" status	Living Arrangements	Family Background
1	Sree	26	BA, works in the service industry.	Straight, not dating	Renting	Parents: Mother divorced, homemaker. Lives in public housing flat she owns. Financially dependent. Siblings: Elder sister and younger brother both single. Elder sister is single and working. Siblings live with mother.
2	Revati	31	BA, works in advertising	Straight, dating	Renting	Parents: Father and mother working. Own public housing flat. Financially independent. Siblings: 2 younger brothers both married and working in Singapore. Live with their families in separate apartments.
3	Lata	34	Masters, works in computer	Straight, not dating	Renting	Parents: Father working. Mother homemaker. Parents live in landed property in Singapore. Financially independent. Siblings: Elder brother married and lives with his family. Younger brother in college, dependent on parents.

4	Gina	37	Masters, works in computing	Straight, dating	Purchased her own place in the UK and bought a public housing flat for her mother in Singapore	Parents: Mother widowed, homemaker. Financially dependent on Gina. Sibling: Gina is an only child.
5	Selma	40	Bachelor of Commerce and IT, working as an IT auditor.	Straight, not dating	Renting	Parents: Retired, living in Singapore. Financially independent. Siblings: 2 sisters. Elder sister married. Younger is not. Both based in Australia.
6	Amelia	48	MBA Management Consultant, owns her own consulting business.	Straight, not dating	Renting	Parents: Retired in Singapore. Financially independent. Siblings: 2 sisters. One in Singapore is married and one is based in Hong Kong and is single. Both sisters working and financially independent.
7	Rina	32	Law degree, practicing law	Straight, in a relationship	Purchased her own flat.	Parents: Father still working, based in Singapore. Mother moved to the UK when her younger sister started university. Siblings: A younger sister who is based in the UK, studying. Younger brother in Australia also completing school.

Appendix B: Aide Memoire

These questions are generic because the interview for this project is semi-structured and interactive. Hence thematic issues are raised – not always in the same order – and then further probing questions are asked on the basis of the respondents' answers. For examples, if a response is 'Yes' then probing questions will be used to explore why the participant said yes. Hence it is impossible to predict all the questions to be asked and each interview should be qualitatively different to reflect the diversity of experiences and opinions of the single women who participate.

Personal Profile

Age

Ethnicity

Nationality

Religion

Highest education achieved

Current occupation

Place of work (city name): currently based in which city?

Residential Type (new)

Living alone or with parents (new)

Family Profile

Number of immediate family members (parents, siblings)

Location of above members (names of cities where they are based)

Age of parents and siblings

Marriage status of parents and siblings

Mobility

Based overseas:

1. Tell me a little about your migration history. How did you come to be based in (name of global city)? How long have you been based in (name of city)?

2. What kinds of issues did you have to consider before deciding to move? What were some of the difficulties you had to overcome?

3. What are some of the benefits, challenges of being based overseas (in relation to work, family, maintaining relationships, socialising, meeting new people)?

4. How does your family react to your being overseas?

5. How often do you travel out of (name of city) for work? What are some of the benefits and challenges of living such a mobile life?

Based in Singapore:

6. Tell me a little about your migration history. Have you always been based in Singapore? If overseas, where and for how long each time? What made you decide to be based in Singapore?

7. How often do you travel for the purpose of work now? What are the benefits and challenges of having to travel frequently for work?

8. Have you considered the possibility of working overseas? Why yes or no?

9. How does your family react to you travelling frequently for work?

Singlehood

Who single women interact with? What they think of themselves? How they think others perceive of them? Single women's relationships with other women (single or otherwise), friendships important? Intimacy (male or non-male?) Companionship?

General views on being single

10. How do you respond when you are asked whether you are single? Do you consider yourself to be single (or does interviewee use some other term – and what does the term mean)? Why? Why not? How would you describe your status? Are you in a relationship? Are you looking? Are you not looking? Why?

If single but seeing someone:

11. How long have you been seeing this person, how serious and who knows (immediate family? Extended family? Friends? colleagues?)

12. Ask them to compare being single to currently being in a relationship.

13. Is the person they are currently seeing, in the same city they are in?

14. If not, how do they maintain relationship long distance? Practically? Difficulties? How often do they see each other?

15. If in the same city, how often do they see their partner? What prevents them from meeting up more frequently if they are unable to meet frequently? How do they manage with frequent travel, if they are travel frequently?

16. How is your life different compared to someone who is married? (socially, at work).

17. Is marriage important to you? i.e. making your partnership legal (for gay women)? Is there a reason why you have decided not to get married yet (even though you have been seeing your current partner)? What kind of conditions must be in place before you would consider getting married? Benefits from marrying? Advantages of not marrying and just being in a partnership?

18. When and where do you become most aware of your unmarried status?

19. For those who are in partnerships that are not "legally" recognised, difference between having and not having that legitimacy and recognition? Benefits? Practicality? Emotional tied and practically living a married life but legally not recognised, problems with that? Benefits?

If single, not seeing anyone seriously:

20. What does being single mean to you? What do you enjoy about being single? What don't you enjoy? Positive and negative aspects of being single.

21. Compare being single in home country (Singapore for Singaporeans or India for Indian-Indians) vs. overseas in (name of global city) or while traveling.

22. How is your life different compared to someone who is married or someone who is seeing someone seriously? (socially, at work). For example, what do you need to do as a single person that perhaps someone married may not have to in order to enjoy the life you want to?

23. When and where do you become most aware of your single status (name and describe site and situations) (e.g. at gym, supermarket, on public transportation? At the office? festive occasion, new year, at weddings? paying taxes? In times of family crises? others?). Why do these incidents stand out? How have they impacted your life? Are there differences in these moments in Singapore vs. (name of global city) for Singaporeans based overseas? Happen more frequently in Singapore vs. overseas or vice versa? Are there differences in these moments in India (for Indian-Indians) vs. Singapore? Why? In what ways?

