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Introduction

Many countries grapple with the issues of ethnic diversity and national unity. Educators have vastly differing views with regard to the relative emphasis that should be given to the promotion of national citizenship and group identities, and to the thorny issue of developing world or global citizens. Like citizenship education, both global education and multicultural education vary greatly when incorporated into the national curriculum of different countries. As global education scholars such as Pike (2001) contend, global education is "infused with distinct national characteristics" (11). Likewise, Schweisfurth (2006) argues that education which aims to develop global perspectives in learners is a "distinctly culture based exercise" (42). Consequently, it is useful to explore how multicultural and global education is implemented in diverse social and political contexts, and examine how tensions between the local, national and global are resolved in different education systems.

In the United States, both multicultural education and global education advocates faced considerable hostility from conservatives, particularly in the 1980s and early 1990s. Global education appeared to challenge the primacy of the nation-state and promote anti-Americanism (Schukar 1993; Gaudelli 2003) while multicultural education was accused of promoting separatism and disunity (Schlesinger 1991; Ravitch 1990). Similarly, Singapore, like any multi-racial heterogeneous state, also faces the same problem of balancing the promotion of national identity, diversity and global perspectives through education. These tensions between the national and the global, as well as between unity and diversity remain highly relevant in today's increasingly globalized world.

The purpose of this paper is, therefore, to explore how the Singapore education system addresses these disparate goals through its national Social Studies curriculum for secondary schools. This paper examines how the Singapore education system approaches multicultural and global education through Social Studies - a relatively new interdisciplinary subject that is required for all secondary school students in Singapore. Uniquely, the curriculum does not just focus on the Singapore context, but promotes an internationalist approach (Thornton 2005), defined as the "policy or practice of cooperation among nations on matters such as peacekeeping, economics and the environment" (82), through the use of international case studies, while simultaneously retaining its focus on the nation-state and national priorities. Finally, the Singapore case study is an exemplar of how such an approach can be incorporated into the existing Social Studies curriculum, without the creation of a separate global education course with its attendant controversies.

This paper, divided into four main parts, begins with a brief review of the relevant literature. The next section provides a contextual background for the paper and describes the history of racial relations in Singapore. Third, I describe the implementation of Social Studies education in Singapore through an examination of the key goals and content of the Social Studies curriculum. Finally, this paper concludes by summarizing the main findings and assertions.

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Multicultural education and global education

Scholars hold contradictory views with regard to the definition and role of multicultural and global education vis-à-vis the promotion of national identity. Both the multicultural education and global education movements are characterized by a multiplicity of definitions, theories and practices. In an oft-cited work, Hanvey (1976) conceptualized global education in terms of five elements: perspective consciousness, knowledge of world conditions, cross-cultural awareness, knowledge of global dynamics, and knowledge of alternatives. Gaudelli (2003), in contrast, defined global education as

"a curriculum that seeks to prepare students to live in a progressively interconnected world where the study of human values, institutions and behaviors are contextually examined through a pedagogical style that promotes critical engagement of complex, diverse information toward socially meaningful action" (11)

Case (1993), on the other hand, contends that global education should incorporate both substantive and perceptual dimensions. The substantive dimension includes knowing about global systems, events and issues while the perceptual dimension includes being empathetic and having an open-minded point of view. In summary, as Pike (2000) argues, "the search for meaning is a recurrent theme in global education research and writing" (65). He notes, however, that there are several common concepts such as interdependence, connectedness, as well as global and multiple perspectives, that characterize global education in the United State, Britain and Canada. Despite these common ideas, both the theory and practice of global education in each country is distinguished by "layers of national distinctiveness" (66). Educators interpret these concepts very differently because of differing contexts, worldviews and ideological positions. Likewise, Parker (2008) noted that despite the "plural and discordant" (202) nature of global or international education, nationalism remained highly significant and central to the movement.

