

“This Is What Social Studies Can Look Like”: Adapting Recent Work in Singapore Studies for The SS Classroom

Pang Wei Han

Raffles Institution (Singapore)

Hard at Work: Life in Singapore. Edited by Gerard Sasges and Ng Shi Wen. Foreword by Teo You Yenn. Singapore: National University of Singapore Press, 2019.

They Told Us to Move: Dakota - Cassia. Edited by Ng Kok Hoe and The Cassia Resettlement Team. Singapore: Ethos Books, 2019.

Eating Chilli Crab in the Anthropocene: Environmental Perspectives on Life in Singapore. Edited by Matthew Schneider-Mayerson. Singapore: Ethos Books, 2020.

According to the Upper Secondary (Express/Normal Academic) Social Studies Teaching and Learning Guide, dynamic content “refers to knowledge needed for students to amplify and deepen their understanding of the core content” and “can take the form of examples found in the Coursebook, or can be examples derived from discussions and explorations students undertake in school and outside of school” (Ministry of Education, 2015, p. 12). This review article was conceptualised with the intention of supporting Social Studies educators by supplementing their toolkit of dynamic content and sources. In addition to presenting an overview of three recently-published texts in the field of Singapore Studies, I will draw linkages with key concepts in the SS curriculum and suggest potential pedagogical approaches to leveraging these texts in the classroom. In keeping with the renewed emphasis on Character and Citizenship Education (CCE), I also remark on how the texts can tie in with various CCE strands, including Values-in-Action, Education and Career Guidance, and discussion of contemporary

issues.

The first of these texts is titled *Hard at Work*. By telling the “mundane reality of what people do to make a living” (p. xxiv), the volume presents extraordinary insight into the “wide-ranging story” (p. xxi) of Singaporeans’ lived experiences. *Hard at Work* provides a counter-narrative to state-centric accounts of Singapore’s development, in which the developmental state’s policies and leaders are valorised. Instead, *Hard at Work* tell the stories of ordinary people who, by working “more than residents of any other OECD country” (p. xx), contribute their labour to nation-building.¹

To this end, the collection features sixty interviews with individuals from a diversity of occupations in Singapore society. Conducted between 2014 and 2017 by undergraduate students from Sasges’s sociology course at the National University of Singapore, these interviews are organised and curated into thirteen thematic chapters, ranging from “Caring” to

“Learning” and “Recycling and Cleaning”. The intentional commitment to diversity shines through in the stories that *Hard at Work* has elected to tell, which include “more visible occupations” (p. xxi) such as teacher, doctor and hawker as well as “less obvious ones” (p. xxi) such as tattoo artist, funeral director and drag performer, and even occupations in the informal economy, such as bet collector, academic ghostwriter and Thai disco singer.

Instead of presenting each interview as a transcript, *Hard at Work* intentionally stitches them together to form a first-person monologue, as if the interlocutors “were talking directly to the reader” (p. xxi). The book also omits academic analysis and reflective commentary, and thus places the interviewees’ experiences at the centre of the work. This in turn allows the reader to form their own conclusions from the ethnographic data in the text. For SS teachers, the vignettes in *Hard at Work* can be shaped into authentic sources for students to engage with. The first-person narrative and jargon-free style ensures that the sources will be accessible and age-appropriate for most learners.

The interviews under the theme of “Protecting” most directly respond to Guiding Question 3 in Issue 1 of the SS curriculum, which focuses on the “role of government in working for the good of society” (Ministry of Education, 2015, p. 16). A police officer shares the emotional labour of working to protect victims of domestic violence, child abuse and suicide, as well as the trauma that results: “Even after you finish your shift you still think about this child and you ask yourself, ‘Did I do enough? Did I do it right?’ ” (p. 245). Despite the toll on mental health, the police officer shares that many other officers “just lie” (p. 246) during mental health evaluations, because “they need their salary for their families” (p. 247). By engaging

with this perspective, students gain deeper insight into the painstaking work that goes behind maintaining internal order and ensuring justice for the residents of Singapore (Ministry of Education, 2015, p. 16).