24. What are your thoughts on marriage? Do you want to get married? No why not? Yes but what is preventing this from happening?

25. How do you think your life might change if you were to get married/make your partnership legal?

Based overseas:

26. How has being overseas impacted the way you live your single/unmarried life? What has your experience of being single been in the city you are currently based in? How is it different from when you were back home (i.e. in Singapore for Singaporeans or India for Indian nationals)? Do you think the experiences of single women overseas is different from those of single men? How and why?

27. What are your primary concerns about being single in the global city (safety, loneliness, others?). Would you say they were different from those when you were based in your home country? Why?

Based in Singapore:

28. How has being based in Singapore influenced the way you live your single life? (influence of proximity to parents and siblings and other extended family members)? How would you say your experience is different from married women? How is it different from single men? How might it different from Singaporean single women living abroad?

Based in Singapore but travel frequently for work:

29. For those who travel frequently for work to a global city, how has having to travel frequently influenced the way you live your single life? (maintaining relationships, meeting new people, escaping familial gaze, trying new things?)

All:

30. How have your views on being single changed over the years? Was there a particular incident that triggered this change? Can you say more about this?

31. Try to get them to talk about first physically intimate encounter (let them define what this is – kiss, hand holding, petting, full-on sex etc).

32. What made you decide to take this step? Where? Was it difficult? In terms of where – public vs. private space?

33. Who knows? Do they share with anyone about these encounter(s)? Parents know? Would them approve? Disapprove? How to avoid gaze? Does mobility matter? In terms of definition of sexual intimacy, taking that next step?

34. If older single respondent ask how encounter changes? Need to avoid gaze still there?

Meeting new people/dating and singles scene/socialising with friends

Based overseas:

35. What do you do for leisure? What kind of hobbies, interest do you have (e.g. travel, books, music, plays, concerts, gym, food)?

36. How has moving overseas impacted your leisure interests?

37. How would you describe your social life? Active? Not? What do you do for leisure (e.g. with friends, taking part in the singles scene, dating, hobbies, religious activities, sports)?

38. Do you hang out with other single people? Do you enjoy hanging out with other singles? Why? Why not? Do you have close friends among those who are married/are in relationships/have kids? Why? Why not?

39. How different is your social life at home compared to when you are away (for those based in an overseas global city)?

40. How important is meeting new people? Why?

41. Does being overseas influence your tendency to go out and meet new people? Do you enjoy meeting new people? Why bother meeting new people at all? (for the purpose of dating/hook-up/finding a potential partner/to make friends?). Why not?

42. When meeting new people (whether for dating or just for socialising), how would initial contact have been made? Through leisure activities (e.g. hobby, volunteer work, gym, clubbing/bars, place of worship, others?), through introductions by mutual friends/family, or through the office? How effective are these avenues for meeting people? Why? For Singaporeans based overseas, how different is this experience to the dating scene/singles scene/meeting people in Singapore.

43. Are there any qualities you look for in a person (whether as a friend to hang out with)? What are the qualities that person must possess before the relationship becomes more intimate (i.e. less platonic)? Would ethnicity, religion, or nationality play an impact in making this decision? Why? Why not? Who would you absolutely not "date"? Why? Why not? What are the circumstances under which you might change your mind? Why? Was there ever an incident when you were pleasantly surprised by the outcome of a date? How? Why?

44. For those based overseas, has being overseas influenced this (for those based overseas)? What would make you say yes or no if you were asked out on a "date"?

45. How the decisions you make about meeting new people changed over the years? More open? Less open? Was there a particular incident that triggered this change? Can you say more about this?

Based in Singapore:

46. What do you do for leisure? What kind of hobbies, interest do you have (e.g. travel, books, music, plays, concerts, gym, food)?

47. How would you describe your social life? Active? Not? What do you do for leisure (e.g. with friends, taking part in the singles scene, dating, hobbies, religious activities, sports)?

48. Do you hang out with other single people? Do you enjoy hanging out with other singles? Why? Why not? Do you have close friends among those who are married/are in relationships/have kids? Why? Why not?
49. How important is meeting new people? Why?

50. When meeting new people (whether for dating or just for socialising), how would initial contact have been made? Through leisure activities (e.g. hobby, volunteer work, gym, clubbing/bars, place of worship, others?), through introductions by mutual friends/family, or through the office? How effective are these avenues for meeting people? Why? For Indian-Indians how is it different from the scene in India? Which scene do you prefer? Home or overseas?

51. Are there any qualities you look for in a person (whether as a friend to hang out with)? What are the qualities that person must possess before the relationship becomes more intimate (i.e. less platonic)? Would ethnicity, religion, or nationality play an impact in making this decision? Why? Why not? Who would you absolutely not "date"? Why? Why not? What are the circumstances under which you might change your mind? Why? Was there ever an incident when you were pleasantly surprised by the outcome of a date? How? Why?

52. How the decisions you make about meeting new people changed over the years? More open? Less open? Was there a particular incident that triggered this change? Can you say more about this?

Work

53. What kind of interactions do you have with office colleagues? (only discuss work related stuff? Meet outside work, personal relationships with office colleagues outside work? What is the nature of these relationships – meet for movie and dinner? Shopping? More?), core group of friends? None?

54. What is your experience of being single in the workplace? Do you socialise with other single colleagues? What do you talk about? For those based overseas, how is this different from home (i.e. Singapore for Singaporeans and India for Indian-Indians)?

55. Are there many singles in your office? What is the distribution of men and women singles? For those based overseas, how does this compare to their workplace at home?

56. How are single women's work lives different from single men's or married colleagues? What are some of the benefits and challenges of being single in the workplace? Why? Compare between overseas and home for those based overseas. Job security? Traveling home too often job security in question? Single people more necessary for job security no one else to "look after you".

57. Have you ever been questioned about your single status in the office? By whom? Where did this take place? What was the outcome of the conversation?

58. Have you ever dated someone from the office? How did the date come about? How was the subject of the date broached? How did you respond? What was the outcome?

