

**Between Self And State: Singapore Social Studies Teachers' Perspectives Of Diversity**

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Social studies and civic education scholarship assert that, to be effective proponents of multicultural education, teachers must navigate a complex agenda comprising knowledge, personal beliefs, student needs, and state policies (Banks, McGee-Banks, Cortes, Hahn, Merryfield, Moodley, Murphy-Shigematsu, Osler, Park, & Parker, 2005; Matthews & Dilworth, 2008). Teachers should be familiar with multicultural content and instructional strategies (Villegas & Lucas, 2002), and understand the major theories and principles within the field (Gay, 2002). Multicultural education also compels teachers to build awareness of their own identity, requires teachers to appreciate how personal perceptions of diversity may influence their instruction, and demands recognition of how societal policies and discourse relating to diversity affect instruction and learning.

Citing the spread of democracy, a growing number of scholars view multicultural curricula as crucial to the preparation of young citizens, especially within societies marked by social inequalities (Banks et al., 2005; Castles, 2004). Yet, national narratives and policies regarding race, gender, socio-economic stratification, and education vary in the manner by which schools welcome children from a wide cultural spectrum (Banks, 2008; Bokhorst-Heng, 2007; Castles, 2004; Feinberg, 1998). In addition, despite contentions that the investigation of the nexus of identity, diversity, and society offers important implications for multicultural education, few studies have examined how state policies and predominant societal narratives influence teachers' perceptions and practice. Consequently, we seek to expand social studies scholarship by making visible the influence of national policies and narratives on Singapore social studies teachers' conceptions of diversity. Singapore, a young and diverse post-colonial city-state with ethnic Chinese, Malay, and Indian heritage, has

implemented national educational policies that have historically emphasized racial harmony in the interest of national survival (Ho, 2010). By contextualizing teachers' perceptions in this qualitative study, we aim to contribute to international efforts in understanding how best to prepare social studies teachers, as they, in turn, prepare young citizens for effective participation in multicultural, democratic societies.

### **Diversity and the State**

States' efforts to reconcile tensions between a unified national identity and citizens' diverse affiliations span a range of philosophical stances: assimilationism, separatism, pluralism, and multiculturalism (Feinberg, 1998). These stances manifest in policies and narratives that, in turn, implicate the role of education (Banks, 2008; Miller-Lane, Howard, & Halagao, 2007; Castles, 2004; Parker, 2003). Proponents of multicultural education have advocated for broad societal and educational policies that take into account complex forms of identity. Parker (1997), for example, argues that education should promote both singular citizen identities as well as cultural identities through the creation of a sense of citizenship that is inclusive of individual differences, multiple group affinities, and a cohesive political community. More recently, Banks (2008) has argued against traditional, universal conceptions of citizenship in proposing a model of cultural citizenship that includes cultural rights for citizens from diverse ethnic or racial groups. For Banks, the state and, by extension, the schools should recognize group differentiated rights within a wider framework of democracy. In many societies however, Singapore included, predominating narratives and values do not necessarily mirror multicultural principles. Nevertheless, our study is informed by contentions that, as curriculum gatekeepers, teachers are in a unique position to make pedagogical choices about how best to address their

students' learning needs. Although societal discourse and state policies may echo assimilationist, separatist or pluralist values, teachers can learn to recognize, develop, and implement multicultural theories and values (Merryfield, 2000).

Teacher preparation therefore, plays a crucial role in furthering multicultural education because teachers' beliefs and dispositions toward their students, pedagogy and curriculum greatly impact their professional behavior (Gay & Howard, 2000). Factors that appear to influence teachers' attitudes toward diversity and multicultural awareness include personal dispositions (Garmon, 2004), beliefs (Pohan, 1996), political ideologies (K.S. Cockrell, Placier, D.H. Cockrell, & Middleton, 1999) and experiences (Garmon, 2004; Smith, Moallem & Sherrill, 1997). Teachers consequently, need to reflect, interrogate and acknowledge their own attachments, beliefs and privileges because "the process of affirming the diversity of students begins first as a teacher's journey" (Nieto, 2000, p. 184). As such, proponents of multicultural education call for teacher education programs that deepen teachers' understanding of multicultural principles by combining study of multicultural theory with reflection on both diversity and identity. They contend that before teachers can recognize how issues such as race, ethnicity, culture and social-economic inequality influence the learning experiences and social and cultural realities of students, teachers must learn to ponder their own civic, cultural, linguistic or socio-economic attachments (T.C. Howard, 2004). Teachers must likewise clarify their roles in achieving a just and democratic society because achieving equality for all students is a fundamental tenet of multicultural education (Banks & Nguyen, 2008; T.C. Howard, 2003; Marri, 2005; Matthews and Dilworth, 2008; Miller-Lane, et al., 2007).

