

**Role of the Church in Immigrants' Urban Integration:  
The Case of Singaporean Immigrants in Three  
Churches in the Tri-cities, BC**

by

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## **Abstract**

This study utilises the theory of bonding and bridging social capital to understand the role of religious institutions in helping immigrants in their integration. There is a growing research interest in understanding immigrants' labour market outcomes, using the aforementioned theory; with most scholars concluding that bridging social capital is more efficacious. Besides economic integration, this study also looks at the social and cultural integration of immigrants within the context of two predominantly immigrant and one predominantly Canadian churches in the Tri-cities, BC. 85 survey responses and 18 in-depth interviews of leaders and congregants found that the churches fulfill four roles for immigrants: 'stepping stone'; integration needs; roots/identity retention and 'leap frogging'. In conclusion, deriving a deeper understanding of how bonding and bridging social capital worked in the three churches, I argue that immigrant and Canadian churches play important and complementary roles in immigrant integration.

**Keywords:** Bonding social capital; bridging social capital;  
urban/economic/social/cultural integration; immigrant church;  
Canadian church

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## List of Acronyms

ALR	Agricultural Land Reserve
BC	British Columbia
BS	Bible Study
CBC	Canadian-Born Chinese
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
ICBC	Insurance Corporation of British Columbia
PPP	Purchasing Power Parity
LMOs	Labour Market Outcomes
LSIC	Longitudinal Survey of Immigrants to Canada
MSP	Medical Services Plan
MV	Metro Vancouver
NHS	National Household Survey
NS	National Service
PR	Permanent Resident
PRC	People's Republic of China
SWF	Sovereign Wealth Fund
UBC	University of British Columbia
US	United States
VCEMF	Vancouver Chinese Evangelical Ministerial Fellowship

# 1. Introduction

## 1.1. Research Question

What roles do religious institutions play in immigrants' urban integration in Canada? What are the economic, social and cultural concerns of immigrants in which religious institutions aid? How can the theory of bonding and bridging social capital<sup>1</sup> help us to analyse and understand the intricate social networks in religious institutions, in order to derive an appreciation of the value of religious institutions in helping immigrants to smooth their pathways to urban integration?

To answer these related research questions, I have chosen to nest this research in the context of the Protestant church setting: two predominantly immigrant churches and one predominantly Canadian church (hereafter named 'immigrant' and 'Canadian' churches<sup>2</sup> respectively), located in the Tri-cities of Metro Vancouver (MV)<sup>3</sup>. Through a study of Singaporean immigrants in these three Protestant and conservative churches, using the theory of bonding and bridging social capital, I sought to understand how and why some choose to come together as "birds of a feather" (Ley, 2008: pg. 2062) in immigrant

<sup>1</sup> It may be helpful to refer to Section 2.3.2 "Social Capital Theories in Understanding Immigrants' LMOs" and Section 2.3.3. "Bonding and Bridging Social Capital in Immigrant Churches" where the definitions of 'social capital' and 'bonding and bridging social capital' can be found respectively.

<sup>2</sup> I define an immigrant church to mean simply that a majority (more than 50%) of the church worshippers comprise of first-generation immigrants; a Canadian church is one in which more than 50% of the church worshippers comprise of local-born Canadians. The first immigrant church comprises a majority of Singaporean immigrants while the second immigrant church comprises a majority of PRC (People's Republic of China) immigrants.

<sup>3</sup> The Tri-cities of MV comprises of the three municipalities of Port Moody, Coquitlam and Port Coquitlam.

churches while others choose to move on from their ethnic-national group by attending Canadian churches. This examination employs both quantitative and qualitative methods of content analysis, short survey, in-depth interviews using selected measures of grounded theory analysis (Glaser and Strauss, 1967), in particular the techniques of constant comparison and concept construction. The theoretical approach to analysis is 'structural symbolic interactionist' in that it attempts to link the Singaporean immigrants' framing of their urban integration experiences and outcomes to their membership<sup>4</sup> and social capital within the church (Eakin and MacEachen, 1998; Tarasuka and Eakin, 2002; Serpe, 1987).

The background to this research stems from four reasons: the growing research interest in applying the theory of bonding and bridging social capital in understanding the labour market outcomes (LMOs) of immigrants; the lack of research in applying the same theory towards a broader understanding of immigrants' urban integration, beyond LMOs; continued trends in deregulation, privatisation and withdrawal of State welfare which implies the growing importance of non-Government and self-funded social and religious institutions; and resilience and growth of religion in North America, especially amongst immigrant groups.

But what is the correlation between social capital and immigrants' urban integration? One key determinant and measure of success in immigrants' urban integration is arguably their LMOs. In a comprehensive and analytical study of the determinants of decline in immigrants' success in LMOs, Reitz (2007b) concluded that "social capital' resources of immigrants and their importance in employment success" is one policy research priority. Indeed, research into drawing correlations between immigrants' LMO with their social capital and

<sup>4</sup> By 'membership' and subsequent frequent reference to the word 'member(s)' in this paper, I simply refer to people who attend the church as worshippers and not necessarily people who are registered, baptized or communicant members of the church.

networks is growing (Aguilera 2002; Ode and Veenman 2003; Aguilera 2005; Kalter 2006). Canadian scholars are also seeing this research need (Li, 2004; Ooka and Wellman, 2006). Amongst theories of social capital, the theory of bonding and bridging social capital has also seen growth in research interest in application on immigrants' LMOs (Lancee, 2010a, 2010b and 2012).

Then why specifically study social capital in churches and their roles in urban integration? There are two parts to the answer. Firstly, immigration research tends to circulate around three themes: rationales for migration, outcomes of migration on immigrants, and impact of immigrants on their countries of origin and destination (Portes and DeWind, 2004). Within the theme of integrating immigrants, there is a lack of research on understanding the role played by faith communities like churches. Indeed, in "accepting the judgement of the Social Science Research Council in lamenting 'the omission of religion from immigration scholarship'" (SSRC, 2002: quoted in Ley, 2008, pg. 2057), Ley (2008) conducted a study of 46 Korean, Chinese and German immigrant churches in MV to understand the nature of the service provider role of immigrant churches using the theoretical framework of bonding and bridging social capital. He found these churches served as hubs of a wide range of personal, social, formal and informal services for co-ethnic members who are bonded in their common faith, ethnicity and existential concerns. Because of bonding social capital, existing or older members reached out unreservedly, of their own will, warmly and practically to new co-ethnic immigrants with the intention to minister to their various settlement needs, including looking for a job. Secondly, the prediction of the demise of religion in Western society did not come true and indeed, Ley's (2008) study "has been stimulated in part by the refusal of religion to die away as secularization theorists had expected" (pg. 2057). Instead of its downfall, recent immigrant research reveals continued interest in understanding the role of religion in North America in integrating immigrants (Park, 2011; Appleby, 2011).

Lastly, in summing up the rationale for this research, one should also ask why select immigrants from Singapore and not immigrants from other countries or regions to understand how churches influence their urban integration? Again, there are two parts to the answer. Firstly, because of the shift in origins of immigrants since the past three decades from European to predominantly Asian sources (CIC, 2012), this probably explains the disproportionate interest in Canadian immigrant studies on immigrants from Asia, for example Filipinos, Indians and Chinese (for example, Kelly et al. 2008; Somerville and Walsworth, 2010; Man, 2004). Singaporean immigrants as one group of Asian immigrants, albeit small in proportion to other Asian immigrants in Canada, could also shed light on this shift in immigrant origin from Asia.

Secondly, skilled immigrants from Asia tend to have a mixed-bag of “disadvantageous” demographic attributes and implied social capital limitations for which past studies have attributed to the immigrants’ negative LMOs (Kelly et al. 2008) and other possible integration issues. This research project postulates that Singaporean (Chinese) immigrants might possibly possess more ‘advantageous’ demographic attributes and higher social capital, hence they are worth studying as a comparison. Flyvberg (2011, pg. 306) noted that

atypical or extreme cases often reveal more information because they activate more actors and more basic mechanisms in the situation studied...the deviant case helps researchers understand the limits of existing theories and to develop the new concepts, variables, and theories that will be able to account for what were previously considered outliers.

Singaporean Chinese immigrants, being an Asian and more specifically South-East Asian immigrant group and Chinese in ethnicity, might be an atypical or extreme case of Asian and Chinese immigrants, contrary to what research



suggests about such immigrants' integration issues<sup>5</sup>; Singaporean Chinese immigrants, with possibly more 'advantageous' demographic attributes and higher social capital, could have a different integration outcome in Canada and this is worth studying.

The rest of this paper covers literature review (Chapter Two), research methodology (Chapter Three), data findings and analysis (Chapters Four to Seven) and culminates with a conclusion (Chapter Eight).

<sup>5</sup> For instance, Galarneau and Morissette (2008) found that based on 1991 and 2006 Census data, skilled immigrant groups from Southeast and South Asia have the highest proportion of low-education jobs compared to all other immigrant groups.

In other research by Derwing and Waugh (2012), they examined the relationship between official language knowledge and the social integration of adult immigrants to Canada and found that Mandarin speaking new immigrants faced considerably more linguistic and cultural challenges than Slavic-language speaking new immigrants.

## **2. Literature Review**

### **2.1. Introduction**

The literature review delves into the following themes: Canadian immigrants' urban integration; social capital theory and its application in immigrant studies; integration roles of religious institutions; and the profile of Singaporean immigrants.

### **2.2. Canadian Immigrants' Urban Integration**

Since the Canadian Government adopted the multiculturalism policy<sup>6</sup>, research interests have focused on the degree of success of this policy primarily through how immigrants are integrating into Canadian society. In so doing, scholars described what is embodied in the multi-faceted concept of urban integration: in economic, social, cultural and political terms, which are often inter-related. For the purpose of this research, I did not discuss political integration<sup>7</sup> as this is not the focus of this research, and, until an immigrant obtains citizenship, he or she does not have voting rights in Canada as a permanent resident. The discussion of economic, social and cultural integration attempts to focus more on understanding Asian and Chinese immigrants' integration outcomes.

<sup>6</sup> See Banting and Kymlicka (2010) for a succinct history and role of Canada's multiculturalism policy in integrating immigrants.

<sup>7</sup> Political integration can be construed as the degree of participation in political and civic activities.

### **2.2.1. Economic Integration**

Most policy and research on the outcomes of immigrant integration in Canada focus on immigrants' economic integration or their LMOs; the findings are worrying, indicating a growing decline in economic success of immigrants in Canada. With more skilled immigrants entering Canada through the points-based system since the 1970s (CIC, 2010 and 2011) compared to less skilled immigrants in the 1950s and 1960s, a key indicator of immigrants' economic integration is the LMOs of skilled immigrants.

Quantitative and qualitative research in this area suggests that skilled immigrants are taking longer to integrate well into the Canadian job market. For instance, Galarneau and Morissette (2004 and 2008), using Census data from 1991 to 2006 to understand the LMOs of recent and established<sup>8</sup> skilled Canadian immigrants, found that recent skilled immigrants were twice as likely to be in low-education jobs compared to native-born skilled Canadians and this phenomenon held true at least up to the 2001 Census. Galarneau and Morissette (2008) also compared the various skilled immigrant groups' education-job mismatch against Census (for 1991 and 2006 data) derived variables like age, education, field of study, mother tongue, visible minority status, country of origin, and region of residence; over this 15-year period, representations in low-education jobs have increased for all skilled immigrant groups. Within these skilled immigrant groups, those who came from Southeast and South Asia have the highest proportion of low-education jobs.

This finding tallies with qualitative studies on Filipino and Indian immigrants which reported high levels of deskilling of their foreign credentials

<sup>8</sup> Galarneau and Morissette defined recent immigrants as those who came to Canada between one and five years before the census reference year. Established immigrants are those who came to Canada between 11 and 15 years before the census reference year.

(educational qualification and working experience) resulting in occupational downgrading (Kelly et al. 2008; Somerville and Walsworth, 2010). The census data presented by Galarneau and Morissette (2008) also revealed that for skilled immigrants, whose mother tongue is neither English nor French, their chances of being in low-education jobs are the highest. This result is again consistent with findings from qualitative studies (Hiebert 2006; Li, 2004).

Other qualitative studies on various groups of skilled immigrants in major Canadian cities also attribute the negative LMOs of skilled immigrants to: country of origin (Boyd and Thomas 2002; Reitz 2005; Mojab 1999; Basran and Li 1998); industry regulation acting as barriers to entry (Girad and Bauder, 2007); Canadian employers' preference for native-born workers (Oreopoulos, 2011); gender discrimination (Man, 2004; Creese and Wiebe, 2009); and prescribed pathway to high-education jobs through entry-level positions first (McCoy and Masuch 2007).

There are possibly many other factors influencing the LMOs of skilled immigrants in Canada as we have only briefly done an overview. But what is obvious is that skilled immigrants, especially recent and Asian immigrants, are experiencing greater barriers in terms of attaining economic integration, in terms of having successful LMOs.

### **2.2.2. Social Integration**

Social integration of immigrants is perhaps a less definitive concept compared to economic integration.

In a study to measure and compare the social integration of immigrants and non-immigrants in Canada, Banting and Soroka (2012) defined social integration as one's sense of belonging to the country, which captures two related feelings: sense of attachment to the country and extent to which that

person feels accepted by other denizens. I used Banting and Soroka's (2012) concept of 'attachment' or 'belonging' in this project to ascertain if the Singaporean immigrant research subjects have any attachment to Canada and feeling of being accepted by other denizens through their association with the churches.

To Banting, Courchene and Seidle (2007), social integration of immigrants can be ascertained through three traditional indicators of social integration: language acquisition, residential location and intermarriage. I also attempted to use these three indicators of social integration in this project to ascertain if the Singaporean immigrant research subjects are socially integrated. Overall, social integration of immigrants to Canada seems to be fairly successful in comparison to other immigrant-receiving countries as "there is little evidence of the deep social faultlines feared in parts of Europe." (Banting and Kymlicka, 2010: pg 53).

### **Language acquisition**

An immigrant's primary medium of social integration with the host country can be considered to be through that country's official language(s); if one cannot speak and read that country's official languages(s), it is hard to construe how social integration with the local population can occur. According to Statistics Canada (2006), due to immigration, there was a sharp increase in the allophone population, persons with a mother tongue other than Canada's two official languages (English and French): from 13% in 1986 to 17% in 1996 and to 20% in 2006. In 2006, of the allophone population, the largest group, at 16.4%, comprises of people who reported having one of the Chinese languages as their mother tongue. Allophones tend to live in census metropolitan areas; in Vancouver census metropolitan area, four out of ten residents are allophones and of those allophones, the largest population are people who reported having a Chinese language as their mother tongue, at 38%.

However, the same Statistics Canada (2006) paper also reported that in 2006, nearly half of allophones in Canada speak English or French most often at home, implying that being allophone does not necessarily imply inability or unwillingness to use Canada's official languages. Furthermore, with increased length of stay in Canada, allophone Canadians tend to adopt one of the two official languages as their home language, indicating an ability or willingness to socially integrate through language acquisition of Canada's official languages, given time to do so. Even without the benefit of length of stay, 82 percent of new immigrants who arrived in Canada in 2000-1 reported that they were able to converse well in at least one of Canada's official languages (Statistics Canada 2003). Regardless, amongst the major ethnic immigrant groups in Canada, the Chinese seem to face one of the greatest linguistic challenges in terms of English-proficiency (Derwing and Waugh, 2012).

This project found that the 18 Singaporean immigrant interviewees (who are all Chinese in ethnicity) from the three churches did not have any linguistic challenges in the English language<sup>9</sup>; however, an issue one Singaporean Chinese immigrant had was with trying to speak in the Canadian English accent to Canadian Caucasians.

### **Residential location**

According to Banting, Courchene and Seidle (2007), there is relatively little evidence of racial concentration in ghettos in Canadian cities. Myles and Hou (2004) conducted a study on the residential pattern of Blacks and South Asians in Toronto and found that over time, these migrants follow a traditional assimilation model: initial settlement is in low-income immigrant enclaves which are occupied by their own and other visible minority groups, but they disperse in the long term, after being more affluent, to higher quality neighbourhoods

<sup>9</sup> Even the Singaporean immigrant pastor of the PRC immigrant church spoke to me in English in the interview.

dominated by white people. An interesting exception to this pattern is the Chinese community. In contrast, recent Chinese immigrants tend to settle in established Chinese neighbourhoods with more affluent and longer-term Chinese immigrants, forming dense ethnic neighbourhoods. The ability of new Chinese immigrants to 'huddle' in mature and affluent Chinese neighbourhoods is attributed to their high levels of individual (human and financial) capital which allowed them to be homeowners soon after migrating to Canada. Myles and Hou (2004) suspect that family and ethnic economies (social capital) also played an important role, based on anecdotal accounts. With language assimilation, not higher income, Chinese would exit from these ethnic neighbourhoods. These residential settlement and movement behaviours suggest that Chinese immigrants may have some degree of initial social integration challenges, as argued by Myles and Hou. These conclusions on Chinese immigrants in Toronto differ from Logan et al. (2002)'s findings on Chinese immigrants in New York and Los Angeles, amongst a total of 15 groups of ethnic immigrants in New York and Los Angeles: Chinese immigrants in New York and Los Angeles who reside in ethnic group neighbourhoods will move out of their neighbourhoods when they have more choices (higher income, home-owners and not working in ethnic sectors).

This project found that about half of the 18 Singaporean Chinese immigrant interviewees could also afford to buy single family homes soon after migrating to Canada but they did not buy homes in dense Chinese neighbourhoods.

### **Intermarriage**

According to Milan, Maheux and Chui (2010), mixed couple marriages are on the rise in Canada: in 2006, 3.9% of 7,482,800 couples in Canada are mixed unions; this figure was 3.1% and 2.6% in 2001 and 1991 respectively.

By respectively analysing 2001 and 2006 Census data, Milan and Hamm (2004) and Milan, Maheux and Chui (2010) found that the Japanese immigrant group, of all visible minority groups, has the highest proportion of mixed marriages in Canada: in 2001, 70% of immigrants with Japanese descent who are in union are in mixed marriages; in 2006, this figure increased to 74.7%. South Asian immigrant groups in both Census years in 2001 and 2006 have the least percentage of mixed marriages in Canada: in 2001, only 13% of South Asian immigrants who are in union are in mixed marriages; in 2006, this figure dropped to 12.7%. Chinese immigrants have the second lowest percentage of mixed marriages in Canada: in 2001, 16% of Chinese immigrants who are in union are in mixed marriages; in 2006, this figure increased slightly to 17.4%.

There are many factors explaining mixed union figures in Canada but in general, immigrants with longer generational status<sup>10</sup>, and longer span of time spent in Canada in their childhood and adolescence, have a higher affinity towards forming mixed unions. Since Chinese immigrants are a newer wave of immigrants to Canada than European immigrants, the shorter generational status could have partially accounted for the low percentages of mixed marriages in Canada for Chinese immigrants. Likewise, as most of the 18 Singaporean Chinese immigrant interviewees are first generation immigrants and married prior to migrating from Singapore to Canada, only one of them is in a mixed union. It would seem then that it will be more accurate to apply this social indicator on immigrants who are not married prior to migrating to Canada.

<sup>10</sup> Generation status refers to the number of generations that individuals and their families have been in Canada.



### 2.2.3. *Cultural Integration*

What constitutes the cultural integration of immigrants is debated, but let us first assume it refers to the depth of knowledge of the host country's culture, values and norms<sup>11</sup>. Yet, knowledge may not equate to belief, adoption and outward display of the host country's culture, values and norms. Even if there is "head knowledge" and outward display of belief in the host country's predominant culture, values and norms, there is yet another measurement of an immigrant's cultural integration: his or her expression of his or her own cultural distinctiveness, either in the private or public spheres of life. In the field of political governance, two official discourses used by Governments, Assimilationist and Pluralist models<sup>12</sup>, discussed this notion of cultural distinctiveness. Does 'complete' cultural integration necessarily denote a complete abandonment of belief and practice of culture, values and norms from one's source country, be it accrued from an ethnic, a patriarchal or religious background? Can an immigrant be said to be culturally integrated with the host country and at the same time retain partially or entirely his or her cultural distinctiveness either in private or public space?

Just a case in point, and a very relevant example to this research, in a recent *Vancouver Sun* article, Todd (2011a) suggested that the celebration of traditional Chinese festivals in Chinese churches indicates a lack of cultural integration of Chinese Christians in the Canadian society. He quoted a few

<sup>11</sup> What construes Canadian culture, values and norms may be debated too.

<sup>12</sup> Poirier (2004) defined the Assimilationist models of immigrant settlement and inclusion to be based on the idea that expressions of cultural distinctiveness should remain in the private sphere and that public spaces should be "neutral". On the other hand, the Pluralist model is premised on the idea that diversity in the private sphere should be reflected in the public realm as a mosaic of communities.

snippets of Li Yu's<sup>13</sup> writings in a chapter of a book *Christianity as a Chinese Belief*, for instance,

Most Chinese Christians still live a Chinese lifestyle -- shopping in Chinese groceries, eating Chinese food at home or in restaurants, drinking tea and watching Chinese TV channels.

Many Chinese churches in Vancouver are very much like living in a Chinese society. That might be a problem.

The Chinese churches strengthen people's original identity, not their Canadian identity. Whether that is good or not depends on how you see it.

Todd said that Yu is not convinced that the process of integration is happening in ethnically uniform Chinese churches in MV; together with UBC (University of British Columbia) Asian Studies professor Don Baker, Yu wondered whether Chinese and Korean churches in MV may be hindering members' ability to engage the wider Canadian culture.

Todd's article invoked a strong rebuttal from the Vancouver Chinese Evangelical Ministerial Fellowship (VCEMF) which was published by Todd (2011b); in short, they argue that Chinese immigrants can be culturally integrated in Canada and still retain their Chinese culture, language and preference for a Chinese church. For instance, VCEMF contends that Canada's multiculturalism policy respects the daily living choices, including the choice of church and language of worship of ethnically different immigrants; at the same time, many Chinese Christians are dedicated volunteers in many Canadian institutions and many second generation Christian Chinese are being nurtured with excellent English language skills to participate more fully in the society. Also, as Chinese church members, many ethnic Chinese Christians do participate in Canadian culture and engagements like supporting Canadian sports teams and athletes during NHL hockey games and the 2010 Winter Olympics, and celebrating

<sup>13</sup> Li Yu is an Asian studies instructor at Langara College.

Christmas similarly as mainstream citizens through gifting, home decorations and charity donations to the less fortunate. This is just one case of how debatable this discourse on cultural integration is.

Some scholars like Sinacore et al. (2009) would even support broadening the understanding of cultural integration of immigrants to include linguistic, sociocultural and psychological adjustment within the new culture.

Linguistic adjustment refers to host language proficiency, preference and use; sociocultural adjustment refers to the ability to “fit-in” and to effectively interact with members of the new cultural environment and is, partly based on educational-occupational status and mobility; while psychological adjustment encompasses general wellbeing or satisfaction in the new cultural environment and is related to cultural values, attitudes, and behaviours. Therefore, successful cultural transitioning occurs when immigrants are able to find occupational and social integration within the new culture. (pg. 159)

This definition of cultural integration is very encompassing and reinforces the inter-relatedness of economic and social integration to cultural integration of immigrants.

### **2.3. Social Capital Theory and its Application in Immigrant Studies**

This segment introduces, summarizes and reviews social capital theories; then, by adopting a working definition of social capital, tailored for immigrant studies, we briefly discuss this theory’s application in understanding the economic integration or LMOs of immigrants. Lastly, we define bonding and bridging social capital and discuss its application in understanding how immigrant churches act as social service hubs in helping immigrants in MV, thereby revealing the economic, social, and cultural integration pathways of some first and second generation ethnic minority immigrants.

### **2.3.1. Social Capital**

Social Capital is a very broad concept. Scholars focus on different theoretical definitions and understandings of social capital. Bourdieu (1986) defined social capital as a social group's actual and potential resources which are linked by a network of institutionalized relationships of members. Granovetter's (1985, 1990) social embeddedness concept concerns how an individual is nestled amongst a web of social relations, creating trust to maintain mutual exchanges (see also Granovetter, 1995). In contrast, Putnam (1993) defined social capital primarily as emanating from organizations. Portes and Sensenbrenner (1993) considered both the importance of the institution and relations for holders of social capital to benefit from, due to moral suasion, group solidarity, reciprocal exchanges and enforceable trust.

From these scholars' various perspectives, social capital includes many attributes, including "social structure; social ties or networks; collective resources; social credentials; and norms and values such as reciprocity, trust, and trustworthiness" (Li, 2004: pg. 173).

#### **Two benefits of social capital**

In the introduction of a study on the impact of a housing mobility program on low-income African-American and Latino adolescents, Briggs (1998) differentiated two types of benefits of social capital that an individual can derive from human relationships: social leverage and social support.

Social leverage refers to social capital that helps one "get ahead" or changes one's current state of affairs or opportunity through access to a higher paying job or job promotion or recommendation for a scholarship or loan. Tapping into human relationships to obtain social leverage has the idea of access to clout and influence.

Social support is social capital that helps someone to “get by” or cope with the current state of affairs. This might refer to getting a car ride, confiding with someone or obtaining a small cash loan for an emergency.

Though this differentiation of social capital benefits to an individual may not be very clear-cut at times, the distinction between social leverage and support is useful for this project in assessing the value of the social capital in the church for Singaporean immigrants.

### **Two downsides of social capital**

Li (2004) observed that the literature on social capital seems to be more passionate about emphasizing the benefits of social capital to members of a group at the expense of overlooking two downsides.

To which, Li (2004) highlighted the works of Weber (1968) to illustrate “how social groups can develop protectionism and restrictions to membership to maintain monopolistic advantages, using characteristics like race, language, religion, origin, descent, and residence as grounds for exclusion” (pg. 174). Hence members just commit to cultivating social capital within the group to promote self and group interests without having to be engaged with outsiders. Another downside could be the restriction of individual freedom of the group members due to tight networks and solidarity; studies of Mennonites in Canada have shown that there are costs to individuals for violating common norms (Linden, Currie & Driedger, 1985; Winland, 1993). These ideas are complex to translate into the context of a conservative Singaporean church and PRC immigrant church, but I argue that homophily (in terms of ethnicity, country of origin, language and conservative religion) makes them possible settings for group restrictions to memberships and members’ freedom.

The second shortcoming, related to the first, has to do with the promotion of social capital as a universal good for all, especially to fulfill political purposes. According to White (2003), Canada’s political shift, to ground citizenship in the

actions and institutions of civil society, coincides with the emphasis on social cohesion and social capital. The drawback on welfare spending also ties in with the Canadian Government's emphasis on social investment in citizens' capacity (Jenson & Saint-Martin, 2003). Contrary to the view that social capital is a universal good, Li (2004) observed that social capital's effectiveness is determined by the class-based resources which the group is endowed with and it determines the level of empowerment of individuals. Wright and Cho's (1992) study of how easy it is for people of various class backgrounds to build friendship ties concluded that class boundaries are relatively impermeable: influential persons have access to certain circles whilst the marginalized people are entrapped in poverty due to the limitations of their life chances, which are determined by the social groups they are associated with.

This idea of a varying effectiveness from being associated with different social groups seem to be somewhat synonymous with Briggs' (1998) two-pronged concept of the benefits of social capital. If one is with the 'right' social group, he or she could effectively enjoy social leverage to make advancements in life, for instance in career, business, social status or physical and material enjoyment. On the other hand, if one is with the 'wrong' group, he or she might just "get by" with mostly social support from the group and stay entrapped in poverty with limited life chances.

### **Two types of social capital**

In his research on the social and economic significance of having racially dissimilar friends for Whites, Blacks, Asians and Hispanics, through phone surveys of 29 city-regions in the US, Briggs (2007) highlighted the importance of friendship ties with White people for ethnic minority Americans (especially Blacks) in terms of improving one's economic status and community influence. Likewise, in the earlier mentioned study by Briggs (1998), he found that by exposing one white adult to a low-income African-American or Latino adolescent

dramatically increases the chances that the young person will report at least one reliable source of job information.

These two studies inform us about the two possible types of social capital and some likely outcomes: bonding and bridging social capital. I will define these two concepts later but for now, it will be sufficient to understand bonding social capital as the social connections between similar groups of people whilst bridging social capital connects people who are different<sup>14</sup>. Most literature on why bridging social capital matters more to LMOs than bonding social capital explains that such human interactions between dissimilar (ethnic, racial, socio-economic) groups have important benefits to individuals (especially for those of lower socio-economic status) and society. For instance, Granovetter's (1973) classic work suggested the value of "weak" ties over "strong" ties to an individual's opportunities and integration into communities. More recently, Macpherson et. al (2001) in summarizing the phenomenon of homophily in social networks, through a review of a broad spectrum of literature in the United States (US), argued that:

Homophily limits people's social worlds in a way that has powerful implications for the information they receive, the attitudes they form, and the interactions they experience. Homophily in race and ethnicity creates the strongest divides in our personal environments, with age, religion, education, occupation, and gender following in roughly that order. (pg. 415)

<sup>14</sup> Szreter and Woolcock (2004) defined a third type of social capital, called linking social capital, which is a refinement or a subset of bridging social capital. Szreter and Woolcock drew a distinction between horizontal bridging (bridging social capital) and vertical bridging (linking social capital); they gave the example of horizontal bridging as ethnic traders seeking counterparts in overseas markets while an example of vertical bridging entailed linking across power differentials like members of poor communities tapping into representatives of formal institutions, for instance social workers and health care providers, resulting in significant welfare and well-being improvements.

This project will adopt the notion that bridging social capital can entail both horizontal and vertical connections, as implied by Ley (2008: pg. 2058) in his definition of bridging social capital which can be found in Section 2.3.3. "Bonding and Bridging Social Capital in Immigrant Churches". When an example of linking social capital is mentioned in this project or identified in the church setting, it is recognized as a subset of bridging social capital, and only implies vertical access to power resources.

The notion that homophily in social networks may not be as beneficial to an individual compared to bridging social connections may be linked to the first downside of social capital that homogenous groups could result in conformity to network norms, restricting the freedom of group members. Also, that these two types of social capital seem to have different levels of effectiveness or benefits to group members could also be linked to the two notions of the benefit of social capital: social leverage and social support. It would seem that bridging social capital for an individual has more social leverage opportunities than being engaged in bonding social capital.