Similarly, multicultural education scholars have defined the field in diverse ways. This division has been characterized by some scholars as a tension between unity and diversity (Parker 1997). Feinberg (1998), however, characterizes the multicultural and national identity debate as a continuum, with assimilationists and separatists at either end, and pluralists and multiculturalists in the middle.

Separatists, according to Feinberg, emphasize the maintenance of the distinctive identity of the group through the formation of separate educational institutions whereas assimilationists aim to erase the separate national or cultural group identities and forge a common national one through public education. Separatists also assert that groups should "form their own separate educational institutions and use them to maintain their own distinctive identity" (Feinberg 1998, 19). Within the United States, one of the main groups advocating a separatist ideology in education consists of Afrocentric scholars such as Asante (1991), who are convinced that an alternative educational paradigm is required to counter what they perceive to be the dominance of White supremacist ideas in education.

Advocates of assimilation such as Ravitch (1990, 2002) and Saxe (2003) have, as their main concern, the unity of the country. To them, therefore, the primary purpose of civic education is to eliminate the influence of separate national or cultural group identities and promote a common national one through public education. Multiculturalism promotes diversity at the expense of national unity and, as a result, creates conflicting loyalties and reduces national identity and patriotism. The multicultural movement has been criticized for being at best, "nothing more than indoctrination of foolish notions" and at worst, "an obnoxious application of factional interests run amok" (Saxe 2003, 108). Similar challenges have also been made against global education programs. Critics of global education charge that global education curricular materials promote anti-American views, reduce patriotism and encourage moral ambivalence (Schukar 1993; Gaudelli 2003).

While there is a wide range views adopted by multicultural scholars, Feinberg (1998) draws a useful distinction between two groups - pluralists and multiculturalists. Pluralists, including Feinberg himself, believe that the "common school" plays an important role in reproducing a shared sense of membership in the national community while remaining relatively passive with regard to the promotion of cultural identity. This shared affiliation and regard for fellow citizens does not come naturally and therefore, "lessons in national partiality must be explicitly taught" (45). Students should also be taught the nation's unique ideas, norms and practices, as well as the special obligations that they have as a member of a particular nation. Culture, religion and other forms of group identity, in contrast, should be confined to the private sphere because it is not the role of schools to promote and raise consciousness about these other group identities.

On the other hand, multiculturalists, according to Feinberg, disagree that culture should be confined to the private sphere and they repudiate the existence of a culturally neutral public sphere. Thus, multiculturalists favor "cultural fairness", which is an ideal in which "no one cultural group dominates over others" (24) and seek the promotion of cultural identity through public schools. Kymlicka (1998), for example, contends that cultural groups have "a valid claim, not only to tolerance and non-discrimination, but also explicit accommodation, recognition and representation within the institutions of the larger society" (147). Any concept of national identity promoted through public education should, therefore, include both the unifying and diversifying aspects of the national community (Banks 2004; Gay 1997). Banks (2004) also maintains that cultural, national and global identities are interrelated. Students need to clarify and reflect on their cultural identifications before developing a similarly reflective national identity. In order for diverse groups to feel a sense of belonging and loyalty to their nation-state, these groups need to be allowed to maintain and include their cultures within the nation. This goal, according to Banks, can only be achieved with the promotion of multicultural literacy through citizenship education that helps students "develop thoughtful and clarified identifications with their cultural communities and their nation-states" (300). Similarly, Parker (1997) argues that education should promote both the singular citizen identity as well as cultural identities. The aim is to create a sense of citizenship that is inclusive of individual differences, multiple group identities (small publics) and a cohesive political community (large public). Thus, schooling should "educate children for political oneness and cultural diversity, with the understanding that these exist parallel to and in support of one another" (Parker 2003, 30). Likewise, others have also contended that multicultural education actually strengthens patriotism and national identity because it allows all citizens to see themselves in the "American Story" and in the structures

and institutions of society (Adler 2003).