### **Context – Multi-racial Singapore**

Singapore dates its beginnings as a modern state with the arrival of the British East India Company in 1819. The establishment of the new colony spurred the immigration of large numbers of people from China, India and other Southeast Asian states in the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. After a short period of anti-colonial agitation, Singapore became fully independent in 1965. From its inception, Singapore, governed by the same political party, the People's Action Party, since 1965, has explicitly sought to pre-empt and address the challenges of building an "imagined community" (Anderson, 2003) from a diverse population largely consisting of first or second generation Asian immigrants. As the Minister of State for Education reminded the public in 2005, "When we achieved independence, many doubted our ability to survive, let alone thrive. We were a Third World country ... our mainly immigrant population had little sense of nationhood" (Chan, 2005, n.p.). Consequently, in an attempt to define the Singapore nation, the government has articulated several national "Shared Values" such as placing the "nation before community and society above self" and "consensus not conflict" (Parliament of Singapore, 199, n.p.). The state also provides explicit instruction on the desired social and moral behavior of national subjects so as to build a socially cohesive, economically competitive and resilient nation. The national social studies curriculum and textbooks, for example, constantly reiterate the importance of a citizen's responsibility to promote racial and religious harmony, social cohesion and meritocracy (Ho, 2009).

The Singapore state's approach to multiculturalism rests on a pluralist conception of multiculturalism (Ho, 2009). Given the heterogeneous nature of Singapore residents, Chinese (74.2%), Malays (13.4%), Indians (9.2%), and "Others" (3.2%) (Department of Statistics,

2010), public schools place great emphasis on the development of a common national identity premised on several state-defined governing principles such as racial equality and meritocracy. The state, however, has not explicitly addressed the position of foreign citizens who comprise 25% of the population of Singapore within this framework. The national secondary social studies curriculum, with its primary goal of promoting “a deep sense of shared destiny and national identity” and developing citizens who will “participate responsibly and sensibly in a multi-ethnic, multi-cultural and multi-religious society” (Singapore Ministry of Education, 2008, p. 3), clearly reflects this focus on national interest. The Singapore government has, on the other hand, sought to implement tight controls on public discourse and has aggressively attempted to resist the politicization of racial and religious issues through the use of legal controls such as the Sedition Act.

### **The Study**

To investigate Singapore social studies teachers’ conceptions of diversity, this study utilizes a qualitative instrumental case study framework (Creswell, 1998, 2003; Miles & Huberman, 1994; Stake, 1995). We conducted semi-structured hour-long individual interviews that were tape recorded with the participants’ permission. During the interviews, the participants answered a series of questions centering on their conceptions of diversity. These questions focused on how they defined diversity and their awareness of discrimination and inequality between different groups in Singapore (see Appendix). We focused on how the teachers’ positionality and personal experiences shaped their understanding of diversity and concepts such as power, privilege, and prejudice. Analysis was data-driven and inductive, guided by the notion of grounded theory and the constant comparative method (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). Using the qualitative software,

NVIVO 8, we classified and coded the raw data, searching for patterns and linkages.

The selection of cases was influenced by considerations of representation, balance, variety, and accessibility (Stake, 1995). The participants in this study consisted of three in-service secondary school teachers who were enrolled in a graduate level course at the only accredited teacher education institute in Singapore. These three participants, identified by their pseudonyms, represented a range of perspectives and experiences that was typical of social studies teachers in Singapore. All three teachers, Julie, Salim, and Rabiah, taught history and social studies. Salim was a Muslim male teacher with a Malay and Chinese background, Jennifer was a female Chinese teacher, and Rabiah was a female teacher with a Sinhalese and Chinese background but identified as a Malay Muslim. The next section provides brief sketches of the backgrounds and experiences of the three teachers.