59. Has there been a work-related situation in which your single status has been advantageous/disadvantageous for you? How? (impacted promotion prospects? Extra work hours? Not being given key projects to work on, being given particular projects to work on?) Why? Why does this incident stand out? What was the outcome of the incident? How did it impact your life? Is there a difference (for those based overseas) between the experience overseas vs. home?

60. In what way are single women viewed differently from single men in your work environment? Compare between overseas and home for those based overseas.

61. How have your views on being single at the workplace changed over the years? Are there aspects in terms of how you behave, whom you mix with in the office that have changed? Was there a particular incident that triggered this change? Can you talk more about this?

Family

All:

62. How often do you spend time with your family (parents, siblings, other family members, where are they based)?

63. What kind of activities do you engage in with family members? What kind of responsibilities do you have towards your family? Financial? Care-giving? What about keeping in touch with and caring for people who are important in your life but are non-family members? Why is the latter group important to you? How and why do you keep in touch or care for them?

64. What would you consider to be your key responsibility to your family (i.e. for example as a daughter, aunt, niece, grand-daughter?). (note to self, what about non-family members?).

65. Has your family expressed concern about your single status? What are their concerns?

Based overseas:

66. What are some of the practical difficulties of you being overseas and having your family be elsewhere (time difference?). How do you keep in touch? Do you return home? How often? Realise do get on? Don't get on? A turning point here.

67. For those based overseas or who travel overseas frequently for work, how has being overseas changed how you perform these responsibilities?

68. Does your family know much about your life abroad? What aspects of this do you/are you willing to share/not share with them? Why? Do you share more of this information with non-family members (i.e. close circle of friends)? Why?

69. Has your family expressed any concerns about your being based overseas/traveling frequently for work? What are these? How have you responded to these concerns? (e.g. safety, postponement of marriage, marriage to a foreigner, others?)

70. In what ways has your relationship with family changed as a result of being overseas for work/traveling frequently for work? Time spent? Activities engaged in? Alternative non-family members for support (who might these be)?

71. How has moving away from Singapore impacted your relationship with your family?

Based in Singapore:

72. Have you ever given up the opportunity for frequent travel or being based overseas as a result of family responsibilities? What were the circumstances surrounding this decision?

73. Is family something you miss or wish to escape from? For those based overseas or who travel frequently for work, how does/will being overseas allow for this?

All:

74. In your opinion, would you consider your family to be a traditional (conservative)? Is this an opinion you have always had of your family, or it is something that has developed/changed over time? What has brought about this change (e.g. moving away from Singapore)?

'Race' Matters

75. What does it mean to be a single Indian/Chinese/Malay woman? What might be different in the single lives of Indian (or other ethnicity where applicable) women?

76. Do you identify with other single women who are of the same ethnicity as you based in the current city you are in? Why? In what ways? For example, do Singaporean-Indian women identify with British Indian women? Is there a certain kind of global Indianess they identify with? Or do they instead identity with women on the basis of nationality, class, other?

77. Does your nationality matter in terms of your experience of being single in (name of global city)? How? Why? Is there no difference? Why?

78. Does your ethnicity matter in terms of your experience of being single in (name of global city)? How? Why? Is there no difference? Why?

79. Does religion matter in terms of your experience of being single in (name of global city)? How? Why? Is there no difference? Why?

Key moments or points of departure

80. Name three key moments in your life as a single woman? How are these significant? Why? Would leaving Singapore/home or being in (name of global city) constitute one of these key moments? Why? In what ways?

81. What are the sacrifices you have had to make in your personal life as a single woman? Why? For Singaporeans, are the differences in the nature of these sacrifices while in Singapore compared to those made overseas in (name of global city)? For Indian-Indians, are the differences in the nature of these sacrifices while in India compared to overseas in Singapore? Why? Are there differences between those who travel frequently for work and those who don't? Why?

82. If you could change one aspect of your single life, what would it be? How? Why? Are you taking steps toward making the change? Why yes or no? For Singaporeans, is there a difference between the changes you would make based in Singapore vs. being overseas in (name of global city)? For Indian-Indians, is there a difference between the changes you would make based in India vs. being overseas in Singapore? Why?

Appendix C: Excerpts from Interviews By Themes

Theme: Singlehood/Marriage

Excerpt from interview with Sree (not her real name, aged 26) in London.

Q: How do you respond when you are asked if you are single?

A: I will say I am single.

Q: Are you seeing anyone right now?

A: No.

Q: Were you seeing anyone when you were in London?

A: No.

Q: Do you date?

A: Not at the moment.

Q: But in London, did you date?

A: Yes in London.

Q: How did you meet this person?

A: To be honest I have not been on many dates, just a couple. Some of them were from work. And some were form a friend who introduced.

Q: And were they people of the same ethnicity as you or different?

A: One was the same ethnicity, one wasn't.

Q: Would ethnicity, religion or nationality matter in terms of your choice of a partner?

A: I think it would. I think more about ethnicity, to a small extent and religion to a small extent and nationality to a small extent. If it affects at a dating stage I would not go further than that. I am just open. If we can click that's important, so it isn't the deciding factor.

Q: What does being single mean to you?

A: Being a single woman has both pros and cons. I really enjoy my independence. I get to just decide what I want to do, do it then. I am not liable to explain anything to anyone. If I feel like going on a holiday, a short trip, I just go. Of course the drawback, I do feel like my friends are getting married, a lot of my friends are getting married and they are like asking me when are you getting married. I do feel some kind of pressure sometimes and I do feel like my biological clock is ticking. I fell in terms of my mum, like some of my relatives are asking, especially when we go to weddings. I hate going to weddings with my mum for that sole reason. Because she

has two daughters and they are always asking, your two daughters, are they married? So I feel bad in the sense that I am giving my mum some kind of added pressure?

Q: Does she say anything about it?

A: Other people are creating the pressure but I do know deep inside she does want to see us settled down.