This research examines the bonding and bridging ties within the church and attempts to place a value judgement on the 'power' sharing nature of these two types of social capital, in conjunction with identifying the two downsides and two benefits of social capital, if any. At the same time, based on Macpherson et. al's (2001) literature review findings that homophily in race and ethnicity creates the strongest divides, followed by age, religion, education, occupation, and gender in a rough order, this project recognises these factors in this rough order when exploring bridging social relations. This means for example that when a bridging social capital is identified between persons of different ethnicity, it is recognised as a greater achievement or more difficult task than for people of different genders to bridge relations.

### **2.3.2. *Social Capital Theories in Understanding Immigrants' LMOs***

Most research on immigrants' integration outcomes, using social capital theory, focuses on understanding immigrants' economic integration or LMOs.

Noting the broad theoretical understanding and applications of social capital theory, to suit the literature on immigrant and ethnic minority communities in Canada, I will adopt Li's (2004) definition of social capital as:



...a social resource that an individual can mobilize by virtue of having cultivated and maintained the social relations of a group to which the person belongs. However, the effectiveness of such a resource is contingent on the nature of the social network and its level of class-based resources, and the benefits derived from such a resource may involve a cost to the individual. (pg. 184)

This definition broadly encompassed the two benefits and two downsides of social capital discussed earlier.

### **Bonding and bridging**

Researchers use bonding and bridging social capital to understand the LMOs of immigrants. For instance, the concept of bonding social capital is premised upon the ethnic enclave themes found in immigrant literature. Li (2004) classified relevant Canadian literature into four broad themes to describe the LMO and economic well-being of ethnic minority immigrants who tap into ethnically-based ties or bonding social capital. These four themes<sup>15</sup> are: the ethnic attachment thesis, the ethnic mobility entrapment thesis, the ethnic enclave economy thesis, and the ethnic transnationalism thesis. The focus of the first two themes highlights the costs to individual ethnic members for leveraging on the group's bonding social capital whilst the last two themes focus on the conversion of the group's bonding social ties to economic benefits.

The literature on the ethnic attachment thesis suggests losses of earnings and good job opportunities from the mainstream society as a result of maintaining ethnic identity, minority language, ethnic exclusive social networks and institutional affiliations (Reitz and Breton, 1994). To a large extent, the second theme on the ethnic mobility entrapment thesis is similar to the first. Literature focused on how ethnic immigrants are immobilized and embedded in their own ethnic network of low-paying and low human capital work opportunities for various reasons, ranging from being complacent and comfortable with the

<sup>15</sup> The subsequent elaborations of the four themes are from Li (2004).

community, to being exploited by a co-ethnic employer who had rendered kinship assistance in the past (Li, 1977).

The third theme on the ethnic enclave economy thesis arose from the increasing concentration of some ethnic immigrants in urban settings. The original postulation by Wilson and Portes (1980) theorized a thriving immigrant-based economy where the ethnic human capital, embedded social network and language is harnessed to benefit both business owners and salaried immigrant workers. Research suggests varying degrees of economic success and benefit and even opportunities for exploitation especially for workers and women (Sanders and Nee, 1987; Portes and Jensen, 1989; Zhou and Logan 1989; Chan and Cheung, 1985; Teixeira, 1998; Teixeira and Murdie, 1997; Marger and Hoffman, 1992; Li, 1992; Marger, 1989; Walton-Roberts and Hiebert, 1997).

The fourth theme on the ethnic transnationalism thesis “identifies the importance of social networks in ethnic transnational communities in allowing members of such communities to use social capital to facilitate the flow of information and circulation of capital, as well as to form transnational business alliances and investment opportunities” (Li, 2004: pg. 185).

Through the exploration of these four themes of literature on the role of bonding social capital on the LMO and economic well-being of ethnic immigrants, Li (2004) highlighted five policy implications, of which I will mention three which are more relevant to this research project. First, class-based resources of a community influence the effectiveness of social capital. Second, bridging social capital is crucial for low-resource groups in order for them to penetrate outside the group, and secure better job opportunities. Third, social capital is inequitable. In the case of financially well-endowed communities, social capital can further advance their already advantageous position, but in the case of resource-deprived groups, social capital may advance only short-term benefits at a protracted cost.

A case study of skilled Filipino immigrants in Toronto (Kelly et al., 2008) illustrates Li's (2004) three policy implications of social capital. The low class-based resources of skilled Filipinos affected the effectiveness of their social capital as tapping into this in-group resource in Canada, using bonding social capital, led many to low-education jobs. The costs to them perpetuate and escalate as new Filipino arrivals continue to obtain survival or low-education jobs through networks of established Filipinos. Government policy is clearly needed to look at helping resource-deprived groups like the Filipinos to establish bridging social capital with host-country groups or other financially well-endowed groups so that their LMOs might improve. Using bonding and bridging social capital as a framework to understand skilled immigrants' LMOs also explains why Filipinos' generally high proficiency in the English language and exposure to Western culture did not help a majority of them to experience better LMOs and earnings.

In contrast to the competing findings of good and bad LMOs for immigrants who tapped into bonding social capital (co-ethnics) in their economic integration, research findings on the LMOs of immigrants when they tapped into bridging social capital (especially to native ethnics) seem to be consistently positive in terms of securing employment, occupational status and earnings (Aguilera and Massey 2003; Kanas and Van Tubergen 2009; Lancee 2010a, 2010b and 2012). For instance, in Lancee's (2010b) research on the economic returns of the Netherlands' four largest non-western immigrant groups to using bonding and bridging social capital, he found that those immigrants with a high level of bridging social capital are more than twice as likely to be employed than those who do not possess bridging social capital. Also, inter-ethnic networks also seem to pay off not just in terms of access to labour market but also in higher earnings. In Lancee's (2012) research on the economic returns of bonding and bridging social capital for immigrant men in Germany, again, he found similar findings compared to his earlier research on immigrants from the Netherlands (Lancee 2010b): strong inter-ethnic ties are beneficial for German male

immigrants in both employment and occupational status whilst co-ethnic ties and family-based social capital has no effects on the same.

### **2.3.3. *Bonding and Bridging Social Capital in Immigrant Churches***

Having explored how the theory of bonding and bridging social capital applies to immigrants' economic integration, we now look at how this theory plays out for the integration of immigrants in immigrant churches. This research project rides on the coattails of Ley's (2008) study of 46 immigrant Chinese, Korean and German churches in MV. He was primarily interested in the production of bonding social capital in these immigrant church communities and how bridging occurs inter-generationally and across cultures. He defined bonding social capital as

the establishment of relations within relatively homogeneous social groups, such as elites, communities of interest or groups sharply defined by their objective circumstances such as immigrants or the elderly. In group support and loyalty and the accumulation and distribution of resources develop over time, but as Portes (1998) has noted, such sympathies may co-exist with such undesirable requirements as internal conformity and the exclusion of outsiders. (Ley, 2008: pg. 2058).

He then contrasted bridging social capital as one that

stretches across social boundaries, connecting diverse collectivities and extending the field of resources and responsibilities. Some authors also recognize linking social capital that emphasizes vertical networks through social strata to centres of power and resources, in contrast to the more horizontal connections of bridging social capital (Woolcock, 2001). (Ley, 2008: pg. 2058).

Using these two definitions of bonding and bridging (which encompassed linking) social capital, he focused on understanding the impact of bonding and bridging social capital on social services in co-ethnic churches as they progress from their formative years, comprising entirely of first generation co-ethnic immigrants, to subsequently having to confront the challenges of their second generation children. For the first generation of co-ethnic immigrants, because of

commonalities in faith, language, ethnicity, place of origin and concerns, urban social settlement services were generated out of a common identity and bonding social capital. These settlement services range from a broad spectrum of advice and information, for instance on accommodation (including offering room and board to new arrivals), job search, and good schools for the children. Some churches are more organized and offer workshops on “home maintenance, income tax completion, parenting in Canada and winter driving” (Ley, 2008: pg. 2066). Others offer language lessons in English and Chinese, music lessons, “martial arts class, a painting class and a group preparing for the citizenship test.” (Ley, 2008: pg. 2066). Counselling is also a vital service especially in the Korean churches as family stresses are common. The head of the household in the Chinese or Korean family is challenged in Canada as they suffer downward mobility in terms of their occupation, businesses and English competency. There were also many stories of effective giving and support.

Bridging social capital was largely limited in the immigrant growth phase<sup>16</sup> (except for mainstream denominations), in the sense that most congregations did not see the provision of social services beyond their own church, though it was clearly not an intentional exclusion of non-co-ethnics. Beyond the era of the first generation of homogenous identity, when the second generation reaches their mid-teens, they started to question the use of the mother tongue in worship service amongst other traditional, hierarchical and formal social relations. The challenge resulted in three broad outcomes: denial; containment; and surrender.

Denial of the cultural challenge by the first generation led the second generation to leave their parents’ church for a Canadian church or a church for second generation immigrants. ‘Containment’ symbolized the recognition by first generation immigrants that for example their children will not retain the Korean

<sup>16</sup> This is a phase where immigrants from a country of origin first arrived in large numbers; this phase ends when the number of arrivals dwindles.

language, tradition and identity. English speaking services were introduced with a different style of fellowship and worship, allowing the children to stay with the parents in the same church. 'Surrender' happened for the German church as these immigrants were of the earlier immigration stream in the 1950 and 60s. For instance, as one German church refused to 'contain' their children (resulting in their departure), church members died out and dwindled to twenty congregants and as they were renting their building premises to a 200-strong young Korean church, they eventually decided to gift the church building to the Korean church. This German church learnt the earlier lesson on their failure to 'bridge' with their children and generously demonstrated bridging social capital to a Korean church in their demise. Ley (2008) concluded his study by discussing how the immigrant church makes the cross-over to the multicultural church by broadening their solidarity and extending bridging social capital to other ethnic groups and the neighbourhood. In short, bonding and bridging social capital was used to describe and understand the progression of the immigrant church from the early phase of ethnic bonding with largely exclusion of bridging to outsiders and then gradually challenged by forces of bridging social capital coming from the acculturation and suburbanisation of the second generation children, diminished flow of old-country immigrants and the recruitment of non-co-ethnic church members.

This smaller research project examines a Canadian church, together with two immigrant churches, in the hope of providing a contrast to what Ley (2008) has found from studying immigrant churches. To study the same ethnic or country-source immigrants (from Singapore) within these three churches, I have also adopted the perspective of bonding and bridging social capital to see how these immigrants are integrated into the Canadian society through their church life. In addition, I have attempted to attribute value judgments on whether the bonding and bridging social capital found in the three churches are good or bad for the Singaporean immigrants. An example of this is found in Oh's (2007) research on the suburban Koreans in the New York-New Jersey Metropolitan

Area where she examined the Koreans immigrants' spatial dispersion without the attenuation of ethnic linkages. She found that suburban Korean immigrants may have spatially dispersed into affluent white-dominant communities because of school-based residential choices for their children's education. However, their residential dispersal is not necessarily due to assimilation with the native born population and attenuation of their ethnic ties. On the contrary, they maintained co-ethnic linkages to businesses, churches, media and social services in order to meet their practical needs regardless of varying degrees of spatial dispersion. In particular, Oh (2007) found a significant amount of attachment of suburban Koreans to churches from the growing number of Koreans residing into far-reaching suburban communities; so long as the suburban Korean immigrants are connected to an ethnic church, they are able to receive co-ethnic community support despite living far away from any Korean ethnic cluster. Oh (2007) propounds that the church then acted as a community within a community to further assist the dispersion of Korean communities. In this sense, bonding social capital within and from the church benefitted and enabled the Korean immigrants to choose their residential locations based on their children's schooling needs and should their residential location be far from the church as a result, it will not affect their practical needs so long as they maintain connections with the ethnic church. In other words, bonding with Korean churches enabled and empowered the Korean immigrants to have a greater and wider spatial choice of residential locations, but at the same time did not lead to immigrant integration.

## **2.4. Integration Roles of Religious Institutions**

Besides Ley (2008) and Oh (2007), a more recent work, by Dwyer, Tse and Ley (2013), explored the extent to which religious institutions, clustered along Richmond's, BC, No. 5 Road, colloquially known as the 'Highway to Heaven', aided in the process of immigrant integration. This section explores this

latest study to provide more localised understanding on how religious institutions help immigrants to integrate in MV.

Although Dwyer, Tse and Ley (2013) do not explicitly adopt the concepts of social capital in their analysis, this paper offered an understanding to this research in terms of the role of religious institutions in immigrants' integration in MV: the authors do not judge if the migrants are integrated through the religious institutions but adopt the method of reporting what they heard from their interviews<sup>17</sup>. Through exploring the social, cultural and religious activities of the 24 religious institutions, representing the Christian, Jewish, Buddhist, Muslim, Sikh and Hindu faith, the authors argue that the interpretation of integration is complex and discursive; different religious institutions along No. 5 Road discussed a range of practices as contributing to immigrant integration and barriers to integration.

#### **2.4.1. *Four Different Modes of Institutional Integration***

The first instance of integration is the sharing of property. Dwyer, Tse and Ley (2013) found various churches willing to share the same building and space with each other; integration is achieved not through merging of common language speaking services but rather separate institutions co-existing in the same property. The second model of integration is witnessed through the British Columbia Muslim Association which developed a Canadian institutional network which supports other satellite Muslim institutions across the Lower Mainland. The third narrative of integration is seen through the Guru Nanak Niwas or India Cultural Centre of Canada whereby their identity is defined by a contestation of the form of worship between recent immigrants from India and longer settled Indo-Canadians, resulting in the departure of the latter group from a previous location in Vancouver, BC, to settle down at No. 5 Road; the more 'westernized'

<sup>17</sup> This method of reporting what is heard will also be adopted for this project.



and liberal group, now at No. 5 Road, is now taking great care in naming their institution and being explicit in their brochure to safeguard from being 'taken over' by 'fundamentalist' Sikhs. The last integration variation is seen in the transplanting of transnational religious architecture to Canada by the Thrangu Tibetan Monastery. The four different modes of integration are not exhaustive but the authors' intention is to recognise the different forms and possibilities of integration.

I have adopted the spirit of "reporting what is heard" from Dwyer, Tse and Ley (2013) into this project, in regards to the types of institutional integration found in the three churches. At the same time, Dwyer, Tse and Ley (2013) qualified that the four integration modes they identified are not all encompassing in terms of representing all religious forms of institutional integration, yet I did find the first form of integration (shared property) in the PRC immigrant church in this project.

#### **2.4.2. *Four Common Spheres of Integration through Religious Space Use***

Dwyer, Tse and Ley (2013) also discussed shared understandings of how the different faith communities interpret their activities as instruments of integrating new migrants into the Canadian society. Firstly, the religious spaces primarily provided the role of spiritual, social and cultural activities for their members; some of these activities provide wider services to the community and not just in-group members, of which, three types of services stood out: elder care, youth retention, and emotional support for the community. Through these services and activities, social capital is built for members by connecting and bridging immigrants to out-group communities.

Secondly, migrants are integrated into segments of Canadian society through collaborations across the various institutions at No. 5 Road. Collaborations include sharing of infrastructure like parking lots, installation of a

main sewage pipe, inter-faith exchanges and shared sport activities by pupils of various religious schools along No. 5 Road, and interreligious dialogue through the Interfaith Bridging Project, although none of the Christian churches participated<sup>18</sup>. Thirdly, these religious institutions were active participants of events organized by the City of Richmond, for instance, many worked with the Richmond City Museum to allow tours to learn about their culture and histories. Fourthly, the religious institutions were also sites of civic engagements: for instance, several institutions hosted speakers concerned with opposing a new fuel pipeline to the airport that was planned to run adjacent to No. 5 Road; also, local politicians sought support from these faith communities during election period; lastly, not all religious institutions fulfilled the province of BC's Agricultural Land Reserve (ALR) requirement to 'actively farm' their backyards and this has been a source of conflict between different communities and City Hall.

### **2.4.3. *Four Barriers to Integration***

Dwyer, Tse and Ley (2013) found four main barriers to integration at No. 5 Road. Firstly, the periphery location of No. 5 Road in relation to Richmond served as a geographical barrier to integration as the lack of public transit meant that people drove or carpoled into and out of the religious space without engaging neighbouring faith groups. For some churches, it made engaging clients for a 'drop-in' meal service difficult; philanthropic work is also concentrated in downtown Vancouver, hence the geographical location of No. 5 Road is not conducive to forming connections with the broader networks of Richmond. Secondly, the religious institutions are constrained in their resources in terms of money, time and human capital. As these faith communities depended on volunteers to run their activities and services, there are issues of insufficient volunteers, 'overstretched' volunteers and inadequately skilled or trained

<sup>18</sup> Integration or collaborations are not necessarily uniform. For instance, none of the churches along No. 5 Road responded to the Interfaith Bridging Project initiative.

volunteers. Furthermore, these faith communities may also not view social services and public education of their faith and culture as their primary work as spiritual evangelism was more important. Thirdly, the different theological and institutional modes of integration meant that some institutions have more Canadian networks and affiliations whilst others continue to retain strong linkages with transnational organisations based overseas. Fourthly, all faith communities face the challenge of 'holding onto' the second generation of migrants due to the difficulty in getting the second generation to identify with the culture, religion and language medium of the faith.

The literature reviews of Dwyer, Tse and Ley (2013) and Ley (2008) provided foundational and insightful background to this research project in terms of understanding the range of social services and activities which help immigrants to integrate in MV. At the same time, the literature also identified certain potentially integrating activities with other members of the society in which the churches and church members would not participate. Before we proceed to the research methodology, the last segment of the literature review attempts to provide a typical profile of Singaporean immigrants; this understanding provides a preliminary basis to appreciating how Singaporean immigrants might integrate into the Canadian society.

## **2.5. Profile of Singaporean Immigrants**

As this research is interested in the integration of Singaporean immigrants in the context of three Protestant churches in the Tri-cities (further described in Methods section under 'Research Settings'), BC, it will be helpful to understand Singaporean immigrants' economic, social, cultural and religious background.

### **2.5.1. Economic Profile**

The average Singaporean is financially quite well to do. Singaporean households top the world with the highest concentration of millionaire households at more than 17% of all Singaporean households (Boston Group Consulting, 2012). Singapore's Gross domestic product (GDP) dollars or purchasing power parity (PPP) calculations, per capita, as measured by the World Bank and International Monetary Fund, is over 60,000 International dollars as at 2012 whilst Canada's stands at over 40,000 International dollars (The World Bank, 2013; International Monetary Fund, 2012). A small city-state of nearly 5.4 million population (as at 2013 based on Statistics Singapore, 2013a) living on 716 sq km of land, Singapore ranks fifth globally in terms of its Sovereign Wealth Fund (SWF) size, standing at USD 405 billion, representing 8.5% of the global SWF as at Dec 2011 (SWF Institute, 2012). Scholars and commentators have attributed Singapore's economic success to a combination of factors: stable and non-corrupt<sup>19</sup> Government, diverse and open economy<sup>20</sup> attracting Multi-National Corporations, efficient port logistics turn-around time<sup>21</sup>, English educated and skilled population<sup>22</sup>, emphasis on a clean and green city<sup>23</sup>, advanced

<sup>19</sup> Corruptions Perceptions Index 2011 ranked Singapore amongst the top 5 least corrupt countries together with New Zealand and Scandinavian countries (Transparency International, 2012).

<sup>20</sup> 2012 Index of Economic Freedom ranked Singapore as the freest economy in the world behind Hong Kong (The Heritage Foundation, 2012).

<sup>21</sup> Global Enabling Trade Index 2012 focuses on measuring whether economies have in place the necessary attributes for enabling trade and it ranked Singapore first out of 132 economies. (World Economic Forum, 2012)

<sup>22</sup> 96.4% of Singaporeans (residents aged 15 years and over) are literate; 67.7% of Singaporeans (resident non-students aged 25 years and over ) have Secondary or higher qualifications (Statistics Singapore, 2013a).

The Learning Curve Report, conducted by the Economist Intelligence Unit on behalf of Pearson, ranked Singapore's education system fifth in the world, behind Finland, South Korea, Hong Kong and Japan (Pearson, 2012).

infrastructure networks<sup>24</sup>, and ease of doing businesses<sup>25</sup>. This goes in line with Singapore's low unemployment rate of 2.1% as at June 2013 (Statistics Singapore, 2013a).

Based on this quick overview of Singaporeans' economic profile, Singaporeans who migrate to Canada are likely to have fairly high class-based and financial resources. Also, taking into consideration the literature review on the LMOs of immigrants in Canada, Singaporean immigrants, with a comfortable financial reserve, will not be as adversely or immediately affected by the bad LMOs of immigrants in Canada, compared to immigrants with limited financial resources like the Filipinos in Toronto (Kelly et al., 2008).

### **2.5.2. Social Profile**

In some ways, Singaporeans have similar social circumstances and profile as Canadians.

Singaporeans have a high rate of literacy and education (Statistics Singapore, 2013a). There are four official languages in Singapore: English, Chinese, Malay and Tamil. The lingua franca and language of administration is English. Most Singaporeans are bilingual, with English as their first language of instruction in public schools and their ethnic language or mother tongue as their

<sup>23</sup>The Asian Green City Index, put together by the Economist Intelligence Unit (EIU), ranked 22 major cities, including Tokyo, Delhi and Shanghai. Singapore is ranked the greenest city in Asia (Siemens, 2012).

The Lee Kuan Yew Centre for Innovative Cities and the Centre for Liveable Cities help to share knowledge on Singapore's successful experiences over the last half-century in urban planning, while learning from other cities and experts to address emerging challenges for Singapore (LKY CIC, 2013 and CLC, 2013).

<sup>24</sup>In a 2012 Quality of Living worldwide city rankings, Singapore emerged top for city infrastructure (Mercer LLC, 2012).

<sup>25</sup>The World Bank ranked Singapore, for the sixth consecutive year, as the easiest place to do businesses, amongst 185 economies (The World Bank, 2012).

second language. Though *Singlish*, a colloquial Singapore English<sup>26</sup>, is widely spoken, Singaporeans are similar to Canadians in that they have a common official language, which is English. Hence, Singapore (Chinese) immigrants are likely to have an advantage in terms of social integration in Canada over other immigrants, whose countries of origin do not adopt English as their official language, for instance China.

Secondly, as a multicultural society<sup>27</sup>, Singaporeans, like Canadians in MV, are acquainted with living with, meeting, socialising and marrying people of other ethnicities, race and religion. Take for instance, most Singaporeans live in public housing<sup>28</sup> and the Government institutes an Ethnic Integration Policy to ensure a balanced ethnic mix among the various ethnic communities living in public housing developments (Housing and Development Board, 2013). Also, 18% of all marriages in 2012 are inter-ethnic or mixed marriages (Statistics Singapore, 2013b), higher than Canada's percentage of mixed marriages in 2006, at 3.9% of all marriages (Maheux and Chui, 2010). Being exposed to living in multicultural Singapore, Singaporeans who migrate to Canada, especially to city regions like MV, will likely find 'multicultural' Canada a familiar social milieu.

Thirdly, growing up in an immigrant-receiving country, Singaporeans would be familiar with the societal changes brought about through the influx of immigrants. The Singapore Government, like the Canadian Government, faces social pressure<sup>29</sup> from its citizens relating to displeasure over how the influx of immigrants caused 'undesirable' social changes: immigrants or foreigners taking away jobs which could have been filled by a local; growing cost of living due to

<sup>26</sup> *Singlish* includes a mixture of Chinese languages, Malay and other ethnic languages.

<sup>27</sup> As at end of June 2013, 74.2% are Chinese, 13.3% are Malays, 9.1% are Indians and 3.3% belong to other ethnic minorities like Eurasians (Statistics Singapore, 2013c).

<sup>28</sup> According to Statistics Singapore (2013a), 81.6% of Singaporeans live in public housing in 2012.

<sup>29</sup> This is indicated by the amount of press interest and social media activities.

higher demand for housing, cars, food, recreation and other necessities; overcrowding of transportation infrastructure; and a loss of Singaporean identity. (for examples on Singapore, see Singapolitics, 2013; Straits Times, 2013a; The Guardian, 2013; and The Morningside Post, 2013; for an example on Canada, see National Post, 2013). Singaporeans who decide to migrate to Canada may be prepared that they may become 'targets' of displeasure by Canadians since they are exposed to this in Singapore, albeit as citizens and not immigrants.

Perhaps one notable difference, in terms of social setting, for Singaporeans would be related to the change in population density when they migrate to Canada. If we discount Monaco, a two sq km country with only 36,136 population as at 2012 (Monaco Statistics, 2013), Singapore is the most densely populated country, standing at 7,540 persons per sq km, as at 2012 (Statistics Singapore, 2013a); MV is about one-tenth of Singapore's population density (Statistics Canada, 2013a). A drastic drop in population density may imply a reduction in social interactions and having lesser social networks and groups; this will strengthen the importance of social capital, especially for immigrants.

### **2.5.3. Cultural Profile**

When we think of a people's culture, we think of values, norms, tradition, religion, the arts, food, heritage, architecture, sports, recreation and these are also interposed with economic, social and political paradigms; these hosts of factors accentuate the difficulty of getting a consensus and it becomes impossible in multicultural Singapore, where national identity is engineered by the Government, whilst popular culture and the constant waves of immigrants provide new meanings of identity (Ortmann, 2009; The Independent, 2013; and Today, 2013).

For a start, in thinking about the Singapore culture, one might ponder also on the Singapore national identity, where most researchers have focused on the

role of the Government in two different developmental phases. In the first phase, from 1965 to the 1980s, pragmatic values of modernity, development and economic success override attention to cultural issues (Kong and Yeoh, 1997); the emphasis was on a harmonious society, collectively working towards Singapore's prosperity and this notion was embedded in the Government's public housing scheme for the masses and the introduction of compulsory National Service (NS) for all men (Ortmann, 2009). The Government also inculcated a crisis motive into Singaporeans: picturing Singapore as a small city-state, with no natural resources, surrounded by enemy 'Muslim' countries, creating an ideology of 'survivalism' (Brown, 2000: 93).

The second phase started in the late 1980s, with the emergence of the negative effects of economic growth like consumer culture, and globalisation and modernization, with its threat of Western vices reflected in materialism and atomization of the family unit, a national ideology of "Shared Values" based on Asian values discourse was invented to strengthen the foundations of the society (Quah, 1990). The five "Shared Values" are "nation before community and society above self", "family as the basic unit of society", "community support and respect for the individual", "consensus, not conflict", and "racial and religious harmony" (Singapore Government, 1991)<sup>30</sup>.

Researchers have arrived at contradictory findings on how successful the Singapore Government's National Identity project is. On the one hand, there is a large body of survey-based empirical research which concludes that Singaporeans have developed a strong sense of belonging (see Ministry of Community Development and Sports, 2001; MacDougall, 1976); on the other hand, other scholars conclude that Singaporeans lack a clear national

<sup>30</sup> See Wee (2010) and Ortmann (2009) for more on the Singapore Government's National Identity project, which many scholars viewed as a tentacle-like grip and top-down approach of the ruling elite in Government.



identification (Hussin, 2004; Yeo 2003). This is complicated with Wong's (2008) letter to the editor of the *Straits Times*, describing two kinds of Singaporeans: "Singaporeans" and "Singapore citizens". The "real Singaporeans" are different from the "newcomers" in that they had friends who participated in NS, struggled through the education system and ate, celebrated, learned, suffered together and served and were being served by other "real Singaporeans".

Contradictions aside, popular culture or the culture of the people defines Singaporeans as "*kiasu*" which means "the fear of losing out to others"; a famous Singapore novelist, Catherine Lim described it as a "phenomenon worthy of anthropological study" (Lim, 1989:43). Another distinguishable "badge of identity" (Gupta, 1994: 4) of Singaporeans is their Creole language, *Singlish*.

As a Singaporean, this researcher, as a subject of Singapore Government's National Identity project and being exposed to popular Singapore culture, I would culturally define Singaporeans as having these traits: possessing Asian values of emphasis on family and kinship ties, shown through respect and formality towards the elderly and superiors; influenced by the western philosophy of 'respect for the individual rights' and adoption of the British system of writing and style of governance; a love for all types of food cuisine, from Asian, and Eastern to Western; materialist, as seen through a desire for status consciousness, branded goods flaunting and luxurious lifestyle; hard working, perhaps an effective demonstration of the Government's policy of crisis motivation and reward through meritocracy; civil mindedness and law abiding, as seen through Singapore's low crime rate<sup>31</sup>.

<sup>31</sup> A recent *Straits Times* article reported that Singapore's crime rate in 2012 reached an all-time 29-year-low (*Straits Times*, 2013b) with 581 police-reported cases per 100,000 people; in comparison, Canada's figure in 2011 is 5,757 police-reported cases per 100,000 people, which is a 9-year consecutive decline since 2003.

#### **2.5.4. Religious Profile**

In this segment, I provide a brief profile of Singaporeans' religion, in particular, the growth of Christianity<sup>32</sup> and role of the church in Singapore society.

Using Census data, Tong (2008) traced religious trends in Singapore from 1849 to 2000. During the century from 1849 to 1949, religious affiliation was largely tied to ethnicity: most Chinese adhered to Chinese religions such as Buddhism or Taoism; most Malays adhered to Islam; most Europeans adhered to Christianity; and most Indians adhered to Hinduism. Christianity was the only religion with some degree of ethnic bridging as there were a few Chinese, Eurasian and Indian converts. During this period, Chinese religions were the most prevalent and shifts in religious orientation were due largely to migration rather than religion switching. In 1849, 52% of the Singapore population practiced Chinese religions and by 1931, they represented 72.5% of the population. Christianity grew slowly from representing 3.5% of the 1849 population to 5.3% of the 1931 population.

From 1950 to 1979, there was no Census data on religion as the Government felt that past Census data on the same provided insignificant value since religion was mainly divided along ethnic lines. However, according to Hinton (1985), this period from 1950s to 1980s was a period of "harvest time" as new Christian denominations were established in Singapore, along with growth of older denominations. Increasing importance of the English language, especially after Singapore's independence in 1963 meant that Christianity and its English literature, Western agencies and missionaries became more prevalent in Singapore. The active and successful proselytization by Christians was reflected in the 1980 Census. Whilst the 1980 Census saw Chinese religions remain the dominant religion, with 29.3% Taoists and 26.7% Buddhists, they registered the

<sup>32</sup> This project uses the term 'Christianity' as referring to both Protestant and Catholic believers.

highest rate of decline since the 1931 Census, the previous Census with religious data. On the other hand, about one in ten Singaporeans professed to be Christians in the 1980 Census, a significant increase since the 1931 Census, especially among the Chinese whereby the percentage of Christians increased from 2.7% in 1931, to 10.6% in 1980. Another interesting observation from the 1980 Census was a significant 13.6% Singaporeans professed to have no religion, being the first time data on “no religion” was collected.

