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ABSTRACT

With the accelerated and large-scale im/migration around the world, many countries face issues of integration of migrants into the host societies. Anxiety created by the continuing economic crisis and declining state welfare contribute to antipathy towards foreign population. Social exclusion is particularly a struggle for those who migrate with unstable statuses as transient workers, refugees, and asylum seekers. To promote social inclusion, this paper first introduces the concept of cultural citizenship grounded in the ethics of care and empathy to approach social inclusion. It further argues that social inclusion can be facilitated through technology use, particularly digital game play. A Facebook game is subsequently designed based on the theoretical lenses to foster cultural citizenship and integration between migrant workers and local Singaporean society.

Keywords: Social Inclusion, Migrant Workers, Digital Games, Action Research, Social Integration

INTRODUCTION

According to the United Nation's report *Trends in International Migrant Stock: The 2013 Revision*, about half of the member countries had a population whose proportion of immigrants is higher than 20%. As globalization becomes pervasive (Ritzer, 2011), many nation states face challenges to suppress cultural differences and push for multiculturalism. A large number of the migrant population with unstable statuses as transient workers, refugees, and asylum seekers tends to be overlooked by multicultural policies. At the same time, majority groups within each country have a strong tendency to maintain their own rather homogeneous "imagined community" (Anderson, 1991). The anxiety created by the continuing economic crisis and declining state welfare contribute to antipathy toward labor migrants, as exemplified in heated debates over immigration policies worldwide.

The dynamic of intergroup relations, racial harmony and multiculturalism is constantly being shaped and negotiated in this complex process of human mobility. The increased diverse population and frequent contact with culturally different others is not always accompanied by the same level of rising social acceptance of minority groups. As a result, migrant workers tend to face the issue of social exclusion and discrimination (Wong, Fu, Li & Song, 2007). Social exclusion is "very expensive, economically counterproductive and lays a heavy social and political burden on society." (Bianchi et al., 2006, p.23). As such, diversity management within any given society is imperative in this global age, both scholarly and pragmatically.

This paper proposes an innovative approach for diversity management though the use of ICT, targeting the issue of social integration of migrant workers in the Singaporean context. The history of Singapore has always been intertwined with immigration. The country has historically heavily relied on migrant labor. Between 2000 and 2013, the non-resident population in Singapore increased from 19% to 29% of the total population. In 2013, the percentage of foreign-born residents stood at 39% of the population (Department of Statistics Singapore, 2013). In the latest statistics released by the Ministry of Manpower, Singapore (2014), 1 in 5 people in Singapore is a foreigner.

Singapore, a constitutionally multicultural and multiracial society, is renowned for its successful implementations of the ideology of multiculturalism and racial harmony policy. However, anti-foreigner sentiment among citizens and social exclusion faced by migrant workers are on the rise. There is a pressing need to address this issue as the foreign workforce continues

to be a critical part of Singapore's development. The purpose of this project is two-fold. First, it introduces the concept of cultural citizenship to extend the scope of multiculturalism to address the problem of social exclusion of migrant workers. Second, it proposes to utilize a digital game as a technological innovation to promote social inclusion of migrant workers.

This paper first discusses the concept of multiculturalism as a theoretical lens and as is situated in the Singaporean cultural context, followed by discussions on cultural citizenship grounded in the ethics of care and empathy rather than the one that is predicated upon cognitive and abstract understandings of mutual relationships with others. Finally, a digital game is suggested as a means of fostering cultural citizenship and social inclusion. In particular, a social simulation and strategy game is designed to provide an environment where a sense of interconnectedness can be created through embodied experiences.

MULTICULTURALISM AND ITS LIMITATIONS

Berry et al. (1977) identified three levels of multiculturalism: demography, ideology, and policy. Demographically, a multicultural society is represented by various cultural groups living together within a particular geographical area. Ideologically, multiculturalism is situated within the intertwined web of politics, religion and culture. It regulates the level of tolerance, mutual respect, rights to maintain cultural heritage and alike. Government policies enforce provision for equitable access rights to resources, reduction of discrimination, removal of barriers to participate in social and economic activities. The overlapping three levels constitute multiculturalism. Unfortunately, the co-presence of different ethnocultural groups does not equate to acceptance and smooth assimilation into the mainstream society. As commonly seen, the management of demographic diversity is often not supported adequately from the public. Singapore is no exception.