Julie was the youngest and newest student in the graduate course. In her late twenties, she taught history and social studies for nearly four years at one of the top girls’ schools in Singapore before her promotion to department head at another school. Of Chinese ethnicity, Julie was surprisingly candid and open about her self-professed racist and pro-gay views. Interestingly, she described herself as “consciously racist,” although she pointed out that she does not discriminate in real life as “it’s just thoughts.” Citing a speaker from the Singapore Ministry of Foreign Affairs who stated that “every race is racist,” she gave an example of having a good Indian friend who was also racist. Julie described their relationship in the following manner, “We are both mutually racist but we are good friends.” Unlike Rabiah and Salim, Julie studied at elite state schools that were not racially or socio-economically diverse. Consequently, she had very few opportunities to interact with other non-Chinese students. This lack

of contact, compounded with her description of her family as “generally quite racist,” greatly shaped her interactions with, and perceptions of, her students and colleagues from the minority racial groups.

Rabiah, an articulate and thoughtful teacher in her mid-thirties, spoke very openly about her beliefs and perceptions, both during the interview and in class. She was the most experienced teacher among the three participants, with almost fifteen years of teaching history and social studies in two secondary schools. Rabiah described herself as “very mixed up” numerous times, not in a derogatory sense, but in a manner that suggested her willingness to accept different opinions. For example, she spoke of her background, “At home, I am very very flexible because my mum is Chinese and my father’s South Asian so ... we accept lots of things.” Rabiah’s understanding of her racial identity appeared more fluid compared to her peers because of her unusual background. Brought up as a Malay Muslim despite a South Asian-Chinese background, she continued to celebrate the Chinese New Year with her maternal relations. Interestingly, Rabiah also referred to how her academic background in history and Southeast Asian studies, as well as the different historical perspectives provided by her lecturers shaped her understanding of racial relations.

Salim, one of the most vocal and outspoken students in class, was, like Rabiah, of mixed ethnicity. A tall, assertive man in his early thirties whose looks reflected his Chinese-Malay heritage, he taught history and social studies at a parochial state school. Salim’s responses clearly demonstrated his consciousness about his racial background. As he pointed out, many people assumed that he spoke Mandarin, “I’ve got a lot of instances where people will speak to me in dialects, in Mandarin ... if I tell them that I’m mixed blood, they give me a very surprised look, like I’ve done something

wrong because I fail to fit in the mold.” Although a Muslim, he studied at a Catholic school until he was sixteen. A history and sociology major, Salim too, had a very keen interest in multicultural education, particularly with regard to issues affecting the Malay community. Influenced by critical scholars such as Michael Barr, he argued passionately that it was his role as a teacher to debunk stereotypes and problematize issues such as class and racial discrimination.

### Findings

From our analysis of the data, we identified three recursive themes: (1) the influence of state policies on conceptions of diversity and discrimination; (2) counter-narratives of diversity and discrimination; and (3) emergent and ambivalent perceptions of inequality.

#### *Theme one: The influence of state policies on conceptions of diversity and discrimination*

The participants’ conceptions of diversity and discrimination closely paralleled state policy and rhetoric, particularly in the privileging of issues pertaining to race, religion, and language. During the interviews, all three participants shared the state’s narrow emphasis on racial, linguistic, and religious diversity, with many of their responses focusing on race and religion. Julie constantly referred to the “four distinct races” during her interview while Rabiah described diversity in Singapore in the following manner, “The simple meaning is of course the different racial groups ... they speak different languages, they believe in different religions, and bring in their own cultures, habits, which is peculiar to them.” Similarly, both Salim and Julie made reference to the state’s differentiation of Singapore’s disparate population into four categories, Chinese, Malay, Indian, and “Others” (also commonly referred to as the CMIO model). As Salim pointed out, in

Singapore, “diversity is basically (referred to) in terms of the CMIO model.” The participants’ responses were also peppered with references to the key governing principles advocated by the Singapore government, such as meritocracy, racial harmony, and national unity.

In this respect, the teachers’ understanding of diversity closely mirrored numerous official state and curricular documents. The national pledge of allegiance, for example, begins with a statement that emphasizes what the state regards as the three most important elements of diversity in Singapore, “We the citizens of Singapore, pledge ourselves as one united people, regardless of race, language or religion ...” (Singapore Ministry of Education, 2007b, p. 134). The national social studies textbooks and the influential state-defined National Education messages characterize diversity and social cohesion in a similar manner: “We must preserve racial and religious harmony: We value our diversity, are determined to remain a united people” (Singapore Ministry of Education, 2007a, p. 1). These two statements, while discursively positioning all ethnic groups as equals and emphasizing “unity in diversity” (Bokhorst-Heng, 2007, p. 635), clearly privilege issues relating to race and religion. Other aspects of social diversity such as sexual orientation, gender, and disability, on the other hand, tend to be downplayed in government policy and are omitted from the social studies curriculum.