According to Tong (2008), the period from 1990 to 2000 saw the proportion of Christians growing steadily in Singapore from 12.7% to 14.6% but it was Buddhism which enjoyed the highest growth rate from 31.2% adherents in 1990 to 42.5% in 2000. Based on the latest 2010 Census (Statistics Singapore 2013d), the religious landscape in Singapore is reflected as follows: 33.3% practice Buddhism; 18.3% practice Christianity; 17% do not practice religion; 14.7% practice Islam; 11% practice Taoism; and 5.1% practice Hinduism. Christianity seems to be gaining a foothold as a belief in the Singaporean society. This could be due to the following two observations made by Tong (2008) when he made some correlation and comparison between demographic and socio-economic data with Singaporeans’ religious beliefs.

Firstly, the observation noted in the first decade (1849 to 1949) still applies today: religious affiliation is tied closely to ethnicity. For instance, Tong (2008) observed that from 1980 to 2000, 99.6% of Malays consistently practise Islam. Religion amongst the Indian community was also stable from the 1980 to 2000 with Hinduism as the most populous religion. The Chinese made significant changes in their beliefs: belief in Taoism by them fell during the period from 1980 to 2000 from 38.2% to 10.8%; the decline in Taoist belief among the Chinese reflected gains to Buddhism, Christianity and non-religious.

Besides ethnicity, educational attainment and language are strong predictors of Singaporeans’ faith. While Christianity was found to be among

those with a higher educational attainment, the reverse is true for Taoism believers. Better educated Singaporeans, especially the Chinese, are abandoning their traditional faiths to become Christians or non-religious. For instance, in 2000, Christians formed the largest religious group among university graduates (33.5%). Also, a Singaporean who had an English stream education seemed to be more inclined to be Christians while a high proportion of Taoists and Buddhists came from Mandarin stream educational backgrounds. The latest 2010 Census showed that Christianity and “No Religion” continued to make gains as Singaporeans’ choice of faith, where Christianity jumped from fourth to second position in terms of number of adherents, from the 2000 to 2010 Census.

Socio-economic data also indicates that the majority of Christians and non-religious tend to be from a higher socio-economic background. For instance, Tong (2008) compared the 1990 Census data and found that 28.3% of Christians and 24.6% of non-religious were found in professional and technical occupations, jobs which are more prestigious and better paid. In contrast, 11.2% of Taoists were found in the same job sectors whilst the bulk of the other Taoists were employed in production, sales and services sectors which are viewed as less prestigious and lower paid jobs<sup>33</sup>. These occupations had low proportions of Christians and non-religious. Likewise, using housing type as another indicator of socio-economic status, in 2000, 34.3% of Christians and 24.2% of non-religious lived in private apartments and houses while only 4.2 % of Taoists did so.

From the preceding discussion, the Canadian immigration system should favour Singaporeans who are Christians and atheists since they are likely to have better educational attainment, went through an English stream education and are found in professional and technical occupations which are highly paid.

<sup>33</sup> The Canadian immigration system would tend to favour Singaporeans who are found in professional and technical jobs rather than production, sales and services sector.

As this project studies the role of three Protestant and conservative churches in MV in helping Singaporean immigrants to integrate in MV, the role of the church, especially Protestant and conservative churches in the Singapore society is also discussed. In Mathews' (2006) representative survey of Christian clergy in Singapore, he found that they have an overwhelming belief in biblical inerrancy, the acceptance of a literal hermeneutic and rejection of modernist stances to Scripture; these Singaporean clergy largely embrace more conservative stances in areas of permissibility of divorce, emphasising the importance of the traditional beliefs of the family. In his subsequent research on the predominantly conservative Singaporean Christian churches' involvement in the production and policing of morality in Singapore and how this enjoyed the Government's patronage, Mathews (2009) argued and showed through two case examples that the Conservative Church in Singapore served as a "voice of moral conscience" to the Government through carefully worded appeals to uphold morality. The two cases relate to the previous Prime Minister Goh Chok Tong's statement that homosexuals would be employed in sensitive positions within the civil service and the proposal for a casino in Singapore. Christian individuals, church leaders and the National Council of Churches of Singapore issued letters and statements, from questioning the Government's loss of moral authority to appealing to the Government to maintain the status quo concerning homosexuality rights and the casino as a source of GDP. When the State failed to heed the Churches' appeal and announced the go-ahead to build a casino, these churches generally stopped pressing and pleading with the State and moved on to provide constructive help. For instance, the vice president of the National Council of Churches in Singapore said in the press following the Government announcement that they are disappointed with the Government's direction but they will educate members on the dangers of gambling, and perhaps develop services and train members to help those with gambling addiction and promote family values. Mathews (2009) concluded with this observation that much literature on church-state relations in Asia focused on the

role of the church in its attempts to influence democratic processes and fight for social justice, for instance the Catholic church in the Philippines was a principal force in destabilising the corrupt Marcos regime while the church in Korea and Hong Kong often championed democracy and freedom in the face of Communist threats. The predominantly conservative churches in Singapore on the other hand acted as a moral guide to the State, by not presenting themselves as authoritative voices nor power competing with the State but rather as “concerned citizens” and “witnesses” to the Singapore society in which they belong.

Mathews (2008) also studied the Singapore Protestant churches (which are also conservative) in their delivery of social services. In contrast to the Catholic churches, Protestant churches, to a large extent, are theologically conservative and traditionally more concerned with “soul saving” than “bread giving” but together with church-affiliated social service organizations called voluntary welfare organizations (VWOs), they surprisingly form 41% of the total number of social service agencies, the largest group in Singapore’s social service landscape, doing “bread giving” or good works. Mathews (2008) classified their main services: help for families and youth; half-way houses, care facilities including hospitals and institutional homes; and facilities for the disabled. He also examined their motivation for involvement in social services – integrating faith and works and obtaining legitimacy vis-à-vis the State and community – and described how ideological, spiritual and material resources are mobilized. In examining how Protestant churches and their organizations are successful in adapting to the secular State and multi-religious society, he also discussed the common perception that their social service provision is a front for proselytization: while these Protestant Christian-based VWOs do not engage in proselytization or overt evangelistic attempts like preaching, they do this indirectly through adopting Biblical principles of love, care and prayer in the administration of their social services, which is meant to draw the people whom they serve to be curious in embracing the Christian faith.

The aforementioned literature review on the Canadian immigrant's urban integration, social capital theory and its application in immigrant studies, integration roles of religious institutions, and the profile of Singaporean immigrants served as our foundations and building blocks to appreciating why the subsequent research methodologies were adopted (Chapter Three), and how the research findings (Chapters Four to Seven) coalesce to derive the conclusions (Chapter Eight).

## 3. Methodology

### 3.1. Objectives

The following are key questions this research aims to answer:

- (i) What are the common reasons for Singaporean immigrants to come to Canada?
- (ii) What are the reasons why some Singaporean immigrants gather as 'birds of the same feather' in an immigrant church while other Singaporean immigrants choose to worship in a Canadian church?
- (iii) What social services do the Immigrant and Canadian churches provide for the Singaporean immigrants? What are the similarities and differences between the two types of churches? What 'types'<sup>34</sup> of Singaporean immigrants use these social services, and how needful, crucial and effective were the services to their urban integration?
- (iv) What is the predominant nature of social capital (bonding, bridging or mixed) in the immigrant and Canadian church? For instances of bonding social capital, did it result in any restrictions to members or exclusion of others in terms of LMO and other social services? If there is bridging social capital, who else outside the group benefited? What are the reasons and circumstances for social capital to bridge? Did bridging social capital result in more empowerment and benefit to the Singaporean immigrant than bonding social capital?
- (v) What is the financial resource level of the church and members' job type (whether in low or high-education jobs)? Indicators of financial resources are: length of stay in Canada, because more established immigrants should have more resources and native networks than recent immigrants; home and car ownership;

<sup>34</sup> We can think of the possible 'types' of Singaporean immigrants in various ways, including but not limited to income-class, occupation, educational qualification, demography and gender.



church offerings, savings and assets. How are LMO and other social service assistances related to the financial resource capacity of the group?

- (vi) Compare findings of (iii) to (v) to see if there is any pattern or relationship, for instance, perhaps the immigrant churches only produce bonding social capital while the Canadian church only produces bridging social capital or there are more job opportunities for Singaporean immigrants in the Canadian church than the immigrant church.

### **3.2. Research Settings**

Three churches (with presence of Singaporean immigrant congregants) were selected as research settings to procure research subjects and data to achieve the aforementioned objectives.

The first church (hereafter, named 'Church A') is a Singaporean immigrant church (English worship service) with about 100 congregants comprising of about 70 - 80% Singaporean immigrants. The second is a Mainland Chinese immigrant church (hereafter, named 'Church B') of similar size as the first, comprising about 80% of Chinese PRC immigrants. There are a few Singaporean families in this church. Though an immigrant church need not be immigrants from the same ethnicity or country, anecdotal evidence and other researchers' work (Ley, 2008) seem to suggest that immigrant churches usually comprise mainly of one core group of immigrants from the same ethnicity or country. This is the case for the two immigrant churches selected for my research. The third church is a Canadian church (hereafter, named 'Church C') with about 250 congregants who gather for worship across two English services (condensed to one service during the Summer season). The majority of congregants are local-born Canadians with the rest comprising of immigrants from different countries, including Singapore.

My family and I attend the two immigrant churches whilst the Canadian church was selected through the suggestion of a friend from Church A, who

participated in my research; she advised that the pastor (a Singaporean immigrant) from a Canadian church (Church C) was coming on a Sunday as a guest speaker for the worship service. I introduced myself and my research to the pastor after the service and he was very keen to render his help by agreeing to be my research subject and recommending a few Singaporean immigrant families for me to contact. Prior to securing this pastor's help, my method of identifying a suitable Canadian church for this research was through my personal knowledge of Singaporean immigrant friends who were attending Canadian churches; their churches were too large in numbers, which will present difficulties with survey data collection.

In terms of personal familiarity and comfort level with conducting research with congregants from the three churches, I rank churches A, B and C in decreasing order. I know more congregants from Church A at a personal level than the other two churches. This is due to three key reasons: I was more committed in the activities of Church A than Church B; my limited Mandarin language proficiency was a barrier to forming close friendships with PRC immigrants from Church B; I did not know anyone from Church C prior to meeting the pastor. Whilst knowing my research subjects may be advantageous, there are also limitations to research, which will be addressed at section 3.3.4.

Very interestingly, these three churches have Singaporean immigrant pastors in the ministry.

### **3.3. Data Collection Methods**

#### **3.3.1. *Published Materials***

Churches publish (both hardcopy and online) materials like the weekly service bulletin, church prayer list or bulletin, event leaflets or notices, anniversary magazines and Annual General Meeting reports. The information in

these published materials serves as an introduction and background on the three churches; comparisons are made by creating a descriptive profile<sup>35</sup> of the three churches through content analysis of the materials<sup>36</sup> and these are presented in Chapter Four.

Since I attend the worship services and activities of Churches A and B, I obtained the materials by myself, through church friends and administrator. Information on Church C was obtained mainly from the pastor and church website.

### **3.3.2. Survey**

I also conducted a survey of the church members and the findings are presented in Chapter Five. There are two key purposes: obtain a description<sup>37</sup> of the attendees of the three churches, which is statistically representative of the adult church congregants; secondly, to identify suitable Singaporean immigrants who are willing to be interviewed. The survey targets are adult congregants, who need not be Singaporean immigrants. I encountered various issues and challenges which I shall briefly elaborate, including my recourses.

#### **Improving the survey form**

After surveying ten congregants in Churches A and B as a pilot test, I revised and improved the survey form (attached at Appendix A) to make it more user-friendly. The revision was in response to the way respondents filled in the

<sup>35</sup> This profile includes a brief history and comparison of the three churches as follows: church activities, church prayer meetings' focus and financial status.

<sup>36</sup> Some requisite information were not published and were obtained verbally through interviews with Singaporean immigrants from the churches. For instance, there was no published prayer bulletin in Churches B and C and I obtained the information verbally from the two respective pastors.

<sup>37</sup> They are: basic demography, socio-economic information, church-related information, and employment information.

first version<sup>38</sup> which suggested that the question format was not user-friendly and there seemed to be some ambiguity in understanding two questions, based on the answers I obtained.

The revised survey form had a format which made the questions appear less lengthy, 'wordy' or overwhelming, and reduced the need for respondents to write by providing some 'tick' options to choose from. I stopped receiving negative user feedback after adopting the revised form; there were few enquiries from respondents about what the questions were asking; the forms were mostly completed appropriately and correctly with very few blanks.

### **Administrating the survey**

The second challenge relates to administrating the survey, which is finding the right time and place to request congregants to fill in the form; the right time and place will not greatly inconvenience or interrupt my potential respondents' schedule. The right time and place that first occurred to me would be on Sundays, in church, after worship service, where most people would stay back to fellowship over food and drinks. This indeed was the place and time which I obtained most of my survey responses for Churches A and B. Overall, I had quite a smooth time administering the survey in Churches A and B, nonetheless, the following are some challenges I faced and overcame.

### ***Survey challenges in Church A***

Most congregants in Church A knew I was doing my Masters, so when the church helped me to announce my research intent via a Notice Board, church weekly bulletin and over the pulpit, most congregants were happy to help when I approached them with the survey form during fellowship time after service.

<sup>38</sup> I observed from some respondents' facial expression when they were filling in the form, suggesting to me that this is not a straightforward form to fill in. Also, two respondents told me that the form is too wordy.

However, as the fellowship time is also a meal time where members sat down for a meal, it may be difficult to get a hungry person to let me go through and explain the Survey Consent Form and then get the person to fill in the form.

An idea came to me when a few congregants who do not usually stay back for the fellowship meal took my form back home and returned the completed form the following Sunday: I asked those who stayed back for the meal to do likewise. Based on this method, possibly more than half of my respondents from Church A returned the completed form on the following Sunday.

Essentially, my principle was to utilise all the right times and places, and this is usually the contact time after church services and activities<sup>39</sup>, to request church goers to participate in the survey. This method worked very well for my survey data collection in Church A; I had sufficient social capital to approach almost all adult congregants directly, who are my targeted respondents, to request them to help me fill in the survey form. Altogether, I obtained 42 completed survey forms from Church A over a four-month period.

### ***Survey challenges in Church B***

I experienced more challenges in Church B. As mentioned earlier, I had less familiarity in this church compared to Church A as most of my friendship networks are with Singaporean immigrants. Secondly, I am not very proficient in the Mandarin language. Lastly, culturally, I am different from them, even though I am also Chinese.

Acknowledging my shortcomings, I was very consultative with my Singaporean immigrant friends from Church B on how to survey the PRC immigrants and was advised that the PRC immigrants would be more

<sup>39</sup> I was active in a Bible Study group and used one of the after-session to request members to help out with the survey.

comfortable with filling in a Survey Form written in the Mandarin language. With my wife's help, the Survey form and Survey Consent form (attached at Appendices B and C respectively) were translated to Mandarin. Indeed, all except one PRC immigrant chose to complete the survey using the Mandarin form.

It was easy to obtain a survey response from my Singaporean immigrant friends in Church B. This was done at one of our usual meal gatherings after a Sunday service. However, I realised that I was having a personal struggle with approaching PRC immigrant congregants after worship service; I do not know most of their names and most of my Sunday 'interactions' with them were body language, facial or 'hi-bye' acknowledgements. This was a one-sided language and cultural challenge as there was no apparent 'hostility' presented by the PRC immigrants.

A breakthrough came when one of my Singaporean immigrant couple friends invited me to join them at a combined cell group<sup>40</sup> meeting during the Chinese New Year period where two cell group members gathered at a member's house for a meal. My Singaporean immigrant couple friends are leaders of one of the two cell groups and through their connection to this 'right' setting, I secured 12 completed survey forms from PRC immigrants, despite the initial awkwardness, as I do not usually join them. What I learnt from this outing was that the PRC immigrants (at least from the two cell groups) are friendly and willing to help, despite my language inadequacy; the Mandarin form might have also played a helpful role.

<sup>40</sup> A cell group comprises of church members who are usually identified by similar trait(s) for instance, age or marital status. They meet regularly as small groups of less than 20 persons, usually at the homes of their members, for spiritual and fellowshiping activities like Bible study, singing, sharing and such meetings usually conclude with conversations over some food and drinks.

Riding on this success, I acquired more confidence in approaching PRC immigrant congregants directly, after the church service, to invite them to help me with the survey. I also utilised another 'right' time during the worship service to approach Chinese congregants who were not attending the worship service, because they were attending to their baby or toddler at the Fellowship Hall. Often with my baby-in-arm, it was easy approaching another PRC immigrant parent with his or her baby or toddler, and getting a positive response to helping me with the survey; perhaps commonality in parenthood was a uniting factor and reason to help me. I also grabbed hold of other small opportunities of interaction<sup>41</sup> to broach the survey invitation which proved to be helpful. Altogether, I managed to obtain 38 completed survey forms from the second church over a 4-month period.

### ***Survey challenges in Church C***

I was unable to obtain a representative survey sample from Church C; four out of the five completed survey forms were completed by Singaporean immigrants whom I interviewed. The pastor suggested that I employ the snowballing method, i.e. he introduced me to Singaporean immigrants from his church so that I could seek their permission to survey and interview them; thereafter, I could ask them to introduce their Canadian Caucasian church friends to me for survey. There were three problems with this method, which I alluded to my zero social capital in this church: firstly, not all Singaporean immigrant referrals (five in total) by the pastor agreed to participate in my research; secondly, of the three Singaporean immigrants who agreed to participate in my research, only two provided a total of five Canadian Caucasian friend contacts to me for survey; thirdly, of the five Canadian Caucasian contacts I contacted, only one responded

<sup>41</sup> For instance, during the period of data collection, I was invited to join a small group of singers to present a praise item; practicing together accorded familiarity and increased comfort level for me to request a fellow co-singer to help in the survey during one of our practice sessions, where we were sitting adjoining each other.

to me, because he was on very good terms with the Singaporean immigrant who referred him.

As I was nowhere close to obtaining a representative sample of the adult congregant population in the Church C, I sought to obtain a descriptive impression of this population from my interviews with the four Singaporean immigrants (including the pastor) in this church. I also obtained permission from my only Canadian Caucasian contact, whom I surveyed, for his impression of the church population in terms of basic demography, socio-economic, LMO and other assistance and social capital information. Appendix D details my findings from this Canadian.

### **3.3.3. Interview**

The purpose of conducting interviews of Singaporean immigrants in the three churches is to collect in-depth answers to the questions laid out in Section 3.1 Objectives. My target was to interview ten, five and five Singaporean immigrants from Churches A, B and C, respectively. I managed to interview ten, four and four Singaporean immigrants from the three churches, respectively. Most of the interview findings are presented in Chapters Six and Seven. I shall briefly describe my method and then elaborate some issues and challenges I faced, including my recourses.

#### **Selecting my interviewees**

The second purpose of the survey was to aid the identification of suitable Singaporean immigrants for interview; my last survey question asked Singaporean immigrant respondents if they are willing to participate in an in-depth interview. From the pool of survey respondents who are willing to be interviewed, I tried to identify a diversity of Singaporean immigrants as potential interview candidates; by diversity, I refer to years of immigration, age, occupation and class or wealth status. However, as the pool of potential interviewees from



Churches B and C is small, I did not have the luxury of choice as compared to church A; as such, I interviewed anyone in Churches B and C who was willing to be interviewed. In addition, for Church C, as all my research subjects were referred by the pastor and I had no prior contact with them, I surveyed and interviewed them concurrently.

### **Interview venue**

In setting up a meeting for the interview, I tried to arrange a date, time and place to meet at the potential interviewees' convenience. As all except two of them stay in the Tri-cities, BC, including myself, it facilitated our meeting due to our proximity and familiarity with travelling to the place of meeting. I conducted interviews at the interviewees' homes, my home, in churches A and C and public places (food court and cafe). To facilitate three of my interviewees' schedules, I broke up the entire interview into two sessions for each interviewee.

### **Interviewing methodology**

I prepared a set of interview questions (attached at Appendix E) for the purpose of reminding and guiding the sequence of my interviews; I first asked some 'easy' questions before moving on to a catalogue of open-ended questions to facilitate 'free-flow' sharing. The 'easy' questions relate to getting them to recall the story of when, how and why they decided to immigrate to Canada. The intention is to 'break the ice', remove any awkwardness and self-consciousness in a 'staged' and recorded conversation; also, as migrating is a significant life cycle event and often laden with interesting stories, I was hoping this would encourage more spontaneous sharing from my interviewees.

After my first two interviews, I found the pathway method of getting my interviewees to tell their immigration, job search and church stories was more effective than rigidly following the question sequence; as such I allowed more spontaneous conversations to develop and the structure of narratives to be guided by the interviewees in order to exhaust their train of thought. I tried to pick

up interesting thoughts, views, key-words expressed by my interviewees in order to ask further probing questions to understand their underlying reasons and intents on their views. This method proved to be very effective for most of my 18 interviewees, except for one of them, who was probably not prepared for the series of probing questioning.

For interviewees from Churches A and B, who are my personal friends, I tried to empty my pre-conceived knowledge of them during the interview and positioned myself as a 'student', learning from a 'teacher', sharing his or her views, life and church stories. As such, prior to commencing the interviews, I explained to my interviewees and offered an advance apology for possibly asking 'apparent' questions and requested for their patience and answers.

### **Interview challenges**

I encountered four challenges relating to my interview data collection. Firstly, some of the Singaporean immigrant congregants, whom I considered to be ideal research subjects, declined to be interviewed. I overcame this problem partially by emailing four of them to provide more information relating to my research and the interview; one of them responded positively and agreed to an interview. A sample of my information email is at Appendix F.

Secondly, I felt vulnerable and limited in my ability to secure Singaporean immigrant interviewees from Church C as I have no social connections with them except through the pastor's introduction. Indeed, of the five referrals given by the pastor, only three agreed to be interviewed. This was despite an intentional and elaborate explanation of some personal information about me and my family, my purpose for contacting them, what my research was about, a sample of my interview questions, and assuring them of their confidentiality and their rights if they agreed to be interviewed.

Thirdly, whilst most of my interviews yielded very interesting insights, there were four interviews for which I felt information saturation was not achieved.

Whilst I will not know all the reasons why this was so, two of the four ‘incomplete’ interviews were held at a less than ideal timing. The other two ‘incomplete’ interviews could be due to a lack of rapport but interestingly these two interviewees both had similarities: health problems and had research experience.

Fourthly, time has to be factored in when doing interview research as people are busy and participating in academic research is likely not their priority. Some of my interview appointments took weeks to come to fruition and there were two willing interviewees from Church A whom I was unable to interview due to their tight schedules, though I was not very concerned as information saturation was achieved from Church A. Also, finding the right timing to broach the interview request is also crucial; it is hard for someone who is going through some hardship as an immigrant to participate in an in-depth interview, sharing about his or her negative and depressing stories. In light of this consideration, I did not ask two potential interviewees from Church B to participate in an interview.

#### **3.3.4. *Countering Limitations of the Methods***

This research is primarily focused on understanding how immigrants receive urban integration assistance in the church from bonding and bridging social capital perspectives. There may be a danger, in the way data is collected, especially through the interview, that the researcher overlooks or ignores or fails to recognise other aspects of urban integration assistance immigrants receive from other formal and informal networks (for instance through immigrant services agencies, job agencies, societies, clubs, family, relatives and friends from other non-church groups).

As such, the immigration, employment and church-going pathway framework used in the interviews sought to understand the full spectrum of assistances the interviewee experienced when integrating into a new urban

environment. This pathway method will suggest if the church network was important or had a role in urban integration and LMOs.

Another limitation to this study stems from the possible problem of causality when studying social capital of a group (Lancee 2012). It may be that the social capital in the church results in better LMOs for Singaporean immigrants but it is also likely that a better position in the labour market resulted in more social capital in the church. In other words, one could get to know more people in the church after finding a job through the church social network, and this could result in a correlation between social capital and employment that is caused by employment, rather than by social contacts. The pathway method used in the interviews helped to identify possible causal paths.

Also, researching with people whom I know may also have resulted in some disadvantages or limitations. The Singaporean immigrants whom I interviewed from Church A and B know me personally. We meet each other every Sunday and sometimes on weekdays for church activities. I know some of their personal and family issues and immigrant integration challenges. So there might be some bias on my part when choosing who to invite for the interview in Church A<sup>42</sup>: I might tend to invite those whom I know obtained many integration assistances from the church or I might tend to invite those whom I have closer friendship with. As mentioned earlier I overcame any possible biases by identifying a diversity of Singaporean immigrants as potential interview candidates and asked them if they are keen to be interviewed.

Another challenge of doing research with friends is the issue of confidentiality. I mentioned earlier that one of my interview challenges was getting declined for interview by 'ideal' research subjects. I believe one of the main reasons why these Singaporean immigrants declined to be interviewed is

<sup>42</sup> As mentioned earlier, I had no choices on who to invite for the interview in Churches B and C.

because they are concerned about what is shared in the interview about their immigration experiences will be revealed to other church members through me either in my thesis or by word of mouth. Even if I keep to my ethical promise of confidentiality, as a friend to them, I would have known something more 'intimate' about their immigrant experiences, challenges and assistances they obtained from the church after interviewing them. Not everyone is comfortable with revealing such 'intimate details' to friends.

So my data collection experience in this project suggests that there might be advantages to be had when collecting general and 'not-too-intimate' information from friends, as I had an easy time surveying people in Church A, but disadvantages may be encountered when collecting 'intimate', personal and detailed information from friends, as seen in my experience of being turned down by friends for interviews due likely to the issue of confidentiality.

Lastly, as the main thrust of my findings on the roles of the church is obtained through the in-depth interviews, which is part of an ethnographical method, in contrast to the statistical or quantitative method of research, I have been careful to ensure that I follow through on Sanjek's (1990) proposed three canon of ethnographical validity: theoretical candor; ethnographer's path and fieldnote evidence. By being self-reflexive about my position in relation to research participants and research context and thorough with explaining in detail about how I have conducted my research through these three ethnographic canons, the validity of my findings are strengthened. Notwithstanding, there are inherent limitations to my ability to interpret the interview results in terms of society at large because of my membership in the same religious and ethnic community as my research participants. This does not discredit the benefits of this membership to certain aspects of my research. For example, though this project's findings of the four roles of the church for the group of Singaporean immigrants from the three churches may not speak entirely for other immigrants in other churches but by providing details of the research, for instance on the

background, socio-economic information and activities of three churches, profile of Singaporean immigrants, research methods and pathways, and stories of immigrant integration, where there are similarities found in other immigrants from other churches, some of this project's findings may speak of and apply to those immigrants and their churches.

### **3.4. Data Analysis**

Data collected from published material by the churches, completed survey forms and transcribed interview records were analysed in the following ways.

#### **3.4.1. Content Analysis**

Content analysis was deployed in analysing and interpreting both the published materials by the churches and the transcribed interview records. This is the main method of analysis for Chapters Four, Six and Seven.

The analysis of the published materials was fairly straightforward because of two reasons: my focus of this analysis was firstly to profile the three churches and provide some background, hence the information I chose to present<sup>43</sup> was readily available and in preset categories; secondly, to categorise the information, I employed the process of cutting and sorting from the published materials into table formats, to showcase and provide some comparison amongst the three churches. For instance, by looking at the church activities and prayer meetings' focus, one might obtain some indication of which church is more inward or outward looking and hence provide a prelude to understanding the bonding and bridging social capital which will be observed from the subsequent interview findings.

<sup>43</sup> They are church activities, church prayer meetings' focus and financial status.

The analyses of the transcribed interview records were more laborious. Firstly, I familiarised myself with the text data by reading and re-reading each transcribed interview; I wrote down insights which I obtained at the end of each reading. Secondly, with the focus of my analysis in mind, which is to understand how churches help Singaporean immigrants to integrate into Canadian society, I attempted to categorise the vast amount of text information by identifying themes and organizing them into coherent categories using selected measures of grounded theory methodology (Glaser and Strauss, 1967), in particular, the techniques of constant comparison and concept construction “in which theories are generated from an examination of data through the constant comparing of unfolding observations” (Babbie & Benaquisto, 2010, pg. 390).

I assigned abbreviated codes to identify and label different concepts in order to categorise them (Babbie & Benaquisto, 2010). Through this process of indexing, four main roles of the churches, in helping immigrants to integrate, revealed themselves through the coding process as more important themes surfaced more frequently (Sanjek, 1990). Thirdly, I tried to identify patterns and connections between the different themes or four roles of the churches; I started writing, in order to visualise what are the ‘within category’ ideas and ‘interrelated category’ ideas, and as I wrote, I constantly referred to what I learnt from the literature review, especially the concept of social capital, in order to critically affirm or refute my interpretation of the data.

### **3.4.2. Quantitative Statistical Analysis**

Quantitative statistical analysis is the primary method of analysis for Chapter Five. The data in the survey forms were hard keyed into a Microsoft Excel spreadsheet and using the spreadsheet formulas, univariate data of the respondents from the three churches, relating to demographic, socio-economic and church participation information, were generated for simple comparison and analysis, serving as a background and profile of the three churches.

## **4. Published Materials Findings**

### **4.1. Brief History of the Three Churches**

Church A had its origins in a Singaporean immigrant couple<sup>44</sup> (hereafter named “couple A”), who kept changing their church of worship after landing in MV as they could not ‘fit in’ very well. From encouragement from a Singaporean immigrant friend who is also a pastor (from the same church denomination in Singapore as couple A before immigrating), couple A started a family worship group at their home with a few Singaporean immigrant families, who were of the same denomination or else, were theologically conservative. Soon, this family worship group grew in size and they started to rent a space in a hotel for worship. A year later, with a generous transnational bequest from a Singaporean of the same denomination, Church A acquired a property in the Tri-Cities, BC; more than 10 years later, the church continued to attract mainly Singaporean immigrants of the same denomination, or theologically conservative persuasion, to their Sunday English worship service.