Q: So she would be happier if you married as opposed to unmarried but she wouldn't force you?

A: Yes.

Q: So no pressure in terms of arranged marriage?

A: No, no.

Q: If you compare being single in Singapore versus being single in London, what would you say are the positive and negative aspects?

A: I think being single in London is more fun in a sense because they have a lot of social networks. I have so many groups of friends, they are all creative, we worked in Madame Trussards, at the end of the day they had a band, they had different things going on which I would go an watch. Very creative, different individuals, so I didn't feel there was something lacking seriously in my life. And I like to cook, so I will

cook for my friends, they will come over and we used to do different activities, so I didn't feel the need to go out and look for someone actively which on hindsight I feel I should have done that. A lot of friends have told me oh you were there for almost 2 years or one-and-a-half years why have you not done, what have you not been doing? Even my sister she came to visit me in London for a short while, she's like by now, I think I would have married someone and stuff like that. There are people I know who marry someone just for the visa, but I didn't want to do that. I feel that I don't know if I wasted time but I don't regret it. I really had a nice time, genuinely, and I got to know the British for what they were, really warm nice people. And yeah, I will never regret that.

Q: What about Singapore?

A: Singapore, I guess being single is challenging especially if you are not of the majority, if you are a minority because it is really hard to meet another single Malay or Indian at any event. It's so hard, in any social single networking.

Q: But it was not as though there were a lot of Indians and Malays in London either?

A: But I didn't have a problem because the people there are not racist.

Q: So you are saying that even if you wanted to see (date) someone from the majority, they would not be open to dating you.

A: Yes. And I am not just making this up because throughout out like having friends, guy Chinese friends in primary school, secondary school, junior college, university even, you know they have this thing you know, oh I can go out with you for a movie but I can't marry you. I had a friend in university who was like, we went out for a movie, drinks and then he comes and tells me oh my mum wants me to marry Chinese, she has to be Teochew. This kind of rubbish. There is this whole thing that's been published in the newspapers where the Chinese men cannot accept an Indian lady more so than any, they feel the features are strong blah, blah, blah, that kind of thing. I think quite a lot has been said and done about that.

Q: How would you compare your life to someone who is married or seeing someone seriously?

A: I have a close friend who was married in London and a close friend who was living with her boyfriend. I didn't feel great striking difference except for the fact when they went home they had someone to see whereas I didn't. We spent a lot of time sometimes them as a couple and me with them, sometimes just me and my friend, the girls. So I never really felt a great difference. But I guess in Singapore I have some married friends here, it is a bit different. I felt it more so here or more so with my Singaporean friends who are married because they love to bring up the subject as well about them being married and me being single.

Q: So what do they say?

A: Basically I have a Singaporean friend who belongs to the same group friends that I travelled with, the guy I was living with. We were all secondary school friends. She is married to a German man and lives in Germany and while I was in London, she came to visit us. So I had to drag myself to the restaurant and meet this girl, the girl I travelled with, the guy I was staying with and this girl from Germany. The 4 of us and she brought her spouse, the girl I was travelling with met a Polish guy in London, so she brought her boyfriend. And we it was just me and the guy friend I was crashing with. Throughout secondary school the girl who is married to the German loves to enquire about my personal life. Who I am dating, throughout, from secondary school all the way til now. So true enough I didn't want to go to the meeting at first but I had some gift that I had bought for her in Uzbekistan which I had to give it to her. So I told the guy, let's bet 20 pounds, the very first question she will ask me is if I am seeing anyone. And he was like no I am broke, so he didn't want to. So we were in the restaurant and in less than 10 minutes she was like so W, who are you seeing now? Then I kicked my friend. I was like 20 pounds, and he was just like shaking his head. And I was like no, I'm just keeping my options open. Then the other girl who was seeing the Polish guy, she was like mocking me, oh keeping my options open, maybe I should keep my option open too, and I was just so angry but by then I was so used to them.

Q: Why do you think they brought this up? Your London friends did not bring it up.

A: To them it (being single) is a normal thing, that's not the first question they ask you when they meet you.

Q: If you had to think of instances where you become most aware of your single status where would that be?

A: When I am with friends who are married or when I am at a wedding.

Q: What are your thoughts on marriage?

A: I do want to get married.

Q: What is holding you back?

A: Basically meeting the right person and coming from a family with divorced parents it's harder, I don't want to make the wrong decision and I don't want to get match made. The whole thing about finding the right person has become really important. So I'd rather be not in a rush to marry any Tom, Dick or Harry for any reason. I'd rather be single and find the person then settle down and face the consequences.

Q: How do you think your life might change if you were to get married?

A: It really depends on the person I marry. That's why it is really important. I am kind of fussy in that sense as in I want someone who has something similar in the sense of I would prefer someone who is into lifelong learning, like pursuing a post grad because that is what I am planning to do. So it would be nice if I meet someone

who's thinking along those lines and so we could compromise and work something out along those lines.

Q: Why has it been difficult for you to meet someone?

A: When I first got there I started working, I was just thinking it would happen. My top priority was to get a job. Once I got a job I just hung out with friends. I had so many friends. It was a bit overwhelming. And then subsequently I became really busy organising something. I actually organized a mini photography exhibition in London of my travel pictures. My work colleagues were so supportive, they helped with the exhibition, gave ideas.

Q: So you were too busy.

A: Yes, but to be honest when I was working. I was interested in someone at work. Initially I didn't know he was attached. And then subsequently I found out he was attached. I was in a way interested in him for awhile so I wasn't looking at anyone (else).

Excerpt from interview with Sunita (not her real name, aged 42) in Singapore.

Q: So the next couple of questions I am going to ask you are about your views about being single okay? How do you respond when you are asked whether you are single?

A: Just to say yes.

Q: So that is a factual question. But in terms of when people ask you, how do you feel when they ask you that question?

A: I guess maybe I’m so used to it now, it doesn’t really bother me at this age. But perhaps, when my friends were all getting married or getting hooked up, I might have felt slightly awkward. But it is something that I might have gotten used to and I am comfortable with now.