Generally, most multicultural education theorists have confined themselves to within the boundaries of the nation-state. Some scholars, however, have argued that the curriculum should teach students how to function effectively within various ethnic and national cultures, as well as that of the global community (Banks 2004). Noddings (2005) describes the relationship between multicultural education and global citizenship thusly:

The purpose of attending to differences, including them in our curricula and celebrating them, is to establish formerly neglected groups as full citizens – people who are heard and recognized. The same purpose should guide our commitment to global citizenship. (16)

In fact, according to Noddings, the multicultural curricula should be closely tied to developing global citizens because students should be taught to "value the lives of all people, not just those of our own nation" (17). Both global and multicultural education should prepare students to live in an increasingly culturally integrated global society and teach them how to address issues of diversity beyond the boundaries of the nation-state (Gaudelli 2003). In a similar vein, Buras and Motter (2006) called for a subaltern cosmopolitan multiculturalism that recognizes and challenges cross-border inequalities brought about by globalization. Others too, assert that the curriculum should also move from focusing on differences, such as race, culture, language and national identity, to the shared experiences of humanity and the evolution and hybridity of cultures (Merryfield and Subedi 2001). Students should be taught to see the world from the perspective of those in the mainstream and from the margins, to critically examine fundamental assumptions about reality, truth and power, and also to "recognize the interconnectedness of local and global intersections of power, discrimination, and identity" (Merryfield 2001, 189).

Singapore, Race and Multiculturalism

Postcolonial Singapore was, unlike the United States or Canada, originally conceived of as a state that was constitutionally multiracial (Chua 2003; Tan 2004). The Singapore constitution, in addition, also contains provisions that prohibit discrimination and guarantees protection to minorities, including Articles 12, 16 and 152 (Tan 2004). Due to historical reasons, the term *race* is constantly being used in political and popular discourse, particularly in the Singapore context (Lee et al. 2004). Furthermore, in Singapore, the meanings of both race and ethnicity are frequently conflated. For example, the Singapore Department of Statistics (2006) assigns the same meaning to both terms and states that the term
ethnic group
"refers to a person's race" (41).

The Chinese form an overwhelming majority of Singapore's population of 4.02 million. Nearly 77% of the population are categorized as Chinese, 13.9% Malays, 7.9% Indians and the rest, including Eurasians, Armenians and so on, labeled as "Others" (Ooi 2005). All Singaporeans, however, are automatically assigned a particular 'race' at birth (determined by the race of the father) and this is inscribed on the official identity card. This broad official Chinese, Malay, Indian, Others (CMIO) classification masks numerous differences within these categories. For example, the heterogeneity of those classified as Indian is striking as they might speak different languages such as Urdu, Tamil or Malay, and have different religions. The former Prime Minister, Goh Chok Tong, neatly summarized the state's conception of the nature of the relationship between race and national identity,

(Singapore) will be an extended family forged by widening the common area of the four overlapping circles in our society. The four circles, each representing one community, will never totally overlap to become a stack of four circles… The overlapping circles approach maximized our common ground but retains each race's separate identity. (Quah 2000, 84)

This approach, however, ignores the possibility of race and racial identity as being shaped by alternative perceptions of religious, linguistic, sexual and class differences (Loomba 2005). Some scholars have, in addition, suggested that this state-defined ethnicity not only creates barriers to interethnic interaction, but also essentializes racial categories and reinforces

differences (Tan 2004).

Racial relations in Singapore, like that of many other postcolonial nation-states, have been greatly influenced by the preferential migration and racially-based policies instituted by the colonial administration (Hefner 2001). The various racial groups were located in separate enclaves such as Chinatown (Chinese), Kampong Glam (Malays) and Serangoon Road (Indians). Each community had its own social structure, leadership and organizations, and was largely oriented toward itself and its homeland of origin (Lai 2004). In the extract below, Barr and Low (2005) summarized the historical influences of the political, social and economic policies implemented by the British colonial government on the division of the people of Singapore - then part of Malaya - into racial groups,

Colonial ideology ranked the myriad of races under its jurisdiction according to stereotypes of racial attributes. Racial groups were distinguished one from the other and included in colonial society in distinctive ways that minimised [*sic*] inter-communal interaction. The role of the coloniser [*sic*] was seen to be one of an umpire, arbitrating the relationships and conflicts between the various communities. (162-3)

