CHAPTER 5

Debating Integration in Singapore, Deepening the Variegations of the Chinese Diaspora

Elaine Lynn-Ee Ho and Fang Yu Foo

Introduction

During the 1990s, in a bid to address immediate labor shortages and mitigate the potential impact of declining fertility rates, the Singaporean government implemented a series of initiatives to make the country a more favorable destination for immigrants. China proved to be an important source of immigration given its abundant supply of the skilled and unskilled workforce that Singapore desired. The cultural background of immigrants from mainland China was thought to be compatible with the majority-ethnic Chinese composition of the Singaporean population, given that 76 % are of Chinese ethnicity (NPTD et al. 2014). Successive waves of Chinese immigration have accentuated Singapore's reputation as a key site where Chinese ethnicity, identity and culture are expressed as part of a wider Chinese diaspora landscape. The growing number of new Chinese immigrants (*xin yimin*) arriving in the country through the different immigration schemes made available by the Singaporean state has served to deepen the variegation of the "Chinese diaspora," a label that has been conceptually interrogated by scholars of Chinese overseas studies such as Wang (1991) and Suryadinata (1997).

E.L.-E. Ho (✉) • F.Y. Foo
National University of Singapore, Singapore, Singapore

M. Zhou (ed.), *Contemporary Chinese Diasporas*,
DOI 10.1007/978-981-10-5595-9_5

Singapore has a majority population of ethnic Chinese (74.3 % compared with 13.3 % Malays, 9.1 % Indians and 3.2 % other ethnic groups in 2015; Department of Statistics Singapore 2016). Most Chinese-Singaporeans were born in Singapore and assert claims of natal belonging that differentiate them from those who were born elsewhere. They distinguish themselves from coethnics born and bred in mainland China (Ho 2006). However, the new Chinese immigrants who left China after 1979 are far from homogenous, and their migration experiences can be periodized according to the conditions in China at the time of departure and the type of migration route they took to get to Singapore. We argue that these contextual factors have an impact on immigrants' attitudes toward integration and the extent of their integration. In the wider literature on integration, one view is that it is the host country that sets the expectations and guidelines for integration. Immigrants are expected to internalize them and thereby become subjects of the state (Lewis and Neal 2005). Some scholars question such notions of integration (Ehrkamp 2006), highlighting that immigrants inevitably bring with them characteristics from their homeland, remaining culturally different from the host society (Nagel 2005). Such debates about integration tend to focus on visible cultural difference such as those to do with ethnicity or religion. Much less has been said about the cultural diversity and differences between coethnics who have converged in immigration societies at different times (for an exception, see Liu 2014). This chapter discusses integration expectations in Singapore, which is experiencing a new wave of immigration from China. It also considers the integration experiences of new Chinese immigrants, and the intraethnic tensions between Chinese-Singaporeans and new Chinese immigrants, as well as differences among the new Chinese immigrant population. This discussion contributes to a more nuanced understanding of the Chinese diaspora at a time when greater emphasis is being placed on human mobility as a resource for driving national progress and wealth accumulation.

The chapter focuses on new Chinese immigrants who have permanent residency or citizenship status. The Singaporean government approaches the integration of permanent residents and citizens separately from that of low-skilled workers. Low-skilled migrant workers are treated as a transient presence because their visas are tied to fixed-term contracts and they do not have the option of applying for long-term residency status. For this group the policy goal has been to minimize alleged social problems; in comparison, highly skilled or capital-bearing foreigners are treated as subjects to be socialized into Singaporean norms and values.

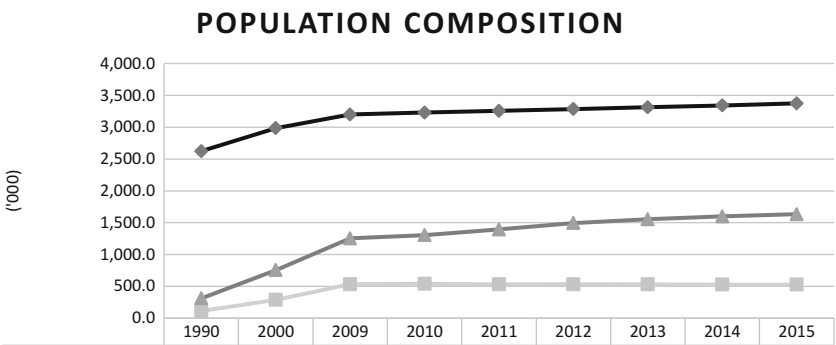
This chapter is based on 28 interviews conducted with 20 immigrants during 2014–2015 (we conducted repeat interviews with a selection of interviewees). The interviewees comprised 12 male and 8 female immigrants, and their ages ranged from 35 to 65. All of them held Singaporean permanent residency status or citizenship. They had immigrated through the employment-pass scheme or as entrepreneurs and investors. The interviews were conducted in Mandarin and lasted for 45 minutes to two hours. The interviewees were recruited through personal contacts initially and subsequently through snowballing contacts. We are both Chinese-Singaporeans born and bred in Singapore but we have forged strong personal and professional networks in mainland China. We situate our analysis of immigration and integration debates in a wider ethnography of Singaporean society and its transnational links with China. Additional analyses of newspaper reports and policy were carried out to set the interview data in a policy context and a social context.