Q: So are all your friends married? Your close friends?

A: Most of them are married.

Q: How many friends in your sort of close network are not married?

A: Very few, I think maybe under 5. You mean just my peers right?

Q: Yes, just your peers.

A: Yeah.

Q: Are you currently in a relationship with anyone?

A: No.

Q: Are you conscious of the fact that you are single? In the sense that do you seek out opportunities to meet someone? Are you still looking, in other words, or have you sort of kind of made your peace with that?

A: Actually it's quite strange – I hope this is honest, but I have never really looked for something. It's quite bizarre, and I think it's only because, again I've always lived with my family and I'm very close to my family, so I've had relationships but I've never felt like I wanted to be married, because I kind of enjoy the idea that I – it's kind of strange – but maybe have a relationship that I can come back home to what I'm most comfortable with. So in a sense, I've never looked for it. I think because I've never been lonely at home. I think if I were living by myself, it might be a different situation. It's kind of odd, and in a way, it's kind of ideal!

Q: Actually it's not so odd, I think what you say makes sense. So in the times when you were in a relationship previously, what was the longest, like the most serious one I guess, how long was that relationship for?

A: About 5 years maybe? 5 years was the longest time.

Q: And how old were you during this period, in your like early 30s, mid 30s?

A: 34 to 39 – thereabouts.

Q: If at any point, you don't feel like answering the questions, just tell me you can't okay?

A: This won't go to my brother or my family right?

Q: No it won't, it won't. Yeah, absolutely not. Why didn't it sort of result, in say, a more formal sort of relationship?

A: Okay, this is also going to be quite strange – but I think almost, in fact, almost every relationship I've had, I've known it was not going to end in a formal relationship or marriage because I didn't ever think they were suitable in a sense to get married and also because I never really looked for the idea of a marriage. Sometimes I think I just enjoy the company or knowing someone or you know, having a relationship in that sense. And you know, I've never really told my family about most of them.

Q: Okay, so it's your sort of private life and you have companionship?

A: Yes. Because I don't want to burden them with something that I think may not result in a marriage. So if someone was, there was one person that was fairly serious and then I introduced, but the rest I did not, so yeah.

Q: So what sort of things, or what's good about being in relationships that way? You mentioned that it's actually you enjoy that, the fact that you…?

A: I enjoy it to a degree. They come with a lot of problems, but I enjoy the companionship and of course I enjoy the physical aspects of it, and it's a different type of relationship that you would have with your female friends. But I don't enjoy it for long, so really this again is quite strange, but I enjoy seeing them for a while and then being able to come back to my own space. I don't enjoy the idea of living with a man because maybe it's issues I have, but I feel I'm not at ease totally you know, and I'd like to be. When I'm completely at ease is when I am at home.

Q: Can you compare the times when you are in a relationship dating versus the times you're not dating, like now, what is the biggest difference about the two ways of being to you?

A: I'm usually a lot more calm, and in a sense less stressed when I'm on my own, because I think being in a relationship, like I said perhaps the issues I have, it's a bit of a rollercoaster for me when I'm in relationships. So it's exciting but also has a lot of downside, so I much more even tempered and calm when I'm not in a relationship.

Q: How would you say your life compares to someone who was married? What do you think are the positive aspects of the kind of life you have right now, say being single or just dating or being able to find companionship in these various forms, than say someone who is married?

A: I think I don't know whether I can compare them because they are quite different. Because I think you have positives in both. Say, I'm assuming like being married would allow you to grow in different ways, like in that you're committed to a spouse,

and you know, if you have children, the different aspects of yourself that you are going to grow that may not necessarily grow totally as a single. But with that of course also comes reduced degree of freedom, which I think you will have to accept when you get married I suppose. But I see it's just one aspect, I mean that is marital life. And with my life, I think the biggest difference is that you probably get to know yourself a lot more as a single dating different people because with every relationship whether it works, for me I don't look at it whether it works or not, it's all part of something you have experienced and I enjoy that – I guess I'm not limited in being with one person only because I think it's quite possible to feel a lot from more than one person and because I've dated people from many different cultures and ethnicities, it's eye opening because so many people see things differently and through that process, I think you discover a lot more about yourself. Whereas when you get married, I guess you might be so busy raising a family, running the home that I guess you probably come to the same stage but perhaps at a later age. Whereas as a single and maybe you may be in more relationships, I think you think that maybe you are a bit more introspective about a lot of things and so you probably gain a certain type of insight maybe at an earlier age than your married friends.

Theme: Family/Friendship

Excerpt from interview with Sangeeta (not her real name, aged 30) in Melbourne.

Q: Can you tell me how you came to be in Melbourne? Like when did you come here and what was the purpose?

A: In terms of career and financial stability, there's no complaints in Singapore. I guess it's the same everywhere. But it just, I went up the corporate ladder very quickly and that's why I got burnt out as well.

Q: So you decided to…

A: Take a break. Other than that, the family support was all very good, but just some personal time and space for me to reflect.

Q: So when you were in Singapore, you lived with your parents?

A: Yes I lived with my parents, it's too expensive.

Q: So when you say, the decision to move back to Melbourne in terms of the pace of live, do you mean you have more time for yourself outside of work?

A: That's correct. Down here basically you can do what you want to do after work hours, you can pursue hobbies. It's a great place to think about if you want a career change. Sometimes you just get caught up with the race that you just go with it. But

you actually reflect whether that's what you want to do at the end of the day? And that's the only thing. You could do more apart from work here.

Q: What about being away from family? Do you find that you have more, how has your life been different as a result of living apart from your family?

A: Not much of a difference. Cause I was always independent. But I guess that's the only pull back factor because I was really close to my family. Difference is not much though, a little bit more wiser, a little bit more disciplined. Not pampered, on my own. But other than that not much of a change.

Q: So when you were living with your parents, they weren't the sort of parents who asked where you were going?

