We the Citizens of Singapore: The Creation, Maintenance and Cracks of a Perfect Hegemony.

Exploring the Relationship of the Singaporean to the State through National Education.

By
Shuang Yin Cheryl Ng

Submitted to Central European University
Department of Sociology and Social Anthropology

In partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts

Supervised by
Dr. Prem Kumar Rajaram and Dr. Alexandra Kowalski

Vienna, Austria
2022

Shuang Yin Cheryl Ng
MA Sociology and Social Anthropology
Central European University

Abstract

What is the role of schooling and the curriculum in reproducing societal norms, political engagement and the relationship between individuals and the state in Singapore? Singapore under the regime of the People's Action Party (PAP) has been long known and criticized for its illiberal democracy, earning itself the title of a ''perfect hegemony'' (Sim, 2001). This research questions the role of education as a state apparatus in disciplining the relationship citizens hold to the state through the theoretical lens of Althusser (1970), Foucault (in Rose, 2011; Lemke 2001; Daldal, 2014), and Gramsci (1999). This research also uncovers the ''cracks'' within the hegemonic regime of the state through exploring how despite the many challenges and fears of sharing criticisms of the state publicly, citizens seek out alternative spaces to voice their rejection and opinions. Through applying Foucault's (2007) notion of counter conducts, this research aims to also unpack the spaces through which citizens in their everyday lives reject the state. This research employs an embedded case study methodology, exploring two subunits: ''Educators'' and ''Students''. The ''Educator'' subunit consisted of four semi-structured interviews and thirteen surveys with educators across various educational institutions and teaching experience. The ''student'' subunit consisted of eleven semi-structured interviews conducted with individuals who have attended all their compulsory schooling in Singaporean state schools. The eleven respondents shared their constructions of citizenship and perceptions of their schooling experiences in relation to their citizenry. Through this research, I garner a better understanding of the mechanisms that help maintain and reproduce the hegemonic state-citizen relationship while also exploring how citizens simultaneously express their seemingly growing distrust towards the state, utilizing digital spaces to voice their criticisms and opinions. This research also demonstrates the tension educators face in their roles as cultural workers and their interpellation as citizens.

Acknowledgements

I would like to express my deepest gratitude to my supervisors, Dr. Prem Kumar Rajaram and Dr. Alexandra Kowalski, who have offered me endless support, encouragements, and guidance throughout this project. I would also like to thank all the participants of the project for offering me insight into their experiences that informed this study. Finally, I extend my appreciation to my mother and my partner for their endless love and support through the completion of my degree.

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Introduction

Being part of a University community with a large international student population inevitably came with the privilege of experiencing different worldviews from people of vastly different contexts to my own background. Through the life experiences of my colleagues, I have been forced to reexamine my own through the discussions and lenses they have shared with me. While in recent years living abroad has given me ample distance from Singapore to question and challenge the single-party state and inequalities perpetuated in Singapore, it is not until a heated discussion in one of our seminars that I started to truly consider and question the relationship of citizens to the state. During this discussion, we were looking at social movements and violent police clashes. While my other colleagues shared their own experiences and encounters, I was perplexed. I did not understand how or why the police, as individuals who were also subjects of the state, pitted themselves against the people. This was a question and a discussion I raised. During which, my professor called Singapore a ‘'perfect hegemony’’, a phrase I have not previously considered but found very befitting of the context. Therefore, this research hopes to explore further how the relationship between the citizen and the state is developed and maintained.

Gramsci (1999) describes hegemony as the seemingly spontaneous consent of the masses towards the imposed social life from the dominant group through manufacturing ‘’consent’’. In Singapore, mainstream narratives and ideologies penetrate the consciousness of the public through multiple state apparatuses such as education, media, and the economic structure while dissent is addressed as idenitity politics through notions of ‘’Asian’’ versus ‘’Western’’ values. Furthermore, the narratives in these state apparatueses often frame dissent negatively, it is even publically shamed and punished (Holoday & Lee, 1999; Bar, 2000; 2014). Gramsci (1999) also states hegemony is an unstable process. However, the hegemonic regime in Singapore and the

rule of the dominant political party has seen much resilience and success in achieving the majoritarian approval over the years, evidenced through election results historically. Therefore, in this research, I use the term ‘’perfect hegemony’’ drawn from my conversations noted above to describe a fabric of hegemony in Singapore that is seemingly largely unchallenged and unquestioned to understand how the illiberal democracy of the Singaporean state is constructed and maintained. In doing so, I question and explore the relationship of citizens and citizenship to the state.

As education is an important state apparatus in socialising citizens to the social norms of the state's hegemonic regime (Althusser, 1970; Gramsci, 1999; Biesta, 2009), I aim to specifically unpack the role education plays towards building and sustaining the notion of a ‘’good citizen’’ in the eyes of the state. In doing so, I examine the interpretations of citizenship education through the perspectives of educators and citizens who have completed all their compulsory education in Singaporean state schools. Through focusing on education, I explore state-controlled schooling and the curriculum in influencing the development of the citizen's relationship to the state through narratives that shape imaginaries and thus, governmentalities of individuals. Ultimately, I hope to also capture where the cracks within this picture of a ‘’perfect hegemony’’ that demonstrates the individual political agency of individuals within the constraints of the structure through the lens of counter conducts (Foucault, 2007).

The Ministry of Education (MOE) is the branch of state governance that oversees the educational needs of the nation state. It develops and implements educational policies regarding pedagogy, curriculum, structure, and assessments. Compulsory schooling for Singaporean residents typically start at Age 7 in Primary school, after which students take the Primary School Leaving Examinations (PSLE) at Age 12 after six years of Primary education. The PSLE results of each child determines the educational track through which they will attend in Secondary

education. Students with the better scores are sorted into the ‘’Express’’ track, while students with lower grades are sorted into the ‘’Normal Academic’’ track or the ‘’Normal Technical’’ track. Students of the ‘’Express’’ track would take the ‘Ordinary’ level examinations after four years, which will sort them into either attending pre-university education in state colleges, or continue their educational journeys in Polytechnics, semi-private institutions that focus on vocational training. Students of the ‘’Normal Academic’’ track would take the ‘National’ level examinations. Depending on their results, students might continue another year in Secondary school to take the ‘Ordinary’ level examinations or continue their studies in Polytechnics under a foundational programme. If they did not do well enough to qualify for either, they would be encouraged to enrol into the Institute of Technical Education (ITE) which is considered as a lower tiered vocational training programme. Students of the ‘Normal Technical’ track will do their ‘National’ level examinations after four years of Secondary education and usually enrol into ITE. Many authors (e.g., Tep, 2019; Barr, 2014a) have criticised the tracked system of the Singaporean education system for reproducing inequalities through the ideological myth of meritocracy. Furthermore, scholars (Barr, 2006; Azman, 2019) have observed and critiqued in their writings the racialised inequalities sustained through state education in Singpaore, stating the state education priveleges the Chinese majoritarian. Thus, I aim to look at how education disciplines and sort citizens into their societal roles and the norms of the state.