Following Berry et al.'s (1977) model, Singapore government encourages each ethnocultural groups to maintain their own cultural heritage. At the same time, a shared common overarching in-group Singaporean identity is being promoted by enhancing group contact in an equitable way. In Singapore, multiculturalism refers to "the ideology that accords equal status to the cultures and ethnic identities of the various 'races' that are regarded as comprising the population of a plural society" (Benjamin, 1976, p. 115). Multiculturalism in Singapore has successfully prevented racial conflicts as well as fueled economic growth of the country.

However, some scholars expressed concerns about the ideology and implementation of multiculturalism.

Chua (2009) observed that multiculturalism hinders interracial relations and facilitates stronger ties with family and neighbors who share the same race. Multiculturalism resulted in erasing distinctive cultural characteristics of linguistic and ethnic groups through assimilation (Valayutham, 2007). Moreover, cultural identity in the global world has become much more contested, making it difficult for individuals to negotiate their belongingness to the nation-state in everyday practices (Rocha, 2014).

To complicate issues further, the global mobility of human capital in the labor market has caused much anxiety in many countries around the world. To maintain its competiveness in the global society, presence of migrants and expatriates continue to be in the work force and hence gradually are perceived as threats to Singaporean citizens (Noor and Leong, 2013). On the one hand, Singaporeans have shown antipathy toward so-called "foreign talents" as they are regarded as taking over well-paid and professional positions, contributing to unemployment among Singaporeans. On the other hand, Singaporeans have been concerned about the issues of safety, congestion, and infrastructure strain with the influx of low-skilled migrant workers. The possible communicative space and boundaries between both types of migrant workers and citizens hence becomes contested. Multiculturalism does not take into account the unavoidable class bias in societies; the status of migrant workers especially that of low-skilled and low-paid workers is normalized without recognizing the interdependence between citizens and foreign workforce in the global economy (Poon, 2009). As Berry (2013) pointed out, issues of equitable participation in the civic society, social inclusion and forging a common in-group identity are often difficult to achieve if not neglected. In order to address these problems, this paper argues that the scope of conceptualization and practice of multiculturalism needs to be widened.

FROM MULTICULTURALISM TO CULTURAL CITIZENSHIP

Education has always been identified as a way to instill multiculturalism by scholars and policy makers; multiculturalism is fostered in schools as a practice of being a good citizen (Tan, 2008). To expand the scope of multiculturalism and overcome limitations identified in previous section, an alternative conceptualization of citizenship is introduced.

Citizenship, in a traditional sense, refers to one's membership to a nation-state, which bestows rights on individuals as well as assigns duties. According to Marshall (1987), inclusion into a society is achieved by providing civil rights, political rights and social rights to citizens. In any given country, one's membership of a nation-state is usually acquired through birthright. Naturalization, and fulfillment of accompanying duties, is the prerequisite to obtain citizenship. While this narrow scope of citizenship was less problematic in the pre-globalization era, it excludes a considerable proportion of the global population from the protection of nation states.

Problematizing the limitation of traditional citizenship, Stevenson (2003) calls for the introduction of cultural citizenship to the current citizenship studies. In particular, Stevenson (2003) attends to Raymond Williams' concept of long revolution, which emphasizes "the importance of society's communicative channels giving a voice to those excluded from the main centres of cultural and political power" (pp. 8-9). The large numbers of diasporic population, which includes migrant workers, religious refugees, asylum seekers, and marriage immigrants, are not likely to be included in the traditional system of citizenship given that social welfare has been increasingly undermined in the last few decades. However, cultural rights can be claimed as cultural inclusion is taken for granted with the rise of globalization and discourses of identity politics.