Given the range of occupations featured in *Hard at Work*, teachers may also draw on the resource to teach Issue 2, Living in a Diverse Society. Socio-cultural and socio-economic diversity manifest in two main ways in the text. First, the stories provide insight into how race and religion influence lived experience. For example, the Wedding Groomer shares the impact of religious rituals in wedding ceremonies. Interestingly, he highlights how the rituals that he practices were originally “a Hindu tradition” but has now transformed into the “Islam way” (p. 320), revealing evidence of cultural exchange and hybridisation in Singapore. Many vignettes also discuss the impact of race on interactions in the workplace. For instance, the Investigation Officer shares that his department is predominantly Chinese, which compels him to assimilate by learning how to speak Mandarin (p. 255). He expresses his displeasure when his colleagues assume that “all Malays should be the same” (p. 257), treating him as “the token Malay” (p. 257) to answer questions about Islam. Similarly, the Student Care Teacher notices the “tension between Malay and Chinese” (p. 176) colleagues at the student care centre, leading her to conclude that “the Chinese people here don’t...actually like the Malays” (p. 176).

Second, the text also discusses the impact of nationality on experiences of work. The vulnerability of Suryanti, a 39-year-old Indonesian domestic helper, is captured in her account of a former employer who “was fierce like a lion” and constantly “scream[ed] at [her] until the whole block can hear” (p. 144). Further,

some of her employers “don’t give [her] enough food” (p. 144) or expect her to “buy [groceries] using [her] own money” (p. 145). The Bus Captain, who travels daily to and from Johor Bahru, expressed his frustration at the two- or three-hour traffic jams along the Causeway. The fatigue compounds the intensity of long driving hours and the management’s demands for punctuality, which creates a stressful and potentially unsafe work environment for the Bus Captain. The vulnerabilities and challenges of these “lower-skilled” migrants stand in stark contrast to the comfort and luxury of the expatriate community in Singapore. The Stay-At-Home Father highlights the “relocation package” (p. 155) that his wife’s job entitled her to, which includes sponsored condominium rental. To that end, he notes that as expats, they “certainly have a higher quality of life than [they] did in London” (p. 157). Similarly, the Paralegal notes that her expatriate bosses’ relocation packages include rentals in penthouses and international school fees for their children, as well as business class flights back to their home countries (pp. 280-1). In discussing the influx of immigrants into Singapore as well as the resultant impacts on socio-economic diversity, these accounts can deepen students’ understanding of inequality in Singapore as intersectional.

Finally, the stories in *Hard at Work* reflect the complexities of globalisation, which forms the thrust of Issue 3 of the SS curriculum. Educators could utilise the interviews to develop nuance in how students understand the driving forces of globalisation. For example, the Aircraft Maintenance Engineer’s work in ensuring the flight-readiness of airplanes (pp. 215 - 219) as well as the Able-bodied Crew Member’s work on the ferry (pp. 219 - 225) empowers the movement of people and goods across international boundaries, thus facilitating the interconnections and

interdependencies that define globalisation. In addition to telling the stories of the Maid or the Thai Disco Singer, who move across boundaries to work in Singapore, *Hard at Work* also discusses the work of the middlemen, such as the Hostess Agent, who hires Thai women and facilitates their travel into Singapore to work in discos (pp. 266 - 273). This emphasis on the agents of globalisation gives abstract and impersonal economic concepts a human face.

With its varied content, *Hard at Work* presents opportunities for differentiated instruction, by presenting meaningful choices for students to engage with stories that are “of genuine interest to them” (Tomlinson, 2001, p. 52). For example, in discussing the influence of race on the lived experiences of workers in Singapore, students could choose from the experiences of the Police Officer, the Investigation Officer, the Barber, the Tennis Coach, the MRT Station Usher and the Student Care Teacher. One of Tomlinson’s suggested strategies to differentiate content by interest—the Interest Center—could be applied (Tomlinson, 2001, p. 54). Students could select the occupation that they are interested in and embark on an inquiry to learn more about how aspects of identity (race, religion, nationality, or gender) influence the experiences of someone working in a specific role. Students can also extend their interest by applying these concepts to other contexts. For example, a meaningful extension might be to encourage students to interview someone who works in the particular field that the student is interested in to write up a mini ethnography. Using *Hard at Work* as a model for social inquiry, students could embark on a meaningful and differentiated Issues Investigation experience.