My research aimed to answer the following question: What is the role of schooling and the curriculum in reproducing societal norms, political engagement and the relationship between individuals and the state in Singapore? In doing so, this research explored the constructions and interpretations of the state and citizenship amongst educators and citizens who have completed all their compulsory schooling in Singaporean state schools. What this research uncovered, is that the state-citizen relationship is reflected by the authoritarian teacher-student dynamic present in school. This research also explored the tensions teachers face between their

interpellation as citizens and their roles as cultural workers of the state, demonstrating that while as cultural workers teachers reproduce the narratives of state ideologies, teachers as individuals/ citizens create spaces within the structure to reject the state through exercising their interpretations over the state's in educating their students. This research also unpacks the ways a meritocratic, pragmatic, and technocratic regime such as Singapore constructs and maintains its hegemonic rule through utilising soft power strategies to ensure the engineered ''consent'' of citizens through vertical politics. Ultimately, this research has also uncovered spaces in which the ''cracks'' of the hegemonic regime in Singapore could be observed and how individuals simultaneously reject and reproduce the imaginaries of the state in their everyday public and private lives. Hence, this research contributes to current literature examining the ''hegemonic engineering'' of Singapore by offering a perspective that explores how such a ''perfect hegemonic'' state is held up by its citizens despite the wealth of literature that has long critiqued its oppressiveness. This research also contributes to current literature by examining citizens as both agents of themselves and the state in the ways they seek alternative spaces in the public sphere and their private lives to express their opinions against the state while simultaneously reproducing the social norms of the state.

Literature Review and Theoretical Outline

In the following section, I take a non-traditional approach to the literature review. By simultaneously mapping out the context of the city-state, while connecting it to the current scholarship of ''hegemonic engineering'' in Singapore, I hope to guide readers into positioning the literature in relation to the historical, social, cultural, and political context of Singapore and its development of education with a specific focus on citizenship education. In doing so, I hope that readers are able to perceive the connections drawn by me between present literature from within and beyond the unique context of Singapore to map my research considerations and how I have positioned this research in the fabric of present scholarship.

A Brief History of Singapore

Pre-colonial Singapore was a part of the Johor Sultanate founded between the 16th and 17th century and sparsely inhabited by approximately one hundred to one-thousand people. The population was mostly made up of Orang Laut, a local indigenous group of people and fewer than 30 Chinese inhabitants who assimilated to the customs of the indigenous (Winstedt, 1979; Frost, 2020; Andaya, 1975). After the arrival of the British in 1819, the sultanate was split between the Dutch and the British, with Singapore positioned as part of the British administration. During which, the population grew due to the British's stimulation of immigration of labour into the island (Frost, 2020: 4). As the Chinese in Singapore were favoured by the British to work in colonial administration, their immigration was highly encouraged which led to three lasting impacts. Firstly, the Chinese population became the dominant group in numbers and political recognition, fostering conflict between the indigenous population (Ackermann, 1996). Secondly, due to the increasing Chinese settlement, the British census of 1830 showed ethnic ratios presenting 71% Chinese, 15.8% Malays and 7.8% Indians, a proportion that has since been largely maintained through immigration policies (Frost, 2020). Thirdly, through the British population census of 1871, the broad categorisation of ethnic groups homogenously into Chinese, Malays, Indians and Europeans, marked by patriarchal descent and neglecting cultural differences was introduced. For example, the Orang Laut, Bugis, Javanese and others from the Malayan peninsula were broadly grouped as ''Malays'' (Saw, 2010; Frost, 2020).

During the post-war years, most of Southeast Asia, including Singapore started to gain independence from their colonizers (Barr & Skrbis, 2008). During this period, rejection of both British colonialism and Japanese nationalism that faced southeast Asian nations during the second world war, birthed a new mythology of nationalism in the name of nation-building and

national identity construction. However, unlike other South East Asian contexts such as Vietnam and Indonesia, Singapore's independence process presented less violent procedures consisting of negotiations between the local elites and British administrators (Barr & Skrbis, 2008). This included a brief period (1963-1965) of merging with Malaya (today known as Malaysia) and leaving Malaya in 1965 to become a self-governing state. Perhaps, due to the non-violent approach of the elites during this period (Barr & Skrbis, 2008), namely Lee Kwan Yew and his network, their place in power was deeply embedded as ''earned'' or ''deserving'' in the public narrative and imaginary. These new ruling elites of Singapore were Malayan Chinese radicals that were often British/ English educated (Barr & Skrbis, 2008; Barr, 2014a). One of their major concerns in the earlier years of Singapore's self-governance was the nation-building project, seen as necessary to flourish economically. In their nation-building project, identity and nationhood was of utmost importance to transform people into citizens of an imagined community, creating the notion of unified civic duty premised over individual interests (Barr, 2014a). Since then, Singapore has been named as a uniquely intriguing example of ''successful'' hegemonic nation-building, in which the single-party state micromanages the everyday lives of individuals towards developing the notion of the ''good citizen'' in relation to the state through policies that heavily police the lives of individuals through the private sphere (Barr & Skrbis, 2008).

Over the years, Lee Kwan Yew's political party, the People's Action Party (PAP) has continued to serve as the dominant incumbent political party in Singapore, maintaining their power and regime. Despite recent general elections leaning towards more oppositional parties, the PAP continues to reign as the dominant party in Singapore. The regime of PAP legitimises itself through the ideology of pragmatism in which the rhetoric of Singapore's impressive success in its ability to attract and maintain a strong global capital is utilised as justification for the dominant party's rule over Singapore (Tan, 2012; Chua 2010). In turn, these ideologies and

justifications of meritocracy and the technocratic regime are funnelled to the citizens through the PAP to maintain their power through the rhetoric of pragmatism (Tan, 2012). However, as Tan (2012) highlighted, while global capitalism has reinforced the notion of pragmatism in Singapore's justification for a technocratic regime, its involvement in globalisation has also served to challenge the hegemonic rule of the Singapore's dominant party.