The British also assigned the different racial groups to specialized economic positions ranging from agriculture to the opium trade and, in doing so, "crystallized the most essential of supra-racial categories: the distinction between indigenous Malayo-Indonesian "children of the soil" (Malay *bumiputera*, Indonesian, *pribumi*) and "non-indigenous" or immigrant Asians (Indians and, especially, Chinese)" (19). The segregated vernacular school system run largely by racially-based or religious organizations further exacerbated this polarization. With the exception of the few English-medium schools that were designed to assimilate the elite natives into British colonial society, there were few opportunities for the different groups to interact in colonial Singapore. The effects of these policies still reverberate today, more than four decades after independence was achieved (Chua 2003; Koh 2004).

Several major episodes of racial tensions occurred in the 1950s and 1960s that resulted in loss

of life and damage to property. Two incidents are particularly prominent - the Maria Hertogh riots in 1950 and the Prophet Muhammad birthday riots in 1964 (Lai 2004). The Maria Hertogh riots originated from a custody battle between the Malay-Muslim foster mother and the Dutch-Christian biological mother of thirteen year old Maria Bertha Hertogh. The resulting riots caused the loss of eighteen lives (Ganesan 2004). The Prophet Muhammad Birthday riots occurred in 1964 and involved a Malay procession that marked the Prophet's birthday. The exact cause of the riots is still a matter of dispute but the consequences were unambiguous. Clashes between Malays and Chinese broke out, resulting in extensive damage to property, especially in the Geylang and Chinatown areas, and more than twenty fatalities.

Due to this colonial legacy of racial division and episodes of racial tension, the postcolonial, democratically elected Singapore government has single-mindedly implemented integrative policies towards the different racial groups through major developmental programs such as public housing and national education. Ganesan (2004), for instance, argues that the Singapore government is "unabashedly interventionist and is committed to a secular multiethnic state within a developmentalist framework" (41). Since the achievement of national independence in 1965, there have been no instances of violent racial conflict in Singapore, although there certainly were emotive racial and religious issues that could have sparked similar riots. The 2002 *tudung* (Islamic headscarf) issue, for example, was a highly emotive and divisive one for the Malay community. This involved the parents of four Malay-Muslim girls who chose to insist that their daughters wear the Islamic headscarf to public school. Consequently, the school suspended the three girls for not wearing the prescribed school uniform (Ganesan 2004). In response to the furor, the Singapore government argued that the public school should be a neutral and common space for all racial groups. Thus, all public school children should conform to the school's dress code (Lee 2003). This issue was subsequently resolved peacefully with the support of Singapore's highest Islamic authority (BBC 2002).

There have been subtle shifts in the management of racial relations and identity manipulation in Singapore (Lai 2004; Tan 2004). The state took over the provision of essential social services such as housing and education from racial and religious organizations in the immediate aftermath of the racial tensions in the 1960s. From 1965 to 1979, the state emphasized the development of a common 'Singaporean Singapore' identity, but from the 1980s, there was a gradual, yet tightly controlled increase in the promotion of racial identity. This was carried out through the use of campaigns promoting cultural roots and values, the introduction of new

public housing policies that determined the appropriate distribution of racial groups, and the creation of racially-based 'self-help' organizations such as the Chinese Development Assistance Council and the Singapore Indian Development Association. In the 1990s, the government also sought to define a national identity that superseded racial ones through the introduction of national ideologies such as "Shared Values" that included messages such as "Racial and religious harmony," "Consensus, not conflict" and "Nation before community and society above self" (Lai 2004, 6). The government actively promulgated these national ideologies through the media and in schools.

In summary, the pluralist conception of multiculturalism, described earlier in this paper, dominates Singapore's state policy. The state places great emphasis on developing a common national identity and actively promotes a sense of shared affiliation through the public education system, particularly through Social Studies. This shared national affiliation supersedes other forms of group identities, including racial or religious identities. Consequently, public schools in Singapore vigorously champion a common national identity, but remain studiedly neutral with regard to the promotion of group identities.