Beyond the SS curriculum, *Hard at Work* could also inform teachers in programme design for Education and

Career Guidance. The interviews in the volume allow students to gain deeper insights into the world of work. For example, the physical and emotional burnout experienced by the Doctor (pp. 298 - 303) and the Nurse (pp. 303 - 309) can allow students to better understand the challenges faced by healthcare workers. Students will also be exposed to unorthodox career trajectories, such as that of the Tattoo Artist (pp. 324 - 331) or the Wedding Groomer (pp. 318 - 324). In both these interviews, the interlocutors shared the importance of connections with mentors who taught them the skills needed to thrive in their careers. In this way, students will better understand the requirements to enter various industries. Ultimately, by exposing students to the challenges, successes and struggles of people in different parts of Singapore society, *Hard at Work* enables students to reflect on their own personal futures, even as they grow into empathetic citizens.

Whereas *Hard at Work* uses the workplace to explore various social issues, *They Told Us to Move* centres home as a site of contestation. The volume relates the aftermath of a government decision to redevelop Dakota Crescent. Residents, many of whom were elderly Singaporeans living in rental flats, were notified in 2014 that they had two years to resettle to the nearby neighbourhood of Cassia Crescent. In the volume, readers bear witness to the emotional, logistical and financial challenges arising from this resettlement exercise. Readers also learn about the process through the lens of the Cassia Resettlement Team (CRT), a group of volunteers dedicated to supporting the Dakota residents in their transition between these two spaces. These volunteers not only served the residents by cleaning their homes or accompanying them on doctor appointments, but also helped to advocate for their needs by “work[ing] closely with

public agencies to highlight the personal circumstances and institutional barriers that residents face” (p. 14). By offering a ground-up perspective on the experiences of Dakota residents, *They Told Us to Move* forges deeper nuance and insight into Singapore’s narrative of development.

The collection features nine interviews with residents of Dakota Crescent and others who are deeply rooted in the community, such as Roger Neo (or Ah Leong, as the residents fondly address him), the Centre Manager for Tung Ling Community Services in Dakota. The interviews reveal the resettlement exercise to be bittersweet. Residents expressed grief and sadness towards the loss of their existing social connections and bonds with their neighbours, as well as a sense of helplessness in the face of inevitable state action. At the same time, they were quietly hopeful that the move would bring a better living environment.

Each interview is accompanied by a reflective essay, written by the CRT volunteer who had befriended and collaborated with that resident. In their reflections, the CRT volunteers vulnerably articulate the emotions they experienced during their time working with the Dakota residents. Their heartfelt desire to serve and connect shines through amidst the bubbling frustrations of the residents. Additionally, the volunteers also provide insight into how informal social support networks (such as CRT or Roger’s Tung Ling Community Services) supplement the rigid institutions of formal government support programmes.

Each chapter of *They Told Us to Move* ends with an analytical essay by academics from “diverse fields spanning sociology, anthropology, gerontology, social policy, public administration, history, architecture and cultural studies” (p. 3). These academic responses help to locate the lived

experiences of the Dakota residents in the larger contexts and discourses of inequality and social justice in Singapore.

