

## **Social Service Student Seminar 2019**

### Presented by:

Lee Si En Ruth

Thian Wen Li

Pang Jee Kim Karin

Jordan Tang Wei Guan

Poh En Qi Gloria

Date: 1 August 2019

Time: 2:30pm to 5:30pm (*Registration starts at 2.00pm*)

Venue: Lecture Theatre 12, Faculty of Arts & Social Sciences, National University of Singapore

Address: 10 Kent Ridge Crescent, Singapore 119260

This seminar showcases independent research by related to social services by Honour's and Master's students in Social Work and Sociology. Panel 1 explores the challenges people face in low-income jobs, while Panel 2 sheds light on serving diverse needs in the community.

### **Abstract:**

#### Panel 1 : Employment

#### **Lee Si En Ruth | Social work takeaways: When Singapore's low-income work in food delivery**

Set in the context of Singapore's burgeoning food delivery scene, this study aims to explore the impact of gig economy food delivery jobs on low-income families. Two methods were employed, namely participant observation in which the researcher took on the role of a food deliverer for a month to gain insider perspectives, and formal semi-structured interviews with 10 deliverers and 2 social workers. It was found that Singapore's low-income gravitate towards food delivery as it can be the best job option for them, due to features such as flexibility and on-demand cash out of their earnings which other jobs lack. However, as family financial needs grow, the fit between deliverers and their work environment widen. Families suffer from income insufficiency, an inability to save, and possible limited social mobility due to barriers to upgrading or changing sectors. In view of these findings, social workers are recommended to reconsider clients' employment as central to their mandate. Policymakers also should consider creating a new legal classification for gig workers to introduce some safeguards for food deliverers, and examine the low-income spectrum of the employment market to address the issue of social mobility.

#### **Thian Wen Li | Retraining to work: Limitations and realities for blue-collar workers in Singapore**

Singapore's claims to meritocracy features the need for the normalisation of high competition and constant upgrading of its citizens to compete. Singapore's main approaches directed at workers are based on retraining and preparing them for the future economy, with two main initiatives being SkillsFuture, which provides a \$500 credit to Singaporeans to learn a new skill, and Adapt And Grow, a programme focusing on mid-career workers. However, these approaches disproportionately benefit the already privileged, and thereby perpetuating inequality. How have such reskilling policies affected low-skilled blue-collar workers? Through an analysis of ethnographic research conducted in a meat processing plant that mainly hires locals, and in-depth interviews with blue-collar workers in Singapore, this research would present the perception towards retraining of these workers. Most of the workers are in their 40s to 60s, mainly Chinese, with limited education, and have engaged with different forms of manual work their whole lives. This research shows that the experiences of these workers do not mirror the

intended outcomes of these policies. There are different levels of awareness towards the SkillsFuture programme, where most are unaware or indifferent towards it. Of cited reasons include lack of time, being too old, too uneducated to learn, or disinterest in learning. The reality is such that their work takes up most of their waking hours and energy that learning new skills is low on their priority list. Yet at the same time, they are vulnerable to job volatility, with minimal social safety nets, are unprotected from increasing levels of competition, and have limited access to procuring better jobs. The mentality of self-reliance and retraining has further shifted the accountability of improving one's predicament, and thereby increasing the burden on these workers. A multi-prong approach should be adopted in order to address the above-mentioned issues. These should be grounded in the realities of their working conditions and quality of life, and consider of the welfare of the workers that goes beyond just improving their productivity.