Stevenson (2003) suggests cosmopolitan citizenship as a type of cultural citizenship that should be promoted in the globalized era. There is a clear distinction between cosmopolitanism and multiculturalism. Multiculturalism is an ideology and principle that is applied to manage diversity within a nation-state. Cosmopolitanism is an ethic that is integral to solve global issues, such as armed conflict, poverty, and public health. Global issues should be collectively addressed with cosmopolitan ethics whereas discriminatory practices in regard to gender, race/ethnicity, religious, and other cultural identities are treated through multicultural ideals. In other words, shared fate or shared responsibility is the basis of cosmopolitanism while multiculturalism is predicated upon respect for differences. However, it should be noted that shared fate and responsibility presuppose the ability to live with and respect differences among global citizens.

The social and political consequences caused by the flow of the global economy and the global chain of both productive and reproductive labor have been observed in multiple countries around the world. Cosmopolitan citizenship that necessitates shared responsibilities and

maintains interdependent relationships among various ethnocultural groups within the nation-state in order to create shared fate is a useful construct.

CULTURAL CITIZENSHIP BASED ON THE ETHICS OF CARE

The limitation of cosmopolitan citizenship is that the notions of shared fate or shared responsibility are abstract, making it difficult to realize in daily practice. For social inclusion to occur, an effective approach to help establish the recognition of each other's existence and the interdependent relationships between the migrant population and citizens of a host country needs to be implemented. The ethics of care is informative in overcoming this limitation. The ethics of care as a moral theory that highlights relatedness of individuals and interdependency formed by an intricate web of people (Noddings, 1984). Furthermore, the ethics of care emphasizes specific cultural and social contexts in moral decisions, requiring one to "think from the point of view of everybody, of every 'concrete other' whom one might turn out to be" (Okin, 1989, p. 34).

Slote (2007) foregrounds empathy in his theorization of the ethics of care. He attempts to apply the principles of the ethics of care to public or political issues beyond private agendas. Slote (2007) states, "care ethics treats acts as right or wrong, depending on whether they exhibit a caring or uncaring attitude/motivation on the part of the agent" (p. 21). Heavily influenced by the sentimentalist paradigm, he sees empathy as the sentimental factor to motivate people to behave in caring ways. Although empathy or compassion has been spoken about in discussions of the ethics of care, Slote (2007) distinguishes himself from other theorists by stressing the role of empathy—in other words, the capability of putting oneself in another's place—as the core aspect in recognizing relatedness and caring others.

As Slote (2007) himself admits, there is concern over his theorization of the ethics of care in culturally diverse societies. As people tend to empathize with those who share the same race, ethnicity, gender, culture, etc., there is a possibility that empathic caring does not lead to harmonious living with those who have different cultural backgrounds. That is, the levels of immediacy and distance affect one's ability to empathize with others. However, he believes that people can develop a sense of empathy toward others since socialization influences the types of feelings one experiences to some extent. As an example, he states that gender differences in the ability to empathize with others are attributed to the practices of gendered child-rearing and practice.

If one's ability to empathize is affected by the ways of socialization, people can be educated and encouraged to further develop their sense of empathy. Slote (2007) believes that parents, educators, and nation-states can facilitate inductive training through various media platforms such as literature, films, and TV shows by helping children and young adults to have more vivid experiences of others' lives and to imagine what it would be like living others' lives. This is an effective starting point for social inclusion to occur.

DIGITAL GAMES AND SOCIAL INCLUSION

Research has shown that the use of (new) media, especially digital games, can train individuals' empathetic ability and facilitate social inclusion. A study by Notley (2009) suggests that online social networks (including those in online games) provide valuable opportunities for marginalized young people (homeless, pregnant teens, those suffering from depression) in Australia to participate in society. In Japan, research shows that participation in online gaming communities leads to increased social tolerance by bringing together diverse populations around shared (gaming) contexts (Kobayashi, 2010). There have been some efforts to enhance intercultural understanding and promote social inclusion via video games. Conceptual bases of such efforts were examined, supporting plausibility of immersive learning for intercultural encounters (Fowler & Pusch, 2010; Wiggins, 2012). Many researchers also have built games to reduce personal biases (Gonzales, Saner & Eisenberg, 2013) and to develop global empathy (Bachen, Hernández-Ramos & Raphael, 2012) - to name a few. In a review of existing games and literature related to promoting social inclusion in gaming,