For SS teachers and students, *They Told Us to Move* captures the core concepts of trade-offs and citizenship in Issue 1: Exploring Citizenship and Governance. By appreciating the experiences of the Dakota Crescent residents, students can deepen their understanding about the impact and consequences of every government decision. This allows students to authentically appreciate the diverse perspectives of the stakeholders who are disproportionately affected by these choices. For Izzah, a “proud mother of five children” (p. 19), the relocation not only meant that her family would “leave [their] old memory” behind (p. 25), but also meant that her children will lose the open spaces where they can “run around” and be “like kampong kids” (p. 21). The decrease in the size of apartments from the Dakota Crescent to Cassia Crescent meant that the elderly Peng had to throw away many of her belongings, which “really breaks [her] heart” (p. 72). More heartrendingly, Peng questions if she should be sent to Sabah and thrown away (p. 72). For 90-year-old Tong, the relocation meant a loss of independence since he “can’t manage it [him]self” (p. 95). Not only did he require “help from the charity” (p. 96) to make the move, he articulated a deep fear of falling because of the “change of environment” (p. 96) and loss of the familiarity of Dakota Crescent. The lived experiences of the stakeholders in Dakota Crescent bring nuance and depth to our understanding of the challenges in making decisions for the good of society.

Further, *They Told Us to Move* reveals the limits to which citizens can “influence government decisions” (Ministry of Education, 2015, p. 16). When asked about her understanding of the reasons behind the relocation, 71-year-old Wan simply

concludes that:

The government says they are going to redevelop this area, so they are asking us to move. They want to make other changes to this area, so we have no choice but to move. What can you say? Cannot say anything right? As long as they give you a place to stay, you should be happy. (p. 172)

This sense of helplessness and the inability to influence the government’s decision is echoed by Chin, who tells the interviewer:

Of course I can’t bear to leave. But what can we do? They told us to move, so we have no choice. Who are we? They are the government? What are we, what can we say? There is nothing to say. (pp. 45-6)

While many of the elderly Dakota residents felt disempowered to influence governmental decisions, individuals with greater cultural capital were able to speak up for the conservation of Dakota Crescent. Bilyy Koh—who had lived abroad for more than a decade and experienced other countries’ efforts to preserve their intangible cultural heritage—launched the Dakota Adventures fortnightly trail to raise awareness about the “value of heritage,” so that the government will reconsider their decision because “belonging is always very important to the citizen and that gives us a pride to be a Singaporean” (p. 200). Similarly, the Save Dakota campaign, started in 2014 by architect Jonathan Poh, drew up a “redevelopment proposal that factored in the preservation of some of the landmarks in the estate” and pitched it to the local Member of Parliament (p. 214). Students can reflect on how a person’s social and cultural capital might empower them to have more influence on governmental decisions, and consider how

Singapore can grow to become more inclusive of the voices of the vulnerable.

Finally, *They Told Us to Move* provides students with a case study of how individuals can form organised groups to contribute to the needs of society. The Cassia Resettlement Team's reflections reveal the struggles and challenges that they faced, as well as their determination to serve the Dakota Crescent community. In her reflection, young Junior College graduate Vanessa Lim describes how she has learned to move beyond seeing elderly people as merely those "who need help" in order to appreciate how they are "tenacious, lively, and constantly strive to be self-dependent" (p. 58). Similarly, having spent time building trust with the Dakota Crescent residents, Jingzhou does not see the residents as "clients" or "beneficiaries", but as friends who "care and love one another deeply" and as "social creatures who seek dignity and meaning in life" (p. 32). As she reflects on the challenges of working with Mano, "the hard-to-love resident [she] still love[s] anyway", Sammie concludes that "service is not just about responsibility and should also stem from love" (p. 235). To that end, the volunteers at CRT "simply push the boundaries of what [they] can and cannot do, challenging [them]selves to meet new challenges and navigate new systems [they] encounter along the way" (p. 235).

From a pedagogical perspective, the structure of the book allows for differentiation of content according to students' readiness and interest. The interview transcripts are lightly edited to "preserve the original voices" (p. 2) of the Dakota Crescent residents and are thus easily accessible to students who might have weaker language abilities. In contrast, the academic essays, if reproduced directly as sources for student consumption, would be suited for students who are reading at a

higher level.