The next section contextualizes integration debates in Singapore's history of immigration and nation-building. As a country built on past immigration flows, Singapore is facing new immigration today that challenges its approach to managing both ethnic diversity and coethnic relations. The section discusses government initiatives to encourage integration and the expectations of Singaporean society of immigrants. The subsequent section discusses the attitudes of new Chinese immigrants to the expectation that they will integrate. It highlights the platforms for integration they have used, in particular the links they forge with new Chinese clan associations in Singapore that are distinct from the pioneer clan associations associated with the Chinese immigrants of yesteryear. The section highlights the intraethnic tensions manifested among the different cohorts of ethnic Chinese in Singapore. Distinctions are drawn not only between Chinese-Singaporeans who consider the country their birthplace and see the newer arrivals as outsiders, but also among new Chinese immigrants according to their period of immigration. These dynamics underline the variegated nature of the Chinese diaspora.

Immigration and Integration in Singapore

Immigration Trends and Tensions in Singapore

From 2000 to 2010, Singapore's permanently resident and non-resident immigrant population nearly doubled in size (see Fig. 5.1) (Department of



	1990	2000	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
Citizens	2,623.7	2,985.9	3,200.7	3,230.7	3,257.2	3,285.1	3,313.5	3,343.0	3,375.0
PRs	112.1	287.5	533.2	541.0	532.0	533.1	531.2	527.7	527.7
Non-Residents	311.3	754.5	1,253.7	1,305.0	1,394.4	1,494.2	1,554.4	1,599.0	1,632.3

Fig. 5.1 Singapore population composition, 1990–2015 (Source: Authors' own graph based on data derived from the Department of Statistics Singapore 2015)

Statistics Singapore 2015). At the population's peak in 2008, 79,167 permanent residency applications were approved (NPTD et al. 2014). Cumulatively this means that the overall permanently resident immigrant population in Singapore increased by more than 0.25 million in less than a decade (2008–2013). Immigration regulations were tightened in late 2009 in response to growing unease among Singaporean citizens who found it difficult to adapt to the pace of change and the changing cultural dynamics. Foreigners are thought to drive up the cost of housing, and are seen as competitors in schools and workplaces. The city-state's capacity to accommodate a rapidly growing population (e.g. in terms of transportation) has been questioned.

Cultural tensions between Singaporeans and pockets of foreigners have been manifested in both physical space and cyberspace. Prominent social media incidents include racist remarks made by some mainland Chinese students towards Singaporeans, or the "cook a pot of curry" Facebook campaign that galvanized Singaporeans to participate in a day of curry cooking after a reported case of neighborhood conflict between an Indian-Singaporean family and their neighbors from China who disliked the smell of curry (Teo 2015). The latter episode, mobilizing non-Indian Singaporeans to demonstrate solidarity with Indian-Singaporeans, signaled the multicultural or interethnic identifications that Singaporeans allegedly

prioritize in their understanding of national identity and nationhood. However, it also underscored the cultural tensions between locally born Singaporeans and new immigrants to the country. In 2013 the government announcement of a projected population increase to 6.9 million by 2030, primarily through immigration, triggered a debate about its feasibility relative to space constraints, infrastructural capacity, and whether immigration is a quick but in effect merely temporary means of driving forward economic growth (i.e., one that does not address issues of economic productivity and fertility decline adequately). Singaporeans, including those of Chinese ethnicity, reacted defensively to the import of more immigrants, even if they were coethnics. The government announcement sparked an outcry and resulted in a protest by more than 4000 people in Hong Lim Park, the only space where protests are allowed in Singapore (BBC News 16 February 2013).

The Singaporean government responded by tightening immigration criteria, publicizing its efforts in this regard, and accentuating the benefits that citizens have over foreigners and permanent residents. According to a population report released in 2014, since immigration regulations were tightened in 2009, only about 30,000 new permanent residency applications had been approved each year so as to retain the permanent resident population at 0.5 million to 0.6 million in the hope that its members would progress toward citizenship. Of these about 20,000 became new citizens each year. The policy goal is to accept between 15,000 and 25,000 new citizens each year to keep the citizen population from shrinking (NPTD et al. 2014). Demands for foreigners to integrate into Singaporean society and policies in this direction have increased concomitantly. The unprecedented increase in the immigrant population year on year has resulted in growing resentment among Singaporeans toward what they see as foreigners encroaching on their living space, workplaces, recreational sites and educational landscapes. This was reflected in the debates about immigration during the general election in 2011 and again in 2015. The ruling People's Action Party (PAP) won a majority in the 2011 general election but its share of the winning votes was smaller than in previous years. Political pundits suggested that this reflected a dissatisfaction with key policies, including its pro-immigration policy. As a result, a new agency known as the National Population and Talent Division was established that same year. Under the Prime Minister's Office, its mandate is to consolidate and coordinate population planning, including the talent-recruitment strategy for Singapore. Visa processing still falls under the remit of the Ministry of

Manpower, while permanent residency and citizenship applications are decided by the Immigration and Checkpoints Authority.

Since the general election of 2011, the Singaporean government has distinguished more clearly between the benefits of citizenship and those of permanent residence by foreigners (known as non-residents in population reports). Recent policies include increasing the monthly school fees paid by permanent residents (SGD110–SGD220) and foreigners (SGD550–SGD1150), whereas citizens enjoy subsidized rates (MOE 2015). Permanent residents now have to wait three years after applying successfully for public housing (known as HDB flats) in Singapore. Previously there was no such waiting period (HDB 2015). There are restrictions on the foreign ownership of landed housing (SLA 2015). Permanent residents and foreigners pay higher stamp duty for private-property purchases than do Singaporean citizens. This is in contrast to the liberal policy in 2005, when foreign investors could count property as part of their investment portfolio to apply for permanent residency status in Singapore. The restrictive policies of recent years suggest that the Singaporean government is clawing back on immigration and signaling the benefits of citizenship more purposefully, not only to assure Singaporean citizens but also to nudge foreigners toward applying for permanent residency and subsequently citizenship.