While Singapore claims to be a democracy, authors (e.g., Barr 2014b; Teo, 2019; Barr, 2009; Chua, 2010) have questioned its claim of democracy as framed by the state. Barr (2014b: 32) states that:

> Singapore's democratic processes are a Bonsai version of the real thing, meaning that what passes for democracy is constrained, pruned, stunted, and mainly for show. It looks democratic but lacks the blemishes that are associated with real disputation because according to Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong, ''a democratic system is inherently adversarial, and there are risks to it.''

Over the rule and regime of the PAP, technocracy is often the driving force of Singaporean politics (Barr, 2014b). This is most evident in the development of citizenship education in schools stating explicitly that those in higher streams of education should be trained to become leaders of the state while those in lower streams of education should be taught to love and contribute to the nation-state (Moi, 2017; Sim & Print 2005b; MOE 2020). Through securing Singapore's economic future, the incumbent ruling party ensured their legitimacy and also their notion of technocracy and meritocracy, constraining a limited understanding and performance of democracy (Barr, 2014b; Tan, 2012; Chua, 2010). Thus, they ensure their continued dominance over state matters in Singapore and the generalised tolerance of an authoritarian rule (Chua, 2010).

Asian Values, Meritocracy and Deservedness

The perpetuation of ‘’Asian’’ values within the political debates of Singapore had two major roots. Firstly, as a nation in the post-colonial era, the nation-building project spearheaded by the incumbent party, People’s Action Party (PAP) strongly rejected ‘’western’’ values for its incongruence with ''Asian culture’’ (Barr, 2000). Another reason why ‘’Asian’’ values synonymous with Confucianism in the ideologies of the PAP took precedence in the socio-political realm is perhaps because Lee Kwan Yew, the first prime minister during Singapore’s independence, found Confucianist teachings of state-centred relationships between citizens appealing as a development strategy for Singapore’s economy (Barr, 2000).

There are two teachings of Confucianism that have been normalised and institutionalised by the state to cultivate the nation-building project of the PAP worth noting to understand the Singaporean socio-political context. Firstly, state and community interests should come before individual rights and needs to ensure harmonious living (Tan & Tan, 2014). Secondly, everyone has a necessary place within the social hierarchy, assigned through meritocratic means such as earning one‘s place in the elites of society through ‘’talent’’, reinforcing the technocratic flavour of democracy utilised in the state’s ideology. For one to be an upstanding citizen, they need to perform their roles and responsibilities in obedience to the hierarchy (Tan & Tan, 2014; Barr, 2000). As part of Singapore’s nation building project, Confucianism’s teachings on ordering the ‘’good society’’ and prioritising the power of the state for the common good of individuals were especially well accepted and internalised by Lee Kwan Yew to justify the paternalistic system of governance while simultaneously establishing the national identity and conduct of citizens in relation to the state (Barr, 2006). Thus, the PAP’s institutionalisation of ‘’Asian’’ values creates an illusion of cultural and moral legitimisation of power and hegemony. In doing so, Lee Kwan Yew established a sustainable illiberal form of democracy that he claims is necessary for economic growth through a unified national identity (Barr, 2000).

Additionally, to promote unity and cohesiveness for the ‘’common good’’ despite the diverse population that makes up the history of Singapore, multiculturalism has become an official ideology out of geopolitical necessity (Chua, 2007). However, this ‘’multicultural’’ ideology has been largely criticised to be unequal and prioritises ‘’Chinese'' values (Confucianism) disguised as ‘’Singaporean'' or ‘’Asian’’ values (Azman, 2019; Velayutham, 2007). Broad and assimilating racial groupings of Singapore’s ethnicities are some ways the government promotes multicultural co-existence of various ethnic groups (Frost, 2020). These broad categories are as follows: ‘’Chinese’’, ‘’Malay’’, ‘’Indian’’ and ‘’Others’’ with ‘’Chinese'' being the economically, politically, and numerically dominant group. Through such strategies, the state reconstructed primordial ethnic compositions and affiliations based on simplified classifications, assimilating polyethnic differences into homogenous racial groups. Thus, creating what Ackermann (1996) defines, ‘’artificial culture’’. Ackermann (1996) posits this management of ethnicity through national identity discourses as ‘’institutionalised ethnicity’’. Through state institutions, Singaporeans are ascribed cultural practices and languages, forming their identity within narrow categorisations. Like the other ideologies of Singapore, education plays a strong part in embedding the notions of multiculturalism and ‘’place’’ of various identities, sorting citizens into different levels of ‘’deservedness’’. This is reiterated by Barr’s (2006) and Sim & Print’s (2005) analysis of citizenship education demonstrating the racialised roles of citizens characterised in the narratives.

Categories ascribed to citizens through identity politics such as racial categorisation, educational tracking, and socioeconomic statuses are deeply conscious in the minds of Singaporeans, impacting their identification within social hierarchies (Teo, 2019). Categories also determine the distribution of resources within Singapore, which as many local scholars have argued, privilege the Chinese majoritarian (Poole, 2016, Frost, 2020; Azman, 2019; Velayutham, 2007). Writers from minority groups (e.g. Sangeetha Thanapal and Alifan Sa’at)

have criticised the state for its 'Chinese supremacist' tendencies fostering 'Chinese privilege', rejecting the multicultural and meritocratic ideologies of the state for its blindness and ignorance to the socio-political effects and consequence.