Given the current Covid-19 pandemic and the Ministry's strategic shift towards the implementation of e-pedagogy (MOE, 2020), *They Told Us to Move* also serves as a powerful resource because of its potential to be incorporated in blended learning. *They Told Us to Move* can be taught together with *Between Two Homes*, a digital exhibition that sought to record the histories and memories of Dakota Crescent. The *Between Two Homes* exhibition begins with an imaginative exercise, prompting students to step into the perspective of the Dakota Crescent residents. An interactive map of Dakota Crescent presents students with photos, videos, and soundscapes of everyday life in the community. Following that, students receive HDB's letter notifying them of the impending relocation, and thus have to make one of three choices: to rent at Cassia Crescent, to buy a flat at Cassia Crescent, or to relocate elsewhere. This sets the context for students before they engage with the stories of the residents (told through photographs and videos).

Figure 1 Empathy and imagination exercise on *betweentwohomes.sg*.



Figure 2 Interactive map on *betweentwohomes.sg*.



Beyond the SS curriculum, *They Told Us to Move* would be valuable for teachers planning and executing VIA programmes. The volunteer reflections could allow students to gain a deeper insight into the realities of serving different communities. Importantly, the CRT volunteers work not only to care for the elderly residents of Dakota Crescent; they also hope to “transform the world we live in through acting together with others”, forming a “public demand for social and political transformation, and in it a different promise of community and the future to come” (p. 108). By taking on a broader perspective to their volunteering efforts, students see that they have the power to imagine and create a more caring and inclusive society. These reflections are empowering and inspiring, and students will do well to engage in such conversations in their own VIA projects.

While *Hard at Work* and *They Told Us to Move* both hone in on the built and human environment, *Eating Chili Crab in the Anthropocene* presents twelve essays (written by university students) about Singapore’s relationship with the natural environment. This collection represents a critique towards the outdated view of the environment as “external, distant, beautiful, boring and seemingly irrelevant to our day-to-day lives” (p. 10) and environmentalism as “an optional, niche interest that one can choose to enjoy, or not” (p. 10). Through their work, Schneider-Mayerson and his

students hope to show that “everything is environmental” (p. 10), where seemingly disparate fields, such as trade, education, and health, are connected to and intersecting with the environment. *Eating Chili Crab in the Anthropocene* is groundbreaking in its attempt to analyse Singapore’s relationship with the environment through this humanistic lens, employing approaches from history, philosophy, and cultural studies to understand the deeper desires, values and priorities that undergird Singapore’s policies and systems. By revealing these insights, the authors present alternative viewpoints in response to Singapore’s developmental narratives and invite readers to create a different future for Singapore.

Although the essays are not overtly arranged or organised in any particular manner, *Eating Chili Crab in the Anthropocene* can broadly be divided into three themes. The first group of essays discusses how Singaporeans interact with the diversity of non-human lives on the island. This includes the Sri Lankan mud crabs (more famously known as the Chili Crab), Asian small-clawed otters, long-tailed macaques and the ubiquitous Javan mynahs. The second group of essays examines the forces that have led to Singapore’s growth and development and brings to light heretofore hidden costs and undisclosed trade-offs. These include Fu Xiyao’s essay on the displacement of the Orang Laut community to build Semakau landfill as well as Sarah Novak’s research on Singapore’s importation of sand from neighbouring countries and the resulting environmental harm. Finally, the third group looks towards the future and articulates their vision, that “another garden city is possible” (p. 241). From rethinking aviation to decarbonising the economy to reimagining education, this final series of essays prompts readers to reimagine the future and to take steps towards its

actualisation.

Incorporating *Eating chili crab in the Anthropocene* in the SS classroom might require educators to modify the essays to suit the readiness levels of their students. That said, three specific essays resonate strongly with the SS syllabus and could be adapted for engaging and meaningful discussions in the classroom.