Integration Initiatives and Expectations in Singapore

Integration is generally understood as the process by which migrants adapt to the receiving society at a policy level and migrants' own experiences of negotiating change. Erdal and Oeppen (2013: 870) argue that it is important to distinguish between "empirical observations of integration as a *process* that affects migrants and the societies in which they live, and the politically loaded idea of integration as an identifiable '*endpoint*' that social policy can implement" (our emphasis). They highlight two different aspects of integration: one focuses on the "functional" aspects of integration, such as how migrants are incorporated into social structures (e.g. labor market, education); the other concerns aspects that are harder to measure, such as relations between the migrant and majority populations and belonging or feeling at home.

The latter aspect of integration has gained prominence in Singapore as a result of government-led initiatives to encourage new citizens' emotional and social integration into Singaporean society. An example of this is the

Singapore Citizenship Journey program conducted by the National Integration Council (NIC), the People's Association (PA) and the Immigration and Checkpoints Authority of Singapore. It comprises an online component to learn about the country's history and values, a guided tour to key landmarks in Singapore and a community-sharing session. There is also a Citizenship Ceremony where new citizens are sworn in. The NIC was established in 2009 "to promote and foster social integration among Singaporeans, new immigrants and foreigners. It comprises leaders from the Government, community and the private sector" (NIC 2010). The PA, seen as a political tool of the PAP for consolidating power through ethnic and social management during the immediate post-independence years (Mauzy and Milne 2002), has adopted a new role in light of immigration challenges. The PA dates back to the pre-independence period when it was established to encourage ethnic and religious integration among the pioneer immigrant groups represented in Singapore. Over the years, as ethnic integration progressed, the significance of the PA and its community centers waned until it was revived to take on the new role of integrating new immigrants into the social fabric of immigrant Singapore.

At the policy level, migrant adaptation is managed in a multicultural framework. Singaporean multiculturalism (or multiracialism, as it is known officially) is upheld as a founding tenet to guide social interaction. When the PAP was elected into government in 1965, it saw that maintaining racial harmony and social stability was essential for Singapore to thrive economically. The Singaporean government had inherited from British colonialism and the Federation of Malaya a plural mixture of immigrant populations (primarily from China and India) that lived alongside the indigenous Malay and mixed-race Eurasians. Singapore adopted an acculturation model of integration (Yap 2014) in which different ethnic groups in the country were encouraged to preserve their distinctive cultures and ethnic identities but to respect the social differences in Singapore and subscribe to its civic values (e.g. meritocracy and the rule of law). The multicultural ethos was incorporated into laws and policies, such as constitutional recognition for racial equality, an ethnic quota on housing estates and the bilingual program in schools. Integration in the context of Singaporean society focused on interethnic assimilation during the immediate post-independence period. The classification of ethnic groups is known popularly as the CMIO (Chinese, Malay, Indian and Others) model (Chua 2003).

However, multiculturalism has been criticized in Singapore and elsewhere for compartmentalizing complex and fluid ethnic identifications

into overarching racial classifications. Contemporary immigration presents new challenges to the multiculturalism model premised on the CMIO categories. The CMIO model glosses over intraethnic differences within individual categories (e.g. Singaporean-Chinese compared with mainland Chinese) while simultaneously lending support to expectations that new immigrants will acculturate to a model of interethnic relations that assumes stable intraethnic relations (see Ho 2017). Inasmuch as the Singaporean state cultivates a project of integration that steers immigrants toward the goal of being accepted in Singaporean society (see Rahman and Kiong 2013), how do newer cohorts of immigrants perceive integration in a context where earlier plural immigrant cultures have meshed into a national fabric, as in the case of Singapore?

Integration from the Perspective of New Chinese Immigrants

Characteristics of New Immigration from China to Singapore

New immigration has introduced greater complexity into managing multiculturalism in Singapore in two ways. First, the range of cultural diversity found in Singapore today (in terms of both ethnicity and nationalities) exceeds the categorizations under the CMIO model. Second, within the category of 'Chinese' there have been new cohorts of immigrants who share the same ethnicity but embody cultural traits perceived to be distinct from coethnics who identify themselves as 'Singaporean' on the basis of birthplace and national identity. Chinese-Singaporeans trace their ancestry to coastal provinces in China, such as Fujian, Guangdong and Hainan, whereas new Chinese immigrants come from a greater range of places. Other aspects of stratification differentiate the diverse group of new Chinese immigrants, including dialects and socioeconomic characteristics.

The Singaporean government implemented several pro-immigration schemes during the 1990s. China became a key market for recruitment drives by the Ministry of Education, which offered scholarships to outstanding foreign students who would then be contractually bound to work in Singapore for a stipulated number of years after graduating. The Singaporean government liberalized "employment pass" (EP) procedures (processed by the Ministry of Manpower) to enable successful applicants to apply for permanent residency status if they fulfilled the residency requirement and

other criteria (processed by the Immigration and Checkpoints Authority). Since 2004 there has been a business visa scheme, Entrepass, popular with new Chinese immigrants who have the business experience and start-up capital required by the Singaporean immigration criteria (MOM 2016). Such schemes targeting wealthy immigrants have since been extended to investors through the Global Investor Program (GIP) (Contact Singapore 2015). Like the highly skilled immigrants, both entrepreneurs and global investors are eligible to apply for permanent residency status. Successful applications are contingent on a range of factors such as income, assets, educational qualifications, professional skills and age (see Table 5.1). Previously it was considered fairly easy for such immigrants to progress to permanent residency status, but in recent years the Singaporean government has raised the bar and this is reflected in the declining number of approvals.