*Theme two: Counter-narratives of diversity and discrimination*

In spite of the influence of numerous national policies on the teachers’ understanding of diversity, particularly their focus on racial and religious issues, all three teachers, intriguingly, also offered numerous counter-narratives that were explicitly in opposition to the state’s official understanding of diversity. Salim and Rabiah, for instance, opposed the government’s claim of equal treatment for

all citizens. Based on their experiences teaching in regular non-elite schools, derogatorily termed “neighborhood” schools, they considered socio-economic class as a much greater source of inequity and discrimination compared to race and religion. To illustrate their point, both pointed out the disparity in family income between students attending the most popular and competitive elite state schools and “neighborhood” schools.

Salim also observed that this socio-economic gap had become significant *within* the different racial groups and argued that racial and religious divisions within Singapore society had become increasingly irrelevant,

Even in the communities themselves, there is also a widening gap between the better educated ones, the ones who have easy access to economic opportunities, as opposed to others. Within the Malay community, this gap is actually increasing ... and this is something that has been highlighted quite a number of times in the Malay media and even by the minister himself (Interview notes).

When asked whether certain groups had more power in Singapore, Rabiah described the marginalization of less privileged Singaporeans, “I definitely see the educated as more powerful. Whatever they have to say, people will listen ... if you are a nobody ... then it’s going to be quite difficult for people to accept it” (Interview notes).

A second counter-narrative offered by the participants focused primarily on how the discrimination faced by homosexuals or transsexuals in Singapore was not acknowledged by the state. Julie and Salim passionately objected to the discrimination faced by gays and transsexuals in Singapore. Their opinions, largely shaped by their own experiences and their

personal friendships, were at odds with the state's position. As Salim pointed out, sexual affiliation is "a taboo area in Singapore." He also expressed his uneasiness with regard to the state's overt bias against homosexuals,

Most of them will take on very menial jobs, probably as social escorts, entertainers, singers, something related to entertainment, to see any one of them holding managerial positions in corporate sectors, it's unthinkable ... (even) if they have the talent and the ability in terms of their merits... what are their chances of being accepted (Interview notes)?

Julie was particularly vocal in her criticisms of government policy when describing how her friend, who was undergoing a sex change procedure, was not offered a job in the civil service because of her sexual orientation. She argued that "there's no meritocracy" for gays in Singapore because many Singaporeans think that "gays are not right ... something is wrong with them psychologically, like it is a mental disease kind of thing."

Finally, Julie offered an alternative definition of diversity, one that incorporated the experiences of foreigners in Singapore. Julie defined diversity in the Singapore context thusly, "In the past, it meant the four different races ... now I would see it as a melting pot of a lot of expatriates." Interestingly, she contrasted the privileged position of White expatriates in Singapore and the prejudice faced by foreigners from China. She explained that Singaporeans, the majority of whom were ethnic Chinese, were prejudiced against Chinese nationals and considered them inferior because "they don't take up the most glamorous of jobs,"

are seen as uncouth, and the women, perceived as "husband snatchers." Citing her own experience, Julie then described how expatriate teachers were accorded more respect than Singaporean teachers in local schools: "It seems that their views are more taken into account at work. Whenever they voice something, people listen but actually it's the same thing as what maybe a Singaporean has already pointed out. I find that quite amazing." This, Julie attributed to the lingering colonial-era attitudes held by the less educated and older Singaporeans, pointing out that "the less educated Singaporeans are more afraid of the Caucasians (because) they seem to hold them in greater reverence."

*Theme three: Emergent and ambivalent perceptions of inequality*

The participants' complex and occasionally contradictory responses also reflected the multiple personal, social, and political influences on their understanding of diversity and discrimination. This reflection also appeared indicative of the inherent tensions between their own identities, lived experiences, and official state policy. Rabiah's position on the state's official policy of meritocracy, for instance, was particularly conflicted. On the one hand, she expressed confidence in the Singapore government's policy of advancement by merit, describing it as a policy that treated all citizens equally and was "blind to individual and group differences" (Young, 1989, p. 250). She cited her own personal experience of overcoming poverty as an example to demonstrate that success in the Singapore context was to work hard and make personal sacrifices:

I don't see much of discrimination ... I have this mentality that as long as you work hard, everything will be there for you... my parents are not well-to-do, so my father

had to have two jobs to make up for the need, send us to school and everything. So on our part, we worked hard (Interview notes).