Hegemonic Engineering of Singapore

Presently, scholarships such as those from Teo You Yenn (2019), Leonel Lim & Michael Apple (2015), Michael D. Barr (2000; 2006; 2009; 2014a; 2014b), Zlatko Skrbis (in Barr & Skrbis, 2008), Chua Beng Huat (2007; 2010); Yao Souchou (2008), Huang Jian Li (2008), Netina Tan (2009), Daniel Goh (2015), Duncan Holoday & Lee Shu Hui (1999), Lily Kong (1995), Charlene Tan & Tan Chee Soon (2014), Jasmine Boon-Yee Sim & Murray Print (2005a) have written extensively on inequality, the hegemonic construction of Singapore and the resilience of the dominant ruling party, People's Action Party (PAP). Or as Holoday & Lee (1999) discussed, the ''hegemonic engineering'' of Singapore. Their analysis of mainstream narratives produced and controlled by the government discussed the use of state-controlled media narratives and its ideology-sustaining agendas. Holoday & Lee's (1999) analysis is also reflected in Kong's (1995) contribution that explores the use of patriotic songs written and sung for the annual national celebrations. However, Kong (1995) expanded the analysis to highlight satirical music as creative counter-hegemonic political actions, demonstrating that while the state's hegemonic projects are largely successful, there are cracks worth exploring.

The scholarship of Barr (2000; 2009; 2014), Chua (2007), Barr & Skrbis (2008), Tan (2009) focuses on the rise of the single-party state and the hegemonic construction of Singapore through its institutions. In their discussions, the ideologies of the PAP, synonymous with the ''state'' in Singapore for its dominance of party-politics and illiberal democracy (Barr, 2000) was criticised as a hierarchal social construction of social deservedness for political participation. Through their writings, the ideologies of the state/ PAP - ''Asianess'', meritocracy and multiculturalism - were analysed and criticised for maintaining the hegemonic

rule of the state through explicitly elitist notions reiterated by PAP as part of its ‘’nation building’’ project (Barr, 2014; Barr & Skrbis, 2008). Tan (2009) further questions the mechanisms employed by PAP through state institutions to maintain the resilience of its autocratic regimes. While these authors contribute a perspective that examines the management of the state over Singapore's citizens that inadvertently and explicitly maintains inequalities, Teo (2019) approaches the study of inequalities from the perspective of marginalised citizens, specifically examining how the narrative of meritocracy is embedded into the mentalities and actions of low-income families. Through her study, education is often cited by low-income families as one of the most important aspects of their children's lives. Through the state's ideological notions of the mythical promises of meritocracy explicitly promoted in national narratives, children are sorted into political and economic deservedness without considering socioeconomic opportunities and challenges children from differing backgrounds face (Teo, 2019)

Although Teo's (2019) study did not exclusively discuss education, she highlights citizenship education is embedded in every aspect of their schooling lives, reflecting the explicit hierarchy of elitism and deservedness purported by the PAP (cited by Barr, 2014). In her discussions and observations, she stresses that the tracked-education system that sorts students through high-stakes examinations categorises not only their potential access into economic mobility but also their political engagement. While students from higher/elite tracks in elite schools are educated to be critical thinkers and civic agents, the curriculum educated students in lower tracks into becoming obedient citizens (Lim & Apple, 2015; Teo, 2015). The educational tracking of students are exercised through high stakes examinations through which students are grouped into various hierarchical programs.

This emphasis on education as a tool that sorts citizens is also reflected in the scholarship of Barr (2000; 2006), Goh (2015), Tan & Tan (2014), and Sim & Print (2005a). In these

contributions, the authors analyse the narratives and imaginaries of Singapore and the role of citizens within the state's structure through the formal curriculum via its materials and educational policies. In their analysis, they highlight the use of the national curriculum in shaping the national narratives for an agenda of expounding and maintaining the ideologies of the dominant ruling party/ state. However, in these analyses that highlight the formal curriculum, the hidden curriculum is left unexplored. The concept of ''hidden curriculum'' pertains to the socialisation of children through education and schools beyond cognitive and academic skills (Ito et. al., 2020; Giroux & Penna, 1979; Apple, 1971). As an important aspect to the socialisation of children, the hidden curriculum, via education, transmits in students the beliefs, societal norms, and values, shaping their socio-political engagements and ways of being (Mayo, 2014; Biesta, 2009; Giroux & Penna 1979; Apple, 1971). Thus, it reflects the Gramscian notion of education's role in maintaining hegemonic relationships with teachers being noted as ''cultural workers'' (Mayo, 2014). However, citizenship education is no longer simply part of the hidden curriculum. Increasingly, citizenship education is part and parcel of the formal curriculum in the schools of Singapore. What was initially moral and civics education has now transformed into classroom agendas and examinable subjects (e.g., Social Studies) through which the Ministry of Education (MOE) has laid out clear educational goals and targets for teachers and students to meet (MOE, 2020; Moi, 2017; Sim & Print, 2005b; Ho, 2010; Tan & Chew, 2007). Therefore, I hope my contribution to the field, by examining both the hidden and formal curriculum will highlight the invisible aspect of education/ schooling as a state apparatus in maintaining its hegemonic relationship with its citizens beyond the formal curriculum. In doing so, investigate the ways teachers and students reproduce and/ or resist the dominant narratives of the state through their interpretations and actions.

Research Significance

In my reading of these authors outlined above and their criticisms of Singapore, they often discussed the existence and impacts of inequality, and the hegemonic illiberal democracy in Singapore's single-party state. However, they rarely discuss why or how citizens maintain such relationships with the state despite growing criticisms. The authors that have discussed the political rebellion of the past also seem to highlight the reasons for failure as the powerful ballast of the PAP over national agenda and narratives (Huang, 2008; Yao, 2008). My goal is to take a step back from the exploration of PAP's hegemonic rule over citizens but rather, how such quality of citizenry is created and maintained. In doing so, I hope to highlight citizens as agentic individuals rather than passive individuals through which ruling ideologies are simply done to and through. In positioning my work, I aim to pinpoint what helps to maintain the relationship between the citizen and the state. I believe that to understand the perpetuation of the hegemonic state, citizens cannot be seen as passive subjects but need to be understood active social actors. In understanding the relationship between citizens and the state, could the analysis also expand towards exploring how the cracks within this "perfect hegemony" is maintained through the unique state-citizen relationship in Singapore and thus etched at to reconceptualise a new form of democracy. While this would entail a larger research project, I intend to focus this research project on the role of education in building and maintaining the ideology of the "good citizen'' and how it develops the relationship between the subject/ citizen and the state to create and maintain the "perfect hegemony'' in which citizens commit to the state's management.