Church B had its origins in a Singapore pastor<sup>45</sup>, who at the time of receiving his calling to start a Chinese Church in Vancouver, was pastoring another church in US. He came to Vancouver in 2000 and set up a Chinese worship service starting from a base of zero worshippers, to reach out to newly arrived Mainland Chinese immigrants. Interestingly, this pastor was previously in the same denomination as Church A when he was in Singapore; however, he

<sup>44</sup> Part of Church A’s history was obtained from this Singaporean immigrant couple.

<sup>45</sup> There was no published church history in Church B; this brief history was derived from the interview with the pastor.



had since left that denomination but it definitely had an influence over the fairly conservative nature of worship in Church B. Over the past 13 years, Church B had been renting from other church premises within the Tri-Cities, BC. True to her pastor's calling, a majority of Church B's worshippers are Mainland Chinese immigrants.

More than 50 years ago, Church C originated from the church planting effort of a Canadian mainstream Protestant church which approached a student (hereafter named 'founding pastor') at a Bible college to head the work. Together with a few other students, the founding pastor laid the ground work for Church C by calling on every home in the vicinity of the area where he was tasked to do this gospel work. Soon, they started a prayer meeting at the home of a Christian family, joined by other Christian couples. One of the couples offered a little building on their property to start a Sunday school which they soon outgrew and moved to the basement of the couple's home. Then a pastor from another church led the call to raise a sum of monies to purchase a building that could be used for church planting; the concept of planting is that once a church outgrew the small chapel or no longer needed the building, it can be freed up for another church to grow. Church C came into being in the small chapel as people came; again, the Sunday school soon outgrew the little building and another couple opened up their home to house half of the Sunday school. Today, Church C is one of the oldest churches within its denomination in the MV region.

## **4.2. Church Activities**

Table 1 is a comparison of the three churches' activities.

**Table 1. Churches' activities**

<b>Subject Matter</b>	<b>Church A</b>	<b>Church B</b>	<b>Church C</b>
Congregation Size (approx.)	100	100	250
Worship Language	English	Chinese (Mandarin)	English
Style of worship	Protestant, Reformed and Conservative: i. Singing of Hymns; ii. Piano and organ as instruments; iii. Occasional choir presentation; iv. Bible-centred preaching	Protestant and Fairly Conservative: i. Singing of spiritual songs; ii. Piano as instrument; iii. Occasional special song item by youths (with band) and children; iv. Bible-centred preaching	Protestant and Fairly Conservative: i. Mix of Conservative and Contemporary songs; ii. Band and piano as instruments; iv. Bible-centred, Grace preaching
Regular or Core Activities (catering more to congregants' needs)	i. Weekly Prayer Meeting; ii. Sunday Adult Bible Class; iii. Children Sunday School; iv. Bible Study Groups (meet during weekdays); v. AWANA - Children's ministry (meet on weekdays, break during Summer) vi. Church Choir; vii. Youth Fellowship; v. Church lunch ministry.	i. Weekly Prayer Meeting; ii. Sunday Adult Bible Class; iii. Children Sunday School; iv. Cell groups (meet during the weekdays for Bible Study and Fellowship); v. Men's Fellowship (play sports); vi. Ladies' Fellowship; vii. Seniors Fellowship.	i. Extensive Prayer program (Men's prayer meeting, pre- and post-service prayer, concerts of prayer, planned prayer walks); ii. Bible Study groups; iii. Children Sunday School; iv. Christian Service Brigade (Christian version of Boy's Brigade); v. Youth Group (Grade 8 to 12 - Bible Study and outings); vi. Girl's Fellowship (Grade 1 to 6 – craft, music, serving the community, discussions); vii. Young Adults Group viii. Women's Ministry (Special and seasonal program, retreat and gym); ix. Men's Ministry (Retreat, breakfast, summertime softball); x. Seniors Ministry

Subject Matter	Church A	Church B	Church C
			xi. Missions (local and abroad);
Special Activities (usually once a year, or with some outreach elements)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i. Annual Bible camp;</li> <li>ii. Children Summer camp (Daily Vacation Bible School);</li> <li>iii. Annual Summer picnic;</li> <li>iv. Christmas Choir concert (Evangelistic Event);</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i. Inviting Guest speakers for a series of messages to either equip believers or train fellow workers in the ministry (e.g. Sunday School Teaching, Family Series)</li> <li>ii. Several Summer picnics (after worship service);</li> <li>iii. Special Children program on Halloween (To draw church children away from celebrating Halloween);</li> <li>iv. English lessons for adults;</li> <li>v. Chinese lessons for children;</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i. Welcome ministry (greet and befriend new comers);</li> <li>ii. Freedom Session</li> <li>ii. Soup Kitchen (shelter homeless and cook for them during winter);</li> <li>iii. ESL class for Persian immigrants;</li> <li>iv. Social assistances to Persian families;</li> <li>iv. Short term missions trip (e.g. to Mexico to build a house for a family);</li> </ul>

Based on Table 1, the three churches have two similarities: Protestant and slant towards being conservative; and similar regular or core activities. However, Church C stood out in its regular and core activities as they seem to be more elaborate and extensive in each ministry; for instance, Churches A and B both have weekly prayer meetings but Church C has more variations and opportunities for organized prayer, as a body of the church.

When comparing the special activities, Church C is the most invested in outreaching to communities outside the church, both locally and overseas; special activities in Churches A and B are more inward looking in terms of ministering to the needs of congregants, with Church B seemingly the most inward looking as it does not seem to have any programs or activities which attempt to reach out to communities outside the church.

### 4.3. Prayer Meetings' Focus

Table 2 is a comparison of the three churches' prayer concerns at their prayer meetings.

**Table 2. Key prayer concerns at prayer meetings**

<b>Key Prayer Concerns at Prayer meetings</b>	
<b>Church A</b>	(i) Confession; (ii) Praise and Thanksgiving; (iii) Supplication – Pray for the (a) country (Canada); (b) church ministries; (c) congregants' spiritual life, those who are travelling, have personal needs like job search, seeking life directions, etc, sick and need God's healing; (d) salvation of loved ones; (iv) Missions – (i) Local missions, referring to the church and individual witness in the Tri-cities; (ii) Oversea Missions and churches planted by the Singapore 'mother' churches.
<b>Church B<sup>1</sup></b>	(i) Pray for members who are 'weak', physically, financially, relationship-wise and spiritually; (ii) Pray for the work of evangelism, that members will bring newcomers to church; (iii) Pray for the edification and spiritual growth of members; (iii) Pray for the equipping and training of members to serve in the various church ministries; (iv) Pray for the organization and co-ordination of the various church ministries.
<b>Church C<sup>2</sup></b>	(i) Pray for members who are sick and need healing; (ii) Pray for members who are local and global missionaries; (iii) Pray for personal needs relating to emotional, monetary, spousal and children relationship stress.

<sup>1</sup> Church B does not have any published prayer list; the five main prayer concerns are conveyed by the pastor in an interview. During the church prayer meeting, the pastor will hand out slips of papers with different prayer items on them to attendees for them to pray in groups. Hence, even attendees do not have access to all the prayer items.

<sup>2</sup> Church C only publishes prayer items (i) and (ii) in their weekly bulletin; these prayer items are not detailed. According to the interview with the pastor, prayer items can be very confidential and this is not strictly a Canadian culture. Hence, a lot of prayers (with details) are said in small groups where members are more familiar with each other and meet in their various Bible study and fellowship groups. The church leaders (pastors and elders) have a confidential 'Elder's list' of

prayers, which are populated by members and lay leaders directly to church administrators or leaders. Item (iii) are prayers which are said in smaller groups and also found in the 'Elder's list' of prayers.

Based on Table 2, Church A seems to be the most open of the three churches in revealing the prayer concerns and needs of its members as it is the only church which publishes a detailed prayer bulletin for its weekly prayer meeting and distributes them 'publicly' in church during the prayer meeting and on Sunday worship service, if there are leftover prayer bulletins. Access to detailed prayer items in Churches B and C are strictly for attendees of the prayer meetings; for Church C, different 'prayer' groups will have different prayer items.

If we adopt an 'inward-outward' looking perspective in examining the prayer concerns of the three churches, it can be observed that all the three churches have mostly prayer concerns centred inwardly on the needs of their members, with fairly similar spiritual, emotional, financial and family needs. In terms of being outward looking, all the three churches were consistently interested in reaching out to those outside the church who have yet to believe in their faith. The slight variation lies in this: Church B was very keen on behooving its members to invite newcomer unbelievers to Church B to believe in God; whilst also interested in local witness, Churches A and C are also concerned about out-group or overseas mission work. But there is a difference: the mission work which Church A prays for all has transnational linkages to the 'mother' churches in Singapore, in that these overseas mission churches were planted by the Singapore 'mother' churches and not Church A; Church C's prayers for the local and overseas missions were all for their members who were sent out by Church C to do church planting. Hence, Church C can be considered to be the most outward looking of the three churches.

#### 4.4. Financial Strength

Table 3 is a comparison of the three churches' financial strength.

**Table 3. Financial resources of the three churches<sup>1</sup>**

<b>Subject Matter<sup>2</sup></b>	<b>Church A</b>	<b>Church B</b>	<b>Church C</b>
Congregation Size (approx.)	100	100	250
Funding source(s)	Tithing (from worshippers); Investment income (very insignificant); bequest (only once in 2012)	Tithing (from worshippers)	Tithing (from worshippers)
Average amount of tithing per worshipper every Sunday	\$27	\$30	\$40
Annual revenue	\$158,000 <sup>3</sup>	\$156,000	\$550,000

<sup>1</sup> All financial figures are rounded off. All financial figures for Churches B and C were obtained from the pastors of the two churches through interviews and can be taken as current or last year's figures.

<sup>2</sup> Information relating to expenditure, assets and liabilities of Churches B and C were not available to this researcher.

<sup>3</sup> Average of three years' revenue, from 2010 to 2012.

Based on Table 3, all three churches' core funding source is from worshippers' Sunday tithing. Churches A and B have similar congregational size and similar annual revenue to fund their activities. Church C's worshippers tithe the highest amount per worshipper per Sunday; it seemed that Church C's members would have the highest class-based or financial resources compared to the other two churches' members. Hence, Church C has the strongest financial capability to fund their activities, assuming the three churches expend their revenue collections in similar ratio.

## 5. Survey Findings

As mentioned in the survey methods section, I obtained 42, 38 and 5 completed surveys forms from worshippers of Churches A, B and C, respectively. The number of completed survey forms from Church C was not statistically representative; to make up for this, I tried to gather information from published materials and the interviews with four Singaporean immigrants and one local-born Canadian from Church C<sup>46</sup>. This was however insufficient to cover all surveyed topics hence where insufficient information on Church C still persists, a comparison was only made between Churches A and B.

Appendices G, H and I each display a table which compares some basic descriptions (Basic Information, Church-related Information and Employment Information, respectively) of the three churches. There are two columns in each table for Church C; the first column is data derived from the five respondents whilst the second column is an attempt to correct the survey data using anecdotal information obtained from the published materials and interviews.

In the following sections, I selectively compared and analysed the social-economic and church activities descriptive of the three churches, with the intent to set the context for the interview findings where I unveiled Singaporean immigrants' integration experiences in the three churches through the four roles of the churches.

<sup>46</sup> The corrected data for Church C will definitely have a higher margin of error than the data for Churches A and B, which are obtained from the survey of a statistically representative population of adult worshippers.

## **5.1. Basic Information**

The table at Appendix G reveals the following demographical and socio-economic information about the three churches.

### **5.1.1. Demography**

Whilst there is a balanced ratio of males and females in Church A, Church B has a higher ratio of females versus males at 3:2. This could be due to the 'astronaut dad' syndrome noted in immigrant research about Chinese immigrants in MV (Waters, 2002).

Church B has the highest ratio of young adults (two out of five persons) followed by Church C (one out of three persons); Church A has the lowest ratio of young adults (one out of ten persons). Churches A and B have the highest ratio of people in their 40s (one out of two persons). Church C has the highest ratio of elderly (two out of five persons), followed by Church A (one out of three persons); Church B is the youngest church with only one out of ten persons who is elderly.

Everyone in Church B is Chinese by ethnicity; nine out of ten persons in Church A is Chinese; an estimated one out of ten persons in Church C is Chinese.

### **5.1.2. Social Indicators**

Everyone in Church B is an immigrant, with Church A following close behind with 19 out of 20 congregants born outside of Canada; about three out of ten congregants in Church C are immigrants. This affirms the immigrant church status of Churches A and B and Canadian church status of Church C.

Half of the congregants in Church A are recent immigrants (landed after Year 2000); only two out of ten congregants in Church B are recent immigrants.



The ratio of Singaporean immigrants in Church A is the highest (seven out of ten persons); lagging far behind is Church B (three out of 20 persons) and Church C (one out of 20 persons);

Almost everyone in Churches A and C is proficient in English; but only slightly over half of the congregants in Church B are proficient in English. Church B is the most educated congregation with almost eight out of ten persons having a University degree; Churches A and C are tied at having one out of two persons being a degree holder.

### **5.1.3. Financial Status**

Church B has the highest proportion of persons who are home owners (over eight out of ten persons); this is followed by Church A (close to seven out of ten persons) and Church C (one out of two persons). Church A has the highest proportion of persons whose family has more than one car (one out of two persons); the ratio for Church B stands at three out of ten persons.

According to Li (2007), who examined the progressive process of the Longitudinal Survey of Immigrants to Canada (LSIC) immigrants during their first four years of settlement and integration period, homeownership rate increased substantially over time: 20% of the LSIC immigrants owned their homes six months after landing; this figure rose to 51% at their four-year mark. This could explain why Church B has a higher homeownership rate than Church A since they have a higher proportion of long-time or established immigrants.

Based on Statistics Canada (2013b), the 2011 National Household Survey (NHS) showed that almost seven out of ten Canadian households owned their dwellings. This figure would place the two immigrant churches on par with the national average. As the margin of error would be higher for Church C's household rate, it is not reliable to compare this to the NHS figure.

Overall, based on this discussion, it is probable that Churches A and B have more financially well off households than Church C; this seems however to run contrary to the earlier findings from the churches' published material that the tithing amount per worshipper at Church C is higher than that of Churches A and B. This researcher is unable to account for this 'discrepancy' except to suggest that richer people might not be the most generous givers<sup>47</sup>.

## **5.2. Church-Related Information**

The table in Appendix H reveals the following church-related information about the three churches.

### **5.2.1. Church Attendance**

Churches A and B have a fairly balanced ratio of new versus old-timer congregants. Nine out of ten congregants are regular church service worshippers in Churches A and B.

### **5.2.2. Best Friends in Church**

One of the survey questions asked respondents to think of three best friends within the MV region and answer how many of these three persons are from his or her church. Church B has the highest ratio of congregants who have at least one best friend from the same church, close to nine out of ten persons. Of these nine persons, six have all their three best friends within the same

<sup>47</sup> This suggestion is partly influenced by the pastor of Church B who shared in the interview that there are some church goers who migrated through the business immigration program, who tithe less than other church goers who migrated to Canada through other programs. What is learnt from pastor's sharing is that committed church goers who are not among the wealthiest in church, do tithe more than uncommitted church goers who are very wealthy. This could then suggest that Church C members are more committed to their church than Church A and B members are to their own churches.

church. Church A has seven out of ten persons reporting having at least one best friend from the same church; of these seven persons, three have all their three best friends within the same church. This finding possibly implies that there is a greater incidence of bonding social capital within church B than in Church A.

### **5.2.3. *Rendering and Receiving Help in Church***

Two survey questions asked respondents if they have rendered help to or received help from church members in the following areas: type 1 - material support (e.g. food, money, in-kind goods, clothes, toys); type 2 - mental, emotional, spiritual support; type 3 - social services (e.g. information on housing, home maintenance, education, schools, childcare, healthcare, transportation, job search).

Comparing Churches A and B, there is a slightly higher proportion of congregants in Church A who have rendered help to fellow church congregants than those who have received help from fellow congregants; the reverse is true for Church B. The percentage of congregants who render material and social services help to fellow congregants in Churches A and B are similar, with seven and six out of ten persons offering material and social help respectively. There is a slightly higher ratio of congregants in Church B offering type 2 (mental, emotional, spiritual support) help (close to eight out of ten) than Church A (close to seven out of ten).

The percentage of congregants who received all the three types of help from fellow congregants in Church A is lower than Church B. Slightly over four out of ten persons in Church A received material help while over seven out of ten persons received the same type of help in Church B; over six out of ten persons in Church A received type 2 help while close to nine out of ten persons in Church B did so; more than half of congregants in Church A received social services help while slightly over six out of ten persons in Church B did so. This

finding could indicate that overall, there are proportionately fewer people who need help in Church A than in Church B. Furthermore, needs could be concentrated intensely amongst a minority of members in Church A.

### **5.3. Employment Information**

The table in Appendix I reveals the following employment information about the three churches.

Church C has the highest ratio of people who are working (estimated at seven out of every ten persons); Church A has close to six out of every ten persons who are employed; Church B has half of its congregants working. The lower employment rate in Churches A and B compared to Church C tallies with immigrant LMO research findings, as discussed in the literature review, that immigrants have a harder time finding jobs than local-born Canadians.

Slightly over half of the congregants in Churches A and B are happy with their current job. Comparing this figure with a Randstad (2012) Workmonitor online survey of 7,000 Canadians where 75% indicated they were either very satisfied or satisfied with their jobs, this could again validate immigrant LMO research findings that skilled immigrants are often deskilled or found in low-skill jobs.

About one out of three congregants in Churches A and B received help from the church on their job search. Slightly over half of the congregants in Church B helped other church members in their job search; this is followed closely by Church A (two out of five congregants helped fellow congregants in their job search). When we also consider the demographic findings that Church B is younger than Churches A and C, in terms of a higher proportion of people in the job-entering and working age, this could suggest a higher incidence of job networks in Church B than the other two churches.

## **6. Interview Findings**

The interview findings reveal the following: pastors' key description of their churches; key reasons why the Singaporean immigrants migrated; Singaporean immigrants' best friends in MV; and four roles of the churches. The purpose of the first three segments is to provide further insights to the fourth segment in understanding the four roles of the churches in helping Singaporean immigrants to integrate in Canada.

### **6.1. Pastors' Key Description of the Three Churches**

This segment highlights a core perspective or theme which resonated strongly from the interviews with the three church pastors, highlighting the distinctions among these three churches.

#### **6.1.1. Church A: The Singaporean Church**

Recognizing Church A as a 'Singaporean Church', the Singaporean pastor (hereafter named 'Pastor A') explained this is largely due to the source of newcomer Singaporean immigrants to the church: same church denominational networks in Singapore.

Before Singaporean families or individuals, who are Christians within the same denomination as Church A, come to Canada, they would get in touch with Church A either through their respective church leaders in Singapore who have connections with the leaders in Church A or through existing church members in Church A who are usually relatives or friends. When Pastor A or any church members are made aware of newcomers from Singapore who intend to worship

in the church, they would contact them (via email if the newcomers have made a landing in Canada) to offer help, usually in the form of sharing some vital what-to-do or what-to-bring information, airport pick up arrangements and making arrangements for the first few days and weeks of settlement. Pastor A said this offer of help to new Singaporean immigrants who expressed interest in joining the church is basically an expression of Christian love; they had experienced how difficult it can be for new immigrants when they landed earlier, not knowing what to do, where to look for things and how to go about getting things done. Secondly, the church wants these newcomers to be part of the church family.

Pastor A qualified that not all Singaporean immigrant newcomers to Church A are new immigrants. Sometimes, but more seldom, Singaporean immigrants who have already landed also ‘walk-in’ to church and come on their own accord because they were in the same church denomination in Singapore or from other denomination but heard that Church A is a ‘Singaporean church’.

Pastor A said they do not have a specific ministry in reaching out to newly arrived Singaporean immigrants as do some (PRC) churches which he is aware of. Yet, he thinks the reason why the church still ended up “helping our own people most of the time” is due to “cultural and language communication”; he said hypothetically,

If I speak Malay, why would I start a ministry or charity work to take care of Indian immigrants? I would have great difficulty in understanding their culture. I may still be able to render to their basic needs like which doctor to go to, which Government Department for MSP (Medical Services Plan) but naturally we will want to reach out to our own ethnic group.

This ‘Ethnic approach’ to church growth, though unintentional, is premised on the knowledge that there is greater difficulty relating to another family with a different language and culture.

### **6.1.2. Church B: The Ever Renewing Church**

The pastor of Church B, also a Singaporean immigrant, (hereafter named 'Pastor B') was quick to highlight his pastoral experience over the past more-than-10 years in the church as an 'upstream' experience, due to the high mobility of his congregants. By high mobility, Pastor B meant that in order to maintain the same number of worshippers, knowing the church will 'lose' 20 to 25 worshippers annually, the church has to retain the same number of new comers and visitors every year. Pastor B said that based on his knowledge, this high attrition rate is a common problem faced by Mainland Chinese churches in MV.

Pastor B attributed his church's high turnover rate to the inability of his worshippers to secure jobs. Since he founded the church, PRC immigrants have always had job search difficulties; upon fulfilment of the residency requirement, many men returned to China as jobs in China were 'beckoning' them. He gave an example that in the past year, three men, who are serving fervently in the church (Pastor B's inner circle of co-workers), have to return to China to look for jobs. This tallies with the survey finding that Church B had an unbalanced ratio of two men for every three women. Some men or families also moved to other Canadian cities, for instance, Toronto, in search of jobs.

Pastor B attributed his congregants' job search difficulties to PRC immigrants' language barriers and other factors, which presented difficulties to integrating into and identifying with Canadian society.

### **6.1.3. Church C: The Welcoming Church**

The pastor of Church C (hereafter named 'Pastor C') is again a Singaporean immigrant. From his account of how he ended up pastoring Church C, a Canadian church, he can be perceived as an outstanding example of a Singaporean immigrant who has integrated well into the Canadian society and 'workplace' (if we consider a clergyman as a job).

Pastor C joined Church C as an ordinary pew member, after completing his term as a pastor of an immigrant church in the Tri-cities, BC. He was a seminarian then. His first Sunday at Church C was unforgettable; as a newcomer he was warmly welcomed. Pastor C shared that this is where churches must understand when newcomers come to a new place: the welcome they get is very important. To him, the window of opportunity is the first two services; if the newcomer does not get a sense of welcome, they will not come again.

This is the reason why Pastor C emphasized the importance of getting the right people to be in the Welcome ministry; he said, "You can be cold about it, you can be warm about it!" To Pastor C, this is what is entailed as a Welcome Team member: other than giving out the church service bulletin, you talk to newcomers, shake their hand, look into the newcomer's face, remember the name, link newcomers up with their peers after the service to make connections. Pastor C gave an example of how he conscientiously ran up to and stopped an undergraduate couple from leaving the coffee room after service and introduced them to other undergraduates in the church and to-date, the undergraduate couple is still in church; during the welcome lunch for newcomers, the couple mentioned that Pastor C's action of holding them back and making the connections to their peers was something that made them come back to church.

Pastor C said that most newcomers come to church through their church website; he is surprised that some had listened to their Sunday sermons posted online before stepping into the church for the first time. This main source of new worshippers perhaps explains the importance of the Welcome Ministry in making linkages and connections with newcomers who are not just mainly Singaporean or PRC immigrants, which Churches A and B received respectively.



## **6.2. Key Reasons for Immigration**

Interviewees shared single and multiple reasons for immigrating to Canada. There is no pattern which distinguishes any one of the three groups of interviewed Singaporean immigrants in the three churches, in terms of their reasons for immigrating. The most common reason for migrating to Canada is 'for children's sake'; this is followed by 'Unhappy at work', 'Pull factors' and 'Retirement'.

What is interesting about most interviewees (including those who shared 'outlier' reasons for migrating) is that through their accounts and stories of how and why they migrated to Canada, three common traits bind them together. Firstly, most had prior experience living in North America either as a student or worker. Secondly, many made trips to Canada and specifically to the MV region and cities (for holidaying and exploratory purposes) prior to submitting their immigration application. This suggests that this group of Singaporean immigrants are familiar with the lifestyle, culture and environment in Canada, prior to landing as immigrants. Thirdly, from the earlier two similar traits and the main reasons why these Singaporean immigrants migrated to Canada, they suggest that many of these Singaporean immigrants are financially well-to-do.

### **6.2.1. *For Children's Sake***

Many interviewees, comprising of recent and established immigrants, came to Canada solely or partially because they were thinking of the well-being and future of their second generation.

Calvin (Pseudonym: hereafter, names of interviewees used are all pseudonyms<sup>48</sup>) came to Canada entirely because of his child's education. He expressed that Singapore's education is good but pressurizing; he always felt that the streaming system is unfair for the young as some children do not 'blossom' until they are older. He is concerned that streaming the young could limit a slow starter's future career options. He wanted a more holistic education system for his child; if he did not have a child, he would not have considered immigration as he felt that Singapore is a good place to find employment and all his extended family members are in Singapore. Likewise, Charles felt that the education system in Singapore is too academically focused; as a result, parents are pressurizing their children with after-school tuition in order to achieve good grades, thus hindering the full development of their children. Echoing Calvin's views, he thinks that the education system in Canada develops a child as a more well-rounded person. Though Charles had another reason for migrating to Canada, his child's education is the major influence for migrating.

Aaron also came to Canada purely for his children's sake. He saw that his children are 'growing up too quickly' and time was passing by as he busied himself with work and business. In order not to miss his children's childhood and also to give them an opportunity to enjoy their schooling years more, he made the decision to immigrate.

Two other interviewees wanted their children to receive an overseas education for their children; this did not seem to arise from concerns about the Singapore education system. To Ben, he said that the 'grass is always greener over the other side'. For Abel, he wanted his children to experience an overseas

<sup>48</sup> Unless otherwise explained, a pseudonym starting with 'A' will be used for a Singaporean immigrant interviewee from Church A; a pseudonym starting with 'B' will be used for a Singaporean immigrant interviewee from Church B; likewise, a pseudonym starting with 'C' will be used for a Singaporean immigrant interviewee from Church C.

education because he himself benefited from an overseas education, which 'opened up his thinking' and made him independent.

### **6.2.2. *Unhappy at Work***

A handful of interviewees<sup>49</sup> said that their work in Singapore was pressurizing, stressful or challenging and hence a motivating factor to migrate; this factor however did not account as the sole reason for them to migrate. These four interviewees are degree holders and employees prior to immigrating (rather than business owner).

Ada was unhappy that workers who are above 40 years of age have a hard time getting a job in Singapore. She finds work in Singapore pressurizing and the 'rat race' life not conducive for her family. For Carol, she was happy to have an excuse (namely, migrating to Canada) to stop working, as her working conditions in Singapore were challenging. For Ben, he just wanted to migrate anywhere to get away from his job stress.

Aden was more unique in that he was not stressed about his work but upset that his company (a Government-linked corporation) told him that he must apply for Singapore citizenship (he was a permanent resident of Singapore then), failing which, his promotion will be held in abeyance; this was the trigger factor for him to migrate.

### **6.2.3. *Pull Factors***

Some interviewees said they were attracted to live in Canada. Amos recalled having this notion that it might be worthwhile living in a different country. To Abel, he was attracted to North America after two periods of work attachment

<sup>49</sup> One of whom is the husband of an interviewee (in the same church as his wife) whom I did not personally interview but he gave verbal consent for his wife (the interviewee) to share about his life as an immigrant in Canada and his motivation for coming to Canada.

in US; life in US 'opened up his eyes' to see the 'system' in North America: the shopping, the schools, freedom, four-seasons weather. He said that one of the freedoms he enjoyed was the ability to refund merchandise; this can be done any time and in the middle of the night since there are 24-hour supermarkets. For Asher, an established immigrant, he felt that migrating to Canada would be better economically and socially for his family as there are more opportunities and bigger spaces (homes).

#### **6.2.4. Retirement**

A few interviewees explicitly said they came to Canada to retire or semi-retire. They have the financial ability to not work full-time; they have amassed sufficiently for their family in their career when they were in Singapore.

For Charles, he knew he did not want to retire in Singapore as he reckoned that the 'things' he can do in Singapore when he retires are limited. He compared the life of a retiree in Singapore and Canada: in Singapore, he can only go to South East Asian countries for short holidays; in Canada, short holiday destinations are in North America and Europe, to him an endless possibility of destination choices. He also liked family life in Canada much better than in Singapore: in Canada's summer, he can cycle, go to the lakes and play tennis four to five times a week; in Singapore, he has to make appointment a week earlier to book a tennis court.

Carol envisioned that she would retire in her 40s or 50s but she realised her dream in her 30s when she migrated to Canada. Abigail is the only one of the three interviewees who is semi-retired and still 'working' in Canada: she is running a business at her own pace.

### **6.3. Best Friends in MV**

The survey form asked the Singaporean immigrant interviewees on how many of their three best friends in MV are from their churches. During the interview, I further explored this topic with the interviewees to understand who their three best friends in MV are and where they knew them.

There were four core findings. Firstly, whilst most Singaporean immigrant interviewees have at least one Singaporean immigrant best friend in MV (in or outside the church), they often also have non-Singaporean immigrant or local Canadian as best friends. Secondly, there was no distinctive preference among the Singaporean immigrants in the three churches towards choosing best friends who are like or unlike them. Thirdly, many have best friends outside their church social network: at their workplace; at their children's school setting; and at their place of recreation. Lastly, they chose three types of best friends: those who are similar to them (in culture and ethnicity, especially fellow Singaporean immigrants); those whom they come into frequent contact with; and those whose lives they got very involved in.

Overall, the interview findings reinforced the survey findings that Singaporean immigrants have a lesser affinity and weaker fixation on forming bonding social capital with their 'kind' and higher tendency to form bridging social capital with those not their 'kind' (Ley, 2008: pg. 2058), compared to PRC immigrants in Church B. The following illustrates this.

#### **6.3.1. *Best Friends Are Those Who Are Similar to You***

This is the most often cited reason on how the Singaporean immigrant interviewees chose their best friends in MV: people who are similar to you culturally and ethnically. This is even so for Calvin, who chose to attend Church C because he wanted to know more local Canadians. However, he is aware that his Canadian friends are still different from him ethnically and hence there is a

cultural and background 'gap'. He thinks this will be a first generation immigrant's problem; he thinks the second generation immigrant will not have that much a 'gap'.