Elaborating further, Rabiah highlighted several state structures set up to assist the less privileged such as Mendaki, an organization focused on helping the Malay community and reiterated the need for an individual to be industrious, "It's just a matter of whether you want it, that you want to improve yourself."

This position shared much in common with the concept of meritocracy, one of the key cornerstones of Singapore's state ideology. This goal is also clearly articulated in the national social studies curriculum and in the citizenship education program, "We must uphold meritocracy and incorruptibility: This means opportunity for all, according to their ability and effort" (Singapore Ministry of Education, 2007a, p. 1). Interestingly, this position is very similar to the common American perception that U.S. schools were supposed to level the playing field by "providing opportunity for all, regardless of social background, by serving as the impartial ground on which individuals freely prove their merit" (Villegas & Lucas, 2002, p. 22). Rabiah, however, substantially contradicted her original position toward the end of the interview. Citing her own personal experiences, she suggested that in Singapore, Chinese speakers were in an advantageous economic position, "Chinese will bring you more opportunities (and) jobs." Continuing her argument, she ranked the relative importance of the three native languages of Singapore, "in Singapore, I always see it as layers, Chinese will go first, then Malays, then Tamils, so it's always in that position. So I guess it's a form of discrimination" (Interview notes).

Interestingly, Salim's positions with regard to racial diversity and discrimination in Singapore were similarly ambivalent. His uncertain views of the

dominant source of inequality in Singapore surfaced throughout the interview. When asked whether there was inequality between different groups in Singapore, he referred explicitly to the advantages accorded to the Chinese majority in Singapore:

Yes. I will not mince my words on that part ... In terms of access to resources especially in this economic downturn period, different ethnic groups are accorded different amounts of help. Not just from the government, but from the society at large ... For example, when we look at employment opportunities ... there's always a tendency that these individuals come from a particular ethnic group, which would be the Chinese (Interview notes).

Immediately after making this assertion, Salim, paradoxically reiterating the state's official position, argued that the racial divide was becoming far less salient in Singapore:

These days, it's not longer that clear, the racial divide, unlike back in the 50s and 60s, it was very easy to play the racial card then. But not now, now it's more of socio-economic issues, class ... not only are the Malay students who are more likely to face a lot of obstacles because of their family background, because of their lack of access to resources, but even my other Chinese students are in the same predicament because of their socio-economic background ... That's an indicator to show that they come from different socio-economic background, and

this is something that does not depend on your ethnicity at all (Interview notes).

Yet, referring to the work of scholars such as Michael Barr and Lily Zubaidah Rahim, he then subsequently proceeded to contradict his previous statement by explaining in great detail how Malays in Singapore were systematically marginalized educationally and economically by the Chinese majority.

Despite Julie's explicit objection to the discrimination faced by gays in Singapore, she appeared ambivalent about the existence of institutional and societal discrimination against members of ethnic minorities, such as the Malays. Citing the example the domination of ethnic Chinese in the Singapore Cabinet, Julie seemed to recognize that the ethnic minority "might feel that they are disadvantaged." This reaction, she pointed out, was due to the fact that "it's easier for Chinese to integrate in political groups because of a racial similarity." Almost immediately, however, she proceeded to question the will and ambition of the Malays in Singapore, "Is it that they don't want (the position in the Cabinet) or is it not happening to them because they see that, oh there's a glass ceiling?" This position, ironically, reflected the Singapore state's position on meritocracy which implicitly attributes an individual's lack of success and achievement to an absence of will or talent. Such policy is clearly reflected in the official social studies textbook used by all secondary students in Singapore that conceptualizes meritocracy as giving everybody "an equal opportunity to achieve their best and be rewarded for their performance, regardless of race, religion and socio-economic background" (Singapore Ministry of Education, 2007b, p. 31).

To conclude, in spite of the Singapore state's narrow definition of diversity and assumptions of meritocracy, the participants were both conscious and highly critical of instances of inequality

and discrimination in Singapore society. When referring to members of groups who were, from their own personal experiences, unacknowledged and marginalized by the state, Rabiah, Salim, and Julie adopted positions that contradicted mainstream political discourse and spoke of the inherent contradiction between a political system that advocated universal equal treatment for all but systemically discriminated against particular groups. As members of minority racial groups, both Rabiah and Salim appeared to encounter substantial difficulties in reconciling their own personal beliefs and experiences with official state policies, possibly contributing to the logical inconsistencies and gaps in their arguments. The teachers' contradictory perceptions of diversity and inequality also serve to illustrate some of the issues that teachers in Singapore face in reconciling state policies and their lived experiences.