Role of Schools and Education in Reproducing the State

It is important here for me to first distinguish the difference between "schooling'' and "education'' despite their synonymity in everyday speech. Education is the process through

which knowledge and skills are learned. Schooling is the formal institution through which education is managed, controlled, and taught. While education also happens in our everyday life outside of the school, the school is commonly an institution that manages the education of the public. Schools serve an ideological function as a state agency, or in Althusserian (1970) terms, a state apparatus in the social production of the state's desirable citizen as conceived by the ruling elite through socialising and reinforcing the national values to students (Apple, 1990). Through schooling, the nation-state reproduces and imposes itself in the everyday realities of students, ensuring the social order is reinforced through education (McCarthy & Dimitriadis, 2000; Apple, 1990). In relation to Singapore's mass state-centric and state-managed education system, the school plays an important role in shaping the narratives and imaginaries of citizens, but it is not the only tool that socialises citizens into the societal roles (Mayo, 2014; Holoday & Lee, 1999; Kong, 1995; Barr, 2000). This distinction is important in this research project as not all education is filtered and managed through the school which might be an important distinguishing quality in understanding the cracks within the "perfect hegemony'' of Singapore.

Biesta (2009) argues that there are three main functions of education: qualification, socialisation and subjectification. Qualification refers to skills and knowledge imparted onto individuals. While qualification is often the main proponent of educational metrics and formal curricula, socialisation is often an aspect which national agendas and ideologies are concerned with. Relating to the hidden curriculum, one purpose of education is the socialisation of individuals into the respective social, cultural, and political order, transmitting norms and values via the hidden curriculum (Mayo, 2014; Biesta, 2009: 40; Giroux & Penna, 1979; Apple 1971). Through the hidden curriculum, education is used as an ideological state apparatus that serves the purpose of socialising people into existing ways of being and doing, amplified by the school (Biesta, 2009; Althusser, 1970; Mayo, 2014). Subjectification is also an important aspect

through which the relationship of national agendas and ideologies are educated through. While Biesta (2009) discusses subjectification as the process of becoming into independent autonomous thinkers, the highly managed education system serving as a state apparatus paints a different reality. Through sorting citizens via high-stakes examinations, Singapore's education as noted by Lim & Apple (2015) and Teo (2019) demonstrates how citizens are sorted as hierarchal subjects through meritocratic and technocratic ideologies. Singaporean students are often placed in educational 'tracks' determined through academic results (Teo, 2019). These tracks not only determine future trajectories in relation to their possible contribution as human capital but also classify the kind of civic education students receive. Hence, reflecting Gramsci's (1999) and Althusser's (1970) arguments of education as a state apparatus in maintaining and affecting its hegemonic rule. Such socialisation interpellates students into their roles within the merit-based technocratic system of Singapore in which classifications stratify students as inferior or superior over each other (Teo, 2019:116; Barr, 2000). Education thus presents a space through which the state exercises its power to influence and inculcate citizens into the mentality of the state by governing and disciplining the social conduct, commitments, and desires of citizens (McCarthy & Dimitriadis, 2000).

Historically, governmentality is often linked to education (Kivinen & Rinne, 2006). Therefore, through a Foucauldian (Rose, 2011; Lemke, 2001; Daldal, 2014) and Althusserian (1970) lens, education is observed as an ideological and repressive state apparatus 'hailing' students into an ascribed ''citizenry'' premised on their socialised ''station'' within the social and state structure. Through education as an ISA, students are reproduced as state subjects through submission to their subjection via soft power strategies of the ruling ideology (Althusser, 1970). Thus, reflecting Foucault's (in Lemke, 2001 and Rose, 2011) arguments highlighting conditions governing the rationalities and actions of individuals within the ruling neo-liberal ideology. Through a Gramscian lens, education is central in the relationships of power and hegemony

(Mayo, 2014; Gramsci, 1999). Through the stratification of individuals via education, citizens are socialised into ascribed hierarchal social stations that reflect the ruling ideologies and social structures (Gramsci, 1999). These ascribed social stations within the structure also constructs the access towards political knowledge and participation, thus shaping the relationship of citizens to the hegemonic state (Gramsci, 1999; Mayo, 2014). Hence, such educational hierarchies are also forms of political and social reproduction. Furthermore, Gramsci (1999) argues that the condition of education creates and sustains homogeneity, further emphasising education as a space through which schools discipline the masses into the social and cultural norms of the elites.

While it is important to consider the ways in which the state subjugates citizens into hegemonic regimes through state apparatuses such as education, this research will not be complete without also considering the ways through which policy actors and individuals find ways to resist or challenge the narratives of the state. Thus, to find the "cracks'' of the seemingly "perfect hegemony'' of Singapore, I intend to also draw on Foucault (2007) for his concept of counter-conducts. Foucault (2007) proposes the use of counter conducts as a counter hegemonic act of self. In the face of discipline and social conduct imposed through the state's structure, counter conduct presents an alternative to challenge the arbitrariness of bourgeois conduct and social/ cultural norms (Foucault, 2007). The use of counter conducts through Foucault's (2007) proposition states that through one's imaginations and behaviours, one can challenge and question the social order and conduct imposed by the state's structure by acting/ behaving against it. In doing so, counter conducts draw a heterogeneous nature of resistance in contemporary politics, disrupting the binaries of power and resistance. However, while Foucault (2007) argues that behavioural counter conducts present a space of individual counter hegemonic resistance, he also cautions that heterogeneous actions of resistance could simultaneously disrupt and reinforce the status quo.

Development of Citizenship Education in Singapore

Since the post-colonial period, Singapore's education system has introduced citizenship education in its various schools through the teaching of ethics which then transformed into civic education through which discussions of the constitution, legislation, and values such as patriotism and loyalty were the main focus (Sim & Adler, 2004). As a young nation-state made of up largely settler immigrants with multiple ethnicities, origins, languages, and religions, Singapore presented a divided nation state. Therefore, citizenship education was intentionally developed to serve the needs and goals of a nation building project towards constructing a shared identity amongst the people (Moi, 2017).

In the 1970s, Singapore inducted a nationalized state-centred education in system in order to respond to the social and national needs of the state, naming the school as the key instrument of nation building and civic education (Sim & Adler, 2004). In doing so, the citizenship education curricula of Singapore were also centralized through the MOE. Due to the increasing use of English and growth of Singapore's industrialization efforts, there were fears that Singaporeans were becoming too "westernized''. Therefore, citizenship education was taught to emphasize and reflect "Asian'' values and morals that unfortunately reflected Confucianist teachings and failed to account for the plurality of moral ideologies in the multicultural realities of Singaporean's sociocultural lives. Furthermore, the teachings of "Asian'' values failed to include necessary skills in a democracy such as critical thinking, further reinforcing the position of illiberal democracy that the Singaporean state ascribes to (Sim & Adler, 2004).