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Social Studies Education in Singapore

Stories and narratives are constantly being constructed and modified, either by political entrepreneurs or those in power, in order to construct a form of social reality and provide a sense of continuity between the past, present and future (Anderson 2003; Byman 2000; Gellner 2006). One of the most effective ways of ensuring the diffusion of a national narrative is through the common school. In fact, education systems have long been used to promote, manufacture or legitimize national historical traditions, symbols and values (Smith 1991; Hobsbawm 1994) and have historically been sites whereby individuals "come to understand themselves as having a national identity and 'citizenship'" (Popkewitz 2003, 267). Within the public school system, Social Studies is ideal for identity building and the creation of a sense of historical

consciousness. This phenomenon is particularly applicable to the Singapore context, especially considering the historical, social and economic constraints faced. Therefore, it is unsurprising that the Singapore government utilizes subjects such as social studies to promote a particular vision of the nation-state.

Social Studies has frequently been used as a vehicle for citizenship education in the United States but there is little or no consensus on what citizenship actually means, nor is there agreement about the implications of citizenship for curriculum and instruction (Thornton 2005; Ross 2001; Evans 2004). Unlike the United States however, Singapore, being a highly centralized state, has not experienced the same degree of contestation over the content, values and goals of the Social Studies curriculum. In fact, schools in Singapore closely reflect government policies and the state's priorities and ideals (Tan and Chew 2004). For example, almost all aspects of the formal and informal school curriculum, including the Social Studies curriculum, is based on the National Education framework (Singapore Ministry of Education 2007). Developed and introduced by the Singapore government in 1997, this national ideological framework aims to "develop national cohesion, cultivate instincts for survival and instill confidence" in Singapore's future (Singapore Ministry of Education 2007, 1). This goal is encapsulated in the six National Education messages that form the basis for the Social Studies curriculum: (1) Singapore is our homeland; this is where we belong; (2) We must preserve racial and religious harmony; (3) We must uphold meritocracy and incorruptibility; (4) We must ourselves defend Singapore; (5) No one owes Singapore a living; (6) We have confidence in our future (Singapore Ministry of Education 2007, 7). Subsequently, in 2001, the Ministry of Education created the Social Studies course as a vehicle for the promulgation of these National Education messages and explicitly structured the course around the state's National Education framework.

Key goals of the Social Studies curriculum

Social Studies was introduced as a required course for the vast majority of Secondary Three, Four and Five (15-17 year old) students in 2001. It was conceptualized as a two- or three-year program, culminating in a high stakes national exam – the Singapore-Cambridge GCE "O" Levels. All Secondary Three and Four students from the 4-year Express academic track and the

5-year Normal (Academic) track are required to complete this course. Because of the centralized nature of the Singapore education system, the Curriculum Planning and Development Division (CPDD) of the Ministry of Education not only creates the national curriculum framework and produces the detailed syllabus for use in all secondary schools, but also authors the Social Studies textbooks used by all students in Singapore.

The Social Studies curriculum adopts an interdisciplinary approach and is organized around the two core ideas – "Being Rooted" and "Living Global," with the aim of promoting national identity, multicultural understanding and global perspectives. As stated in the curriculum document, the aims of the Social Studies program are to enable students to

   - understand issues that affect the socio-economic development, the governance and the future of Singapore;
   - learn from the experiences of other countries to build and sustain a politically viable, socially cohesive and economically vibrant Singapore;
   - develop thinking and process skills which are essential for lifelong and independent learning;
   - have a deep sense of shared destiny and national identity;
   - develop into citizens who have empathy towards others and will participate responsibly and sensibly in a multi-ethnic, multi-cultural and multi-religious society; and
   - develop into responsible citizens with a global perspective. (Singapore Ministry of Education 2008, 3)

The Social Studies curriculum is divided into six thematic units: (1) Singapore as a nation in the world; (2) Understanding governance; (3) Conflict and harmony in multi-ethnic societies; (4) Managing international relations; (5) Sustaining economic development; (6) Facing challenges and change (Singapore Ministry of Education 2008).