At the lower end of the skills spectrum, China was, and continues to be, one of the main source countries from which construction and manufacturing industries in Singapore recruited foreign workers (through "work permits" processed by the Ministry of Manpower) (Yeoh and Lin 2013). Unlike skilled foreigners on EPs, low-skilled foreigners thus employed cannot apply for permanent residency. There is a separate category of "S-pass" workers for professionals whose qualifications and salary levels are lower than those of foreigners eligible for EPs but higher than those of work permit holders. S-pass holders are able to apply for permanent residency but are considered on a competitive basis. A "study mothers" (*peidu mama*) visa scheme allows mothers to accompany young children studying in Singapore. Under this scheme, the mothers are allowed to work only after a year in Singapore and restricted to selected service sectors (owing to earlier instances of alleged sex work done by study mothers) (Huang and Yeoh 2005). Although this chapter focuses on new Chinese immigrants who qualify for permanent residency and citizenship through the EP, investor or entrepass categories, the negative stereotypes associated with study mothers and S-pass or work permit holders were evoked by participants in the study as a basis on which they reflected on their experiences of integration and the social prejudice they encountered in their interactions with Singaporeans. The next section discusses the attitudes that the research participants expressed toward integration.

Table 5.1 Routes for the immigration of professionals, entrepreneurs, and investors

Schemes	*Criteria*
Employment pass	**1. Employment pass** • Foreigners who earn a fixed monthly salary of at least $3300 and possess good university degrees, professional qualifications or specialist skills. (w.e.f. January 2017, new EP applicants will have to earn a fixed monthly salary of $3600 or more, depending on their qualifications and experience) **2. Personalised employment pass** • High-earning existing Employment Pass holders with a fixed monthly salary of at least $12,000; OR • An overseas foreign professional with a fixed monthly salary of at least $18,000
Business Visa: Singapore Entrepreneur pass (EntrePass from 2004)	• Foreigners who owns 30% shareholding of a company that is less than six-months old, and with a minimum $50,000 paid-up-capital • Sponsored by a well-established Singapore company; OR have obtained a Banker's Guarantee of $3000 by a Singapore bank • Fulfil at least one out of the following innovative conditions: – Funded by a government-accredited venture capitalist or business angel – Holds an intellectual property – Has research collaboration with A*STAR or higher institution in Singapore – The company is an incubatee at a Singapore Government-supported incubator
Global Investor Program (GIP) (from 2004)	• An investor with at least 3 years of entrepreneurial or business track record, and is interested to start up a business or invest in Singapore • May apply for the approval-in-principal Singapore Permanent Residence status (PR) through the GIP. Choosing either investment options: Option A: Invest at least $2.5 million in a new business entity or to expand an existing business operation; Option B: Invest at least $2.5 million in a GIP fund that invests in Singapore-based companies

Source: Authors' own data derived from Contact Singapore (2015) and Ministry of Manpower (2016)

Attitudes of New Chinese Immigrants toward Integration

Despite being a country where most people are of Chinese ethnicity, Singapore has acquired a unique cultural blend as a result of its multicultural ethos. For new Chinese immigrants, this means understanding not only the history and culture of the country but also the social characteristics that guide people's cultural interactions, or participating in activities with "elements of Singaporean culture" (Zhong, male, naturalized citizen). The new Chinese immigrants interviewed saw integration as a process of adaptation to "avoid conflicts with the local culture" (Li Li, female, naturalized citizen) or in "getting along with the locals" (Heather, female, naturalized citizen). Several said that immigrating to Singapore means accepting the values and norms of multiculturalism and meritocracy, seen as founding tenets of Singaporean identity. Both values are tied to the national narrative of how the plural cultural groups found in the country are to be treated equally. Historically, the emphasis on these values has to be understood in the context of the *bumiputra* policy in neighboring Malaysia, which privileges the indigenous Malays and others. It was the difference in political approaches upheld by the Singaporean and Malaysian leadership toward ethnic diversity that led to the separation of Singapore from the Federation of Malaya in 1965. Values of meritocracy and multiculturalism espoused in Singapore resonated with the new Chinese immigrants. As Ma Ning (female, permanent resident), who has lived in Singapore since 1991, put it, "I am a Chinese national; I am not born in Singapore nor did I grow up here. Yet when I step[ped] into society, the place that offered me all the [opportunities] is Singapore."

Some interviewees said that when they first arrived they sought entry into Singaporean society by participating in the activities of Chinese associations, and several remain active in the new Chinese associations formed by new Chinese immigrants like themselves. Inadvertently, this channels them into narrowly defined and predominantly Chinese social networks, even though Singapore is a country characterized by ethnic diversity. The new Chinese associations are closely associated with emigration from mainland China since 1979, whereas the established or pioneer Chinese clan associations trace their historical emergence to an earlier wave of immigration during colonial times. The new Chinese immigrants come from a more diverse range of provinces in mainland China than the earlier wave. As Montsion (2014) suggests, the temporal qualities of Chineseness differ across these different types of Chinese association. The pioneer Chinese clan

associations, such as the Hokkien Huay Kuan, seek to preserve their dialect roots among a younger generation of Westernized Chinese-Singaporeans. Like the PA, the significance of the pioneer clan associations as a tool of social cohesion waned as Singaporean society matured, but, through the renewed immigration from mainland China, some associations seek a new role—one of helping to integrate the newcomers (see also Yeoh and Lin 2013; Montsion 2014).