In the early 1980s, moral and civics education was replaced with religious knowledge and Confucian ethics. However, this strategy faced much backlash from parents about the appropriateness of religious knowledge being taught in secular schools and was swiftly replaced

with civics and moral education lessons again in the early 1990s (Tan,1982; Henson, 1989; Sim & Adler, 2004; Moi, 2017). This shift to civics and moral education intended to highlight the national ideologies of Singapore, using colourful workbooks, slides, and videos played in the classroom (HistorySG, n.d.). However, there were fewer rigid demands and control over the teachers regarding how citizenship education lessons should be taught. Therefore, the lessons often reflect the teacher's personal understanding of citizenship education (Sim & Print, 2009). Furthermore, in the face of competitive high stakes examinations, teachers and students often saw little value in emphasizing the civics and moral education lessons, choosing instead to use the allocated timeslot as extra time to focus on examinable subjects instead (Chew, 1998). Hence, citizenship education as social studies were introduced as an examinable subject since 2001 to emphasize its importance (Sim & Print 2005c).

The National Education (NE) curriculum was first introduced and developed to create an examinable citizenship education subject, Social Studies (Moi, 2017; Sim & Adler, 2004; Sim & Print, 2005c). Its goals were to foster a sense of identity, pride, and self-respect as Singaporeans through understanding the challenges, strengths and values of Singapore (Moi, 2017). The curriculum also emphasized that citizens needed to contribute to Singapore's development and well-being with a strong focus on economic contributions (Han, 2006). The social studies curriculum was implemented across all levels of state education with slightly different focuses in each level. At the primary level, students were targeted towards developing an emotional connection to the nation through love and pride. At the secondary level, students were taught to consider the challenges of Singapore, its position in the global context whilst attempting to simultaneously inculcate critical thinking through evaluating their knowledge in high stakes examinations, while also developing sense of nationalism in students through highlighting the vulnerabilities and opportunities of Singapore. (Moi, 2017; Sim & Print, 2005c). Over the years the NE and social studies curricula has faced many changes. In 2005,

the prescription of "Love, Know, Lead'' was introduced to the NE curriculum. Its directives stated the goals for primary education is to educate students in loving the nation, in secondary education to know about the nation, and in the elite track of pre-university education, students are taught and encouraged to lead the nation (Sim & Print, 2005c). In 2007, as many students expressed cynicism over the agendas of NE, claiming it was propaganda, the revised curriculum implemented in 2012 highlighted learning goals that emphasized critical thinking skills and removed Singapore's links to the global world, drawing a closer Southeast Asian perspective. However, in reality, much of the tasks still included rote memorizations to prepare for the high stakes examinations rather than encouraging critical thinking about existing challenges and issues (Sim & Print, 2005c).

The most recent revision to the citizenship education curriculum in Singapore was published in 2020, renaming the syllabus as Character and Citizenship Education (CCE) and it was implemented in 2021. The new CCE syllabus combines the previous NE with social and emotional learning, targeted at character building through social relationships and an emphasis on societal contribution in reflection of global goals towards twenty-first century skills and global citizenship (MOE, 2020). The syllabus outlined states that CCE should be a school wide approach in encouraging active and morally upright citizens, using the terms active and moral synonymously. It's goals are stated as (MOE, 2020: 8):

> " a) Good character: Have a sound moral compass and a strong sense of right and wrong, think critically and ethically, be discerning in judgment, take responsibility for choices and actions, be caring towards others and strive for excellence; Resilience and social-emotional well-being: Have a balanced sense of self, form healthy relationships, be resilient when faced with challenges, find meaning in life, and have a sense of gratitude and appreciation;

> b) Future readiness: Have a sense of purpose in life, develop the dispositions of adaptability and lifelong learning so as to be able to navigate education and career pathways purposefully and take on the challenges of the future, including the world of work and life; and
>
> c) Active citizenship: Develop a strong national identity based on a sense of belonging to the nation, a sense of hope in themselves and the future, an awareness of the reality of Singapore's vulnerabilities and constraints, and the will to act on improving the lives of others, and building a future for our nation''

While in the MOE (2020) syllabus there is a lot of emphasis on critical thinking, student-led discussions, and learning, I insist that is important to examine also the implementation of the syllabus through the perspective of policy actors such as teachers and students. In my reading of the syllabus, I also noticed there is much vagueness in the writing of syllabus through which morality: "right'' and "wrong'', is assumed to be universally shared in the state's prescription.

Methodology

Since the institutionalisation and normalisation of citizens' relationship to the state is central to this investigation, I intended to explore two subunits of subjects and work towards analysing the data drawn from both subunits through an embedded case study methodology. Embedded case studies often involve multiple objects and units of analysis that could be investigated through subunits that can be then used to compare and contrast (Scholz & Tietje, 2002). This research exploring the role education plays in socialising the state's norms of citizenship utilises the embedded case study method to explore the two identified subunits broadly labelled "the educators'' and "the students''.

This research project utilises qualitative methods to draw understanding regarding the ways in which educators as cultural workers, and citizens, through their interactions with education and the school construct their perceptions and relations to the state. Qualitative research allows for flexibility and less structured data collection through which thematic analyses could serve to help organise and frame the data (Guest et. al., 2012). Through semi-structured interviews, I was able to gain deeper insight into the inner worlds of my participants and understand their perspectives regarding how they view themselves in relation to the state and their roles in reproducing or countering the hegemonic narrative perpetuated within the state (Weiss, 1995). Through the in-depth interviews, I was able to extract their opinions, reflections, and interpretations through their lens (Weiss, 1995) through which I draw on an apply a thematic approach to unpack and understand them. A thematic approach serves the research to draw common experiences and reflections of the research participants to unpack the sentiments various individuals in each subunit derive through their experiences and interaction with education and the state (Guest et. al., 2012). While I was unable to do interviews with most of my informants from the subunit of educators and am limited to the answers reflected in the surveys, the mix of multiple choice and open-ended answers helped to draw further insight and understanding as to why people answered the way they do (Jones et. Al., 2013). The limitations to surveys, however, is that they might not provide representative data, especially with the small number retrieved through this research project (Jones et. Al., 2013). What it does though, is to supplement the analysis of my interviews to understand the extent other educators might reflect or disagree with sentiments shared by the educators in the interview. I have also chosen to not include archival research as I was limited with my access to such resources. Therefore, I have decided that for the scope of this investigation I aim to only centre and focus on the accounts of my informants. However, future research could explore further the interpretations these subunits have of the policy and syllabi documents. Ultimately however, despite the limitations, through the use of embedded case studies, I aimed to have crafted an understanding of the

various subunits that could serve for comparison and contrast towards understanding the larger issue of the role education plays in constructing the relationship between state and citizens (Scholz & Tietje, 2002).