A: Not at all. I had the full freedom to go where I wanted to go, do what I want to do, no questions asked.

Q: Okay. How did your parents react to you wanting to return?

A: They were very supportive, though I know they were worried. They were really supportive. They did say if that's what you want, we'll come visit you often, we'll support you. They did say don't worry about the consequences at least do it because then you won't sit back and regret it, saying I should have taken the risk. So they were really good in that way.

Q: So they've been quite supportive..

A: yes definitely.

Q: So what sort of responsibilities do you have toward your family?

A: At the moment, no financial responsibility because my parents are all set. Actually not very much. It's just that touch of me being a child to them and they getting more updates from me. So other than that not much of responsibilities

Q: So if they're not well, who…

A: Oh, if my parents are not well, my brother is there at the moment. But there was an incident earlier this year. My dad had a heart attack, so I did fly up.

Q: How long did you stay for?

A: Just for 2 weeks because dad recovered pretty well after surgery and everything was set. My brother was here as well but he decided to go back because he was getting married and because of dad. So other than that mum's fine to take care of dad. So everything's set. So if there's a need for me to, I will go back (to Singapore).

Q: Here in Melbourne, you are away from family, but who would you call here if you were sick?

A: It would be U, if U wasn’t here it would be my older housemate. I have listed her as my emergency contact.

Q: Did you know U before Melbourne?

A: Yes my brother and her were friends.

Q: And when she came to Melbourne, she looked you up?

A: Yeah, she looked me up.

Q: And you other housemate is a Singaporean?

A: No she’s of Indian ethnicity but she’s from new Zealand and she’s been living in Melbourne for 10 years now.

Q: She’s your other emergency contact person?

A: Yes.

Q: Why is it important to have these close friends, what do they bring to your life?

A: Lots of things. You definitely need friends. But these are the friends you’ve made because you connect well. And at times when they do, cos my ex-housemate, even

though she's Indian, she's predominantly brought up in a Caucasian community, so I do see how her values, her Indian values and her Western values clash. She's lived here long and so she tells me how the Caucasian community works, so it's kind of insightful as well. At the same time it's fun, you can let go of your pressure, chill, have fun and the times you are with them you don't even feel there is a stigma that you're single. It's fine, life is okay.

Q: And this friend, she's single?

A: Yes.

Q: So your close friends, do they tend to be single?

A: Here yes because I don't have married friends. But back home it's a mixture.

Q: And do you think when you're here, the fact that your ex-housemate and U are of the same ethnicity as you, do you think that influences why you have a connection with each other?

A: With U, but with R, no. Cos we are poles apart. But even though we don't see things the same way, it's like oh right, that's your opinion, and you're okay with that, it's just our characters match but definitely not being an Indian, I do have other Caucasian friends from work.

Q: So what's the difference in terms of what you expect of a close friend and family?

A: If your friend doesn't understand you, it doesn't bug you much but if your family doesn't it matters cos you've known each other since you were young. And you tend to be upset on why they don't see your point but you also block it out, why you don't see their point. I guess you live with one as in you carry the bond further but friends if you don't see each other for 6 months, you can always catch up. It won't be a bothering point. You're busy, you're studying, the expectations are less when you're friends than when your family, probably because of the bond, the commitment, the non-tangible responsibilities you have to each other.

Excerpt from interview with Saras (not her real name, aged 53) in Singapore.

Q: We were talking about looking after your mother. Can you tell me a little bit more about looking after your mother – was that something you stepped up to take on? Did your sister get involved?

A: No, no. You grow up with a very strong sense of duty. And then duty...they were wonderful parents. I was lucky. They're nice people and they're not only nice to us, they're nice to people, you know, others. So it's easy to love them. But duty of course was very strong. I mean the struggle was coming back home because, I mean, there were many discussions with other friends I had. And one of them who I went on a trip with, we had a big fight. Because of duty versus love. And that's when I saw the "honesty" inverted commas of how maybe the European model works. You know that they don't do things out of duty, so they claim. A lot of it is because I want to. And that was a very good, big fierce argument that we had in some field in Scotland. Because it made me wonder what it is that is keeping, making me want to go home. Of course I had the bond but besides that, why? Why did I stay? Why didn't I run? All the usual things – when the opportunities were there. And I felt that I had to work it through. How much of me is doing it for duty and how much is because of love. And I think I fell more on the love side. And that love is, a bit of it also has got the fear element, that I cannot cope with myself if I were to just leave it. She's a lovely person, that's why. If she was not a nice person, it would have been easy, you see. That's why.

Q: Sure. So your mother never placed any limitations on you even though you were single?

A: No, no. I mean she would grumble. But it's funny her grumbling. And she's got a lovely sense of humour. So you have many opportunities of coming back and turning it into a joke. And because she sees it as a joke then she starts laughing. Then it's diffused you see. So you learn skills like that in the process. Because, you know she's worried, you know she wants you to get married. Because that's her domain, that all she knows. While she's happy that I'm doing so many things in the community, she would also say why are you doing all this? Why don't you get married? You are married to your work! And she'll get mad and all that but you can turn it very easily to like a question or a joke. And then she doesn't have an answer, then she has to back down. So there was a little bit of rational, logic I could use. So I survived because she was still open in that sense, you know? If she was just like, shut down, this is not my way, then I would have to do exactly what you did and move out, you know? Because there were spaces, you know? Although we were living together, there were spaces. And also because I am earning the money and she doesn't. All that she also know, you know?

Q: Ya, sure. Ok, so your sister is married. While your mum was alive was she involved in any kind of care giving at all?

A: No, no. They decided, very good, they decided from young, that they are the parents, they will take care of their children. They employed a domestic workers and the last kid, when the age of 8, they stopped all the helpers. They had 2, because they had twins and they had 5 kids altogether. And everyone had to do housework, and share the housework.

Q: This is your sister's family?

A: Ya, which is great.

Q: So your sister didn't look after your parents?