While not underestimating the existing studies, many of the video games designed to increase intercultural sensitivities and social inclusion are still lacking in that they do not show the role of a player in shaping virtually-created intercultural encounters. In addition, players are often placed in intercultural situations detached from their everyday lives. Two conditions should be satisfied to foster the notion of cultural citizenship proposed earlier. First of all, video games should be specific to the culture where those games are played. As discussed earlier, Singapore has its own unique histories of promoting racial harmony through the national education. Development of generalized intercultural encounters does not provide players with embodied and contextualized experiences in a specific cultural setting. Second, those video games should be built upon the web of people rather than cause-effect relationships in intercultural encounters. In other words, video games should be designed to show complex influences of various

stakeholders on a player's status and decision. Adding to these two conditions, Richard (2013) proposed three principles of game design that can help foster social inclusion: 1) increase frequency and variety of representation of marginalized groups in games, 2) design inclusive social networks around games to increase minority gamers' sense of belonging and community, and 3) adopt and maintain strict and transparent moderation that is easy for players to use. Based on these principles, a Facebook game is designed to help foster cultural citizenship.

## THE DESIGN AND IMPLEMENTATION OF A FACEBOOK GAME

This project aims to provide a simulated gaming experience to train cultural sensitivity, awareness and cultural citizenship of the majority in the society. This decision of focusing on the citizens of the host culture to promote social inclusion of migrant workers is based on the suggestion of Croucher and Cronn-Mills (2011). They asserted that "the host culture affects the level of *intercultural evolution*", which is a process of "individuation and universalization" (Kim, 2008). Therefore, an approach that taps on the host community to reduce anti-foreigner sentiment is relevant as the host's *receptivity* is crucial in the adaptation of immigrants (Stephan and Stephan, 1993).

One way to help build empathy is through identification of in-game characters—which is termed avatar. Representations of digital game characters and their effects on players have attracted scholarly attention for the last decade. In particular, scholars have raised concerns about disproportionate representations of races and genders, which show more white male characters playing primary roles. While misrepresentations of the real world in a numerical sense were criticized (Williams, Martins, Consalvo, & Ivory, 2009), bigger concerns were shown over how those misrepresentations affect players' perceptions, attitudes, and behaviors in regard to race and gender relations. Existing studies have found that representations of digital game avatars affect not only players' perceptions of the reality but also their attitudes and judgments in regard to races and genders (Behm-Morawitz & Ta, 2014; Dill & Burgess, 2013).

Unlike other media, digital games often provide users with immersive environments by giving them specific roles and leading them to take immediate actions. An avatar enhances the level of immersiveness as players are given a merged identity, which leads to incorporation of one's identity into other and internalization of the alternative identity (Li, Liau, and Khoo. 2013). In order to examine the effects of avatars on players, scholars conducted experiments that assign

avatars with different appearances to research participants. Yee and Bailenson (2007) found that changes in avatars' appearance result in individuals' behaviors online. In particular, they contended that individuals tend to conform to desired behaviors for the identities attached to their avatars. Martey et al. (2014) also concluded that when male game players embody a female avatar, they are likely to behave and talk in similar ways to those of women. Furthermore, Peck and his colleagues (2013) found that players who embody an avatar of a different race are likely to report reduced implicit racial biases against other races.