The first subunit identified are educators of state schools. The research aimed to target educators of varying lengths of teaching experience, organisational positions (I.e., trainee teachers, subject teachers, department heads, and principals), and educators from varying institutional level (I.e., primary education, secondary education, and junior college education) as research subjects. As educators employed and trained by the state, they are also instruments of the state apparatus. Hence, through identifying them as a subunit, I had hoped to unpack how they view their roles in relation to building the 'good citizen' through education, the role of education/ the school and how they perceived the political engagement of their students. In exploring the field of educators, I faced two challenges. Firstly, many educators I approached were cautious of being part of a research project that might be potentially critical of the state, stating that they were unsure of their ability to participate as workers of the state and would require approvals from their school principals despite the assured anonymity of their involvement. This alluded me to some ways through which the engineering of hegemony is constructed into the thought processes of educators in creating a tacit acceptance towards the state's regime. Secondly, after gaining approvals from principals, many teachers found the research period unfavourable to their timeline as many had informed me the period of January to March is often a period when schools are packed with activities and competitions, not allowing them time or space to participate in a lengthy interview. Therefore, with the clock ticking towards the deadline of my fieldwork, I decided to switch from solely conducting interviews to including surveys which could further assure the anonymity of educators' identities while also allowing them to spend less time on the survey.

The survey yielded interesting results and had reached educators from various teaching experiences and institutions, it had only received thirteen responses. I have considered the access to teachers and their expressed caution towards responding to my research as a potential reason for the low number of respondents. In addition, I would speculate, as per the conversations in the interviews, that MOE educators in Singapore are tasked with juggling multiple demands and hence participating in a research project may not be a priority towards their time.

As for the interviews, I had four informants of teaching experiences varying from two to twenty years from multiple educational institutions and administrative positions. Of these four, three were working in secondary schools and one was an educator in a pre-university institute. These interviews were held online and included a series of questions that explored their personal background and political views/ engagement; their perspectives of citizenship; and their perception of students' interactions with civic and social issues.

The second subunit identified was broadly called the ''student'' group. However, rather than looking at students who are still in education, I targeted adults in Singapore who have spent all of the state's compulsory schooling years in MOE schools. In doing so, I drew on their recollections of their interactions with citizenship education and how it has impacted their relationship to the state and their construction of citizenship. This however failed to account for and include students who have experienced the most recent (2021) implemented changes to the citizenship education syllabus. The eleven informants from this subunit interviewed have completed their compulsory schooling between the years of 1983 – 2019; hail from various racial ethnic groups in Singapore; attended different schools; and are of various socio-economic backgrounds. While my scope of informants might capture a snapshot of the population in Singapore, it is limited to individuals who have completed compulsory schooling in Singapore and may not account for those who did not spend most of their lives and childhoods in Singapore,

limiting the research's scope of understanding. The questions in the interview broadly focused on unpacking their understandings of what a "good Singaporean'' was; what they believed to be the duties of the "Singaporean citizen'' and the state; as well as how compulsory schooling influenced their present political participation.

Scholz & Tietje (2002) argue that a good, embedded case study would involve a plethora of research activities that include participant observations, surveys, interviews, focus groups, and archival records. However, due to the geographical limitations, financial limitations (I was based in Vienna during the time of the research), and the limited scope and timeline of this research project, I was limited in my research activities, choosing to mainly rely on semi-structured interviews for both subunits and an added survey for the subunit of educators due to limitations faced when I entered the field.

Results and Discussion

In the following chapter, I unpack the results of the interviews and surveys gathered from informants of both subunits and develop a discussion that compares and contrasts the data from the subunit of educators and students. This chapter constructs a discussion that draws from both subunits to develop my analysis of the role education plays in maintaining the hegemonic rule of the state. All the names used in the following are pseudonyms.

In this chapter, I explore the ways in which the state, citizenship, and state-citizenship relationships are constructed with a specific focus on the role of education. In doing so, I elaborate on the ways that educators as cultural workers draw tensions from their interpellation as citizens and cultural workers. I also examine how citizens simultaneously reject and reproduce the narratives of the state through the lens of Gramsci (1999), Althusser (1970) and

Foucault (Rose, 2011; Lemke, 2001; Daldal, 2014). Finally, I draw on Foucault's (2007) scholarship of counter conducts to understand how citizens as teachers and students through their individual actions, interpretations and perceptions of the state might etch at the "cracks'' of Singapore's "perfect hegemony''.

Subunit: Educators (Results from Interviews and Surveys)

This subunit's data consists of thirteen survey responses and four semi-structured interviews. The informants of this subunit had teaching experiences between two to twenty years, covering a range of trainee teachers, subject teachers, department leaders, and school administration across various levels of state education (I.e., primary education, secondary education, and pre-University education[1]). The survey is used as supporting information and data to the results drawn from the interviewees. The survey's scope covered five Primary school teachers, five Secondary school teachers, and three Pre-University teachers. Most of the survey respondents were subject teachers while a smaller portion were department heads, and one is currently in teacher training. The subjects educators of the survey responses taught covered a range of subjects such as English, Natural Sciences, Second Languages[2], Social Studies, Humanities, and other unspecified subjects in the survey. The interviews covered one teacher of a pre-university institution, two subject teachers from secondary schools and a principal of a secondary school. All the interviewees during the time of the data collection were working in

[1] Only Primary and Secondary education are part of compulsory schooling. Pre-University education is organized by the state but requires good results in one's Secondary school leaving examinations ('O'-level examinations) to be enrolled.