A: No, no, no. That was my sole responsibility. Because we...I found her husband was a little bit of the possessive kind. So ok la, you know, but also he's a good man. And also because I like the way they are bringing up the children. They don't come and like you know ask us to do stuff for them. Although at one stage they did. They dropped off their twins at our home and then from our home they would go to school because everyone is out. And that was fantastic for my mother because I am all hours out of the house. She sometimes said that I treat the house as a hotel. And so the children being there, there was great bonding for her. So that was good for her. Then they would go to school on their own and they would take the bus and go home. So ours was just the morning that they used to stay with us.

Q: Right. So when you went out for work, I mean like overseas...

A: She had the helper who was at home.

Q: So the helper was the one who was at home. So if there was any emergency, would it be ok to call your sister if you weren't around?

A: Yes, yes. They have both our numbers and they can call either of us. They can even call my brother. They have 3 numbers. And in that sense we mutually support each other. In emergencies, anyone who can run, runs.

Q: Ok. But the primary caregiver was you?

A: Yes, yah. My sister and I have a good relationship in the sense of...we are not close but we have a good relationship in the sense of taking care of processes. You know, like you...you go and handle all that, because there were a lot of ins and outs of hospitals. You take care of all that. I will take care of the transport or something like that. So ok, finished, end of story.

Q: So she did do some help, it wasn't you on your own.

A: Oh, no, no, no. But in the home and everything, it's my, mine...

Q: Because they lived with you?

A: Both of them lived with me and also because I think they...he's very clear that is his nucleus so I think she has to fall in more with that.

Q: With their family..

A: Sometimes I must be honest I did feel a bit of resentment, you know? Because I just felt that, you know, this is very big on me, primarily as the sole person. But, er...you always give in because you don't want to give trouble...

Q: Because she's married and has her own family?

A: And they are not passing off their children. So I becomes like, ok, fair and square, you know. But then, hello, why am I here? Just because I am single? What if I was married?
Then what is going to happen? So that kind of question does come up. What if I was married? Where would this ball game go, you know? You're just lucky that I am not interested you know?

Q: Yah. When you're out of the house, for work and all that, did your parents while they were alive, did they ever ask where you were going? Who you were seeing?

A: Ya, my mother would ask what time are you coming back. Same old question. I will just tell her I don't know. Everytime it's the same answer- midnight. So you give the last digit.

Q: But you're used to it? You don't see that as an invasion of your privacy.

A: No, no. I don't. The quarrels all took place in the earlier years, you know. From secondary school days right up to about almost early thirties. That was the height of all the quarrels.

Q: That means, the not wanting them to ask you and all that...

A: Yes, yes. Tantrum throwing, the whole works. That was all at that time. It's like what you were saying...conditioning, conditioning them to like, hello...don't ask. So all that took place. The next time as you're older...I have also changed.When you ask me, I'll just give an answer. Sometimes, the answer is right, sometimes it's a flippant answer so that it's like "back off". And she knows it and then she will just say, "Oh ask no questions". Then I will say yes, ask no questions. But this repartee...we always had a repartee thing going. If it wasn't there then it will be very tough.

Q: So how important are friends to you?

A: Oh very important, very important.

Q: What do you count on them for?

A: But I have neglected them. They're still standing by me, which is sad. Neglected them in the last 4 years easily because I have no time for a lot of socials. I depend on them, that I can pick up the phone and I can just say "Hey, you know, I'm really going through some spell here". They will just listen. They don't even know half...because I've got many circles, they don't even know what I'm talking about this circle. But they will listen and they will be able to tell me. I've got friends that are still...they are there from my secondary school days, my NIE days, my this days. So all different

lots. So I can call one lot and the other lot for different, different things. And it's nice...

Q: You must be managing your relationships there, even though you haven't had time.

A: They are kind, they are kind. They are kind because they understand what I am doing. They feel like “Ok, she's the mad one who is doing this, we are not doing this so we will support her”. It's that kind of kindness that they are bestowing on me, you know? And I appreciate that but I still feel I must make time because it's no nice. You know? They're very sweet but I can feel it. I can feel it. I can feel that we were much closer and tighter before. Now half the time I don't know what is happening in their lives.

Q: So what is the difference between what you can call on your sister for and what you can call on your close friends for?

A: My close friends will know more intimate details about my life. My sister will know nothing. She will know many procedural stuff..this that dont know what is going on and all that. But I am a bit more of a confidante for her. She will tell me things. The reason why I don't confide in my sister is simply because she has...she is carrying a lot of things for the family.

Q: Sure. But your friends know more...about what's happening?

A: That's right. But then, you can't put anyone in the picture for too long. At the end it will still have to be you. This is one thing that I think the co-dependency in a marriage is wonderful. That part is attractive. And I think even in any partnership, that is attractive. A single person...these kind of thoughts have come through my mind. And I'm thinking, what will I do? Then I was thinking...it also goes back to your philosophical make up. Like I said earlier, I am a believer in Hinduism but not the religion. And Hinduism is very simple. Your life is for the moment. You have done that much, you have to go, you go. So sometimes I think if I get some terminal illness, I might make my own decision. There is no need to invest in all this treatment. That's it. Because the philosophy is there – you will come back. Don't know as what...cockroach??! That you will come back and continue the work until don't know where...So it depends...

Theme: Racial and National Identity

Excerpt from interview with Shal (not her real name, aged 36, gay) in Melbourne.

Q: Is that one of the reasons you moved out of Singapore, so that you have that potential if you'd like to, to be in a civil partnership.

A: Yes definitely. There is definitely as freedom here that I would like to have in Singapore. But it is not really a major issue for me to have come to Australia in the first place, but it is something to think about.

Q: When and where do you become aware of your unmarried status?

A: Actually it doesn't matter. I think the only insurance. Actually there were 2 occasions in Singapore where that happened. It really upset me. One was an insurance policy. I had 2 insurance policy. They require you to nominate, and my nomination, it was so narrow, my nomination should be immediate family, and if I am married my kids, I could not nominate somebody outside of that.