In summary, the official Social Studies curriculum for secondary schools is designed to enable students to understand Singapore's geopolitical situation, including its constraints and vulnerabilities. Apart from imparting content knowledge and skills, the curriculum emphasizes core values such as patriotism and loyalty. Key goals of the Social Studies curriculum in Singapore include inculcating national pride and identity in Singapore, and instilling, in students, the importance of cultural, racial and religious consensus. Finally, the Social Studies curriculum places great emphasis on the idea of an interdependent global community and the promotion of global perspectives.

Social Studies, multicultural education and global education

The Singapore Social Studies curriculum is an issues-based national curriculum with a global focus. Multicultural issues are considered to be essential to Social Studies, primarily because of their role in enhancing "social cohesion within a diverse society" (Singapore Ministry of Education 2008, 3). The government perceives social cohesion as a necessary precondition for economic development and, ultimately, for the survival of the nation-state. Social cohesion is also considered especially important in light of the disruptive impact of globalization on the political stability of a country. This particularly instrumental understanding of multicultural education is not only reflected in the official school curriculum, but is also constantly reiterated in state documents and official statements made by government ministers. For example, Dr Aline Wong (2000), the Senior Minister of State for Education, asserted in a speech that "Singapore's transformation in the global era reflects the experience of many other societies which are multiracial … there will definitely be a greater need for interracial harmony and intercultural understanding." Consequently, she argued, Singapore's future as a country in a borderless world "depends all the more on national cohesion and political stability." Unsurprisingly therefore, the Ministry of Education has chosen to incorporate these issues into the Singapore Social Studies curriculum.

The unit titled "Conflict and harmony in multi-ethnic societies," provides a pragmatic rationale for the promotion of social cohesion and uses this overarching question as a guide, "Why is harmony in a multi-ethnic society important to the development and viability of a nation?" (11). Ethnic "harmony" is perceived to be useful because it ensures the survival of the nation-state and because the different groups contribute to the diversity and vibrancy of multi-ethnic societies. This unit reminds students of the dire consequences of inter-ethnic conflict, thus the need to be "vigilant against the forces of divisiveness that cause conflict and disintegration of societies" (11). The latter statement, in particular, indicates the level of official concern over the possibility of ethnic and religious strife in Singapore.

This unit is divided into two sections, titled "Social Cohesion and Harmony" and "Discord and Disunity," both of which explicitly address racial and religious issues. Social cohesion, according to the text, can be achieved through the management of diversity and racial and religious sensitivities, as well as through the strengthening of common bonds that "unite the people as a nation" (11). The first section adopts a conventional approach and highlights the history of racial and religious tension in Singapore, including the 1950 and 1964 race riots described earlier in this paper. Students are tasked to recognize both internal and external threats to Singapore's harmony, particularly transnational terrorism. The text also describes the case of the Jemaah Islamiyah group, a Southeast Asian Islamic militant group that attempted to bomb several important buildings in Singapore, including the American embassy. The section, in addition, emphasizes the need for Singaporeans to be aware of ethnic and religious sensitivities and to develop tolerance. The curriculum extols the benefits of a harmonious multi-ethnic society and lists the state's strategies for ensuring that the needs of different ethnic groups are met through the use of policies such as minority representation in parliament. Next, the curriculum seeks to develop, in students, the values of respect, empathy, and appreciation of differences, thus the emphasis on "non-violent approaches like negotiation, mediation and cooperation in resolving conflicts" (11). Finally, this section also addresses, in great detail, the importance of integrating ethnic groups in society and forging a national identity.

