

ORAL EXAMINATION

CREATIVE IMAGININGS: THE PRODUCTION OF AESTHETIC CULTURE OF CHORAL MUSIC PRACTITIONERS IN SINGAPORE

MOHAMED SHAHRIL BIN MOHAMED SALLEH, SOCIOLOGY

Abstract

This dissertation employs the case of choral music practitioners and their work in schools in relation to the Singapore Youth Festival to examine how the Singapore state rule, and how state and art practitioner relations in Singapore affect the ways in which aesthetic culture is produced. Singapore's policies pertaining to the management of the arts are expansive and complex, ranging from how citizens are educated in the consumption of the arts to the ways in which arts content is managed via state institutions. I choose to focus on the everyday arts making that is found in schools and on the professional labour provided by choral music practitioners who are arts practitioners in their own right in order to show how arts practitioners have allowed themselves and their arts to be governed by the state.

Combining analyses of interviews, site and participant observations, policy and media documents, as well as secondary scholarship on Singapore and the arts, the dissertation examines how there are ongoing tensions between the state and the arts practitioners, and shows that the tensions that arise out of the relationship generates a "culture of arts practitioners" that is key to the proliferation of the arts practices carried out in schools in Singapore. From the perspective of arts practitioners, policies have not been successful in turning Singapore into a veritable arts hub. Nonetheless, they have had important latent effects. Normative practices and values are generated that constitute the Singaporean arts practitioner as subject, especially those who work for the state in schools. These subjects see themselves as part of a nation where the arts is a developmental strategy to become a Global City.

Thursday
27 Aug 2020

10am

Venue:
TEAMS Meeting

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Despite misgivings about the state's approach and attitudes, they perceive the state as both employers as well as a source of funding. The "culture of arts practitioners" consists of these practices, expectations and values that citizen subjects embody and that orient them to the needs of the state.

Against the statist literature that emphasizes the coercive powers of a top-down, bureaucratic state, the dissertation takes a more Foucauldian perspective that incorporates positionality, subjectivity and meaning. On the other hand, my thesis positions itself against the Foucauldian governmentality scholarship in insisting that the state remains a dominant power in the case of managing the minutiae of the lives of arts practitioners. Finally, the thesis goes further than either of these approaches in showing that the production of culture is both a way of performing meaningful consent as practitioner-subjects, as well to ameliorate their craft and their own lives. Like state actions, the arts practitioners' consent is strategic and depends on the state's effective provision of valued material and cultural goods.

Proceedings

Duration	Session
5 mins	Chairperson Welcome & Introduction of Panel
30-45mins	Presentation by Student
15 mins	Q&A (by audience – faculty / students)
Break	Audience to leave the meeting
30 mins	Q&A by Panel
15 mins	Chairperson to ask candidate to leave the meeting Private Panel Discussion and Decision on the Oral Examination
15 mins	Candidate invited back by Chairperson Feedback and Outcome of Oral Examination

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