Panel 2 : Diverse needs in the community (start 3:45pm)

### **Pang Jee Kim Karin | Evaluation of buddy programme for foreign wives in Singapore: A comparison between participants and participants-to-be**

There is agreement that foreign wives face considerable challenges including finding employment, acculturating, facing discrimination, and having frail social support. Despite the benefits associated with higher levels of social support, the effectiveness of social support interventions in Singapore is replete with mixed results. As such, the present study seeks to evaluate the effectiveness of the Buddy Programme, a social support intervention for foreign wives in Singapore in which each foreign wife is paired with a Buddy who supports her over the span of the year-long programme. A one-shot posttest quasi-experimental design on intervention group and non-intervention group participants was employed to examine the programme's influence on foreign wives' social support, acculturation, and social integration in Singapore, and to identify service gaps and potential improvements from the foreign wives' perspectives. Results indicated that there was a significant difference in overall friend social support especially in the area of informational support. Other key findings include relatively high levels of support from the family, and high levels of acculturation even without the intervention. However, social support from the Buddy was generally low, and there was no significant difference in the levels of social integration between the two groups. On the other hand, open-ended questions and the qualitative interviews found that participants wanted two main areas of support from formal sources of support namely, information and tips regarding specific issues that affect binational families, and assistance to help them enhance their skills and economic situation. The findings suggest that the Buddy Programme may be effective in enhancing friend social support, but not in other areas. To meet the programme objectives, Buddy support and social integration may be two aspects of the programme to enhance. In summary, the study points to specific areas of the programme that could be enhanced, as well as the participants' perspectives on how the programme can be enhanced to meet their needs better.

### **Jordan Tang Wei Guan | LGBTQ+ people's perceptions of social services and community groups in Singapore**

Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer (LGBTQ+) people have recently risen to the fore in civil and political discourse. However, a social work perspective on LGBTQ+ people in Singapore is still lacking in existing literature. While it is known that there are social services and community groups that serve the needs of LGBTQ+ people, little is known about the perceptions that LGBTQ+ people have of these social services and community groups. Without this knowledge, it would be difficult for social workers to improve the support ecosystem for LGBTQ+ people. Thus, this exploratory study aimed to find out the perceptions that LGBTQ+ people have of social services and community groups. A survey was conducted to measure participants' perceptions of social services and community groups on the following aspects: awareness, availability, adequacy, accessibility, affordability, acceptability (which comprised of competence of staff and safety), and barriers to usage. Results showed that awareness and familiarity were high for services, and low for non-services, which indicates different levels of publicity that could be due to the purpose of the organisation or the number of avenues for publicity that

are limited by the legitimacy of the organisation. Results also show that in general, social services and community groups are perceived as inadequate and there are not enough of them, which could be attributed to unfamiliarity, or an actual gap in the services and groups. Community social services, in particular, were perceived as inaccessible. Community social services and school counselling services were also perceived as unsafe and incompetent, which indicates that these services have an image problem, where they are unable to cultivate the image that they would be non-judgemental and affirming towards LGBTQ+ people. Supporting this is the finding that fear of judgement and staff that lack competence stood out as perceived barriers. Overall, the results are concerning as they highlight many gaps in the social services and community groups that hinder LGBTQ+ people from getting the help they need.

### **Poh En Qi Gloria | Comparative study of aging-in-place communities in Singapore: The significance of built environment and sense of community on perceived wellbeing of older adults**

The purpose of this explanatory study was to better understand how the built environment and sense of community are linked to the wellbeing of community-dwelling older adults. Indicators of built environment including neighbourhood walkability, accessibility and satisfaction of facilities as well as indicators of sense of community were examined in relation to outcomes of wellbeing (satisfaction with life and quality of life). This paper applies the following theoretical frameworks: Ecological theory, Environmental Press theory, Sense of Community and Socioemotional Selectivity theory to guide the understanding of how the built and social environments can affect wellbeing of individuals. The comparative study was done among a group of older adults (55 years and older) living in matured communities in Singapore- Kampung Admiralty and Whampoa (N= 100). Through this study, there were significant associations found between the built environment, sense of community with the older adults' wellbeing in both communities. Sense of community also serves a mediating effect between built environment and wellbeing. These provide valuable insights into the ageing-in-place literature for Singapore, that interactions between the built and social environments that older adults reside in can influence their perceptions on wellbeing. More community-oriented interventions have been introduced over the years in response to older adults' expression of desire to age-in-place amongst our matured communities. As such, this has important implications on gerontological social work.

[Register here](#)

Registration closes on Thursday, 25 July 2019.

For enquiries, please contact [Ms Jess Tan](#)