



# PEARLYN NEO

917-444-4947

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## SKILLS

Qualitative research and analysis (ethnography, participant observations, semi-structured interviews, focus groups), participatory research, community development, human-centered design, project management

## RESEARCH INTEREST

Vulnerable communities, urban and rural poverty, social justice, social policy, community-based social interventions, youth work, livelihood interventions

## SOFTWARE

STATA, SPSS, NVivo10, Tableau, Adobe Creative Suite

## LANGUAGE

Fluent in English and Mandarin, conversational in Teochew and Hokkien dialects

## EDUCATION

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### Columbia University

Sep 2019 - Present

#### *Master of Arts in Sociology*

- Fulbright Scholar sponsored by the US Department of State
- Peace and Social Change Intern under the Women, Peace and Security (WPS) program at Columbia University's Earth Institute Advanced Consortium on Cooperation, Conflict and Complexity (AC4)

### Singapore Management University

Aug 2010 - Jul 2015

#### *Double Degree*

- Bachelor of Social Sciences - Sociology (Public Policy, Development, Management)
- Bachelor of Science (Information Systems Management)

## PROFESSIONAL AND RESEARCH EXPERIENCE

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### Singapore University of Technology and Design

Sep 2017 – Jul 2019

#### *Research Assistant, SUTD-MIT International Design Centre*

- Managed an interdisciplinary team of social scientists, developers and engineers to develop a mobile application that connects *karang guni men* and households so as to empower and support traditional trades in Singapore
- Designed survey instruments and conducted ethnographic fieldwork with public stakeholders and *karang guni men* through participatory design workshops, digital focus groups and interviews to improve their user experience
- Engaged with elderly Customer Service Officers from Singapore Pools to identify needs, design strategies and negotiate solutions to ease them in the organisation's transition towards Smart Cities and Digital Transformation

### Yale-NUS College

Sep 2015 – Mar 2017

#### *Research Assistant, Division of Social Sciences (Sociology and Public Policy)*

- Headed ethnographic fieldwork process of recruiting and conducting primary interviews with 200 migrant domestic workers in Singapore and 150 bio-scientists and policy makers in Singapore, Hong Kong and the United States
- Performed qualitative and quantitative data cleaning and analysis, and contributed to research and drafting of manuscripts on Stepwise Labour Migration including a book titled "Multinational Maids: Stepwise Migration in a Global Labour Market" (Cambridge University Press 2017) which received the 2018 Max Weber Award for Distinguished Scholarship and 2017 Tomas and Zaniecki Best Book Award from the American Sociological Association

### Singapore Management University

Dec 2014 – Aug 2015

#### *Research Assistant, Lien Centre for Social Innovation*

- Conducted intensive research (both primary and secondary) and performed qualitative and quantitative data analysis on findings for 4 publications: "Elderly Population in Singapore: Understanding Social, Physical and Financial Needs", "Single-Parent Families in Singapore: Understanding the Challenges of Finances, Housing and Time Poverty", "People with Physical Disabilities in Singapore: Understanding Disabling Factors in Caregiving, Education, Employment and Finances" and "Unmet Social Needs in Singapore"

### Freelance Independent Researcher

Jul 2015 – Present

#### *On Food Insecurity in Singapore*

#### *School of Social Sciences, Singapore Management University*

- Supervised a team of 30 students to conduct 200 qualitative in-depth interviews and data analysis on low-income persons in Singapore struggling with hunger
- Expanded research on hunger in Singapore by proposing targeted solutions and policy recommendations in a report through using persona creation and analysis

**On Poverty and School Performance in Bukit Merah, Singapore**  
**South Central Community Family Service Centre (SCCFSC)**

- Lead researcher and analyst for qualitative project to understand how students' performance in school are related to poverty trajectories at home through focus group discussions and interviews using the Asset Based Community Development approach

**Research Coordinator**

**Humanitarian Organization for Migrant Economics (HOME)**

- Focus group coordinator for research on migration trajectories of Construction Workers
- Main coordinator and task allocator for all 40 volunteers in the Research Team

**Strategic Revamp and Policy Examination of Vulnerability in Singapore**  
**National Council of Social Services (NCSS)**

- Contributed to landscape scan and policy recommendation proposal examining policies and programmes specifically focused on the Elderly, Mental Disabilities Community and Persons with Disabilities in Singapore
- Assisted with literature review and data collection cumulating in NCSS' 5-year strategic thrust direction revamp

**Process and Service Design Consultancy to VWOs in Singapore**  
**D-Catalyst Innovation Consultancy Pte Ltd**

- Main coordinator of research process, developed community resource framework and assisted in designed ethnographic research questions using design thinking framework to help improve 4 Volunteer Welfare Organisations' capabilities under the NCSS Bite-sized Project initiative

**Programmes and Research Manager**

**UNFRAMED (Social Incubator Start-up)**

- Co-driver of a social incubation and accelerator programme targeted at grooming 10 social-impact start-ups to design solutions for the elderly community in Singapore
- Responsible for content, advertising and management of social media platforms
- Part of the curriculum design team that devised a 6 month boot camp to enable start-ups to maximise impact through the use of frameworks such as design thinking

**PUBLICATIONS AND PRESENTATIONS**

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**Peer-Reviewed Journal Articles**

- Chen, Julianne and Pearlyn Neo. 2019. *Texting the waters: An assessment of focus groups conducted via the WhatsApp smartphone messaging application*. Methodological Innovations 2019: 1-10.
- Paul, Anju M. and Pearlyn Neo. 2017. *Am I Allowed to Get Pregnant? Awareness of Pregnancy Protection Laws among Migrant Domestic Workers in Hong Kong*. Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies 24:1-19.

**Conference and Workshop Presentations**

- Presenter, "Paradoxes of Waste Sustainability in Singapore: Clean Campaigns, Technocentric Recycling Programs and *Karang Guni* Informal Recyclers". Unmaking Waste 2018 International Conference and Exhibition. University of South Australia, Adelaide, Australia. 20-23 September 2018.
- Presenter, "Empowering Traditional Trades and Forging Sustainable Households with Smart Recycling Platform – Paradoxes of Waste Sustainability in Singapore". Fourteenth International Conference on Environmental, Cultural, Economic & Social Sustainability. Cairns, Australia. 17-19 January 2018.
- Co-presenter, "'Am I Allowed To Get Pregnant?': Awareness of Pregnancy Protection Laws Amongst Migrant Domestic Workers in Hong Kong. ISA Research Committee on the Sociology of Migration RC31 International Conference: Migration in a turbulent world. Doha, Qatar. 26-28 November 2016

**LEADERSHIP**

- Co-Leader for a 12-man cycling team and secured sponsorship for a 12000km expedition in South Africa
- Vice-President for SMU's Catholic Community
- Led 12 departments and organized 15 events for SMU's outdoor adventure club

**COMMUNITY SERVICE**

- Overseas Mission Trip Leader for a team of 40 members to An Hiep, Vietnam to refurbish a school yard
- Management Team Member that helped to devise an integrated production system to provide clean water to 6 schools in Terai, Nepal
- Interned at an education consultancy and conducted poverty assessment for 6 months in Bangalore, India

**ADDITIONAL**

- Contributed to human trafficking legislative and policy developments at Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), Bangkok in 2014
- Co-founded a start-up in 2012 that aimed to bridge the communication gap between elderly and their caregivers
- Completed a course in Human-Centered Design by +Acumen and IDEO.org
- Completed a course in Transmedia Storytelling by The University of New South Wales (UNSW) in Jun 2017