Meanwhile, the new clan associations formed by post-1979 Chinese immigrants aspire to build links to Singaporean society by partnering the pioneer Chinese clan associations and other Singaporean organizations or institutions through their activities. Their mandate is to provide a platform for members to interact with one another and get to know Singaporean society better. The route toward integration taken by both types of association arguably chimes with government-led integration. Both types of clan association work closely with Singaporean government agencies or members of the political elite to aid integration. Such associations facilitate the entry of Singaporean businesses into the mainland Chinese market. Reflecting on her participation in one of the new associations, An Ni (female, naturalized citizen) said:

> Why we come together in this association is different from the motivation of early immigrants when they joined the clan associations back then. These early immigrants they may face difficulties in their lives, and when they first came to a new place they [...] needed to seek help. As for today's new Chinese immigrants, these people they have good background, they are well educated, equipped with professional skills so [...] their motivation to join a social organisation is beyond issues of bread and butter, they seek to have emotional and social interaction with others, yes. [Our association] is part of the Singapore Federation of Chinese Clan Association, which has joined multiple talks organised by the Lee Kuan Yew School of Public Policy, and even hosted Chinese officials from the PRC Qiaoban. It also introduces and links up entrepreneurs from both China and Singapore. It serves its role as a bridge (*qiaoliang*) between the two countries.

The interviews suggest that several of the new Chinese clan associations seek to forge close links with the Singaporean political elites, and to channel integration efforts through government-led initiatives such as the activities of the PA or by inviting ministers and members of parliament as guests of honor at their events. However, the close links between new Chinese immigrants and the ruling political party have triggered speculation in

Singaporean social media that the pro-immigration policy gives the PAP an electoral advantage since new citizens are more likely to cast their votes in its favor (e.g. TR Emeritus 12 September 2015). The predominance of new Chinese immigrants in Singapore compared with other immigrant groups has also led to claims that the government uses this policy to retain the Chinese majority in the Singaporean population, thus entrenching Chinese privilege over that of the minority groups. This argument, however, overlooks the intraethnic distinction between coethnics, who consider themselves locally born and bred Chinese-Singaporeans, and the post-1979 new Chinese immigrants. Another distinction is between new Chinese immigrants who arrived in the 1990s as skilled workers (emphasizing educational levels and skills) and the later cohort whose members entered as entrepreneurs or investors. This periodization corresponds with changes in mainland China, from a low-income developing country before and during the 1990s to a middle-income developing country from early 2000 onward.

Seeking entry into Singaporean society through the Chinese clan associations limits the extent to which new Chinese immigrants socialize with wider Singaporean society. Singaporeans who participate in Chinese clan associations, even pioneer associations, are a minority. Young Chinese-Singaporeans, in particular, communicate in English or Singlish and are socially distant from the Chinese traditions and customs through which the pioneer clan associations tend to organize their activities. Although they learn Mandarin as a second language as a result of the bilingual educational policy, English or Singlish is still the lingua franca. This also means that their ability to communicate or socialize with new Chinese immigrants is limited. New Chinese immigrants said that they had very few social interactions with non-Chinese Singaporeans, such as Malays, Indians and Eurasians.

Coethnic Tensions and Social Prejudice Experienced by New Chinese Immigrants

Despite the integration policies that seek to bridge the social differences, intraethnic distinctions exist between new Chinese immigrants and Singaporean-Chinese, together with interethnic distinctions with regard to other ethnic groups in Singapore. New Chinese immigrants feel that their inability to express themselves effectively in English or Singlish affects their integration. They are less confident interacting with English- or Singlish-speaking Singaporeans and have few opportunities to interact with non-Chinese Singaporeans. They acknowledge the usefulness of

speaking the Chinese dialects represented in Singapore in order to communicate with older Singaporeans. The older generation of Chinese still communicate in dialects such as Cantonese or Hokkien, rather than English or Mandarin. These dialects are different from those that the new Chinese immigrants speak since many come from other parts of China. An Ni said, for example, that:

> I think that language is a very huge factor [. . .] I really admire Singaporeans because they are quite talented with languages. I mean quite a number of Singaporeans can use Chinese to communicate, at the same time they can also speak different dialects such as Cantonese, Hokkien etc. Take myself for example, I think language is a problem for me. Back in China I can take up the role of an emcee, but in Singapore I cannot, this is because I do not know dialect. If you do not know dialect, it creates a distance between you and the audience (especially those uncles and aunties). Hence, I feel that language poses a huge challenge to integration. When you are with a group of people, okay maybe we can still communicate in English, but once they switch to dialect there is no way we can still communicate. In Singapore if I do not open my mouth, people will assume that I am a local Singaporean. However once I start to talk, my [Mandarin] accent gives me away. So I think because of our accent problem, it discourages new Chinese immigrants from taking the initiative to meet locals.

This passage highlights not only the structural aspects of language ability but also the social prejudice that new Chinese immigrants face in Singapore. An Ni's reference to "accent" signals the social stereotypes that Singaporeans, especially Chinese-Singaporeans, project onto new Chinese immigrants.