The second section, "Discord and Disunity," looks beyond the boundaries of the nation-state when addressing the multicultural issues highlighted in the previous paragraph. Instead of just focusing on historical episodes of racial or religious conflict within Singapore, the curriculum approaches the theme of inter-racial harmony and discord in a more subtle and less didactic manner. The focus here is not on Singapore but is on two classic cases of societies affected by

long-term and intractable ethnic and religious conflict - Sri Lanka and Northern Ireland. The curriculum analyzes, in great detail, the discrimination faced by various groups, as well as the racial and religious sensibilities involved. With regard to Sri Lanka, students study the causes and consequences of the protracted conflict between the Sinhalese and the Tamils. In addition, they explore the religious conflict in Northern Ireland between the Protestants and the Catholics. The students then evaluate the different historical causes of the conflict, such as the competition for economic resources, the discrimination faced by the Tamils and Catholics, and the political, social and economic repercussions of this conflict. From these case studies, students are taught broad universal concepts that cut across national boundaries such as compromise and mutual accommodation, common space, minority rights, integration and social cohesion. They are also constantly reminded of the dire consequences of racial and religious conflict to a country, including foreign intervention and economic disaster.

The focus on forging a national identity and the building of common space links both the local and international case studies in this unit. In contrast, the curriculum pays far less attention to examining and celebrating of the diversity of cultural and religious values present in heterogeneous societies. The public school system does not promote cultural and religious identities and these group identities are, instead, confined to the private sphere. This emphasis on the promotion of a common citizen identity and building a national community in state schools seems to parallel the beliefs of pluralists such as Feinberg (1998) who contend that the "common school" plays an important role in reproducing a shared sense of membership in the national community. This shared affiliation and regard for fellow citizens, argues Feinberg, does not come naturally and therefore, "lessons in national partiality must be explicitly taught" (45). Students should also be taught the nation's "ideas, norms, self-understandings and practices that distinguish it from other nations" (48) as well as the special obligations that they have as a member of a particular nation.

International case studies and international organizations

The use of international case studies throughout the curriculum clearly reflects the state's emphasis on international issues. As described in the previous section, two international case studies, Sri Lanka and Northern Ireland, are used to illustrate the dangers of multi-ethnic conflict. Other case studies that form an integral part of the thematic curriculum include the British National Health Service, Venice in the Middle Ages and the Iraq-Kuwait conflict. In the unit, titled "Good governance," the students compare the highly dissimilar approaches to health care in the United Kingdom and Singapore. The text explicitly contrasts the efficiency of the Singapore health care system, with its emphasis on shared responsibility, to the spiraling costs, long wait times and inefficiency associated with the British National Health Service (NHS). The latter is held up as a negative example of the excesses of the welfare state particularly since it does not fit into the Singapore government's economic paradigm of individual responsibility.

Next, the use of the case study of Venice in the Middle Ages in the unit "Facing Challenges and Change," provides a warning to all students that Singapore cannot afford to ignore and be resistant to change if growth and prosperity are to be maintained. The text lists the factors that led to the rise and decline of Venice in the Middle Ages and students are told in apocalyptic tones that "failing to respond to the changing global landscape over time may result in a nation fading into obscurity" (15). Finally, the case study of the Iraq-Kuwait conflict forms an integral part of the unit titled "Managing International Relations." This unit argues that conflicts among nations exist and thus, it is important for a country to deploy deterrent and diplomatic strategies to ensure its survival. Students explore the events that led up to Iraq's invasion of Kuwait, the impact of the conflict on the two countries, the region and the world, as well as the role of the United Nations in resolving the conflict.

The extensive use of international case studies provides Singapore students with the opportunity to examine national and international issues and make explicit connections between the local, national and global. These benefits, however, are tempered by how this information is presented in the curriculum and in the textbooks. The social studies curriculum generally presents these highly controversial and contentious case studies in a simplistic and factual manner. Historical details are presented as uncomplicated, settled and uncontroversial, and are organized around neat categories such as "Causes of conflict among ethnic and religious groups" (11), and "Factors that led to the decline and fall of Venice" (15). The curriculum does not provide or explore alternative or competing positions. This lack of a counter-hegemonic discourse within the curriculum is both troubling and ironic as one of the key goals of the social

studies course is to promote independent inquiry and critical thinking. Similar criticisms have, in fact, been leveled at textbooks in the United States. Hess, Stoddard and Murto (2008), for example, noted that most of the history textbooks examined in their study presented only one unchallenged perspective of the causes and impact of 9/11 and terrorism.