Becky's three best friends in MV are all in Church B: two PRC immigrants and one Singaporean immigrant. She defines best friends as people whom she can go to and vice versa without feeling 'burdened' in terms of culture, values and ways of doing things. For instance, culturally, between her and her Singaporean best friend, they do not have to say much and still understand each other. Despite qualifying that her two PRC immigrant best friends are not the category of friends whom she can relate everything to, she was willing to bridge any cultural 'gap' by learning from them.

### **6.3.2. *Best Friends Are Those You See Often***

Abigail did not see the need to have common ethnicity, culture, faith or circumstances (as immigrants) to forming a best friendship with someone. Her best friends are people whom she trusts and have common interests; this boils down to length of contact with that person.

To Agnes, all her three best friends are in her workplace because she sees them a lot, almost every day. When she first immigrated to MV, she did not have a 'proper' church to go to; her first few Canadian churches – as she was church hopping – presented culture barrier to her in the form of 'whites and us' where friendships were superficial.

All Agnes' three best friends are Asians and immigrants who came to Canada when they were young; these people are similar to her culturally, ethnically and circumstantially (immigrants). She sees them for eight hours on work days and this constant interaction revealed needs and allowed them to build close friendships through practical actions; they cover Agnes' work when she returns late from an extended lunch time where she had to fetch her children

from school back home. Due to the long hours together at the workplace, they formed close friendships by sharing everything about their families.

### **6.3.3. *Best Friends Are Those Whose Life You Get Involved in***

Charles' three best friends in MV are all local-born Canadians (of whom two are Caucasians from Church C). He would never imagine having a good Canadian friend in Church C who has gone through alcoholism, drugs and mental problems, had he remained in Singapore. Through a church program, pairing 'strangers' up to encourage sharing (of every life struggle) and support of each other, Charles was able to experience the sufferings of his best friend and get involved in helping his best friend to take measured steps in getting back a 'normal' life.

Two of Carol's three best friends in MV are from Church C; one of whom is a Singaporean immigrant while the other is a Canadian Caucasian. Carol's third best friend is from outside the church, a Chinese immigrant who had been in Canada for many years. Carol was very involved in her best friends' lives: she helped to baby sit their baby once a week for a few months when one of her best friends was studying; she also personally helped another best friend and her daughter to find employment.

## **7. Four Major Roles of The Three Churches**

This section discusses the four roles the three churches play in aiding the integration of the Singaporean immigrant interviewees into the Canadian society through studying the nature of their social capital, in particular, bonding and bridging social interactions with fellow church goers: including other Singaporean immigrants and non-Singaporean immigrants. The four integration roles are: 'stepping stone'; administration of integration needs; roots and identity retention; and 'leap fogging'.

### **7.1. Stepping Stone**

Churches A and B played a crucial role in helping many Singaporean immigrant interviewees, who had already resolved to worship at either of these two churches<sup>50</sup> before they 'step in' to Canada. As a piece of stepping stone for these Singaporean immigrants, Churches A and B utilised bonding social capital (Ley, 2008: pg. 2058) in carrying out this role in two ways: hosting exploratory trips to Singaporean family members, friends or Singaporeans worshipping in a church in Singapore belonging to the same denomination as Church A, who may potentially become Canadian permanent residents (PR) or who have already obtained PR approval; and being the first social network to render transitional and settlement needs to newly arrived immigrants. Despite being a Canadian church, Church C's role in rendering 'stepping stone' aid was surprisingly experienced by the four Singaporean immigrant interviewees through bonding

<sup>50</sup> Two interviewees from Church C also received 'stepping stone' help from Church A as they worshipped at Church A initially when they landed in Canada.



social capital too (Ley, 2008: pg. 2058); though they were not new immigrants but because they were pleasantly and surprisingly welcomed, in their first visits, through the power of bonding social capital interaction, it left a good and lasting impression on them to want to continue coming.

It must be qualified that some interviewees from Churches A and B did not experience 'stepping stone' assistance for different reasons: the church was not in existence; two interviewees initially settled in another province; there were extended family members or friends in Canada who helped them; and personal preference not to trouble people whom they know, including existing church worshippers, despite knowing them prior to coming to Canada.

This 'stepping stone' role of the three churches resonates with Bourdieu's (1986) definition of social capital as a social group's actual and potential resources which are linked by a network of institutionalized relationships of members; actual resources are rendered by existing members to host visitors and assist in the settlement needs of newly arrived immigrants while potential resources are latent in the visitors and newly landed immigrants who become future church members, in turn extending their resources to the next 'batch' of visitors and new arrivals to the churches. Based on Briggs' (1998) distinction of the two types of benefits of social capital, 'stepping stone' help from the three churches would be classified largely under the category of social support, instead of social leverage. Li's (2004) concern with possible cost to individuals when drawing on a group's social capital is largely absent at this 'stepping stone' stage.

### **7.1.1. *Exploratory Trips***

As mentioned earlier, most interviewees took single or multiple exploratory trips to Canada and the MV region, in the form of holidaying with family members, prior to applying for immigration and also after obtaining immigration approval but before permanently landing in Canada with their families. Many of

these trips were conducted within the auspice of Churches A and B<sup>51</sup>: for instance, when a Singaporean family or individual visits MV at the invitation of Singaporean immigrant friends or family members who are worshipping at either Churches A or B, the hosts would also bring the visitor to places of interest and their respective churches. Another example would entail a holiday visit after obtaining immigration approval, to obtain their PR cards and conduct some errands, and at the same time, the family visits the church for worship service. These two scenarios necessarily imply that the visitor is usually either of the same church denomination in Singapore or a friend or relative of an existing church-goer from either Churches A or B.

Perhaps succinctly summarised by Aaron, who made a couple of exploratory trips (mostly holidays) to Canada prior to immigrating, he said that he has yet to come across anyone who visited Canada on a holiday and not enjoyed it. Abel would probably agree with Aaron as he took two exploratory trips after he obtained PR approval: the first trip was with his wife and without his children whilst the second trip was with the whole family. In his first trip, he confirmed his and his wife's landing papers and had no other official matters. They stayed at a hotel and visited Church A over the weekend, to start getting acquainted with the people in church and also asked them general questions about job search, life in MV and best place (city) to buy or rent a house.

In his second trip with his family, he had two agendas: confirm his children's landing papers and make his children comfortable with migrating to Canada. The attempt to obtain his children's buy-in to move is because his

<sup>51</sup> Some exploratory trips were conducted outside the context of the church as these trips were done before the church was established.

Beside the accounts of the interviewees, based on this researcher's personal observation, having worshipped in Churches A and B for over two years, these two churches (especially Church A) receive visiting and holidaying friends and relatives from Singapore regularly especially in the Summer; this researcher is personally aware that some among this group of visiting Singaporeans are keen to immigrate to Canada.

children will 'lose' their Singaporean church and school friends through this move. He did his 'sales pitch' to his children in two ways: bringing his children to church where they were introduced to their peers, who are also second generation Singaporean immigrants or local-born Canadians to first generation Singaporean immigrant parents; bringing his children for a road trip vacation to the 'most beautiful place in BC'. The ability of many interviewees to conduct such exploratory trips tallies with the economic profile of Singaporeans in general and the survey findings on the financial status of the Singaporean immigrants from Churches A and B.

### **7.1.2. *Transitional and Settlement Needs***

Below are the transitional and initial settlement experiences of three interviewees from Church A<sup>52</sup> who benefitted from bonding social capital (Ley, 2008: pg. 2058); Church B interviewees also had similar 'bonding' experiences of getting support from Church B but as details of those support were not as vividly conveyed in the interviews, they were not included. Though transitional and initial settlement assistances are largely classified as social support (Briggs, 1998), the three interviewees seemed to view this social support with differing importance.

#### **Ada's transition**

Ada had a lot of faith in and reliance on the power of bonding social capital in Church A; this is seen in the decisions she and her husband made when making their transition into Canada as new immigrants.

She only knew one person in Canada prior to immigrating to Canada: the ex-pastor of Church A who is pastoring Ada's church in Singapore. Ada's church in Singapore is the 'mother' church of Church A; hence both churches are

<sup>52</sup> One interviewee, Charles, is currently in Church C but he experienced transitional and settlement assistance from members of Church A and was part of the group for a while before moving to Church C.

affiliated through the same denomination. So through this religious bond, Ada's pastor connected with the administrator in Church A, who helped her to view and confirm a rental unit near the church before Ada's family made their landing in Canada. Upon arriving in Canada, as the landlord of the rental unit was unable to remove the ex-tenant in time, the church administrator helped Ada's family to book a hotel near to Church A for a few days. During those crucial transitioning days at the hotel, the administrator guided Ada on basic and crucial settlement needs like where to buy groceries, daily items and furniture.

Ada shared that her husband thinks that if they encountered any problem in Canada, the church can be the first to help. This therefore reinforced the importance to them to be attached to Church A; in fact, the church was so important that Ada's husband turned down an in-person job interview in another Canadian province before they landed in Canada. Despite having no prior friendship with anyone in Church A, Ada's husband was resolved to be geographically close to Church A first, as a new immigrant, to get social support (Briggs, 1998) from the church. Giving up a potential Canadian job for a Singaporean immigrant church is a demonstration of the faith in and power of bonding social capital (Ley, 2008: pg. 2058). To Ada and her husband, the social leverage (Briggs, 1998) of "getting ahead" through a Canadian job is less attractive than the social support of "getting by" from the transitional and settlement help that Church A can render through bonding social capital, in spite of Ada and her husband's middle-class income status<sup>53</sup> which requires them to look for Canadian jobs upon immigrating. This is an interesting example where social support is perceived to render more benefit than social leverage.

<sup>53</sup> This status is based on their decision to rent first as a new immigrant compared to the next two interviewees (Aaron and Charles) who bought a house in MV upon receiving their PR approval. Also, Ada and her husband were more active in their job search in Canada than Aaron and Charles.

## **Aaron's transition**

For Aaron, who already knew Singaporean immigrant friends in Church A prior to immigrating to Canada, it was unsurprising that he tapped into this source of bonding social capital and it definitely played a role in helping him to make a smooth transition as a new immigrant, despite experiencing a hectic transition.

Aaron said he knew many new immigrants who made their first landing in Canada just to comply with the official time constraint of getting their PR card and then return to their country of origin to 'tie up loose ends' and to prepare for the permanent move subsequently. But for his case, he decided to come as a family and make the landing and stay on. So when the house he bought in the Tri-Cities, BC<sup>54</sup>, near Church A, was not ready for occupation after his family landed, his family stayed with a friend from Church A for a few weeks. He had bought this house in an earlier trip just before making his landing as an immigrant. Again, the realtor who took care of the house transaction was recommended by a friend from Church A. When asked if he experienced a smooth transition as a new immigrant, he said it was relatively smooth because he could ask his friends from Church A, who had the same migrant experience, "Where you do this? Where you do that? To apply for this, apply for that. Set up, open up a bank account and start." By being able to get immediate answers to questions common to new immigrants, it shortened the learning curve and relieved part of the hectic nature of handling the processing and formalities he encountered as a new arrival.

<sup>54</sup> About half of the 18 Singaporean immigrant interviewees from the three churches are like Aaron, who could afford to buy their houses (all single family homes) in the Tri-Cities, BC, straightaway or within a few months after migrating to Canada. These affluent Singaporean immigrants have high levels of individual (human and financial) capital, similar to the Chinese immigrants in Toronto in Myles and Hou's (2004) study, except that these Singaporean Chinese immigrants did not settle in dense Chinese ethnic neighbourhoods, since the Tri-Cities, BC is not known to have such neighbourhoods, compared to Richmond, BC.

## **Charles' transition**

After Aaron settled down into the web of social network in Church A, he transitioned from being a potential to an actual resource of the group (Bourdieu 1986). When it was Charles' turn to land as a new migrant, he contacted Aaron for help because he knew Aaron back in Singapore. Aaron rendered his and his group's (Church A) resources to help Charles make his transition, as a new immigrant, smooth.

Charles was one of those many new immigrants whom Aaron said would first land just to obtain a PR card and return another day permanently with their family. So after Charles made the initial short landing to obtain his PR card, he returned a second time to 'settle everything' with the help of Aaron and his church friends and then returned to Singapore before he made a final third trip with his family back to Canada to live permanently.

So during his second trip, Charles applied for MSP, immigration card and started driving lessons with the ICBC (Insurance Corporation of British Columbia). These applications required a Canadian address hence Charles used Aaron's home address to receive documents and correspondence from Canadian authorities. Aaron also tapped into his church's collective resources (Li, 2004: pg. 173) and introduced Abigail to Charles, who bought a house in the Tri-Cities, BC through Abigail. Aaron then introduced Aden to Charles, who drove Charles around to browse for furniture and also helped to customise Charles' study furniture. Aaron also helped Charles to assemble IKEA furniture for his newly bought house. Aaron also introduced another church goer's spouse (hereafter named 'Anson') to Charles, who bought a car from Anson.

When Charles made his final third trip back to Canada with his family, Anson picked Charles and his family up from the airport with the car, which Charles bought from Anson, and fetched them to their home. Because of the series of bonding assistance from fellow Singaporean immigrants in Church A,

Charles' family had a very comfortable start to their immigrant life. And Aaron continued to 'pass down' practical advice to Charles, which he had acquired previously as a new immigrant: where to shop, for instance in Canadian Superstore and T&T Supermarket; where to buy an item at the cheapest price and; which restaurant to go to when they are not cooking.

As expected, Charles worshipped at Church A during his transition as a new immigrant; his biggest social network in Canada was embedded in Church A. We return to Charles later to discuss his experience in Church C after he left Church A. For both Charles and Aaron, the social support (Briggs, 1998) in the area of transition and settlement needs, obtained from Church A's bonding social capital, seemed to be a "good-to-have" experience but did not come across as necessarily crucial to them as a new immigrant transitioning into Canada, in comparison to Ada and her husband. The impression is that had Charles not gotten help from Aaron to fix up IKEA furniture, he might have gotten similar help from his friendly neighbours as he shared that many of them came over to his house to introduce themselves within the first few days they moved to Canada. Likewise, had Charles not bought a car from Anson, he could easily have purchased a car from a used car dealer after settling down in his new home. This may have some correlation to Charles' and Aaron's better financial position and knowledge of Singaporean immigrant friends and relatives who were already settled down in MV, compared to Ada and her husband.

### **7.1.3. Importance of 'Bonding' Welcome**

Whilst it is normal for the interviewees from Churches A and B to feel welcomed in a Singapore or co-ethnic church, the four Singaporean immigrant interviewees experienced a warm welcome, surprisingly through bonding social capital (Ley, 2008: pg. 2058), on their first Sunday visits to Church C, a Canadian church. Indeed, the 'stepping stone' initiation towards integration to this Canadian church was aided by bonding social capital: they were quickly introduced by the

Welcome Team to fellow Singaporean immigrants who were already in Church C<sup>55</sup>, albeit they met other “dissimilar” people too.

The idea that this commonality and familiarity in nationality or ethnicity can make a newcomer feel welcomed and comfortable in a new and unfamiliar church environment had a strong legacy on these four Singaporean immigrants in subsequently helping other newcomers to ‘step-in’, identify with and settle down in the church. After they settled down in the church, all of them eventually joined the Welcome Team at different intervals and used the same concept of bonding social capital to welcome newcomers, albeit the field of what is bondable can be broadened beyond ethnicity and nationality. As with Aaron, these four Singaporean immigrant interviewees, now as part of the network of institutionalized relationships of members in Church C, translated their potential resources, latent in them as a result of being beneficiaries of a ‘bonding’ welcome, into actual resources, rendering ‘stepping-stone’ aid to other newcomers (Bourdieu, 1986).

Carol shared an instance when she was on duty to welcome people during a Sunday service. She noticed a Caucasian elderly couple who looked ‘lost’ and she asked them if they were new; at the end of the service, she introduced them to another Caucasian elderly couple in church and could see the two couples bonding very well. She felt that if she were to start talking to them, she will soon run out of things to say. Introducing another Caucasian to the newcomer couple was important but identifying suitable Caucasians who are also couples and elderly was also crucial, in her opinion. Pastor C also had a similar account whereby his gesture of welcome made a young student couple come again.

<sup>55</sup> It was not clear from the interview that Pastor C was introduced to Singaporean immigrants in Church C on his first visit but his family members had already earlier first joined the church a few Sundays ago as he was away. Regardless, in the interview, pastor made it very clear that he definitely felt very welcomed on his first visit.



Calvin said that if church members just talk amongst themselves after Sunday service, with the newcomers standing at one corner like “wall flowers”, they will not feel welcomed and will not come again. He remembered welcoming a newcomer couple where the husband is a Caucasian and the wife is a Filipino. After the church service, he introduced them to other Filipinos in church. Likewise, on another occasion when he was welcoming people, he asked a newcomer to confirm if he was from Romania or Czechia before introducing the newcomer to a Romanian couple. Calvin said that he is thinking how he would have wanted to be welcomed as a newcomer; he felt that if he were new and introduced to a Singaporean immigrant in church, he would immediately feel that he has someone in the church to whom he can relate.

Whilst Calvin’s reason for going to a Canadian church and avoiding an immigrant church was to expand his network of friends beyond just Singaporean immigrants, he desires to first meet and bond with Singaporean immigrants in a Canadian church so that he can feel comfortable in a new place before exploring and bridging new friendships with “dissimilar” people. Though this ‘bonding’ welcome is just a social support (Briggs, 1998) to new comers, the four Singaporean immigrant interviewees (especially Pastor C) stressed the importance of this bonding social capital in providing a pivotal role in their ‘stepping stone’ stage of integration to this Canadian church for themselves and other new comers. Also, from the way these Singaporean immigrants used bonding social capital, it strikes a similar tune to MacPherson et. al’s (2001: pg. 415) argument that homophily in ethnicity creates the strongest divide, with age, religion, education, occupation, and gender following in roughly that order: Carol found someone of similar age in church for the elderly newcomer; Pastor C found students (educated in the same tertiary level) in church for a new student couple; Calvin found Filipinos in church for the new comer Filipino with her Caucasian husband and a Romanian couple in church for the new comer Romanian.

## **7.2. Administering Integration Needs**

The initial transitional and settlement assistances are a prelude to the next-in-line integration assistances Singaporean immigrant interviewees obtained, after the initial excitement of moving to a new place settles down: those who are not in Canada to retire have to find jobs; those who have children have to figure out the difference between the Singaporean and Canadian educational systems and decide which school to enroll their children in; and those whose vocation is to study, have to balance, amongst many things, doing well academically and eating well at the same time.

In administering integration needs, the three churches seem to be guided by an over-arching principle, each different from the other two: Church A is guided by a 'hierarchy of needs'; Church B is guided by 'leadership'; and Church C is guided by 'bridging relationships'. This does not mean that an over-arching principle in either one of the churches is entirely absent from the other two churches; as an over-arching principle, it simply meant that that trait or character is prevalent.

### **7.2.1. Church A: Hierarchy of Needs**

Church A is an 'abundant' church; only a few people (including Singaporean immigrants, non-Singaporean immigrants, and local-born Canadians) are in financial, physical or material need. This is echoed by the three pastors' unanimous impression of Singaporean immigrants in Canada: a group of immigrants who are generally better at integrating into the Canadian society compared to other immigrant groups. The pastors surmised that the ability to better integrate boils down to knowing the English language, having a comfortable financial reserve and being more job mobile (in terms of qualifications); these profiles coincide with the literature review on the economic and social profiles of Singaporeans.

This could have led to the easy identification of those in church who are clearly in need (including non-Singaporean immigrants), where in-group resources are then focused and hierarchically dedicated to helping them. There is no differentiation in ethnicity in terms of help rendered, once the needy person is identified by the group within the spatial boundary of the church; the 'hierarchy of need' principle circumvents the notion of rendering resources within a bonding social capital paradigm. However, as rightly pointed out by Li (2004), the effectiveness of a group's resources depended on the level of empowerment of individuals in the group, as there were some limitations to the effectiveness of some of the assistances rendered, which came in the form of both social support and social leverage (Briggs, 1998). This research also found that the level of empowerment of a group's resource also depended on the willingness of the recipient in extracting and fully utilising it.

Also, to those who are new and affluent Singaporean immigrants, the degree of integration help rendered to them or requested by them seems to first focus on what is more crucial, vital or important to know; the other less vital and mundane information can be figured out by the newcomer or shared with them later. Hence, the 'hierarchy of need' principle also seems to apply to information transfer, where need-to-know information precedes good-to-know information.

### **Employment assistance**

Overall, Church A is not a good place for Singaporean immigrants to obtain social leverage in terms of finding Canadian jobs (Briggs, 1998). Only half of the interviewees in Church A (excluding Pastor A) sought to obtain some form of job search assistance from the church; the other five interviewees either found jobs by themselves, through other social networks or did not need to look for a Canadian job.

Pastor C might have an answer for this phenomenon. He said that knowing the English language is an advantage to many Singaporean immigrants

as it equips them to ‘understand’ Canada better than immigrants from other groups. Also, many PRC or Indian immigrants do not have a layer of ‘fat’ like most Singaporean immigrants do and hence have to do whatever work they can find; most Singaporean immigrants, with more financial reserves and higher job mobility (in terms of qualifications), are more likely to take their time in getting jobs. Indeed, Abel, Aaron, Ada and Abigail all took their time to look for a job. Aaron added that another possible reason why some Singaporean immigrants may have difficulty finding a job quickly is because most are relatively established in their career and income level in Singapore; if they are looking for a similar type of work and income in Canada, they will be disappointed.

Only Arthur, out of the five interviewees, obtained job assistance through the church network and found a job directly. Arthur, together with two non-Singaporean immigrants found a job directly by being an in-group member of Church A; they were all in greater financial need than most other church members<sup>56</sup> and ethnic (or Singaporean) attachment was not a factor to obtaining employment for the two non-Singaporean immigrants.

### ***Job offered to those in need***

Arthur said that most people would find jobs or ask for work ‘within their own context’; Church A was his context. He recalled working for a church member who is a Singaporean immigrant but as the amount of work was insufficient, his boss suggested that he apply to another company where he had relatives working there, saying, “They are always looking for people”. Though Arthur was initially adamant as he felt he lacked the skills, he eventually went for the interview and was offered the job. He knew that his ex-boss’s introduction or

<sup>56</sup> Arthur did not explicitly say in the interview that he was in financial need when he was hired by another church member; this researcher concluded that he was in greater financial need based on Arthur’s pathway of coming to Canada and his overall family financial and housing situation. The other two non-Singaporean immigrants are clearly in greater financial need due to the reason given by Agnes on why she employed them and also from this researcher’s general observation and association with them in church.

bonding social capital (Ley, 2008: pg. 2058) helped him secure the job as the company which hired him was looking for new hires who are friends and relatives of existing employees; soon after he joined the company, this hiring policy was removed. Bonding social capital helped Arthur to obtain social leverage to “get ahead” with a better job, which offered full-time hours compared to his previous insufficient hours of work (Briggs, 1998).

Agnes offered to employ two non-Singaporean immigrants who attended Church A as she knew their situation and wanted to help them financially. She was not approached by them for help but she could see that one of them needed help whilst the other person’s need was conveyed by another Singaporean immigrant in church. To her, it is better to give them a job to earn an income as it helps them in their self-esteem; she would prefer not to give them ‘easy money’ as she thinks it will generate requests for more. When asked if they are the right candidate for the job, she said, “No”, notwithstanding that they do have some skills set for the job which Singaporean immigrants generally do not possess. However, one of them had an issue with not turning up for work. She said that after hiring him a few times, she eventually stopped calling him for work because he was irresponsible in this regard.

Arthur utilized the job opportunity given to him through the church network and to date, for over 10 years, he continued to work in the same company and is grateful for the job. In contrast, Agnes’ non-Singaporean immigrant church friend, though identified to be in need of a job through the church network, for whatever reason(s), did not utilize the job offer fully. This example adds another dimension to our understanding of the limitations of social capital’s effectiveness (Li, 2004); being in a resource-rich group does not guarantee benefits if the individual does not take advantage of the resource.

### ***Resource limitations***

The other four out of the five interviewees who obtained some form of job search assistance in Church A did not arrive at job search success<sup>57</sup> directly from the church network, due to limitations of the church in-group resource (Li, 2004).

Ada felt that Church A is not the place where she can obtain job information and opportunities as she said that most people in church are retired, with few working adults. For instance, after she landed and took some time to settle her children's education, she was deliberating what course to study in Canada, to enable her to find a job. After consulting and tapping into the information network in church A, she decided on a course and paid for it. Only upon completion of the course did she realise from another social network that the course she took qualified for 80% funding by the government for immigrants. She lamented that the people in Church A were not aware of this information as they are not in the market to look for work.

Alex also did not find the assistance offered by Church A and another Canadian Church (not Church C) directly helpful to aiding him secure work. Advice on where he could look for work (for instance, job boards like Workopolis) was not very helpful; offers from Church members to be his character referee were also not taken up by Alex as he had a more relevant reference he could ask for help: a past job supervisor, who not only knew his character but could vouch for Alex's industry knowledge which was crucial for securing a job. The "weak" ties Alex had with his Caucasian job supervisor would be more likely than the "strong" ties Alex had with Singaporean Chinese church members, in terms of helping him to secure a Canadian job (cf. Granovetter, 1973).

Abel also asked Church members if they knew where he could find job vacancies. He was told that Government-funded agencies offer help as they had

<sup>57</sup> Some successfully found jobs through non-church networks.

job position postings. The information was only helpful to the limited extent of pointing him to consider looking at attending a suitable program conducted by an agency; the assistance offered by the agency program was largely dedicated to getting his qualifications recognized in Canada, which he is not keen to pursue due to his extenuating job search circumstances. He concluded that Church A is 'not a big deal' in terms of a place to find job leads.

### **Material, physical and financial assistance**

Through participation in church life and activities, needy members are known by word of mouth and through observation; they are aided in material, physical and financial ways, which contribute towards their sustenance, thus enabling integration in the Canadian society. Some members expressed their needs by not paying for after-service meals and this is known by the church but no discipline was taken.

Again, this assistance transcended beyond co-ethnics as the principle of need overlooked any cultural or racial differences between Singaporean and non-Singaporean immigrants in the church. The extent of this assistance again has its limitations (Li, 2004) and they are largely classified as social support (Briggs, 1998), again in varying importance to the beneficiaries.

### ***Leftover food***

Church A hosts a meal for worshippers at the Fellowship Hall after every Sunday worship service; this meal is charged at cost price to any partaker. It is not easy to estimate the right amount of food to prepare or order hence on certain days there are insufficient food supplies and on other days there is leftover food<sup>58</sup>; the aim is obviously to avoid the two extremes.

<sup>58</sup> From this researcher's observation, days where there was leftover food were more prevalent than days where there was insufficient food.

According to Agnes, leftover food is allocated in sequence to the following groups or category of people, based largely on a need-sequence: full-time church workers; whoever needs food, like the students who are going back to campus; and lastly, whoever wants the food. Kitchen helpers also get some leftovers at times, depending on which of the three categories they fall into. Pastor A could attest to this system as he often gets leftover food whenever there is any; he said leftovers are packed up and passed to him first as he might be perceived to be in need as a pastor. He had similar experience in another church of the same denomination in another country (not Singapore), where he was serving.

When Alex was a full-time student, prior to working, he found it hard to eat well as he tried to adapt to the Canadian climate and higher price of food in Vancouver compared to Singapore. He lamented,

In Singapore you could get a complete meal for 5 dollars or so whereas come over to Vancouver, 5 Canadian dollars will only maybe get you a small sandwich, which was definitely not enough for me.

Without a steady source of income as a student, the first item he would save on was food and either settled for eating less or not eating as healthily as he would like to. He was very appreciative of the food the church offered to him, when he was a poor and often hungry student. He thinks the church usually offered leftover food to students first, especially those who live by themselves or are away from their family. He extended the source of food he obtained beyond the Sunday church meal to other church-related activities, for instance, special events like Christmas dinner after the Christmas concert, church summer outings and church member house gatherings. Alex qualified that he received much less food now as he is working; he would rather the church donate the food to current students, especially those who are living alone. The social support (Briggs, 1998) in the form of receiving leftover food decreased in importance for Alex when he transitioned from being a poor student to a working young adult; he recognizes that the value of this social support will be higher to another student.



Agnes also added that she knows of some people who persistently ate the church meal without paying, despite clear and sufficient notices and information that payment is necessary. She said the church leaders were notified of such dishonest matters but they decided not to take any action on the culprits, thinking that their conscience should speak to them; Agnes also thinks these free riders could be in financial need. It is interesting that whilst the church has its own schema of needs to distributing leftover food, there is also a group of free riders who silently self-declare their financial need by eating for free, presumably so, since there are sufficient notices and announcements to inform that the meal requires payment. This finding adds another dimension to our understanding of the downsides of social capital theories (Li, 2004): whilst studies of Mennonites in Canada have shown that there are costs to individuals for violating common norms ((Linden, Currie & Driedger, 1985; Winland, 1993), Church A's leadership prefers not to enforce non-conformity by some in-group members, opting to allow the members' consciences to exercise self-correction. Also, to these free riders, this weekly meal, as a form of social support (Briggs, 1998), seemed to be more important than their clear conscience, reputation and honesty.

### ***Gifting***

Pastor A shared that he receives financial support from church members (within Church A and his previous churches) in the form of love gifts. As a beneficiary, he will use part of this unsolicited financial help he receives to, within his private capacity, help other church members who are also in financial need (Bourdieu, 1986). When asked by his recipient, "How about you?", he would reply that he is sharing a blessing from God, rendered to him from another believer. He receives these gifts from both Singaporean immigrants and local Canadians and in sharing some of his gifts, he had shared with both Singaporean immigrants and local Canadians, based on his knowledge of who are in financial need and co-ethnic criteria is immaterial. His assessment of who are in need is either

through his conversations with people in the church or from his personal observations.

Alex also received many practical Christmas gifts in his first year in Church A, when he was a student. He was pleasantly surprised with his gifts as he was not used to it; he reckoned the reason why he received many practical gifts like sweaters, socks and gloves was because it was his first white Christmas, to help him adapt to the cold weather. He also opined that the gifts were welcome gifts, being his first year in church, as the number of gifts he received in his second year diminished.