### **Discussion and Conclusion**

The three predominating themes which capture teachers' conceptions of diversity and discrimination, as well as their perceptions of inequality and social structures point to the manner in which Singaporean social studies teachers' perceptions are both influenced by state policies and are reflective of multicultural principles culled from personal experiences. In this section, we discuss findings in light of previous research and the Singaporean context. We conclude the study by forwarding suggestions for multicultural education teacher preparation.

Previous studies clearly demonstrate the impact of teachers' experiences, beliefs and multicultural knowledge on their professional behavior and decision-making. Pohan (1996), for example, found a strong positive correlation between a teacher's personal and professional beliefs. Political ideologies and beliefs about the

roles of schools and teachers, in addition, affect teachers' positions on diversity and multiculturalism (K.S. Cockrell et al., 1999). Likewise, a teacher's personal dispositions such as openness, self awareness, and sense of social justice can influence her conceptions of diversity (Garmon, 2004). Experiential factors, such as education, personal experiences of discrimination, and working with supportive group members also help shape teachers' multicultural understanding and development (Garmon, 2004; Smith et al., 1997).

The results of our study suggest a particularly interesting point that may be worthy of further exploration. Apart from the dispositional and experiential factors that influence both preservice and inservice teachers' sensitivity to diversity, our study indicates that state policy and narratives also play a significant role in influencing the Singapore social studies teachers' understanding of multicultural issues. The close relationship between all three participants' conceptions of diversity to state policy and rhetoric manifested in both policy documents and the national social studies curriculum is clearly reflected in the similar emphasis accorded to racial and religious issues. While the participants appeared familiar with the different cultural values and particularities of the different ethnic groups, none of the teachers, however, challenged the metanarrative of the development of Singapore history and culture. None of the participants demonstrated an understanding of the role of the Singapore state in constructing and validating identity groups, including their own. Their cultural diversity knowledge base remained largely confined to a simplistic understanding of diversity, closely mirroring the Singapore state's approach that focuses primarily on surface culture. Finally, the teachers faced numerous challenges in trying to reconcile their

personal identities, beliefs, and experiences with the state policies and narratives that dominate the centralized Singapore education system.

This finding holds implications for multicultural teacher education and suggests that for teacher education to be more effective, it is important for teacher educators, particularly within the social studies, to both be conscious of, and explicitly address, systemic and policy issues. Reform in teacher education is particularly constrained by the narrow influence wielded by multicultural education advocates (Berliner, 2005; Gay, 2005). Beyond efforts at the individual and school levels, transformative multicultural education hinges on "systemic changes...that affect policies, programs, personnel, pedagogy, and power" (Gay, 2005, p. 223). These concerns echo scholars' observations that, especially within societies with predominant separatist or assimilationist philosophies, teachers' enactment of multicultural education is limited by the lack of supportive curricular guidelines, administrative direction, assessment policies, or textbooks (Gay, 2005; Gay & T.C. Howard, 2000).

To conclude, as teacher educators ourselves, we feel that social studies teachers have a moral obligation to ensure greater equity in education by acting as "agents of change" (Villegas & Lucas, 2002, p. 24). As change agents, teachers should recognize how political and social structures help to reproduce societal inequities (Sleeter & Grant, 1991; Sleeter & McLaren, 1995) and develop a cultural diversity knowledge base (Gay, 2002) because teachers cannot teach what they do not know (G. R. Howard, 2006). Thus, this study's explication of the impact of factors such as national policies on Singapore social studies teachers' beliefs and understanding of diversity will contribute to international efforts in understanding how best to foster transformative classrooms and help

teachers develop the capabilities and dispositions necessary for the preparation of students for democratic living in an inclusive global multicultural society.

## **Appendix**

### Interview Protocol

1. Singapore has frequently been characterized as a diverse society. What does diversity mean in the context of Singapore society?
2. Is there equality between different groups? Do any of these groups experience discrimination? Do certain groups have more power than others? Why? Give examples.
3. What factors have influenced your understanding of diversity and multicultural education? What has helped shape your perspectives of individuals from different groups or backgrounds?
4. How important are issues of race, diversity and multicultural education to you? Why?

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