First, Fu Xiyao's "Dumpster Diving in Semakau: Retrieving Indigenous Histories from Singapore's Waste Island" presents an interesting case study of trade-offs created by Singapore's economic development. Fu argues that the construction of Semakau landfill, necessitated by Singapore's consumerist culture, came at the expense of the Orang Laut who lived in the islands of Pulau Semakau and Pulau Seking. To Singaporean students, the Orang Laut should be familiar as they feature in the Secondary 1 History syllabus. As indigenous sea nomads, the Orang Laut played a significant role in the development of Temasek in the 14th century, using their place-based knowledge to navigate the seas and facilitate trade. Fu laments that the forcible relocation of the Orang Laut "terminated the indigenous islanders' intergenerational memory of living at sea" (p. 102). Fu's research reveals "the richness of local history" in these indigenous communities as well as the "grief of loss" that they experienced due to these forced relocations. As former Nominated Member of Parliament and co-director of the play *Tanah • Air*, Kok Heng Leun, says, "If it were me, I would be angry forever, deeply hurt" (p. 105). The trade-offs for the Orang Laut are articulated clearly and painfully by Fu:

In 1993, Minister for the Environment Mah Bow Tan announced the plan for the gargantuan landfill complex. Dr. Kanwaljit Soin, the first female

Nominated Member of Parliament, appealed to the government to save Pulau Seking from obliteration. She highlighted that the island preserved Singapore's cultural heritage from before colonisation. The government rejected her appeal, citing the additional \$130 million that would be needed to change its landfill plan. (p. 103)

On the surface, the trade-off presents as a choice between economic development and the conservation of cultural heritage for the Orang Laut. However, Fu argues that the larger trade-off lies between the logics of capitalist consumption and the indigenous community's knowledge and connection with natural world. It is in the light of this brutal trade-off, which has led to the "history of the indigenous islanders...[being] erased by the construction of Semakau landfill", that she "grieved for the environmental, social and cultural losses in the name of development" (p. 115). This deeper history of the Orang Laut and their displacement is an integral part of the story Semakau landfill. Before bringing students on their next Learning Journey to visit Semakau landfill, teachers would do well to read this chapter and provide their students with the island's larger historical and cultural contexts.

Secondly, Lee Jin Hee's "Javan Mynahs, "Invasive" Species and Belonging in Singapore" presents an opportunity to expand students' understanding of xenophobia. Lee argues that the Javan mynah's status as an "invasive" species provides a convenient justification for the Agri-food and Veterinary Authority (AVA) to "set giant net traps to capture and 'humanely euthanise' the mynahs with carbon dioxide" (p. 139). Lee questions if the AVA would resort to euthanising Javan mynahs because of noise complaints by residents if they were considered "native" birds. To that end, Lee challenges the false

dichotomy of “native” and “invasive” species since “ecosystems are dynamic and constantly changing” (p. 142) and especially because many ecosystems in Singapore, such as the reservoirs, reclaimed land, and built-up areas are themselves “artificially engineered environments” (p. 143). Lee concludes that “there is nothing ‘natural’ about determining what can legitimately belong or not” since these boundaries of “belonging” are socially constructed (p. 145) and often used to justify the exclusion and elimination of certain groups. Lee parallels this fear of the “invasive” Javan mynah to the rise of xenophobia both in Singapore and around the world. She points out the irony that “Singapore, a country largely made up of the descendants of immigrants, seems to harbour a fear of foreigners” (p. 149) but also acknowledges that this “sense of vulnerability” and “ideology of survival” have been a crucial part of the construction of Singapore’s national identity (p. 149). By exposing our students to Lee’s essay, we prompt them to reflect on their understanding of what it means to belong (our national identity) and what it means to exclude (our rising xenophobia and fear of the other).

Third, Sarah Novak’s “To Build a City-State and Erode History: Sand and the Construction of Singapore” illuminates the forces of globalisation. Novak describes the importance of sand in Singapore’s development. Sand is a crucial element in the building of skyscrapers in the Central Business District and HDB buildings in the heartlands. Sand is also essential for land reclamation, which has helped Singapore grow from 590 square kilometres before independence to over 720 in 2017. The crux of Novak’s argument—and its resonance with Issue 3’s core concern around the uneven impacts of globalisation—stems from the source of the sand. “Whose sand am I standing on” she asks, “and what were

the ecological and social costs of bringing it here” (p. 69). Although exact numbers are unreported, Novak’s research has revealed that Singapore has historically imported sand from Malaysia and Indonesia; more recently, we have imported sand from Cambodia, Vietnam, Myanmar, and the Philippines (p. 69). The sand mining activities in these areas have created existential threats for the communities living there. As Novak puts it, “sand mining is a zero-sum game: in order to gain it, someone else has to lose it” (p. 69). It is a trade-off on a globalised scale: Singapore’s development comes at the cost of environmental destruction and displacement for our Southeast Asian neighbours. Yet, the global nature of this trade-off renders it distant and invisible for Singaporeans.