Aaron resonated what Alex felt as he generalised that material support is given in Church A not so much because people needed them; when such social support is given to people and their children, they are encouraged by it because they are being thought of. This is because most people who come to Church A are not in abject poverty, to the extent that they needed clothes or food. Aaron added that material support is usually given to new comers as this group of people is perceived to have more difficulty adjusting to a new life in Canada as they may feel 'unsettled'. Social support (Briggs, 1998), through gifting to a newcomer, would then seem to create additional value compared to gifting to an "old-timer" as on top of helping the new comer to "get by", it also helps the new comer to cope with "unsettling" feelings of being in a new country.

Indeed, despite the absence of abject poverty in Church A, the token of encouragement is still often presented to those who are relatively more in need, be it in actual material need or perceived need, as 'unsettled' new immigrants.

### ***Transportation***

All interviewees, except Alex, bought a car immediately or soon after arriving in Canada. Before Alex bought a car, he was offered car rides by church members to Church activities, especially Sunday worship services. Alex said a few families took turns to drive him but there was no strict scheduling or system

on who is to drive him. On a week to week basis, he would ask them, “Hey so and so, can you pick me up?”

However, there was a limitation to this form of social support rendered to Alex. The limitation did not come from the resource givers but rather from Alex himself as it culminated to a point where the value of this social support (Briggs, 1998) diminished over time as he became discouraged and sick of travelling many hours, to and from church, every weekend. The geographical distance, the lack of a personal vehicle to shorten the travelling time, led him to stop utilizing the resource offer from the church network as he searched for other churches nearer to where he lived. He returned to Church A regularly after he purchased a car, after he had a steady income from a full-time job.

This geographical barrier to integration, experienced by Alex, has semblance with Dwyer, Tse and Ley’s (2013) work on the peripheral location of the religious institutes at No. 5 Road. These examples reinforce the importance of physical geography, in particular, proximity, to services.

### ***Information sharing***

Information is shared in any in-group network and the same is true in Church A; information or advice given to new Singaporean immigrants to help them integrate into their new milieu comes in all forms in Church A. They can range from information on children’s education, to housing information like mortgage regulations, to safety matters relating to living in a different country, to job search information, to weather information, to transportation (transit and private) information, to where to shop for groceries, household items, electronics, and furniture.

Amidst the plethora of information communicated, there seems to be an unspoken understanding of what a Singaporean would be concerned with or need to know first as a new immigrant; hence, the information giver would convey what he or she thinks is the most needful or crucial piece(s) of

information a new immigrant individual or family should hear. Of course, beyond saying what is more important, conversations would be rife with drips and drabs of other advices aiding integration for the new immigrant.

For instance, Pastor A said that when he first arrived in Canada, for safety reasons, he was told what a blinking traffic junction is, i.e. it is a pedestrian controlled or activated crossing. Prior to this information, he had the wrong perception that he had to stop when the green light is blinking; he was able to drive in BC for up to one year using his Singapore driving licence, without having to convert to or take a test for a BC Driver's licence, implying that he would not have read up or studied about this in order to pass the BC Driving Theory Test before embarking on the Practical Test, had he not obtained this information from church people.

For Arthur, one particular piece of 'pre-emptive' advice he would give to new immigrants, with children who are either entering or going to attend either UBC or Simon Fraser University, pertains to the location to buy a house. As many new Singaporean immigrants in Church A like to stay in the Tri-Cities, BC area<sup>59</sup>, they need to consider the transit commute time (45 minutes to one hour for one way) for their children or be prepared to bear the additional cost of paying for their children's dormitory or nearby rental. This advice reinforces again the importance of physical geography, in particular, living in proximity to the Universities, to immigrant integration (Dwyer, Tse and Ley, 2013).

<sup>59</sup> Seven out of eleven Church A interviewees stay in the Tri-Cities, BC and all the eight interviewees in Churches B and C also stay in the Tri-Cities, BC. In his exploratory trip, Aaron drove around MV and found Coquitlam, BC had the strongest appeal for him to live in as he felt that the more established suburbs looked old and were not as well organized as Coquitlam, BC. In deciding where to stay, Abel also drove around the MV region and felt that Coquitlam, BC was 'neat' and comparable to Singapore in terms of its nice layout of building development; he did not want to stay in Richmond, BC because it was too ethnically and Cantonese based; Vancouver and Burnaby, BC are out of his budget; Maple Ridge, BC was too far from church, downtown Vancouver and UBC.

Also, these two examples emphasize again the varying importance of social support (Briggs, 1998): had Pastor A not known what a blinking traffic junction is and try to slow down every time he encounters one, he may become a road hazard or even end up in a traffic accident; if new Singaporean immigrants did not take into consideration their children's future University education when making their home-buying decision, they may make a financially unwise decision. Providing crucial and important information seems to be a valuable social support to the Singaporean immigrants in Church A; as co-ethnics, the church members know what new comer co-ethnics may be concerned with or overlook and be at an advantageous position to provide valuable and pertinent advices.

### **Spiritual assistance**

One explicit means of communicating integration needs is through the spiritual exercise of prayer; many interviewees mentioned the prayer bulletin as a source through which members know who has what needs. These needs are often expressed to Pastor A, church leaders or administrators who will include them in the prayer bulletin, which members will pray<sup>60</sup> over on a weekly basis during the church prayer meeting.

As each member will have many needs, Alex opined that only 'major' prayer request items are 'brought up to the surface' in the church prayer bulletin; people would usually pray amongst their family and close friends if it was a minor issue. When Alex went through two crucial, important and distressing milestones of his life, relating to integration in Canada, he asked the church to pray for him; it was important for him to know that church members were there for him in his time of need and discouragement.

<sup>60</sup> Prayer, to protestant (or Bible-believing) Christians, is a conversation with God, their Abba Father, telling God their thanksgivings, praises, confessions and petitions. The Bible says in Philippians 4:6-7 (King James Version Bible): Be careful for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God. And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.

Again, the principle of 'hierarchy of needs' seems to hold true in the area of praying for one another's integration needs, at the church level. The restriction or downside of this resource (Li, 2004) lies in whether God will answer the prayers, as plainly explained by Alex,

Prayer support is important, not that there is any special power that it will come true if you pray more about it because everything is in God's timing and everything is in God's will.

### **7.2.2. Church B: Leadership**

Almost all the Singaporean immigrants in Church B undertake major and multiple positions of church leadership: pastor, preacher, interpreter, cell group leader, worship leader, musician and Sunday School teacher. Although PRC immigrants also take up some leadership positions, it is obvious that the core group of leaders are Singaporean immigrants whereby there is a unique relationship where one minority group of Singaporean Chinese immigrants is leading a bigger group of PRC immigrants, in a predominantly PRC immigrant church, which is renting from and sharing the church building of a Canadian church (Dwyer, Tse and Ley, 2013).

This unique Singaporean Chinese immigrant leadership relationship over the PRC immigrants did not result in another Mennonite-version or religious-version of restriction to group members' freedom or costs to members for violation of common norms (Linden, Currie & Driedger, 1985; Winland, 1993). Instead, Granovetter's (1985, 1990) social embeddedness concept, concerning how an individual is nestled amongst a web of social relations, creating trust to maintain mutual exchanges (Granovetter, 1995), was evident in Church B. Findings from Singaporean immigrant interviewees from Church B suggest a presence of trust by the PRC immigrants for Singaporean immigrant leaders. This seems to be reinforced by a sharing from Pastor A that as a church leader, when people (within and outside Church A) know he is a minister, they will be more willing to open up and trust him with more information.

Leadership aside, trustworthiness seems to be an attribute tagged on Christians. In another sharing, Arthur mentioned that he recalled a colleague asking him if anyone in his church (Church A) was hiring; this colleague was asking on behalf of another person in his church who is seeking work within his skills set but this colleague only seemed to be asking church-goers which suggests some form of trust in church people when it comes to job seeking. In the course of this research, this researcher also spoke to one PRC immigrant from Church B who mentioned that when she first came to Canada, her landlord (a non-Christian) told her to go to any church as she can trust church people to be loving and helpful in her settlement needs.

Regardless of whether the trust for Singaporean immigrants in Church B originates by virtue of them being in church leadership or them being Christian, integration assistances (from PRC immigrants in Church B and Asian immigrants outside of Church B) to Singaporean immigrants seem to arise out of a sense of trusting social relations. However, as integration assistances are rendered more often by Singaporean immigrants to PRC immigrants within Church B, perhaps by virtue of the former being in leadership positions, instances of Singaporean immigrants from Church B (based on three interviewees, excluding Pastor B) obtaining integration assistance from PRC immigrants in Church B and people outside of Church B were largely limited to mainly employment assistance<sup>61</sup>, which seem to tally with the survey findings that Church B could have the highest incidence of job networks than Churches A and C.

Perhaps due to their leadership position and mainly one-sided assistance to the PRC immigrants, the Singaporean immigrant interviewees seemed to be very involved in helping to solve integration issues faced by the PRC immigrants,

<sup>61</sup> Becky did experience settlement assistances from some PRC immigrants from Church B: information on Canadian schooling systems for her children; accompanying her to view houses to buy; offer car rides to her before she purchased a car.

suggesting a high level of bridging social capital<sup>62</sup> (Ley, 2008: pg 2058). Bonding social capital amongst Singaporean immigrants in Church B will not be discussed<sup>63</sup>.

### **Employment assistance**

Of the three interviewees from Church B (excluding Pastor B), one was not employed but seeking work, at the point of interviewing them. The other two interviewees had found various Canadian jobs, through both church and non-church networks. For jobs found through church B's network, the two interviewees understand that they were hired because they were deemed to be trustworthy on top of other possible factors like matching skills set.

Ben had held six Canadian jobs to-date, of which three (not in chronological order) were secured without any social networks whilst the other three were found through two social networks: Church B and his children's school. It is interesting to note that the three jobs Ben secured without any help from social networks were more professional, well-paid and related to Ben's skills and work experience in Singapore whilst the other three jobs were fairly 'easy' or low-education jobs and lower paying jobs.

Through the Church B network, Ben found two jobs. For the first of these two jobs, he was approached by a PRC immigrant in Church B who asked if he wanted to work for him as he just set up a small company and was looking for people from church who are trustworthy; to him, Christians, to a certain extent,

<sup>62</sup> Bonding social capital could also be utilised here since the Singaporean Chinese immigrants and PRC Chinese immigrants are co-ethnics. However, bridging social capital is used here because all the interviewed Singaporean Chinese immigrants (except for Pastor B) revealed that they felt cultural differences and 'gaps' exist between them and the PRC immigrants because they are from two different countries. This however did not seem to hinder the mainly one-sided integration assistance from Singaporean immigrants to PRC immigrants.

<sup>63</sup> This is because of two reasons: this researcher did not focus on this area in the interview with the Singaporean immigrants from Church B; the discussion on Church A has offered insights into how Singaporean immigrants relate to one another within a bonding social capital network.



can be trusted. As a result, Ben worked for the PRC immigrant, who hired mostly Christians to work for him. For the other job which was found through Church B's network, Ben was looking for a 'simple' job; through talking to another PRC immigrant (hereafter called 'Bob') in church, Ben asked if he could take on a 'simple' job in Bob's company. Because Bob's supervisor trusted Bob's recommendation, Ben got the job after an interview. Bob's referral of Ben is because he could trust in Ben to do the 'simple' job well, though he was initially concerned that Ben would not 'condescend' well or 'fit in' to this low-skilled job, since Ben is quite skilled in his own profession.

When Pastor B's wife (a Singaporean immigrant) was approached by a PRC immigrant from the church network to recommend someone who can speak English, Cantonese and Mandarin for a Saturday-only job, thinking that the Pastor's wife would have many suitable Christian candidates in mind, Pastor's wife recommended Becky. Because of the trust in the Pastor's wife (who is also someone in church leadership), the PRC immigrant telephone interviewed Becky and asked her to start work, even before meeting Becky.

Bonding social capital (Ley, 2008: pg. 2058) on the basis of a common religion seemed to be the key factor for how Ben and Becky obtained jobs through the church social network. However, given the nature of the lower-paying and Saturday-only jobs secured through the church network, it would be more accurate to categorize the benefits Ben and Becky obtained from the Church group as a form of social support instead of social leverage (Briggs, 1998).

However, the story for Becky did not end with the Saturday-only job, which she held onto for more than three years; this job enabled her to expand her social network beyond the church as she got acquainted with many Chinese parents and teachers as she was working in a school environment. Through this job in the school setting, she was then asked to help out and work once a week for the same company which owned the school; again, Becky worked very well

with her colleagues and was influential in helping to resolve conflicts amongst her colleagues. Becky then again through Pastor B's wife's recommendation, moved on to a full-time job where she again expanded her social network beyond the church, before she moved on again to do a word-of-mouth marketing business.

What started out as social support (Briggs, 1998) from Church B in the form of a Saturday-only job, which led her to another once-a-week job, turned out to become a social leverage (Briggs, 1998) assistance from Church B as Pastor B's wife again recommended Becky for a full-time job, which helped Becky to "get ahead", being a higher paying job. Also, regardless of whether the employment assistance from Church B was a form of social support or social leverage, Becky was able to expand her social network beyond the church and this could have been one deciding factor for venturing into the word-of-mouth marketing business, though she shared that she was not doing this business aggressively. We learnt from Becky that whether social capital is effective (Li, 2004) or beneficial for an individual is not only dependent on whether the benefit is a form of social support or leverage (Briggs, 1998) but it also hinges on whether the individual knows how to exploit and utilize the social capital and opportunity presented to him or her: Becky was diligent in expanding her social networks beyond Church B at all her jobs, regardless of whether the jobs were helping her to "get by" or "get ahead". This is a positive example in contrast to the account of one of the two non-Singaporean immigrants in Church A who did not take full advantage of Agnes' job offer.

### **Helping PRC immigrants strengthens Singaporean immigrants' social, cultural and spiritual integration**

Whilst many Singaporeans are unhappy with the huge influx of immigrants in Singapore and definitely would not be inclined to assist them with integration issues in Singapore, the four Singaporean immigrant interviewees consistently shared that they rendered much more integration assistance to PRC immigrants than receiving integration help from PRC immigrants in Church B. The

impression is that as a group in overall church leadership, Singaporean immigrants are more resourceful and committed<sup>64</sup> to the church, hence more attendant and bridging (Ley, 2008: pg 2058) to the needs of PRC immigrants in the church. This 'bridging' commitment by the Singaporean immigrants to helping the PRC immigrants reflects a strong sense of belonging to the PRC immigrants' Canadian integration challenges (Banting and Soroka, 2012), despite cultural differences between the two groups which is expressed by all the interviewees except for Pastor B; this commitment also strengthened Singaporean immigrants' spiritual integration in Canada.

### ***Social and cultural integration***

Pastor B said the church is not outward looking, for instance, it does not give materially to the homeless or people in poverty but rather ministers to 'inner' church members in terms of good will, for instance, by visiting the old and sick and sending some food to them, in line with Chinese custom. Ben echoed Pastor B's point of view,

Our Mandarin church is not so much on this society things like pregnancy, those who are in drugs, our church don't really do that. It's a Mainland Chinese church and then I think they are in quite a lot of needs to be addressed already like helping new immigrants and then trying to visit those new visitors to the church.

Pastor B provided some descriptions on the 'lot of needs' of PRC immigrants which Ben said the church has to address: besides spiritual needs, job security, church members' family, spousal, in-law and children relationship problems. In some sense, Ben and Pastor B are saying that these PRC immigrant societal issues are in fact Canadian societal issues, since they are part

<sup>64</sup> The resource here does not just refer to financial or monetary terms; it also refers to spiritual, emotional, intellectual and time resources. For instance, Pastor A said that the richer people in church do not necessarily tithe more to the church ministries when there is no or lesser commitment to the needs of the church; though the Singaporean immigrants are comfortable financially, they are not the richest in church, yet they tithe the most in percentage terms, with respect to their income, signifying commitment to the church and its members.

of Canadian multiculturalism; there is every need to look into these PRC immigrants' social issues as much as other wider Canadian social issues like drug abuse or teen pregnancy and abortion issues. To Ben and Pastor B, rendering social support (Briggs, 1998) to PRC immigrants is just as legitimate as reaching out to other ethnic or social groups in social support need, from Church B's perspective. Through the PRC church members, Singaporean immigrants felt accepted into multicultural Canada through their attachment to PRC immigrants' integration concerns and dedication to helping them (Banting and Soroka, 2012).

What is interesting here is that to an outsider, he or she might view the assistance rendered by the Singaporean (Chinese) immigrants to the PRC immigrants as that of bonding social capital but to an insider who is aware of the cultural gap between the two groups, bridging social capital (Ley, 2008: pg 2058) would be a more accurate description of the nature of the assistance. So not all Chinese churches might be what Yu simplified or homogenised as just strengthening the Chinese's original identity and not their Canadian identity (Todd, 2011a) because there could be different 'types' and identities of Chinese in a Chinese church: some Chinese immigrants, like the Singaporean (Chinese) immigrants in Church B, who tend to have lesser integration issues in Canada, could be helping other groups of Chinese immigrants, like the PRC immigrants in Church B, to better integrate into the Canadian society.

### ***Spiritual integration***

Becky said she grew spiritually stronger in Canada than when she was in Singapore as she said that when she was put to serve in church, she 'grew'. Ben also found himself helping PRC immigrants more than receiving help from them; in particular, many PRC immigrants in his cell group look up to him for spiritual or biblical answers to their integration problems. Rendering social support to PRC immigrants in Church B helped reap in spiritual benefits of drawing closer to God, a benefit of social capital which seemed to be outside the classification of social support and social leverage (Briggs, 1998).

### **7.2.3. Church C: Bridging Relationships**

The resounding theme, echoed by the four Singaporean immigrant interviewees in Church C, with respect to integration assistance experienced through church activities (be it experienced by themselves or rendered by them to others in church), is 'bridging relationships'. Through bridging out to non-co-ethnics or non-Singaporean immigrants through church life and programs, they formed integrative relationships with local-born Canadians (most of the time) and with some immigrants from other ethnicities in these following ways: socially, culturally, materially and financially. The importance of the church as an organization or institution, defined through its programs, seems to be very important in the creation of bridging social capital in Church C (Putnam, 1993; Portes and Sensenbrenner, 1993).

From the social perspective, the church was an ideal place for the Singaporean immigrants to extend and bridge their social network into the Canadian society; looking at it culturally, the church helped to break down the Canadian cultural barrier, especially for Carol; materially and financially speaking, the church acted as a place of religious institution where they can practically live out their faith by investing their time, possessions and finances into the lives of local-born Canadians (both inside and outside the church) and find satisfaction and meaning in being part of a Canadian church and society.

Hence, bridging social capital did not just stretch across different and various social boundaries which are horizontally connected but it also transcended to vertical networks of social strata (linking social capital) where more affluent Singaporean immigrants connected with local born Canadians who are from middle-income households or even the lower rungs of society (Ley, 2008: pg. 2058).

In terms of categorizing the types of benefit, bridging social capital did not provide any social leverage for the Singaporean immigrants as was seen when

immigrants tapped into bridging social capital in their LMOs (Lancee 2010b and 2012). This could be because most of the Singaporean immigrant interviewees are financially well off and did not seem to need a Canadian job. The only exception could be Pastor C who likely obtained social leverage from the church as he was a seminarian when he first joined Church C and then “got ahead” and became a pastor as he took on more service portfolios like conducting Bible Study and pulpit preaching.

### **Social integration**

Two of the three Singaporean immigrant interviewees from Church C (excluding Pastor C, who is the fourth interviewee) are reasonably young retirees who are financially comfortable; the third interviewee is self-employed, obtaining work from mostly Singapore clientele. The three of them did not depend on any Canadian social networks to look for work; they were not seeking to be economically integrated in the Canadian society by having a Canadian job. Hence, though the survey revealed that Church C probably has the highest ratio of people who are working, compared to Churches A and B, all the four Singaporean immigrant interviewees from Church C did not need to tap into the “weak” ties (Granovetter, 1973) available to them in Church C to look for employment<sup>65</sup>.

These three interviewees deliberately chose to join a Canadian church (Church C) because they wanted to get to know more Canadians and bridge beyond just knowing Singaporean immigrants. For instance, Charles said that in joining Church C, his purpose was to integrate into the Canadian society and not stay in an immigrant church (he was previously from Church A); he wanted a church that is more outward looking, which caters to the broader community. Similarly, Calvin felt it is important to integrate with the local community and not

<sup>65</sup> The exception could be Pastor C as he might have tapped into Church C’s social network to obtain his pastoral work in Church C as he was a seminarian when he first joined Church C.

cluster amongst Singaporean immigrants. Including Pastor C, all the four Singaporean immigrants expanded their bridging social capital through participating in the church life, mainly church programs, which link them up with Canadian networks both within and beyond the church (Putnam, 1993; Portes and Sensenbrenner, 1993). The desire to engage in bridging social capital did not seem to stem from the motivation of obtaining any social leverage from Church C (Briggs, 1998).

### ***Acquiring Canadian social networks through church life***

Within the church, the majority of local-born Canadians (Pastor C estimated it to be 80% of his congregants) plus a minority of immigrants from different ethnicities provided a miniaturized Canadian society, within a spatial and institutional setting (Portes and Sensenbrenner, 1993), for the Singaporean immigrants to develop their 'bridging' social networks.

Beyond the initial welcoming and 'stepping stone' ritual of getting to know other Singaporean immigrants in Church C, all the four Singaporean immigrants expanded their social networks by bridging into Canadian networks through participating and serving actively in the church. For instance, Charles is committed to attending many activities and serving in various ministries, on top of attending Sunday worship service: group Bible Study, Freedom Session program, social gatherings like a summer picnic and men's breakfast, Welcoming team and missionary work. Through these church activities and services, he was brought closer to other church members in terms of friendship, thereby, becoming a member of different Canadian social networks in the church, be it the Bible Study or the Social gatherings networks and so on.

From their experience of interacting and befriending Canadians in church, all the four interviewees feel that the church Canadians are genuine and not superficial, when showing interest in wanting to befriend them. None of the four interviewees expressed difficulty with communicating in the English language

with the Canadians in church; all of them were conversant in the English language which helped them to acquire Canadian social networks in church, with a minor exception for Carol who had a small issue with feeling pressured initially to speak in the Canadian accent to Caucasians, in order to be understood by them and we come to her story later.

### ***Charles' unlikely Canadian best friend***

The social integration penetration level into Canadian networks in church varies for the four Singaporean immigrants; at least two of the four interviewees each have two Caucasian best friends in church, when asked to identify three best friends in MV, which seems to be an indication of a fairly deep bridging social integration and penetration into the Canadian networks in church. Putnam (1993) and Portes and Sensenbrenner's (1993) focus on the importance of the organization or institution in building social capital can be seen in Charles' friendship with a Caucasian in Church C.

The tendency for people to be closely associated with other people of a similar social class<sup>66</sup> (Wright and Cho, 1992), made it amazing for Charles, an ex-businessman, to be befriend a Caucasian (hereafter named "Chris") in church as one of his three best friends in MV, who has been through drug abuse, alcoholism and mental problems. Prior to coming to Canada, Charles' circle of friends and best friends in Singapore were business owners, CEOs and directors of companies, people of high social and material status, just like him. As mentioned earlier, Li (2004) said that exclusive social groups endowed with class-based advantages, are unlikely to bridge with other deprived groups deprived of such advantages. Going against convention, the church setting acts as the uniting factor and reason for Charles and Chris' close friendship; this

<sup>66</sup> The most common meaning when someone uses this term is to think of the upper, middle and lower classes and by this there is reference to one's social, economic, job and educational status.



might be aided by Charles' cessation of business dealings in Canada, thereby reducing the need to stay in touch with his Singaporean business connections and friends.

It was through a church program, aimed at helping participants to confront and overcome their personal life struggles like drug abuse, alcoholism, pornography addiction, anger and so on, that Charles got to know Chris. Carol, who also attended this program, described this program as such: it forces randomly mixed participants (from different demography, ethnicity and duration in church) to engage in deep sharing, making them realize that they have many "common human experiences", despite their differences in ethnicity and background. Moral suasion, group solidarity and enforceable trust within this church program made it possible for bridging social capital to exist.

As such, despite ethnic, background and class differences between Charles and Chris, Charles got to know Chris thoroughly through the program and as a result, admired Chris for overcoming his past drug and alcohol addictions, fighting an ongoing battle with a mental illness, and using his experience to help others in church who have been through his situation. Charles may not have such "common human experiences" as Chris but Chris' strong Christian faith and love for reading the Bible, artistic talents and academic attainments strike a common chord with Charles. Charles said he would not have made friendship with Chris had he remained in Church A or stayed in Singapore; they continued to meet regularly to update each other about their lives after the program. It is clear that Church C played a crucial institutional role in socially bridging two very dissimilar persons as Charles and Chris (Putnam, 1993; Portes and Sensenbrenner, 1993).

### ***Coming face-to-face with Canadian social issues***

Besides more inward-looking programs which helped Charles to socially bridge with Chris, Church C also has outward-looking programs which allowed

the four Singaporean immigrants to bridge with 'different' Canadians outside the church who have some social problems. (Ley, 2008: pg. 2058). By personally coming face-to-face with social issues of the Canadian society, their social integration is further enhanced through the church institution (Putnam, 1993; Portes and Sensenbrenner, 1993).

Charles, Calvin and Carol are all involved in a church program to shelter and cook for homeless people in the church during parts of the winter period. By providing free sit-down meals, church members had the opportunity to talk to homeless people; Calvin said that through this opportunity, church members could help these homeless people with their housing and other needs, through their social network. With the problem of the lack of a proper shelter and warm meals resolved, Carol said this freed up a lot of time for the homeless participants to think about their current wretched state of life. Charles said these homeless people started to think about what they want in life and some accepted Jesus Christ and got out of their drug habit. He recalled one of them is now engaged to a member in church and he is aware of similar astounding stories of such transformation out of homelessness and its associated issues like drug abuse. Charles was especially amazed at the extent to which some Caucasian families in church would take the 'risk' to take some of these homeless people into their house for a few months.

What is noteworthy is that social support led to social leverage when some homeless people chose to take advantage of the social capital presented to them from Church C. Supplying proper shelter and warm food helped some homeless people to "get by" but when some started to muse about the damage drug abuse had brought to their lives, and possibly saw the love and concern shown to them by members of Church C, they tapped into the social capital in Church C and decided to "get ahead" by embracing the Christian faith, got out of their drug abuse and one even got engaged with a member from Church C. There is close semblance here to how the Singaporean Protestant churches conduct social

services, like setting up Halfway houses, in the hope that those whom they reach out to will embrace the faith (Mathews 2008). Of course, the high value judgement I place on the Christian faith in this example of my respondents helping some homeless people to “get ahead”, is influenced by my belief in the Christian faith: in fact, embracing this faith through believing in Jesus Christ does not only offer possible help to a person to “get ahead” in this life but he or she “gets way ahead” of non-believers in the afterlife by having eternal or everlasting life, when they are “born again” in Christ Jesus in this life.<sup>67</sup>

Calvin also shared about another church program which partnered with an elementary school to provide material and financial support to the students including computers or funds for school excursions to children who cannot afford them. This program was targeted at children coming from lower income families as the elementary school was situated in a neighbourhood where there are many rental apartments and co-ops. In stark contrast to the Singaporean immigrants in Church B, Church C’s Singaporean immigrant interviewees were exposed to a different set of Canadian societal issues through their church outreach, thereby aiding in their social integration into Canada in another pathway.

<sup>67</sup> In chapter three of the gospel of John, one of the four gospels of the Bible, we read of the encounter and conversation between Nicodemus, a Pharisee and ruler of the Jews, with Jesus Christ. Jesus told Nicodemus that except a man be “born again”, he cannot see the kingdom of God (synonymous with having eternal life). In John 3:15-21 (King James Version Bible), Jesus told Nicodemus, “That whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life. For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved. He that believeth on him is not condemned: but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God. And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil. For every one that doeth evil hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reproved. But he that doeth truth cometh to the light, that his deeds may be made manifest, that they are wrought in God.”

## **Cultural integration and appreciation**

As Church C is a miniature representation of the ethnic mix of Canadian society, the exposure and bridging with Canadians in church helped the Singaporean immigrants to derive a deeper understanding and appreciation of the Canadian culture, which are largely under the category of social support (Briggs, 1998). This was especially evident in Carol: she changed her stereotype perception of blue collar Canadians; she understood why Canadians are generally reticent; she overcame a mentality which assumed that white people are somehow superior; she learnt that one way to be accepted by Canadians is to speak like them, in terms of their accent. However, she acknowledged that there will always be a cultural gap between Singaporean immigrants and Caucasian Canadians, which is why she continued to maintain her bonding social capital with Singaporean immigrant friends (Ley, 2008: pg. 2058).

### ***Talented blue collar Canadians***

In Singapore, when Carol had the time to socialise outside of her heavy workload, she would go out with her best friends who are her ex-classmates or church friends: people who are similar to her, for instance, in terms of being highly educated (Wright and Cho, 1992). In Canada, she meets people of different demography and profession, especially in Church C. She recounted Pastor C telling her that many church goers are in blue collar jobs, hence giving her the impression that they are not very educated. However, when she started to interact with the Canadians in church, she found a huge difference between blue collar workers in Singapore and Canada: even without high formal education, Canadians can be very well read. She said,

When they (Canadians) have hobbies, they really learn their hobbies to a high level, be it playing the guitar or some things. Even in adult BS (Bible Study), the kind of questions they ask show that they have read so much and they are so articulate, even though they could be blue collar workers! You see. So there is a lot you can talk to them about. And there is a lot of interests beyond work, so I find over here they really have life-long learning.

Carol learnt that blue collar workers in her church and perhaps by inference, in Canada, can be very different from those whom she might have stereotyped in Singapore and respected them for their in-depth knowledge and talents acquired through informal and life-long self-education. It changed her mindset that blue collar workers must be of a certain class or typology in terms of knowledge, wisdom and character.

### ***Appreciating Canadian reticence***

From being 'immersed' in an institution made up of predominantly Canadian Caucasians, Carol observed a general difference between Canadian Caucasians and American Caucasians. She said that other social observers and herself felt that Canadian Caucasians in their church are not as forthcoming, somewhat like the British Caucasians; they are more private and introverted people compared to their American counterparts who are more forthright and "in your face". Because of this Canadian 'temperament', Carol said that Canadian Caucasians might be perceived to be 'cold' and do not care about others. However, over time, Carol understands and counters this negative reasoning with a positive perspective: Caucasian Canadians are generally very polite, their seeming nonchalance and longer time needed to 'warm up' (compared to American Caucasians) is more out of politeness and not wanting to be intrusive to others.