A prototype of a Facebook game, named Food Street Tycoon, has been developed to promote social inclusion of migrant workers. Food Street Tycoon is a simulation game based on the theme of Singaporean hawker centers, which is a public food court commonly found in Singapore. In this game, a player takes the role of a hawker center manager, whose objectives are to get customers to come to her/his hawker center, and eventually to maximize profit. This game was designed in a way that encourages players to learn the importance of individuals' active participation in civic matters, especially with regard to social policies by participating in various events in the game. In-game characters of cleaning personnel are designed to reflect the current percentage of migrant workers from different cultural groups in Singapore. Players of this game play the role of the hawker center manager by building stalls, hiring workers, and collecting money from customers.
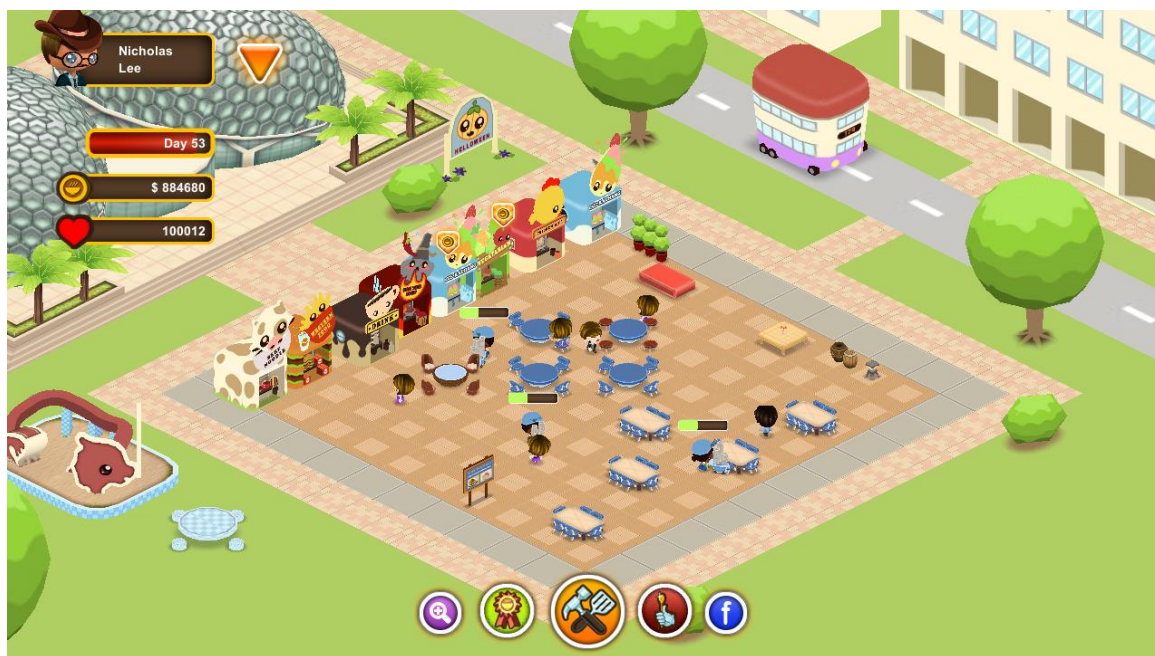
A screenshot of Food Street Tycoon

The game was designed with several principles promoting social inclusion and empathy as well as public policy in mind. For instance, one of the design guidelines is to ensure the representation of marginalized groups. Marginalized groups have to be equally represented in terms of frequency and variety. Hence, in the game, marginalized groups (in this case foreign immigrants) are equally represented in the game in the form of non-player characters. Future study has been designed to investigate how identification with avatars in a casual game affects players' in-game behaviors as well as their attitudes toward other races, particularly migrant workers, in the real world. By analyzing how players manage a virtual hawker centre where people from various cultural backgrounds meet and work together, the next study will examine how games can be used to simulate individuals' responses to social policies and the betterment of society.

CONCLUSION

Research on multiculturalism has shown its limitations for promoting social inclusion of marginalized cultural groups at the individual level. It is important for every individual in a given civic society to recognize the shared responsibilities to work toward an inclusive society where migrants are welcomed and well-integrated into the mainstream culture. In order to promote social inclusion of migrant workers, this project first argues to include the concept of cultural citizenship based on the principle of ethics of care to understand possible practice to facilitate social inclusion. Empathy is proposed to be the underlying mechanism for host culture citizens to understand the issues around integrating migrant workers into the mainstream society. As Leong and Liu (2013) pointed out, cross-cultural training has shifted from assimilating minority or migrant cultural groups into the mainstream culture to creating the impetus for experiential learning and cultural awareness. A video game has been designed to serve as a platform for developing understanding and empathy as part of responsible citizenship in order to promote social inclusion. Studies will be conducted to understand the effects of such games on perception and attitude towards migrant workers in the future.

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