In adapting *Eating Chili Crab in the Anthropocene* as dynamic content for the Social Studies syllabus, I would recommend the use of experiential learning to spark curiosity and deepen the authenticity of our students’ inquiry. Many schools already organise learning journeys to the Semakau landfill, and that experience can be framed through the broader historical context of the Orang Laut. This learning journey could be paired with Zero Waste experiments (in which students consciously minimise waste and compete by seeing who produces the least amount of waste in a week) so that students can appreciate how much they consume. Due to the ubiquity of Javan mynahs, students will have no difficulty participating in observations of the Javan mynahs in HDB blocks and hawker centres. By taking note of their behaviours and the interaction between humans and these “invasive” species, students can draw deeper insights into ideas of belonging and othering. Finally, the opportunity to visit Singapore’s beaches (possibly as part of VIA projects such as beach clean-ups) offers students a

chance to physically interact with the powerful resource of sand. By posing the same question that Sarah Novak asks, “whose sand am I standing on?” the teacher can lead students to think critically about their environment.

For CCE teachers looking to engage students in discussions of contemporary issues, *Eating Chili Crab in the Anthropocene* would come highly recommended. Nationally, PM Lee’s National Day Rally speech in 2019 placed the climate crisis in mainstream public discourse. As more students learn about the impending existential threat posed by the climate crisis, *Eating Chili Crab in the Anthropocene* adds value to their learning by articulating different perspectives and cultural contexts, which teachers can utilise to deepen students’ understanding of the issue and sharpen their approach to enacting change. A teacher who reads *Eating Chili Crab in the Anthropocene* would empower students to go beyond the traditional 3Rs (reduce-reuse-recycle) and imagine new ways of living and being that can transform society as we know it. Further, with the rise of eco-anxiety and eco-grief amongst the younger generation (i.e. a sense of sadness or fear towards the climate crisis), teachers can point to *Eating Chili Crab in the Anthropocene* as a manifestation of community and solidarity.

It is my hope that by exposing our students to the stories, experiences and wisdom encapsulated in the three texts reviewed in this article, we can better prepare them to become “citizens of tomorrow” (Ministry of Education, 2015, p.

6). By delving into the environmental research in *Eating Chili Crab in the Anthropocene* and appreciating the globalized diversity in *Hard at Work*, students will grow to “understand the interconnectedness of Singapore and the world they live in” (Ministry of Education, 2015, p. 6). By reading the narratives of the Dakota Crescent residents and hearing the reflections of the CRT volunteers, students will grow to become “informed, concerned and participative citizens” (Ministry of Education, 2015, p.6). Crucially, despite their varied subject matter, one similarity unites these three texts: they are primarily written by young people, not much older than secondary school students. By engaging with this material, students can realise that they, too, have the power to create knowledge. By validating the experiences and life-worlds of youth, these works show our students that they can take ownership of their learning and serve as creators of knowledge. This democratization of knowledge production in turn models the norms of democratic citizenship that undergird Social Studies. This is what Social Studies can look like.

References

Ministry of Education. (2015). *A Guide to Teaching and Learning for Upper Secondary Social Studies Express/Normal (Academic)*. Ministry of Education.

Tomlinson, C. A. (2001). *How to Differentiate Instruction in Mixed-Ability Classrooms* (2nd ed.). Alexandria VA.: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development.

ⁱ Singapore is not an OECD country, but enjoys a standard of living comparable to most OECD members.