Carol's interactions with and observations of a regular group of Caucasians in the church helped to bridge (Ley, 2008: pg. 2058) her understanding and appreciate a distinctively Canadian Caucasian reticence, different from American Caucasians.

### ***Overcame white superiority mentality***

Carol shared that when she first came to Canada, she found herself having to repeat what she said to Caucasians before they can understand what she meant. She thinks that this is because Caucasians are not familiar with her

accent and hence found it hard to understand what she says. As a result, she felt self-conscious when speaking to Caucasians and hence would rehearse in her mind what she wanted to say before verbalising it and this created a vicious cycle, making her even more self-conscious.

However, through a Caucasian missionary (hereafter called “Christina”) in Church C, Carol overcame this white superiority mentality. When Christina and her husband were not overseas, they opened up her home to reach out to people who came from Muslim countries like Iran; Carol joined many of these gatherings. Carol found that Christina had the gift of making her invitees, who were definitely not as proficient in their English language as Carol, feel very comfortable speaking to Christina. Simply through her friendship with Christina, Carol overcame her self-consciousness. In Carol’s own words,

...because I got to know this lady well, and she made it so easy for me to know her well, because she initiates conversations, and you know, she doesn’t act like it’s so hard to understand what I’m saying, you know? (Laughs) So their gift and their calling is in cross cultural missions, so they have picked up this skills unconsciously, I would think, over the years. Yah, so it helped me to overcome my self-consciousness, just through my friendship with this lady.

Through Christina’s warm ‘bridging’ friendship and acceptance, Carol learnt that there is no need to feel that Caucasians are superior than her because she was unable to speak English in a ‘legible’ accent to Caucasians: she concluded that it all depends on whether the Caucasian whom she is speaking to wants to make an effort to ‘bridge’ (Ley, 2008: pg. 2058) and understand her English accent and the degree of exposure to people of other culture.

### ***Speaking like one of them***

Carol surmised that Christina’s ability to connect so easily with people from different cultures is largely because she is exposed to people of different cultures. Carol thinks that one reason why Caucasian Canadians tend to exhibit hesitancy in talking to non-Caucasians or immigrants is because they lacked ‘bridging’ contact (Ley, 2008: pg. 2058) with them, people of other races. She

thinks that the younger Caucasian Canadians do not have this problem; they have been through the school system with a more diverse population, people who look different, and this 'bridging' exposure makes it easier for young Caucasian Canadians to treat 'different' people as one of them.

Through her church and non-church experiences, she concluded that being accepted by a Caucasian has to do mainly with the degree of likeness of speech accent:

A lot comes through how you speak because the moment you open your mouth, you identify yourself as whether you are a recent immigrant or you have lived here for 10, 20 years for when you live for 10, 20 years, you would begin to sound like them. It immediately puts them more at ease. Whereas if they find that you speak like a new immigrant, they will also mentally and subconsciously categorise you as a new immigrant and immediately they will feel as if they have less in common with you and they need to make more effort if they want to talk more with you, that kind of thing. That is the average Canadian.

This perhaps accounts for her earlier reasoning that young Caucasians can easily embrace their "different looking" friends, since these friends have been through the Canadian educational system and would speak like them in an accent. Also, this researcher noticed that of the four Singaporean immigrant interviewees, only Pastor C has the Canadian accent: if Carol's reasoning is true, this would surely have been useful in Pastor C's ministry to the Canadians in church since he would put Canadians at ease with listening to his sermons and also conversing with Pastor C on a personal level.

### ***Cultural gap***

Despite evidence of deep bridging social capital (Ley, 2008: pg. 2058), there is a limit to the extent of cultural integration the Canadian church can render to the Singaporean immigrants. Charles qualified that much as he made a conscious effort to attend a Canadian church so that he can integrate into a typical Canadian society through church life, he is still more comfortable with people from his own country and did not lose contact with his Singaporean

immigrant friends in MV. This was also Calvin's sentiment when he discussed why his best friend in Church C is a Singaporean immigrant:

When you say best friends, still ultimately, when you have to decide who is your best friend versus your ordinary friend, I think for us it still naturally tend to be Singaporean, to an extent *lah*<sup>68</sup>. Because culturally, background-wise, we are all the same right? Like I talk to you I can kind of connect quite easily, really, because we are all from the same country, right? Cos no doubt we know some Canadians but, you know, at the end of the day we are still different ethnically, so there is that, this gap *lah*.

Calvin thinks that second generation immigrants will not have that wide a gap. Yet, he thinks his child, who has young Caucasian and Asian (Taiwanese, Koreans and Hong Kongers) friends, would probably be more comfortable with Asian friends than Caucasian friends, as there are more similarities with the former group in terms of diet, lifestyle and perceptions (way of viewing certain things, for instance in parent-child relationship and conduct).

### **Material and financial assistance**

All of the four Singaporean immigrants opined that Singaporean immigrants in MV are generally wealthier than the majority of middle-class Caucasian Canadians in Church C. As Charles previously worshipped in Church A prior to moving to Church C, he could testify that the Singaporean immigrants in Church A are generally better off financially than the Caucasians in Church C. Similar to how material and financial assistance is rendered in Church A, Charles said the principle he adopted in giving financial and material support to people in church is based on need and it does not matter if the person in need is not a Singaporean immigrant. When material and financial assistance is rendered based on need, this criteria can transcend beyond bonding social capital to bridging social capital (Ley, 2008: pg. 2058) very liberally and this is evident in Church C.

<sup>68</sup> *Lah* is one of about 11 particles used in *Singlish*; it is a pragmatic particle used to express agreement or negation (Gupta, 1994).



For instance, Charles shared that one of his previous Caucasian pastors had to resign due to a serious medical condition. As the ex-pastor was unable to obtain a diagnosis for his medical condition, it delayed his insurance claims and medical welfare from the Government, resulting in financial difficulties arising from costly medical diagnosis and treatment. One of the church leaders organized a support group beckoning those who can contribute financially to support this ex-pastor; Charles issued a series of cheques spanning a duration of more than a year towards this call. He is personally aware of other middle class Caucasians in church who also helped this ex-pastor financially. Calvin also shared that the church will occasionally announce or print in the Sunday service bulletin, requests for used furniture, household items and appliances for new immigrants, especially Iranian immigrants or refugees who just joined the Persian church, which is an outreach of Church C's ministry. As a poorer and needier group of worshippers than the English congregation, the Persian congregation benefitted materially from the generous donations from the English worshippers, in which Calvin, Charles and Carol played a role. Also, these three Singaporean immigrants were also involved in the homeless program which supplied material needs to the homeless during the winter.

***Bridging horizontal and vertical social barriers***

The flow of resources in the church, in terms of material and financial supports, bridged both horizontal and vertical social barriers (Ley, 2008: pg. 2058): horizontally, it transcends multiple cultures and ethnicities, from Singaporean immigrants to Caucasians, Persian immigrants and homeless Caucasians; vertically, it surpasses class-based distinctions, from richer Singaporean immigrants to middle-class Caucasians, former Iranian refugees, who just attained Canadian citizenship and had no or few material possessions and homeless people who can be considered as one of the lowest rungs in society.

Of course, the instances of material and financial assistance mentioned here is a glimpse of the actual scale and depth of social support (Briggs, 1998) in Church C. But these instances of material and financial assistance broke the class-based argument that exclusive social groups endowed with class-based advantages are unlikely to bridge with other deprived groups, deprived of such advantages (Li, 2004). In their conscious decision to join the Canadian church, Singaporean immigrants, who may be wealthier than their Caucasian counterparts, moved away from their previous social standing and bridged across horizontally and vertically to materially and financially reach out to people from other Canadian societal classes; in return, these Singaporean immigrants found themselves integrating meaningfully into the Canadian society through the church, albeit without gaining any social leverage (Briggs, 1998) which did not seem important to them.

### **7.3. Roots and Identity Retention**

Church roots<sup>69</sup> and a fusion of Singapore-Canada identity in Church A play important urban integration roles to the first generation of Singaporean immigrants and their children (in their parents' opinion), respectively.

#### **7.3.1. Church Roots**

##### **Influence on Singaporean immigrants**

That Church A is a branch or 'offspring' of a Singapore church, of which there are many other churches in Singapore with the same denomination, is a crucial factor in attracting new Singaporean immigrants, who worship in the various churches in Singapore belonging to the same denomination. This

<sup>69</sup> By 'church roots' I refer to the church's denominational history, background, distinctiveness and they all sum by as a form of church or denominational branding.

denominational 'branding' or church roots guarantee the newcomer a close semblance of the traditional form and style of worship and doctrinal beliefs they are used to in their churches in Singapore. Without this church roots as one key uniting factor for many newcomer Singaporean immigrants, actual and 'imagined' integration assistance would not have been rendered to them in the same way had they joined another church.

Granted that some interviewees, including Pastor A, mentioned that the Singaporean immigrant church branding does attract Singaporean immigrants who are Christians but not of the same denomination or church roots, the interviewees agree that this group of visitors or newcomers tend to leave the church after coming for a few Sunday services. One good example is Calvin who mentioned that prior to settling down in Church C, he had visited Church A twice and felt comfortable with the people, since they are 'like him' but he felt the worship service was too traditional and different from his denominational background in Singapore. He said that Church A is well known amongst Christian Singaporean immigrants as a "Singaporean church" and he visited Church A partly because of this. So, according to Pastor A and some Singaporean immigrants from Church A, most who stay in Church A have the same or similarly traditional church root or denomination in Singapore, prior to immigrating to Canada.

### **Influence on non-Singaporean immigrants**

This influential factor in attracting church goers, its denominational distinctiveness or church root, seems also to be the reason why a minority of non-Singaporean immigrants in Church A (including local-born Canadians) chose to worship in Church A despite the cultural gap with Singaporean immigrants;

most of these non-Singaporean immigrants have had similar church background and tradition either in their country of origin or in Canada<sup>70</sup>.

Abel explained why some local-born Canadians chose to worship in Church A even though they know they cannot truly mingle around compared to being in a Canadian church; they do converse with Singaporean immigrants but Abel recalled what one Caucasian Canadian, who was with a group of Singaporean immigrants who were having an informal conversation after a Sunday worship service, said, “I haven’t got a word of what they are saying”. Abel explained that this is because Singaporean immigrants do not speak English but *Singlish* when they come together; he defines *Singlish* as a mixture of English, Mandarin, Cantonese, Hokkien, Teochew – a diverse dialect mixed together with English, which only Singaporeans understand – which Canadians do not understand unless an explanation is provided. Abel further explained why local-born Canadians get ‘lost’ in a group of Singaporean immigrants engaging in conversations in *Singlish*,

We can come out of a conversation without set rules, with topics changing 360 degrees; subjects can come from the language itself. When we talk about certain topic, there are set rules but *Singlish* jumps topic and a non Singaporean will lose relevancy in the conversation.

The immigrant church setting, where a significant number of Singaporean immigrants gather, helped to retain the use of *Singlish*, a bastardised English language, amongst the first generation Singaporean immigrants. This may suggest a lack of social and cultural integration with the Canadian society yet Singaporean immigrant interviewees (from all the three churches) generally agree that Singaporean immigrants generally integrate better in Canada than

<sup>70</sup> This information is obtained from the interviewees during the interviews and also from my previous conversations with them, before the interviews. Additionally, I have also spoken to some local-born Canadians on a causal level prior to this research and know their past church background.

immigrants from most Asian and other non-English speaking countries. This brings to mind VCEMF's argument that Chinese immigrants can be culturally integrated in Canada and still retain their Chinese culture, language and preference for a Chinese church (Todd, 2011b). Likewise, Singaporean immigrants can retain their use of *Singlish* in a Singaporean church, as a Singaporean identity, and still be culturally integrated in Canada in other ways.

The point that is stressed here is that Church A does not just have a Singaporean church identity but also a certain denominational or church root identity which acted as one important factor in attracting and retaining new Singaporean immigrants of a certain Christian denomination or church root to tap into the 'Stepping Stone' and 'Integration assistance' resources of the church. Bonding social capital (Ley, 2008: pg. 2058) went beyond co-ethnics or fellow countrymen but also brethren of the same denomination. Ethnic attachment seemed to be less of a reason for bonding in Church A than church roots; the literature review on the religious profile of Christians also seems to provide an explanation of why the Singaporean immigrants in Church A are mostly Chinese, since many Chinese Singaporeans switched their religious belief to Christianity, based on recent Census findings (Tong, 2008).

### **7.3.2. Singapore-Canada Identity**

The presence of second generation Singaporean immigrants with a Singapore-Canadian identity also played a role in helping new Singaporean immigrant families to integrate in MV. Church A also had instances of second generation Singaporean immigrants leaving the church for certain reasons similar to those cited in Ley's (2008) study, where second generation people left their parents' Korean churches for Canadian churches or a church for second generation people, due to differences in the traditional form of worship; but unlike the Korean church, the language of worship was not an issue in Church A since the worship service is in English. However, there still remained a significant core

group of second generation Singaporean immigrants in Church A whose Singapore-Canadian identity helped to play a role in assisting newly arrived second generation Singaporean immigrants to integrate into Canadian society.

### **Three social classes of Canadian Chinese**

Amos and Audrey are long-time Singaporean immigrants who settled down in Canada outside the province of BC. In recent years, they started travelling to MV frequently as their children moved to MV to pursue tertiary education. They visited a few churches in MV before coming to Church A, at the recommendation of a Singaporean friend who attends a church in Singapore belonging to the same denomination as Church A; since then, Amos and Audrey would worship at Church A whenever they visit MV. So to church A, Amos and Audrey are new although they are not new Singaporean immigrants.

Like Calvin, Amos and Audrey chose to attend a 'white' church in the province in which they settled down so that they could integrate into and experience Canadian society. However, one main reason why they chose not to attend a 'white' church in MV is because they wanted their son (hereafter named 'Alvin'), who had just returned to Canada from two years of NS in Singapore, who was following them to church, to be associated with the second generation Singaporean immigrants in Church A, who either came to Canada at a young age or were born in Canada. Prior to his two years of NS in Singapore, Alvin left his parents' 'white' church during his youth and joined his Canadian-born Chinese (CBC) friends to worship in a church comprised mainly of Chinese in ethnicity, in their English speaking service.

To Audrey, she felt Church A's second generation Chinese Singaporean immigrants will provide good social networks for Alvin because he had spent two years in Singapore serving in the army; in order to make the transition back to a church in Canada, a Singaporean church would be ideal. Amos qualified that they were not concerned about his transition into the Canadian society as he is

already “Canadianized” through many years of schooling in Canada and that his best friends are ‘white’ is a sign of his integration. Audrey further explained that whilst they would like Alvin to have exposure to the wider Canadian society rather than to be cloistered in a particular social group, nevertheless, if Alvin were to have Asian friends, Audrey’s preference is for him to befriend second generation Singaporean Canadians because they opined that another Chinese church comprising of other Chinese nationalities, for instance, Hong Kongers, Taiwanese or PRC will have a different sub-culture. If it is not possible to be associated with Singaporean Canadians, Amos added that any second generation Chinese (from Hong Kong, Taiwan or China) who were either CBC or grew up in Canada will be fine as these category of Chinese speaks Canadian English and are schooled in Canada, unlike the “freshly arrived” who only speaks Cantonese or Mandarin. Ideally, Audrey said that if Alvin were to befriend Asians, she would prefer that he associate with Singaporean Chinese rather than Chinese from other nationalities as she hoped Alvin will retain the “Singaporean ways” of Chinese values.

Amos’ and Audrey’s conception of Alvin’s bonding and bridging social capital (Ley, 2008: pg. 2058) with Asian peers is drawn along and within the lines of nationality and length of stay in Canada, thereby creating three different social classes of friends which Alvin might befriend. According to them, second generation Singaporean Chinese immigrant young adults who were either CBC or came to Canada at a young age with their parents will bond easily with Alvin; perhaps a mixture of bonding and bridging effort would be entailed with second generation Chinese immigrant young adults, from countries like Hong Kong, Taiwan and China, who also were either CBC or came to Canada at a young age; a huge gulf of bridging would be necessary for Alvin to befriend “freshly arrived” Chinese immigrant young adults from Hong Kong, Taiwan and China. To Amos and Audrey, Church A provides the ‘best’ class of Asian friends for Alvin.

This description of the three social classes of Canadian Chinese has some semblance to Wong's (2008) description of who are "real Singaporeans" compared to "newcomers". This may also somewhat echo Li's (2004) and Wright and Cho's (1992) theory on the relative difficulty of people to build friendship ties across class boundaries though it must be noted that Alvin did not have any problems befriending 'white' people but seemed to have a preference to attending the English speaking service of a largely Chinese church during his youth and now having no objections to his parents' desire for him to attend Church A.

### **Instant social circle of friends as replacement**

Abel felt that Church A played a huge role in helping his children feel comfortable with migrating to Canada; having 'lost' their large social networks of Singaporean friends, Abel's children could relate to the second generation of young Singaporean immigrants in church who are in a similar age group as them. He felt that the availability of young like-minded Singapore-Canadian friends in church for his children was very crucial in view of a relatively less connected (in terms of transit) and less vibrant or cosmopolitan Canada compared to city life in Singapore:

One of the big difference between here and Singapore is, in Singapore you can just hop on a bus or MRT (Mass Rapid Transit) and go anywhere you like until 12 o'clock midnight; here, without a car, you can't go anywhere and most shops are closed anyway. So these young people, unless they have friends, or else they will feel very very bored and miss Singapore a lot.

Abel's sharing might have some relevance to the issue of population density briefly discussed in the literature review on the social profile of Singaporeans. At one-tenth of Singapore's population density, MV is likely a more difficult place for young second generation Singaporean immigrants to quickly regain the 'loss' of their large social networks of friends in Singapore. However, Church A presented a ready and instant pool of young adult second generation Singaporean immigrants. Through bonding social capital, even



though Abel's children are "freshly arrived" second generation Singaporean immigrants, they were easily embraced by the existing group of "long-timer" young adult second generation Singaporean immigrants; this could be because Abel's children were exposed to North American living and coupled with their Singaporean identity, had very close semblance to the existing group's Singapore-Canadian identity and hence bonding social capital developed readily (Ley, 2008: pg. 2058).

Though finding an instant group of 'alike' friends in Church A is a form of social support benefit which helps the "freshly arrived" second generation Singaporean immigrants to "get by" (Briggs, 1998), but because immigrating to Canada 'for children's sake' is the main reason for migrating, this form of social support is viewed as important to the Singaporean immigrants.

## **7.4. Leap Frogging**

The three churches played at least four distinct types of 'leap frogging' roles to help both first and second generation Singaporean immigrants to integrate into the Canadian society; I define the concept of 'leap frogging' as having the idea of crossing spatial, geographical, social and cultural contiguities, via bonding or bridging social capital (Ley, 2008: pg. 2058).

### **7.4.1. *Transnational 'Leap Frogging': Geographical Crossing to Bond***

As discussed earlier, Amos' and Audrey's choice of Church A for Alvin, upon his return to Canada after two years of NS in Singapore, as a way to re-introduce him back into Canadian society, is one instance of a transnational 'leap frogging' with the intention for Alvin to form bonding social capital (Ley, 2008: pg. 2058) with other 'similar' second generation Singaporean immigrant young adults in church. Likewise, Abel's children also 'leap frogged' transnationally after

'losing' all their Singapore-based Singaporean friends to form bonding social capital (Ley, 2008: pg. 2058) with Canadian-based second generation Singaporean immigrant young adults.

Also, most first generation Singaporean immigrants who obtained 'stepping stone' and integration assistance from Churches A and B, were integrated to a certain extent into Canadian society because they felt welcomed, accepted, and belonging in Canada, by a Canadian registered institution (Putnam, 1993; Portes and Sensenbrenner, 1993), a "home away from home"; transnational 'leap frogging' happened as the new Singaporean immigrants uprooted themselves physically from Singapore and settled down in another geographical location in MV and formed bonding social networks with other 'similar' Singaporean immigrants in church (Ley, 2008: pg. 2058). As seen from the 'stepping stone' role of the church, this social support (Briggs, 1998) seems to be quite important to many Singaporean immigrants.

#### **7.4.2. *Weekend 'Leap Frogging': Social and Cultural Crossing to Re-Bond***

Church A also played a unique "fall back" or "home base" role for Singaporean immigrants to 'leap frog' from the Canadian society and culture to the familiar Singaporean culture in church and then leap back to the former after a Sunday in church and this cycle repeats weekly. Instead of hindering members' ability to engage the wider Canadian culture as Yu wondered of Chinese and Korean churches in MV (Todd, 2011a), Church A, an immigrant church, helped Alex to better engage the wider Canadian culture, through a weekly re-bonding of bonding social capital in church (Ley, 2008: pg. 2058).

To Alex, Church A played a "safety net" role of being his spiritual and physical support on the weekends after a weeklong immersion in the Canadian society and culture as a student, and after his graduation, as a member of the Canadian workforce. In his words, Alex said,

I think the unique character of (Church A) is that it allows you to have a base of spiritual and physical support while the new immigrants are, you know, is able to interact with the local culture, but yet sort of come back to a more familiar culture on the weekends. So, in a way, you can see it as a safety net, that will always be there.

This weekly or weekend 'leap frogging' exercise is a kind of "fall back" he does every week to re-bond with a group of fellow Singaporean immigrants, in order to "re-charge" himself for the next week's endeavour within the Canadian society and cultures. He added,

But like I said the unique character of (Church A), being a church comprised mostly of recent immigrants, or first generation immigrants, with South-East Asian heritage, is that you have that sense *yah*, that fall back that you can come to, you know, a group you can fall back on, while you go out and explore Vancouver, oh not Vancouver, explore Canada and you know, its different cultures and its own character. *Yah*, people asked me if I missed Singapore food. I say no because I eat Singapore food almost every weekend. (Laugh)

When this researcher asked Alex why Church A would be a "fall back", "safety net" or refuge to him, he concluded, "I feel like it gives you like a base, you know, like a home base you can come back to, after a long day or after a hard week. *Yah*."

Interestingly, Carol, who is retired, shared that she might have preferred to attend a Singaporean immigrant church and not Church C if she had been exposed to the Canadian society and culture either as a worker or student; through her hypothetical example, she is also recognising the weekend 'leap frogging' integration role played by an immigrant church in possibly providing her a respite from a week of social interactions in the Canadian society and cultures, which she is not culturally accustomed to, based on her Singaporean upbringing.

Though this weekend 'leap frogging' is just a form of social support (Briggs, 1998), the importance alluded to it by Alex and Carol seem to suggest benefits beyond just "getting by".

### **7.4.3. Integrative 'Leap Frogging': Social and Cultural Crossing to Bridge**

As a miniature representation of the ethnic mix of Canadian society, Church C played an integrative 'leap frogging' role to the four Singaporean immigrant interviewees in church to enhance their understanding and appreciation of the Canadian society and culture, albeit this 'bridging' did not seem to create social leverage for them except perhaps for Pastor C and for some of the homeless people who "got ahead" (Briggs, 1998) by giving up drug abuse and accepting the Christian faith through the shelter and meal program; by conscientiously making an effort to participate in the activities and services in church, these Singaporean immigrants bridged with Caucasians and other non-Singaporean immigrants in and outside church and formed new bridging social capital and networks (Ley, 2008: pg. 2058) beyond what their Singaporean immigrant counterparts achieved through their church life in either Churches A or B.

This can be seen through Charles' views on Church A's outreach efforts: Charles felt that Singaporean immigrants in Church A would be willing to help by giving to the poor and "down and out" but they do not have the opportunity to do so by being in Church A as the church outreach does not reach out to "those people" but rather caters to people within the church group. Charles does not think this is because the church is a Singaporean immigrant group but rather accords this to the traditional church culture, arising from a doctrinal or denominational distinctive; in other words, Charles is saying that the traditional way of doing things in Church A is a contributing factor to the 'conservative' behaviour of not reaching out to 'outsiders'<sup>71</sup>.

<sup>71</sup> I have classified the three churches under table 1 'Churches' Activities' as conservative (for Church A) and fairly conservative (for Churches B and C). I made this classification based on the churches' denomination and how traditional is the way of worship, which seem to coincide with Charles' definition of a conservative church.

If what Charles is saying is true, as is also my personal persuasion to agree, being a member of Church A and also having attended or visited other churches of differing range of 'conservative' or 'liberal' persuasion in the past, this sheds an interesting and alternative perspective on why some churches might be more inward looking than others: being an immigrant church might not be the only factor for being inward looking in terms of the needs of its members as we have seen in Church B; a Canadian church which has a similar traditional church culture, arising from a doctrinal or denominational distinctive similar to Church A, could also be more inward looking. This then begets the question of whether it would be problematic for Canadian churches to be inward looking in terms of focusing into just the needs of their mainly Caucasian or local-born members? If these Canadian churches just "do their own things" and strengthen their Canadian identity, would Yu have an issue, since a Canadian church could theoretically be more inward looking than an immigrant church if it is more traditional than the immigrant church (Todd, 2011a)?

Secondly, there is evidence<sup>72</sup> that Church A also played a role in aiding the process of integrative 'leap frogging', as the transition from an immigrant church to a Canadian church could arise from the milestone of graduating from the initial 'unsettling' stage where Church A offered 'stepping stone' and or some integration assistance. The picture is that of a young foal, weaning away from its dam. This aligned with Pastor A's sharing that he knew of some new Singaporean immigrants who joined the church for a season and left after settling down; some could presumably have left for other churches, including Canadian churches like what Charles and Carol did. This role of Church A strengthens the importance and complementary function of immigrant churches, in their partnerships with Canadian churches to help immigrants in their integration process.

<sup>72</sup> This evidence is not just from Charles and Carol's move from Church A to Church C but from other interviewees' sharing and this researcher's personal knowledge.

#### **7.4.4. Reflexive ‘Leap Frogging’: Culture and Value Retention**

Church A allowed Singaporean immigrants to practice reflexive ‘leap frogging’, a type of selective integration method where the immigrant shapes and defines his or her own desires for choosing what to integrate and what not to integrate in a new society; therein lies the notion that being well integrated in the Canadian society need not mean integrating in all possible aspects, again, striking a similar tune to VCEMF’s argument that Chinese immigrants can be culturally integrated in Canada and still retain their Chinese culture, language and preference for a Chinese church (Todd, 2011b). Amos and Audrey exemplified this category of integration as they seemed well integrated into the Canadian society, yet at the same time, they retained their Singaporean Chinese culture and value systems, which to them, identifies them and they do not want to give up this identify.

That Amos and Audrey are well integrated in the Canadian society is seen in the way they ranked their friends in the ‘white’ church which they attend outside of the province of BC, where they had settled down many years ago. They have three main groups of friends in their ‘white’ church: Caucasians (majority); long-timer Asian immigrants from China and Hong Kong; and newly arrived Asians (mainly from China). Amos said they are very good friends with the whites, even though they have a different culture. As for the long-timer Asian Chinese, despite similarity in ethnicity, Amos also opined that they had different culture, but also knew them well, in a different way from the Caucasians. For the third group of newly arrived Asians, he said, “we tried to know them but we can’t really know them because they are so different; we don’t know how to know them well”; William felt this is because these newly arrived Asians have different problems, perspective and solutions even though they are co-ethnics.

Audrey said of the three groups, they are the most comfortable with the ‘whites’ in her ‘white’ church. Amos theorized that this is because Canadian Caucasians are generally very nice people and this is seen in terms of their

driving habits, polite behaviour and respectful personalities. Audrey's theory is that as Asians, they have 'baggage': an Asian has an expectation of how another Asian from another country should behave as an Asian; an Asian will not have such an expectation on a Caucasian, in terms of having similar values. However, when two Asians from two different countries get to interact, they realise that they are different even though they can both be Chinese in ethnicity. Amos added that this is perhaps the reason why when two Asian strangers encounter each other, they will avoid one another as they will have negative thoughts about each other and just distance themselves from one another.

Audrey further explained why they have different value systems from the Chinese who are from other countries, using the analogy of three different groups of Chinese: Singaporean Chinese; Hong Kong Chinese; and Mainland China or PRC Chinese. She said that Singaporean Chinese are "just at home" with the Malaysian and Bruneian Chinese as they are all South East Asians; they have a common culture, different from the Chinese from East Asia, for instance the Hong Kong and PRC Chinese.

This difference in culture with more 'distant' or 'dissimilar' Chinese can create a divide that is even stronger than the cultural gap between Singaporean Chinese and Canadian 'whites', which Amos attributed to three reasons: Singaporean Chinese are internationalised, exposed to multiculturalism and speak good English, which are typical Singaporean social and cultural profiles discussed in the literature review. Elaborating, he said that Singaporean Chinese are generally quite internationalized (Audrey added "cosmopolitan" too) in the way they think and interact with people. Also, due to the multicultural setting in Singapore, Singaporean Chinese are just as comfortable with their Singaporean Indian friends as their Singaporean Chinese friends. Lastly, Singaporean Chinese have the ability to speak English well and that has given them a world-view of people; they feel a lot more comfortable in a white society compared to Chinese from other Asian cities. Amos said he knows of Chinese friends from

Hong Kong and China who feel very inferior and uncomfortable when they are in the midst of the “whites”; they are not just professionals but are also schooled in Canada. Audrey added that this problem is because these Chinese ‘mix and huddle’ amongst themselves, leading to being “white-phobic”, even though they may be second generation Chinese immigrations. Amos gave the example of Richmond, where some Chinese socialise amongst other Chinese and earn a living from one another; they do not have to go beyond Richmond or Chinatown and they are quite comfortable without having to integrate into the Canadian society (Li, 2004). As such, they want to continue to live in this kind of situation.