Q: Really?

A: It was CPF (Central Provident Fund, the national compulsory insurance scheme in Singapore), yes. Insurance also there was something wrong. One insurance policy didn't allow me and one did. So I put my partner's name in one and my brother's name in another. Why should I give any of my money to my brothers? And the other thing was, the will, I wanted to prepare for the future but I couldn't really do that. The

CPF, insurance policy, this really bugged me, that I couldn't really take care of my partner in the future?

Q: Why do you think it is so inflexible? Why shouldn't people be able to give their friends money?

A: I do not know. I have no idea, especially when it is your money. So that was it. But here in Australia, now that being gay is a bit more recognised, in fact the benefit scheme down here is based on whether you are having a relationship, whether gay or straight, it applies.

Q: So do you think your ethnicity matters in terms of living the life you live? Do you think not being married is more difficult for Indians than for others?

A: Definitely. Indians I just find that they have this another thing about status, ooh women must get married as a certain age and if they are not married there must be something wrong with you. And when they say wrong with you, it could be mental or physical. There must be a reason for it (not being married), job status, the fact that it's like you are no longer, not as respected when you are single until you get married. Being married is the norm, and if you are not, something is not quite right.

Q: What kind of respect?

A: Social respect? Where your opinions count. When you get invited to places it's based on the fact whether you are married or not. If you are a woman and not married the invite goes to your parents and not to me.

Q: It's assumed you will be there?

A: Yes. And then it happened with one of my friend's weddings.

Q: Do you identify with people who are of the same ethnicity as you, here in Sydney?

A: No it does not matter.

Q: Does their status whether they are married or single matter?

A: No. It's about commonalities, if there are no commonalities you can be Indian, I am still not going to.

Q: What about nationality?

A: It doesn't matter.

Q: What about religion?

A: Doesn't matter.

Excerpt from interview with Lakshimi (not her real name, aged 43, gay) in Singapore.

Q: Okay. What does it mean to be a single Indian woman? Do you think there is anything special about that compared to say the experiences of any other ethnicity?

A: I mean to me, it doesn't and maybe within my family where marriage and children, those kinds of things have not been a prime aspect of how we judge our womenfolk. But you know I guess, if you talk to a lot of Asian women, even in general, it is very common to label people by marital status and gender, and race. You know if you say you are going out with someone, they will ask if you are going out with an Indian? A Chinese is it? It's in our society, very common for people to ask that and say that. And same thing too our society, generally if you are Indian, people expect you to married, with a couple of kids things like that. And so I have not had this recently. But a couple of years ago when my mother was ill, I had one hospital nurse who was talking to me when my mother was terminally ill. Must have found out that I am a normal sensible person, then asked me why didn't you want to marry?

Q: What did you say?

A: I said, no cannot. I have always been very busy with my career. No but you know, you must marry you know…for women ah must marry in life you know. It was a very generic statement but obviously in her world that was a requirement, you are a woman you know, it's like…

Q: Was she Indian?

A: Yes she was Indian.

Q: Do you think that is a requirement among Indian women?

A: I think it is an expectation. You need to me married and you cannot be single.

Q: How did you feel when she said this?

A: I felt a bit awkward. A – she was my mother's nurse. B – I didn't want to tell her look I am single because I am gay…but it is very common. I will give you another example in my late 20s when I bought my home, it was a double storey terrace house, I got the Hindu priest to do religious blessing, house-warming. The Hindu priest was laying the flowers, and he was looking around left and right in the house, then he looked at my mother and said, "where's her husband?". My mother said, no husband. She's single. And he looked at her and said, such a big house and she's single? Obviously the priest is making a social statement, for a single woman, you have obviously bought too big a house for yourself. Ha ha. Again you know, it was an expectation on the part of the priest to assume that he was doing the housewarming for a couple.

Q: Do you think that nationality matters to you, in terms of your experience of being single?

A: No. Not at all.

Q: And ethnicity?

A: Generally, when I meet Indian men and women, there is this expectation if you are a woman, you are married. And I have even had that with male colleagues in the past. Like I have worked with a lot of Indian nationals who work in my organisation on the IT side and they generally ask me, why are you not married? And these are Indians out of India. So they tend to ask a fairly direct question.

Q: Do you think that there is then a difference between Singaporean Indian women's experience of being single and an Indian national woman?

A: Yes, I met a friend who had a colleague who was Indian from India, working in Jones Lang-La Salle. She's single, of fairly dark pigmentation, and we were having drinks once and she sort of was saying oh know my parents want me to come back to India next month to meet yet another potential arrangement. And she went on to share that because she was of dark complexion, her parents have been finding it a real chore to find her an arrangement because everyman who comes in finds her complexion a problem. So she was basically bemoaning her single status. The two of us, my friend and I said, maybe you should find yourself a nice white boy in Singapore, because they would love you for your pigmentation, and the fact that you are different and do away with whatever it is. She said well my parents would never agree to me marrying a foreigner. It would have to be someone of the right caste. I suspect in India, we've become somewhat bastardised in Singapore, you know we have married different races, people who have come from Tamil Nadu may have married a Gujarati, you know we have become so mixed here, that we have loss sight. If there is any Indian in Singapore who can say which village or which caste he came from, very few perhaps.

So in Singapore I guess people have never really looked to the fact that if you are Indian, you are single, people will just say oh you are a professional, financially sound, maybe amongst the lesser educated Indians in Singapore, they still hold on to those values, those ways of measuring of the success of a woman, because you don't have a 6 figure job salary to talk about. You don't have a degree.

Q: Your physical appearance becomes your collateral?

A: That's correct, your sort of only other qualification in life since you don't have a degree and a professional job, so it's yes I am married. And I think in India it still somehow or another remains a bit of a bugbear amongst Indians, that if their daughter is not married, it becomes sort of a halo thing, all become slightly crestfallen, oh then how can our son get married?