Li Li, who used to attend karaoke sessions at the community center (under the PA) in an attempt to get to know local Singaporeans, observed that older Singaporean women (known in local parlance as "aunties") in the classes exhibited a mild prejudice towards younger women from mainland China:

> When I spoke my accent gave me away. My fellow classmates (aunties) were still quite polite to not harp on this. [. . .] At least Singaporeans try to be courteous and still try to take care of me. Maybe I am sensitive but you can sense from the very minute details that they may be judging you. They would ask me why do I have time to attend the classes, and given my young age and I am a female why do I come over? While they try to probe and ask in a polite manner, and they asked these out of curiosity, I feel that there is some form of prejudice and stereotype.

The prejudice that Li Li described refers to the negative stereotypes Singaporeans associate with younger women from mainland China, whom they see as "husband snatchers." Heather, also a female immigrant, said:

> As an immigrant, I devote myself to this country. I work hard all the way [...] Sometimes when people kept saying, you Chinese etc. [...] When they hear my accent, they question me on my standard of living and whether I married a local [...] To them my identity as a Chinese woman, I am here to take advantage of the country. Even today, those old people who are 60-plus years old still have such stereotypes ingrained in them. They may still discriminate you.

In a separate interview, Ma Ning brought up this topic but added:

> To put it objectively, although Singapore is very good there are also middle aged men in Singapore who are not that decent [...] You know you have a family and you are old, why do you still look for young [mainland Chinese] women and give in to temptation because of their looks.

Another type of negative stereotype is the belief held by some Singaporeans that new Chinese immigrants come from a less "developed" country, or that, even if China has advanced economically, mainland Chinese nationals still fail to behave in a "civilized" way. As the pioneer Chinese immigrants improved their lives in the 1980s and early 1990s alongside economic growth in Singapore, their kin and village networks in China lagged behind. The pioneers project old impressions onto the new immigrants. Recalling her experience in the late 1990s when she first relocated to Singapore, Ma Ning said:

> For instance when I first came here, I was living in a HDB [...] My neighbours would ask if I have any pigs at home, and if I ever owned a pair of leather shoes. It was my own house already, so upon hearing such questions [...] At that time I would feel like they are asking stupid questions, but [...] When you think back on this, you have to ponder [...] Firstly, the [HDB residents] do not belong to upper class of society, they may have never gone travelling, so perhaps they do not know how China has developed. That means they do not have any malicious intent when they ask us this [...] When they ask you such questions, they do not know they are just curious. So I just respond and explain to them how China is like now.

Another interviewee, Betty (female permanent resident), said much the same, but added that it is different for younger Singaporeans:

> [Singaporeans who do not know China] tell me they been to China in the past [. . .] Some of them still think that China is mainly sustained by agriculture [. . .] The funniest thing was one of my mother's friends even asked if our house is still farming [. . .] Our family has been detached from the agricultural way of life for such a long time, but many of them still hold an outdated view that China is a country sustained by agriculture [. . .] Maybe because in their minds, China is still a backward country, after all in the olden days the older generation did perceive China as like that. But after a while [. . .] Youngsters who were born in the 1980s and 1990s they feel that China is getting stronger. Some even ask me why I come here, because China is developing so well now and I can go back!

The social prejudice toward coethnics described by Betty is not unusual in the wider context of intraethnic tensions studied elsewhere in the world (e.g. Tsuda 2009; Ho 2013). However, such studies have tended to focus on ethnic "return" migration, whereas the structural and social features of intraethnic tensions discussed here are brought forth by the policies of capitalist nation-states that seek to court human capital and financial capital through immigration.

Although the image that China projects today differs markedly from that of its rural past, another stereotype has come to be projected onto new Chinese immigrants. This has to do with the newfound wealth of the entrepreneur and investor migrants that Singapore started to attract after the Entrepass visa was launched in 2004, together with the later GIP visa. Wealthy migrants purchase luxurious apartments or landed property in housing districts coveted by aspiring middle-class Singaporeans. Incidents such as a horrific car crash involving a Ferrari driven by a *fu-erdai* (second-generation wealthy Chinese) draw the ire of the Singaporean public toward what they consider ostentatious behavior by new immigrants (see Yeoh and Lin 2013 for the public responses to this incident). The dual nature of the stereotypes associated with the socioeconomic status of the new Chinese immigrants also signal distinctions within the wider category generally referred to as 'new Chinese immigrants.'

Cohort Distinctions among New Chinese Immigrants

Deepening the variegations of the Chinese diaspora found in Singapore are cohort distinctions drawn by the new Chinese immigrants themselves, who

consider those who arrived in the 1990s (*lao xinyimin*) to be different from those who arrived from the mid-2000s onwards (*xin xinyimin*). The earlier cohort moved to Singapore as educational and skilled migrants and they differentiated their experiences of integration from the later cohort of entrepreneurs and investor migrants, as well as from the skilled migrants who left China after its economic boom. Zhong reflects thus:

> [First] the earlier cohort of new Chinese immigrants definitely have a better understanding than those new Chinese immigrants who just came. Secondly, I think the difference in age is quite significant too. It is essentially two different generations of immigrants who are coming to Singapore, and differences already exist in their background and how they are being brought up. Even as you are speaking about Chinese immigrants, those who came twenty years ago, and those who came five years ago, they are very different people. If you put these two groups of people back in China's setting, differences still exist between them. This is with reference to their education background, economic background and the influences they have when growing up.