Yet Amos and Audrey seemed to have ‘turned their backs’ on the ‘whites’ in favour of a ‘mix and huddle’ with Singaporean Chinese immigrants in Church A and do not choose to attend a ‘white’ church in MV when they visit their children. Audrey explained that there was never a turning back to preferring to associate with Singaporeans by saying, “We have always been like that”. Amos explained, “You can’t help with the fact that you are a Singaporean, if you are not born here. You are what you are, unless you want to give up your identity.” Even though strategically, they may want to have a broader experience to live in a country outside Singapore and integrate with the Canadian society, but as Singaporean Chinese, they have already formed their mind, behaviour and identity. Audrey said their identity is first Asian, then Singaporeans, then Chinese; this differentiates them from other Chinese Asians who are not from Singapore. Their preference is for their children to also retain this identity by having close friendships or bonding social capital with second generation Singaporean Chinese (Ley, 2008: pg. 2058); this preference has not changed since they migrated many years ago. This does not preclude their objective to be in Canada to integrate with the society and system but in terms of their Singaporean culture and value system, they intend to retain them.

Amos’ and Audrey’s mastery of this art of integration through reflexive ‘leap frogging’ is somewhat supported by the Canadian system of



multiculturalism. Amos explained that he recalled reading his son's school textbook on the difference in cultural assimilation in Canada and America. In America, cultural assimilation is done in a 'melting pot' style; in Canada, this is done like an orchestra: the conductor (the Canadian Government) will conduct and there are many players (immigrants from all over the world) with their own instruments. Amos further elaborated and recalled that on Canada Day or whenever there was a multicultural celebration, his son's school will ask the students to put on their own costume, depicting their unique ethnicity or nationality and tell their classmates about the culture they came from; there is no downplaying of an individual's distinctive culture, identity and difference from the mainstream Canadian society. Likewise, Amos and Audrey felt their decision to attend Church A is in the same vein of guiding their next generation (children) to retain and keep their Singaporean Chinese identity and culture, through bonding social capital (Ley, 2008: pg. 2058), whilst continuing to be integrated with the broader stream of Canadian society.

## 8. Conclusions

Through the lens of bonding and bridging social capital, the two immigrant and one Canadian churches played four roles in helping the Singaporean immigrant interviewees to integrate economically, socially, and culturally in Canada, albeit in unequal proportions: 'stepping stone'; administration of integration needs; roots and identity retention; and 'leap fogging'. In revealing these roles, we derived a deeper understanding of the application of bonding and bridging social capital by witnessing bonding social capital in the Canadian church and bridging social capital in the two immigrant churches. This added an additional dimension and meaning to Ley's (2008) work on the Chinese, Korean and German immigrant churches in MV, which largely found a strong persistence of bonding social capital within these churches, due to co-ethnics' likeness and shared predicament, and a reluctance to form bridging social capital.

To elaborate, in Church C, just because a majority of worshippers are Caucasian Canadians does not negate the power of welcoming non-Caucasian Canadians, including Singaporean immigrants, through bonding social capital by introducing the non-Caucasian newcomers to the existing minority group of worshippers, along the lines of ethnicity, age and education (MacPherson et. al, 2008: pg. 415), who face similar challenges and life experiences to the newcomers. We can characterize this as bonding social capital because homophily is achieved, for instance, through some similarities in ethnicity, age, education qualification. Likewise, within immigrant churches like Churches A and B, the predominant church context of 'need' and 'leadership', respectively, allowed bridging social capital to occur between Singaporean immigrant interviewees and non-Singaporean immigrants: in Church A, Agnes offered jobs

to two non-Singaporeans who are in financial need; in Church B, most of the Singaporean immigrant interviewees are in multiple areas of leadership in the church ministries, serving and helping PRC immigrants to better integrate in Canada. This is bridging social capital because some obvious 'divide' or difference is being connected or reconciled through being part of the church group.

Additionally, in the examination of bonding social capital within Church A, ethnicity and country of origin are not the only main reasons for bonding, as seen in Ley (2008)'s study; Church A was also a group defined by their church denomination or church roots: most newcomer Singaporean Chinese immigrants used to worship in churches in Singapore of the same denomination as Church A. What is 'bonding' here went deeper beyond the 'superficial' or apparent criteria of ethnicity or country of origin. On another note, a congregation of co-ethnics need not necessarily equate to only the presence of bonding social capital: the Singaporean Chinese immigrants and PRC immigrants from Church B may look alike as co-ethnics but the Singaporean immigrant interviewees from Church B and also Amos and Audrey confirmed that there are bridging and cultural differences between them and PRC immigrants. On top of differences amongst co-ethnics from different countries, Amos and Audrey also introduced the notion that length of stay in Canada also affects the nature of bonding and bridging social capital needed to form social relations. These insights, together with MacPherson et al's (2001: pg. 415) homophily "divides" serve as examples for future research on bonding and bridging social capital to challenge the conventional notion of what constitutes 'bonding' and 'bridging'.

With respect to the social support and social leverage benefits (Briggs, 1998) of both bonding and bridging social capital, findings from the three churches show that bonding social capital resulted mostly in social support and not social leverage for the Singaporean immigrants in the three churches. This tallies with immigrant and social network literature suggesting that bonding social

capital usually helps immigrants to “get by” with social support (Granovetter, 1973; Briggs, 1998 and 2007; Kelly et al., 2008). However, what is interesting is that the outcome of “getting by” from social support can be exploited to enable one to “get ahead” as we saw how Becky was able to make full use of the social support help obtained from Church B in landing her first Canadian Saturday-only job by expanding her social networks outside of Church B and eventually went into a word-of-mouth marketing business, which necessarily required her to have wide social networks. Of course, we need to be cautious in applying this to other “ethnic enclave” context as the literature review on the ethnic attachment thesis suggests both entrapments and benefits from harnessing an immigrant-based economy, in this case, Church B.

Also, different Singaporean immigrants also viewed the social support they received with varying importance: to Ada and her husband, social support from Church A was more important than the social leverage of getting a job in another province. Becky and Ada’s examples imply that social support benefits derived from bonding social capital need not necessarily be ‘inferior’ in value and benefit to social leverage that bridging social capital may accord one with.

On the other hand, findings from the three churches shows that bridging social capital (which is more prevalent in Church C) did not result in mainly social leverage (especially in the terms of LMOs as one would expect based on the literature review) but rather social support (Briggs, 1998) for the Singaporean immigrants in the three churches. This could suggest that both the immigrant and Canadian churches might not generally be a good place to obtain social leverage and job search assistance, even in Churches A and B, which the survey findings suggest have more financially well off households than Church C. This answered one of the questions raised under section 3.1 (Objective) that LMO seems to be unrelated to the financial resource capacity of the church group. Of course, this explanation could cut both ways as the high financial resource level of the Singaporean immigrants, meant that not many Singaporean immigrant

interviewees are looking for or need Canadian jobs: this implies that even though they may be in a 'bridging' environment, especially in Church C, they may not be actively looking for social leverage benefits as it may not be important to them. That bridging social capital resulted in mostly social support for the Singaporean immigrants in Church C could also be due to the church group resource level as Church C comprises mostly of middle-class Caucasian families: indeed, Charles found himself financially supporting the ailing ex-pastor in his medical treatment. Also, my earlier argument in the literature review on the other downside to social capital, that homophily in the two immigrant churches might result in group restrictions to memberships and members' freedom, was not observed in Churches A and B.

If we view strictly from the perspective of the production of social support and social leverage (Briggs, 1998) in the two immigrant and one Canadian churches, it does not appear that there is any particularly strong benefit or reason why Singaporean immigrants may want to prefer to worship in either of these three churches. None of the three churches 'stand out' in terms of offering more social leverage benefits than the other, implying that the Canadian church does not seem to have an edge over the immigrant church in offering more social leverage for the Singaporean immigrant to "get ahead" in terms of integration. This may be due to the Protestant nature of these three churches where belief in biblical inerrancy, the acceptance of a literal hermeneutic and rejection of modernist stances to Scripture (Mathews, 2006), makes them theologically conservative and more concerned with "soul saving" than "bread giving" or good works (Mathews, 2008). Legitimacy and motivation of social services as part of the church activities is based on biblical principles, meant to draw non-Christians to embrace the Christian faith and Christians closer to God. Likewise, as observed by Dwyer, Tse and Ley (2013) of all the Christian churches at No. 5 Road in Richmond who did not participate in the Interfaith Bridging Project initiative, Churches A, B and C are also unlikely to practice in institutional integration with other religions, thereby prescribing certain integration activities

which the churches and church members would not participate in. Take for example Ben and Becky's pathway to their jobs through Church B, it is unlikely that they will through Church B be directed to job opportunities and other market segments found in other (non-church) religious institutions due to the church's stance on religious 'bridging'.

Secondly, through identifying and discussing the four roles of the churches, we reinforced the discursive nature of immigrant integration. For instance, Ada valued the importance of the 'stepping stone' and integration assistances of Church A whilst Abel did not want to or see the need to leverage co-ethnics in his 'stepping stone' stage of migration. Also, Ben and Pastor B saw being in church leadership and serving the PRC immigrants as a form of integration whilst the four Singaporean immigrant interviewees from Church C would associate integration with being involved and connecting with mainly local-born Canadians and Caucasian Canadians in Church C. Yet still, Amos and Audrey's reflexive style of 'leap frogging' integration, choosing what to integrate and not to integrate, for instance, choosing to retain their Singaporean culture and values, may not go well with those who concur with Todd's *Vancouver Sun* article, suggesting that Chinese churches' celebration of traditional Chinese festivals is a lack of cultural integration (Todd, 2011a).

This discursive nature of integration should not be viewed as problematic but rather possibly a successful manifestation of successive Canadian governments' support for multicultural policy. In addition, it also serves to reinforce the importance and complementary function of both the immigrant and Canadian churches in their similar and distinctive contributions to the urban integration of immigrants. As we have seen through this study, the 18 Singaporean immigrant interviewees were at different stages of their immigration and family life cycle: some are newly arrived, with their spouse and children; some have arrived for over ten years and are either single or married, with or without children; some have young children while others have children who are

already married. The possible combinations and permutations of the immigrant and family life cycle meant that each of the 18 Singaporean immigrant interviewees is unique from the perspective of their integration needs and preferences.

This explains why Church A can be a very good integration resource for new Singaporean immigrants in terms of 'stepping stone' and initial integration assistances whilst Church C is helpful for Singaporean immigrants, who may have already experienced initial settlement assistance from either relatives, friends or co-ethnics (within or outside the church), and want to 'venture' out to further integrate with the mainstream Canadian society. Charles' and Carol's 'progression' from Church A to Church C exemplifies the complementary function of the immigrant and Canadian churches in playing important integration roles to them. Yet, Church A's 'function' was not just limited to 'serving' new Singaporean immigrants as established immigrants like Amos and Audrey 'returned' to this immigrant church, after many years in their 'white' church, to allow Alvin to integrate with their preferred and 'best' group of second generation Chinese, the second generation Singaporean immigrants who were either CBC or migrated to Canada at a young age.

Therefore the ethnic enclave 'accusations' of immigrant churches do not always hold; as this research has shown, some Singaporean immigrants, depending on the different stages of their immigration and family life cycle, do move away to Canadian churches and some might choose to come back to immigrant churches at a later stage of their immigration for the sake of the second generation or for other reasons not discovered by this research. That immigrants congregate like "birds of a feather" (Ley, 2008: pg. 2062) in immigrant churches and celebrate their ethnic, traditional or national festivities (Todd, 2011a/b) should not be plainly understood that there are no or only feeble attempts on the part of these immigrants at integrating into the Canadian society: many immigrants could be like Alex, who do experience 'huge doses' of

Canadian culture and social networking integration from their 'weekday' vocation (be it as a student or working adult) and wanted and needed that 'weekend' retreat and "safety net" in an immigrant church, to 'recharge' them for another new week.

This conclusion helps us to appreciate at least one urban and policy significance of this immigrant integration study: the multi-faceted and contested debate on immigrant integration (Todd, 2011a and 2011b) can be comprehended by policy makers, researchers, commentators, and even the lay-person, when we make an effort to understand the 'bonding' and 'bridging' decisions of immigrants, who are at different stages of their individual and family life cycle. This can be achieved through education at the governmental, civic, community and school level through dialogues, community conversations, conferences and research papers; with such education, Canada will continue to be an immigrant-receiving country where "there is little evidence of the deep social fault lines feared in parts of Europe." (Banting and Kymlicka, 2010: pg 53).



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## Appendix A. Survey Form

### Survey of Church goers: SFU Master of Urban Studies research

#### (A) Basic Information

1. Gender

- Male  
 Female  
 Do not wish to disclose

2. Age in years

- 21 – 30                       31 – 40  
 41 – 50                       51 – 60  
 61 – 70                       >70

3. Ethnicity

4. Languages that you are proficient in (oral & written)

- English                       French  
 Mandarin                       Cantonese

Others:

5. Country of birth

6. Current Nationality or nationalities

7. Year landed in Canada (for immigrants only)

8. Highest level of education

- University  
 Diploma / College / Trade School  
 Secondary School  
 Others

9. Are you a home owner in Canada?

- Yes  
 No

10. How many cars do your family own?

- 0             1             2             3  
 4             5             6             >6

#### (B) Occupation Information

11. Current Occupation (if any)

12. Past (last) occupation before immigrating to Canada (for immigrants only)

If not working, are you currently seeking work?

- Yes             No             N/A

13. Are you happy with your current job?

- Yes             No             N/A

14. Think about the last time you looked for a job in Canada: did you get any direct or indirect help from other church members? Indirect help could be advice on how to write a Canadian resume, childcare service while you go for an interview, etc.

- Yes             No             N/A

15. Did you help other church members in their job search?

- Yes             No             N/A

(C) Church Information

16. How many years have you attended services in this church?

17. On the average, how often do you attend this church worship service?

- Weekly
- Biweekly
- Once a month
- Irregular / Just visiting / First time

18. Which other church activities (other than worship service) do you participate in regularly?

19. Think of your three best friends in greater Vancouver. How many of them are in this church?

- 0
- 1
- 2
- 3

20. What are the kinds of help you have given to church members? (Tick as many as applicable)

- material support (e.g. food, money, in-kind goods, clothes, toys)
- mental, emotional, spiritual support
- social services (e.g. information on housing, home maintenance, education, schools, childcare, healthcare, transportation, job search)
- others

21. What are the kinds of help you have received from church members? (Tick as many as applicable)

- material support (e.g. food, money, in-kind goods, clothes, toys)
- mental, emotional, spiritual support
- social services (e.g. information on housing, home maintenance, education, schools, childcare, healthcare, transportation, job search)
- others

22. If you are a Singapore immigrant, are you willing to be interviewed (about 1 hour) to understand the kinds of help you offer to or obtain from church goers in this church?

- Yes
- No
- N/A

## Appendix B. Survey Form in Mandarin

SFU 城市研究硕士课程：教会调查问卷

### (A) 个人资料

1. 性别

- 男  
 女  
 不愿回答

2. 年龄

- 21 – 30                       31 – 40  
 41 – 50                       51 – 60  
 61 – 70                       >70

3. 种族

4. 您所精通的语言（口语并书写都流利）

- 英语                       法语  
 华语                       粤语

其他:

5. 出生国家

6. 现持国籍

7. 登陆加拿大年份（新移民）

8. 最高学历

- 大学  
 专科文凭/ 技术学院证书  
 中学  
 其他

9. 在加拿大是否持有房地产？

- 有  
 没有

10. 您家里共有多少辆车？

- 0       1       2       3  
 4       5       6       >6

### (B) 职业资料

11. 现职业(if any)

12. 在移民加拿大之前的职业（新移民）

若您现在没工作，是否正求职中？

- 有       没有       不适用

13. 您对现有的工作满意吗？

- 有       没有       不适用

14. 试着回想您最后一次在加拿大找工作的情况。您是否得到教会会友直接或间接的帮助？间接帮助泛指：教您如何拟求职信、在您去面试时，帮您带孩子，等等。

有      没有      不适用

15. 您是否曾帮助其他教会会友寻找工作？

有      没有      不适用

(C) 教会资料

16. 您在这间教会崇拜多久了？

17. 您一般来教会做礼拜的次数？

每周一次      一个月两次  
一个月一次      偶爾來 / 不常來 / 第一次

18. 您平日还参与教会的什么活动（除了主日礼拜）？

19. 您在大温地区最要好的三个朋友，有几个和您一起在这间教会做礼拜？

0      1      2      3

20. 您曾给予其他教会会友哪些援助？(請在所有适用的选项打勾)

- 物质援助 (例如：食物、金钱、旧物品、衣物、玩具等等)
- 精神、情绪和属灵上支持
- 非物质援助

(例如：提供房屋、住家维修、教育、学校、托儿、医药、公共交通、找寻工作等咨询 / 资料)

其他援助：

21. 您曾得到其他教会会友哪些援助？(請在所有适用的选项打勾)

- 物质援助 (例如：食物、金钱、旧物品、衣物、玩具等等)
- 精神、情绪和属灵上支持
- 非物质援助

(例如：提供房屋、住家维修、教育、学校、托儿、医药、公共交通、找寻工作等咨询 / 资料)

其他援助：

22. 若您是（或曾是）新加坡公民，您可愿意接受约一小时的访谈？访谈内容主要是向您了解您曾给予其他教会会友什么协助或得到过什么样的帮助。

有      没有      不适用

## Appendix C. Survey Consent Form in Mandarin

调查问卷同意书

亲爱的 \_\_\_\_\_

感谢您愿意参与这份调查问卷。问卷所收集的资料有助完成我的毕业论文“移民教会在城市同化所扮演的角色”研究。这项研究主要探讨新移民在异乡寻找工作和安顿下来时，教会所提供直接和间接的帮助。

本人目前就读于Simon Fraser University (SFU)的城市研究硕士课程，毕业论文是由Peter V. Hall教授指导。这封信的主要内容是解释调查问卷的用途和条件。

这项研究可以加深我们对新移民如何运用教会人际网络的认识。这项研究主要探讨三间教会，其中两间是移民教会，而第三间则是加拿大本土教会。这三间教会都有新加坡移民，但三间教会独特之处又将成为了解教会如何帮助新加坡移民融入社会做一个鲜明对比。这份问卷所收集的资料如：基本人口资料、社会经济资料、工作和教会所提供的援助。

这项研究所收集的调查问卷表将会储存在上锁的柜子里，只有我能翻阅；问卷所收集的资料将以密码锁上，存放在电脑里作资料分析。在2013年内完成资料分析后，一切相关的资料与问卷将继续存放在上锁的柜子里，只有我一人能取出或翻阅资料。五年内，我会把所有一切相关的资料与问卷销毁。

以上所述的资料储存方案是确保您所给予的资料完全保密，意图不造成您的困扰。在我论文中所提及的资料将是集体性的代表，不会有任何资料指出您的身份或代表您个人的意见。若您对我的论文题目感兴趣，我可以在答辩会后与您分享我的研究成果。我的论文将会在SFU的Institutional Repository刊登，网址(<http://summit.sfu.ca/>)。除了您宝贵的十分钟之外，这项调查问卷并没任何金钱交易。

您参与这份研究问卷纯属志愿性质。您可以选择不参与、不回答问卷中任何一道问题、或在中途停止参与。您是否参与问卷并不会和您在教会里或职场上有任何牵扯。虽然我并没事先征询您雇主的意见，但我已经获得您教会长执会的许可，获准向教会会友分发这份问卷。这项研究已通过 SFU Office of Research Ethics 的批准。

叶祖敏敬上

城市研究硕士课程学生，SFU



研究题目：移民教会在城市同化所扮演的角色

SFU Office of Research Ethics 编号: 2012s1038

受邀参与以上研究，我申明我已看过并明白以上内容。我也了解该研究生会在合乎法律的情况下，尽量为我所提供的资料保密，并不会用任何我所提供的资料来泄露我的身份。

是否参与这项研究完全是我个人的意愿。我绝对有权利拒绝参与这项研究。若我决定参与这项研究，我也可以在不提供任何理由的情况下终止参与。我知道我若有任何投诉或关注，我首先应该联络研究生的监导主任 Peter V. Hall 教授：c/o Urban Studies Program, Simon Fraser University, 515 West Hastings Street, Vancouver, BC V6B 5K3 ( )。

投诉的第二联络人是SFU's Director of the Office of Research Ethics: Dr. Hal Weinberg, Director (Office of Research Ethics), Simon Fraser University, 8888 University Drive, Multi-Tenant Facility, Burnaby, B.C. V5A 1S6 ( )。

这项研究项目编号： 2012s1038.

所收集资料和这份同意书会分开储存。所收集资料是用于完成一份城市研究硕士课程的毕业论文研究项目，而这份研究报告在完成将会公开刊登在 SFU's Institutional Repository 网址 <http://summit.sfu.ca/>。我可以取得这项研究报告的成果，也可以联络叶祖敏( ) 或 Peter V. Hall 教授 ( ) 索取报告。

我签名代表我同意参与这项调查问卷。

参与者姓名: \_\_\_\_\_

参与者签名: \_\_\_\_\_ 日期: \_\_\_\_\_

译者：中文翻译为副本，若与英文内容有抵触，一切以英文内容为准。

## **Appendix D. Pointers Learnt from a Canadian from Church C**

**Pointers learnt from a conversation with a Canadian from Church C (hereafter named 'Clive', a pseudonym), after he helped to complete a survey form for this research**

**Purpose:** After completing the survey form, I told Clive that I am unlikely to obtain a representative sample of surveys with people in his church. I then obtained his permission to ask him if he could share his opinions on his church, relating to basic demography, socio-economic indicators like LMO, social assistances and social capital information. Below are what I learnt from him.

**Demography:** Clive did not correct me when I said that majority of people in his church are Caucasians.

**Jobs:** Clive said most people in his church would be employed. Regarding employment of most Caucasians, he said he does not have a good sense of what people do. But of the people he knows, he feels there is an even distribution of blue and white collar jobs. He listed the jobs of some people he knows: engineer, accountant, plumber, furnace service repairman (now in full-time ministry), and X-ray technician. Clive got a part-time driving job through a church friend. He also knows of other people in church who got jobs from people in church; this is a "social thing", by word of mouth.

**Education:** Majority of adults do not have post-secondary education.

**Demography:** Well-balanced age group of people in church. Fairly significant group of teens, young adults, majority distributed from 20s to retirement age. Substantial group of retirees. In the recent years, there has been an influx of younger people because of a young lead pastor.

**Church participation:** He usually attends the later morning service as there are two English services. He attends Bible Study (BS); has been a long timer, i.e. he is the only original member due to turnover. This BS group is exclusively all Caucasians, mostly retirees but lately a young guy (in his 20s) joined.

**Homeownership:** Majority slightly tilted towards home owners (know of people who are renting), i.e. maybe 60:40

**Car ownership:** Most would have cars.

**Friendship:** There is a strong and good fellowship in church among people. In some cases, the friendship have been built over many years. The church was established in 1961. One BS couple has been in the church since 1965.

**Benefits:** Part of the fruits of being in a good relationship with God is that God blesses in material ways.

## Appendix E. Interview Questions

### Information relating to Immigration (Easy and ice-breaker question)

1. Can you relate the story of when, how and why you came to Canada?

### Information relating to Church

1. Please tell me the story of how you came to attend this church? What were the factors or circumstances that made you come here?

2. You mentioned in the survey form that you have been in this church for \_\_\_ years. How has your experience been so far?

3. You mentioned in the survey form that your attendance is \_\_\_\_\_.

(i) Infrequent→Do you attend more than one church? Are you visiting other churches too? If so, what are the differences between those churches to this one?

(ii) Regular→What are the reasons for your dedication to attendance in this church?

4. You mentioned in the survey form that you participate in \_\_\_ church activities.

(i) Please share with me what are these activities, your roles and how do you feel about them in terms of outreach to fellow church members?

(ii) If interviewee does not participate in any church activities, ask the following question → Have you considered joining any of the church activities (Give some examples if necessary)? Can you share why you choose not to join these activities?

5. You mentioned in the survey form that you have \_\_\_ best friends in church.

(i) If one to three →Did you know them prior to joining this church? What makes them your best friends? Are they also Singaporean immigrants? Is it easier to make good friends in church compared to outside groups? If yes, why?

(ii) If zero → (Counter check if interviewee is new to church before asking) Is it difficult to make friends in church compared to outside groups? If yes, why?

6. You mentioned in the survey form that you have offered or received certain help from church members. Could you kindly elaborate a little more about that? Does this happen frequently in this church? Why do you think people offer this kind of help? What does this help mean to the giver and the receiver?

7. What types of assistance, help, services and ministries do you wish to see more of in this church? Why do you think these are currently lacking or not provided in this church?

Information relating to Occupation

8. You mentioned in the survey form that you are worked as a \_\_\_\_\_ prior to immigrating to Canada. Can you elaborate a little about the nature of this job? How many years were you on this job? What other job experiences do you have?

9. You mentioned in the survey form that your current occupation in Canada is \_\_\_\_\_. How many years were you on this job? Can you kindly share how you found this job? Did you rely on any person's referral or recommendation? What other Canadian job experiences do you have?

(i) If the current Canadian job is dissimilar to previous job in Singapore → Why didn't you stay in your line of work which you were doing back in Singapore?

10. You mentioned in the survey form that you are \_\_\_\_\_ with your current job.

(i) If happy → What are the factors that make you happy with this job?

(ii) If unhappy → Why are you unhappy with this job? What have you done to look for another job?

11. You mentioned in the survey form that you \_\_\_\_\_ help from church members in your Canadian job search.

(i) obtained → Can you kindly tell me the types of help you obtained or rendered to other church members? Why was help rendered? What were the circumstances?

(ii) did not obtain → (To verify this answer with answer to questions 6 and 8 to really confirm that no direct or indirect help was received or rendered by interviewee) Why do you think you did not receive any job search help in church. Is this the wrong place to expect this type of help? Where do you get such help?

## Appendix F. Information Email

Dear church friends

Thank you for helping me with my Masters research survey form.

I understand you have indicated "No" to an approximate 1 hour interview request, as indicated in your answer to my last survey question. The purpose of this email is not to ask why you indicated "No" to an interview but to provide more information about this interview, in the hope that you may change your mind and agree to helping me with this interview. So if after reading this email, it did not change your mind about the interview, I will not send you any further information about this interview, unless you take the initiative to ask me.

The interview is like a conversation and story-telling time about your life as an immigrant in Canada. I will guide and ask you questions about your settling down experiences and also how the Vancouver Bible Presbyterian church played or did not play a role in it. So some sample questions are:

1. Can you share about the circumstances and reasons why you came to Canada?
2. Try to remember the first time you landed in Canada, what did you do? Where did you go? Who did you meet? Did anyone help you?
3. How did you come to worship in church?
4. How did people in church help you? How did you help other people in church?
5. Can you share the pathways you took to finding work in Canada?

At the start, you may find answering these 'rigid' questions rather awkward but as you start to tell your own interesting life stories, you may find yourself enjoying recounting and reflecting why you took the path you took. Some interviewees tell me that the interview helped them to review and reflect about the choices they made in Canada and also about the role of the church in helping one another. With your permission, I will tape record our conversation to facilitate transcribing and data analysis. This means that if you are not comfortable with the conversation being taped, I will not do so.

In the course of the interview if you say anything which you feel could be sensitive, you could ask me not to include in my research writing. You can also tell me this after the interview. Even if you do not highlight to me, I will also exercise caution when I use information shared by my interviewees so that as far as possible, they will not be identified when people read my thesis. In reality, people say only 2 persons will read my thesis; my supervisor and myself.

I respect your reasons for disagreeing to an interview. However given the way I designed and limit my research to just 3 church settings and focusing only on interviewing Singapore first generation immigrants, your participation in my research will be very much appreciated. So if you think you can spare 1 hour of your time, do call or text me at [REDACTED] to arrange a date/time/place convenient to you for this interview. If you feel like helping me but still have some concerns about the interview which I have not addressed in this email, please ask me. Many thanks!

God bless,  
Choo-Ming

## Appendix G. Survey Findings on Demographic and Socio-Economic Information

S/No.	Basic Information	Church A	Church B	Church C	Church C <sup>1</sup>
1	Total survey respondents	42	37	5	NA
2	Ratio of males versus females	48:50	38:62	80:20	NA
3	Ratio of young adults (21 to 40 years old) versus those in their 40s versus elderly (61 years old and above)	10:52:29	41:49:11	0:100:0	30:30:40
4	Ratio of Chinese versus others	88:10	100:0	80:20	10:90
5	% of respondents who are proficient in English	93%	57%	100%	95%
6	Ratio of immigrants versus people born in Canada	95:2	100:0	80:20	30:70
7	Ratio of Singaporean immigrants versus others	69:26	14:86	80:20	5:95
8	Ratio of immigrants who have been here recently (after Yr 2000) versus those who came earlier	50:40	22:78	20:60	NA
9	Ratio of University educated persons versus others	52:45	76:24	100:0	50:50
10	Ratio of home owners versus others	67:31	84:16	80:20	50:50
11	% of persons with more than 1 car in their family	50%	30%	80%	NA

<sup>1</sup> Corrected and best estimate but margin of error will be higher than churches A and B.

## Appendix H. Survey Findings on Church-Related Information

S/No.	Church-related Information	Church A	Church B	Church C	Church C <sup>1</sup>
1	Ratio of new church attendees (0 to 5 years) versus old-timers (> 5 years)	40:57	59:41	20:60	NA
2	% of respondents who are regular church service worshipper, i.e. attend service on a weekly basis	90%	92%	100%	NA
3	% of respondents who have 3/2/1 best friend(s) in their church	31:5:36	59:16:11	0:40:60	NA
4	% of respondents who have rendered type 1 / 2 / 3 assistance <sup>2</sup> to other church members	69:67:64	70:78:62	100:100:80	NA
5	% of respondents who have received type 1 / 2 / 3 assistance from other church members	43:64:55	73:86:62	20:100:60	NA

<sup>1</sup> Corrected and best estimate but margin of error will be higher than churches A and B.

<sup>2</sup> Type 1 assistance is material support; type 2 assistances are mental, emotional and spiritual support; and type 3 assistance is social services. Questions 20 and 21 of the survey form at Appendix A will provide examples of these assistances.

## Appendix I. Survey Findings on Employment Information

S/No.	Occupation Information	Church A	Church B	Church C	Church C <sup>1</sup>
1	% of those who are working	57%	51%	60%	80%
2	% of respondents who are happy with their current job	52%	59%	80%	NA
3	% of respondents who obtained help (in any form) from church on their job search	29%	32%	40%	NA
4	% of respondents who helped other church members in their job search	43%	54%	60%	NA

<sup>1</sup> Corrected and best estimate but margin of error will be higher than churches A and B.