The Social Studies curriculum, in addition, gives great emphasis to the role of international organizations. In the unit focused on Sri Lanka and Northern Ireland, for example, the curriculum examines the roles played by international organizations in resolving these conflicts and emphasizes the need for "non-violent approaches like negotiation, mediation and cooperation in resolving conflicts" (11). The unit also highlights the positive role played by international organizations and clearly expresses the high regard, held by the Singapore state, for these world bodies through the use of statements such as: "World and regional organizations like the United Nations play crucial roles in resolving conflict among nations" (12). The students, in addition, explore the role of a large regional organization that has had great influence on Singapore – ASEAN (the Association of Southeast Asian Nations). Finally, the curriculum also highlights the importance of bilateral and multi-lateral economic, political and military relations for Singapore's survival and emphasizes concepts such as regional and international cooperation, collective security, peaceful coexistence and reciprocation.

While these units stress the interdependence of countries and speak of trust and peaceful coexistence between nation-states, this is, however, balanced by an equally strong emphasis on concepts such as national interest, patriotism, sovereignty, and national vigilance. In fact, the curriculum asserts that it is essential "to be self-reliant for Singapore's security" (12). Consequently, the text prominently highlights the need to ensure national security through the maintenance of a standing armed force consisting of both professional and citizen soldiers, ensuring sustainable development and establishing a local defense industry.

Concluding Considerations

What makes the Social Studies curriculum in Singapore interesting is how it manages to incorporate the local, national and global demands placed on Singapore students. In his comparative study of global education in the United States, Britain and Canada, Pike (2000) observed that

… educators' interpretations of, and responses to, the forces of globalization are as subject to the influences of particular cultural belief systems and worldviews as anything else. In this sense, the global education movement does not signal a globalization of education; rather it reflects the development of more globally-oriented models of national education. (71)

Similarly, Parker (2008) points out that national security imperatives, such as economic competitiveness and military security, dominate the latest wave of international education in the United States. "Nationalism," declares Parker, "plays a starring role" (202) because public schools have historically been used by the state to further national interests. The Singapore Social Studies curriculum's utilization of international case studies to augment the students' examination of key challenges to Singapore's security thus provides an instructive illustration of how these multiple goals are incorporated into an existing national curriculum.

National interests and global responsibilities need not necessarily be in conflict. Adopting what Davies (2006) characterizes as the "global+citizenship education approach," (14) the curriculum's global orientation has helped to make citizenship education less parochial and more globally relevant. In other words, students are encouraged to "think global, act local" (14). The concept of inter-connectedness (Alger and Harf 1986) is also constantly emphasized throughout this curriculum. The Singapore Social Studies curriculum draws many parallels and between Singapore and other events on the world stage, particularly through the use of international case studies. The explicit connection to world events enables students to be cognizant of global issues and perceive the "world as inter-related systems" (Kirkwood 2001, 12). As described in the previous section, even the unit devoted to multicultural issues adopts a similar global focus while simultaneously addressing the issue in a national and local context.

In a world that is, on the one hand, determined to sustain distinct national and group identities and, on the other hand, becoming increasingly globalized, interconnected and interdependent, Social Studies educators are regularly faced with the challenge of balancing these conflicting demands. The Singapore Social Studies curriculum thus serves as an interesting case study of how a national Social Studies curriculum has been shifted away from an exclusive focus on the nation-centric paradigm to one that is more globally oriented in nature while still being firmly anchored to the nation-state. In sum, this examination of the Singapore social studies curriculum provides an insight into how a young, heterogeneous nation-state, faced with inter-racial tension and strife from its inception, has managed to balance the demands of creating a unified "imagined community" (Anderson 2003), supporting diversity and promoting global perspectives.

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