The earlier cohort of new Chinese immigrants arrived as students on scholarships or as skilled professionals. Their socioeconomic status was modest compared with that of the later arrivals, who came as entrepreneurs or investors. Several new Chinese immigrants who arrived in the 1990s said they lived in HDB estates when they first arrived (many continue to do so) and found this to be helpful in interacting with local Singaporeans. Echoing similar views, Jia Jia (female, permanent resident) said:

> I have some new Chinese immigrant friends, they took such a long time to integrate despite having the chance to interact and be exposed to the Singapore society. A lot of them always fall back on the thought of how life used to be like [in China], and how life has changed over here [in Singapore]. Yes, when they feel this, it impedes them from integrating easily [...] These people may be well taken care of at home, so their parents' influence is very strong. Maybe people of my generation, our parents cared for us but not to such a large extent. We have to sort out a lot of things for ourselves, especially after we graduate from university. Now it is not like that, now the parents take care of everything for them! As such the mentality and beliefs of their parents will have some influence on them, but for our generation we are the ones who influence our parents! Another thing is [...] These people when they are back in China, a lot of times their conditions are really different from ours. A lot of times money is a form of power, so they may feel that they are rich [and powerful].

This discussion underlines the heterogeneity of the Chinese population in Singapore, suggesting that social distinctions exist not only between Chinese-Singaporeans and the new Chinese immigrants, but also among new Chinese immigrants. The earlier cohort of new Chinese immigrants maintain that they made a stronger effort to integrate into Singaporean society through their work and housing choices, as well as the local schools they sent their children to (entrepreneurs or investors can afford to have their children educated in private schools known locally as "international schools"). Such social distinctions are tied to policies that have attracted new Chinese migrants from different socioeconomic backgrounds across the decades, as well as to the changing social and economic conditions of emigration in rising China.

Conclusion

In this chapter we have examined the attitudes and platforms for integration used by new Chinese immigrants. We have focused on those who have become permanent residents or citizens. The chapter signals how, alongside social transformations in China, the immigration policies of the Singaporean government paved the way for distinct types of People's Republic of China immigrants to move to Singapore in order to meet the labor or investment needs of the country. Both factors have contributed to deepening the cleavages within the Chinese diaspora in Singapore. Far from being a homogeneous category, the new Chinese immigrants are stratified by socioeconomic status, type of employment, place of origin and period of immigration, which in turn determines the type of visa they have and their routes to permanent residency or citizenship.

The chapter highlights the emic labels that different cohorts of new Chinese immigrants use to frame their experiences of immigration and integration. Corresponding to the immigration policies of the 1990s is an older cohort of new Chinese immigrants who arrived mainly as students or skilled professionals and then remained in Singapore. The immigration policies after 2004 attracted wealthier skilled immigrants, entrepreneurs and global investors who belong to the upper-middle or upper socioeconomic strata. This chapter has shown how the Chinese diaspora in Singapore is stratified in terms of (1) the migrants' own social and economic backgrounds and (2) the policies developed by the Singapore government in its pursuit of a global competitive advantage. The distinct timeframes

described correspond to transformations in China's economy and politics that in turn have an impact on the attitudes of Chinese immigrants toward the country of immigration.

The *lao xinyimin* say that they adapted to Singapore by living in HDB flats on estates alongside Singaporeans. They are more likely to have achieved upward social mobility by starting in lower-paying jobs and working in the same places as Singaporeans. The later cohort of *xin xinyimin* came with the financial means to purchase private property (or HDB in more expensive housing estates). They are more likely to start their own businesses servicing mainland Chinese clientele in Singapore or China, and they retain other business operations in China. This means that their interactions with Singaporeans through housing or employment networks are more limited. The later new Chinese immigrants now have a range of newly established Chinese associations and friendship networks (distinct from the pioneer clan associations) to join. For the older cohort, this was not the case during the 1990s, and they were more likely to seek integration and widen their Singaporean social networks through voluntary associations. Nonetheless, they believe that, as first-generation immigrants, their inclusion in Singaporean society will always be deemed partial, even though they belong to the majority-ethnic group. They retain their identification as mainland Chinese together with Singaporean permanent residency or citizenship status, a sign of their transnational identification alongside an aspiration to integrate.

New Chinese diasporic identity is characterized by the simultaneous negotiation of orientations towards both the ancestral land and the adopted country. Inasmuch as new Chinese immigrants seek to localize in Singapore, their assumption that they can integrate into a multicultural society while interacting predominantly with fellow Chinese immigrants or Singaporean-Chinese may differ from the expectations of the wider society, which envisages integration into a multicultural society that includes cultural interactions. This chapter also shows how successive episodes of Chinese immigration create new axes of differentiation and tension among coethnics. The development of contemporary or new Chinese diasporas reflects a variegated landscape characterized by the multiple layers of attachment that diasporic descendants and new immigrants forge with the countries in which they claim belonging and citizenship.

References

BBC News. (2013, February 16). *Rare Mass Rally Over Singapore Immigration Lans.*

Chua, B. H. (2003). Multiculturalism in Singapore: An Instrument of Social Control. *Race & Class, 44*(3), 58–77.

Contact Singapore. (2015). *Global Investor Program*. https://www.contactsingapore.sg/gip. Accessed 15 Aug 2016.

Department of Statistics Singapore. (2015). *Population Trends 2015*. https://www.nptd.gov.sg/PORTALS/0/HOMEPAGE/HIGHLIGHTS/population-in-brief-2015.pdf. Accessed 7 Aug 2017.

Department of Statistics Singapore. (2016). *Population Trends*. http://www.singstat.gov.sg/docs/defaultsource/default-document-library/publications/publications_and_papers/population_and_population_structure/population2016.pdf. Accessed 24 July 2017.

Ehrkamp, P. (2006). "We Turks Are No Germans": Assimilation Discourses and the Dialectical Construction of Identities in Germany. *Environment and Planning A, 38*(9), 1673–1692.

Erdal, M. B., & Oeppen, C. (2013). Migrant Balancing Acts: Understanding the Interactions Between Integration and Transnationalism. *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies, 39*(6), 867–884.

Ho, E. L. E. (2006). Negotiating Citizenship and Belonging in a Transnational World: Singapore, a Cosmopolis. *Social and Cultural Geography, 7*(3), 385–401.

Ho, E. L. E. (2013). "Refugee" or "Returnee"? The Ethnic Geopolitics of Diasporic Resettlement in China and Intergenerational Change. *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers, 38*(4), 599–611.

Ho, E. L. E. (2017). Cosmopolitanism Dispositions: Cultivating Affinity Ties. In K. S. Loh, P. J. Thum, & J. Chia (Eds.), *Living with Myths in Singapore* (pp. 191–198). Singapore: Ethos Books.

HDB (Housing and Development Board). (2015) *Ethnic Integration Policy & Singapore Permanent Resident Quota*. http://www.hdb.gov.sg/cs/infoweb/business/estate-agents-and-salespersons/buying-a-resale-flat/ethnic-integration-policy-and-spr-quota. Accessed 6 Nov 2015.

Huang, S., & Yeoh, B. S. A. (2005). Transnational Families and Their Children's Education: China's 'Study Mothers' in Singapore. *Global Networks: A Journal of Transnational Affairs, 4*(5), 379–400.

Lewis, G., & Neal, S. (2005). Introduction: Contemporary Political Contexts, Changing Terrains and Revisited Discourses. *Ethnic and Racial Studies, 28*(3), 423–444.

Liu, H. (2014). Beyond Co-ethnicity: The Politics of Differentiating and Integrating New Immigrants in Singapore. *Ethnic and Racial Studies, 37*(7), 225–1238.

Mauzy, D. K., & Milne, R. S. (2002). *Singapore Politics Under the People's Action Party, Politics*. London/New York: Routledge.

MOE (Ministry of Education). (2015). *Increase in School Fees for Non-citizens in Government and Government-Aided Schools from 2016*. http://www.moe.gov.sg/media/press/2015/09/increase-in-school-fees-for-non-citizens-from-2016.php. Accessed 6 Nov 2015.

MOM (Ministry of Manpower, Singapore). (2016). *Work Passes and Permits*. http://www.mom.gov.sg/passes-and-permits. Accessed 15 Aug 2016.

Montsion, J. M. (2014). Chinese Ethnicities in Neoliberal Singapore? State Designs and Dialect(ical) Struggles of Community Associations. *Ethnic and Racial Studies, 37*(9), 1–19.

Nagel, C. (2005). Skilled Migration in Global Cities from Other' Perspectives: British Arabs, Identity Politics, and Local Embededdness. *Geoforum, 36*(2), 197–210.

NIC (National Integration Council). (2010). *Singapore Citizenship Journey*. https://app.nationalintegrationcouncil.org.sg/SingaporeCitizenshipJourney.aspx. Accessed 6 Nov 2015.

NPTD (National Population and Talent Division), Singapore Department of Statistics, Ministry of Home Affairs and Immigration and Checkpoints Authority. (2014). *2014 Population Brief*. http://population.sg/population-in-brief/files/population-in-brief-2014.pdf. Accessed 6 Nov 2015.

Rahman, M. M., & Kiong, T. C. (2013). Integration Policy in Singapore: A Transnational Inclusion Approach. *Asian Ethnicity, 14*(1), 80–98.

SLA (Singapore Land Authority). (2015). *Foreign Ownership of Properties*. http://www.sla.gov.sg/Services/RestrictiononForeignOwnershipofLandedProperty.aspx. Accessed 6 Nov 2015.

Suryadinata, L. (Ed.). (1997). *Ethnic Chinese as Southeast Asians*. Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies.

Teo, V. (2015). In Celebration of Lee Kuan Yew: Singapore's Future as a Global City. *Studies in Ethnicity and Nationalism, 15*(2), 363–374.

TR Emeritus. (2015, September 12). *We Know Why PAP Won Big*. http://www.tremeritus.com/2015/09/12/netizens-we-know-why-pap-won-big/. Accessed 6 Nov 2015.

Tsuda, T. (Ed.). (2009). *Diasporic Homecomings: Ethnic Return Migration in Comparative Perspective*. Stanford: Stanford University Press.

Wang, G. (1991). *China and the Chinese Overseas*. Singapore: Times Academic Press.

Yap, M. T. (2014). Immigration and Integration in Singapore: Trends, Rationale and Policy Response. In M. T. Yap, G. Koh, & D. Soon (Eds.), *Migration and Integration in Singapore: Policies and Practice* (pp. 25–38). New York: Routledge.

Yeoh, B. S. A., & Lin, W. (2013). Chinese Migration to Singapore: Discourses and Discontents in a Globalizing Nation-State. *Asia and Pacific Migration Journal, 22*(1), 31–34.