[2] Second languages taught in school follow the CMIO classification adopted by the Singaporean state. Students categorised as ''Chinese'', ''Malay'', and ''Indian'' are assigned to Mandarin, Bahasa Melayu, and Tamil lessons respectively. Students who fall into the categorisation of ''Others'' are offered choices between the three languages. Other languages are available to students to study as a second language should their families opt against the default system. However most schools only offer these three languages and students who would like to study other languages may have to attend such classes externally.

different schools. One was from an elite school while the others were considered regular everyday schools. To share the results of the educator subunit, I will be disclosing the results of the survey alongside with how it compares and supports the results of the interviews.

Educators' Motivations: Pragmatism and Moral Citizenship

When asked about their reasons for becoming educators, survey respondents had varied answers which I have grouped into two broad categories. Those who mentioned "contributing back to society'', "making a difference'', and "helping others'' accounted for over half of the respondents while a small group of respondents highlighted choosing education as a career path as pragmatic, stating "stability'' as their main reason. The interviewees' responses were not too different. The following two interviewees shared their reasons of choosing education as a career choice being linked to their desire to make a difference in the lives of students:

> "It is nice to teach people when you see them learn and enjoy themselves in terms of learning and they don't see it as a chore...Teaching is fulfilling, especially when you teach those that people tend to give up on. When you do put in the effort with them, you can really watch them grow.'' (James, Secondary School)

> "I have a strong intention to impact students. I have a vision in mind for what kind of educator I wanted to be, and I believe that imparting values through sports was an important reason why I chose to become an educator instead of an athlete. Kids these days don't really have much family time and so I think the school makes a huge difference regarding how children are nurtured'' (Lilla, Secondary School)

The following two respondents demonstrated their career choice was connected to the pragmatism and stability of the field of education, reflecting the ideology of pragmatism in Singapore in the construction of citizenry.

> "I really loved history and naturally if you are passionate about history, you either write a book as a historian or you teach. That is why I decided to explore being a teacher and I have been an educator since.'' (Kenneth, Secondary School)

> "I was working overseas and for personal reasons, I had to relocate back to Singapore, and I was looking for something more stable and teaching seemed to offer that stability.'' (Suqin, Pre-University Institute)

Educator's Construction of Citizenship

As premise towards understanding the construction of citizenship in the educators' minds, they were asked to share what they thought makes a good citizen. Educators that used the terms ''participative'' and ''contributes towards development or society'' accounted for almost half of the answers which some of the interviewees also stated. These interviews also seem to highlight social citizenship alongside contributing to society, seemingly stating that non-economic contributions to society should be based on social relationships and values.

> "Moral and social values are what makes people good citizens, especially towards each other socially.'' (Lilla, Secondary School)

> "A good citizen is one that finds a way to play a part in contributing to the country they live in be it socially or economically. Any way they see fit for the country they live in to make it a better place.''
> (Kenneth, Secondary School)

> "A good citizen should treat each other and everyone in the country equally and nice.''
> (James, Secondary School)

The notion of social citizenship was also highlighted by a small group of the survey respondents through stating terms such as "actions towards others'' and "socially responsible''. Other responses included notions of pride, obedience, and emotional connections to the state. The distribution of these survey responses was equally spread amongst the different levels of schooling surveyed. One interesting response from an interviewee was that the pre-University educator highlighted critical thinking as one of the markers of a good citizen, reflecting the scholarship of Tan (2019) that the tracked education seems to position students in different educational attainment and achievements to be of different calibres of citizens.

> "A good citizen is someone who is informed about Singapore's position in the world and has a discerning relationship questioning the nation state.''
> (Suqin, Pre-University Institute)

One of the final questions of both the interview and survey asked what educators thought made a good Singaporean and their answers were similar to their answers to the question regarding what makes a good citizen. Only one educator had a varying answer, pointing out that being a good Singaporean is a unique fabric of existence:

> "Being a good Singaporean is rather unique, it's not just being a good citizen which I had answered earlier. Singapore is a very small nation with a lack of

> resources and almost no indigenous population... So being a good Singaporean might come with a lot more understanding and knowledge as to how to make one's mark in this place.''
> (Kenneth, Secondary School)

The state definition as outlined in the latest document for citizenship education (MOE, 2021) seem to mirror much of what the educators have stated. In the document, a "good moral compass'' was considered an important aspect of citizenship as well as searching for meaning through contributing to society both economically and socially. What differs however, is that the teachers seem to highlight social citizenship and responsibility to each other over responsibility towards the state. While the document seems to emphasize the contributions, a good citizen should make toward the state over social citizenship, the educators interviewed seem to highlight social and global citizenship over students' "duty'' towards the state. Thus, demonstrating that policy actors in implementing policies have some freedom and space to reject the definitions of the state through exercising their own interpretations. Therefore, while teachers may be hailed as cultural workers, they may also reject the state through their individual actions, reflecting Foucault's (2007) notion of counter conducts. However, it would be too simplistic to state that educators were constantly and consciously rejecting the state as their interpretations may also serve to reproduce the ruling ideologies.

Educators' Perceptions and Practices of Citizenship Education

When it came to questions regarding whether education could play a bigger role in developing good citizens, respondents were more divided. Two out of three of the pre-university educator's surveys stated they disagreed that the school could play a larger role while one of the primary school educators and one of the secondary school educators expressed neutrality towards the

issue. The high percentage level of disagreement from pre-university educators could be explained through the interview through which the pre-university teacher expressed students in pre-university were given multiple platforms to engage and express themselves politically as they were often thought of as future leaders of Singapore. Therefore, pre-university educators may feel that schools already do play a large role in developing students' citizenry.

> "Basically, the people that they are looking to staff public service would primarily come from pre-university institutions so that could be one reason why they give so much more opportunities to engage in such issues, even to the extent of the ministerial visits... students through their pre-university seminars get to debate on a social or political issue and think of solutions which they eventually present to ministers.''
> (Suqin, Pre-university institute)

What I found interesting, which was also reflected in the interviews with educators is that many of the secondary school educators in secondary schools either disagreed or were neutral as to whether citizenship education is a goal they aimed to achieve in their teaching. While most of the teachers in the Pre-university group and primary school group agreed or strongly agreed that citizenship education is something they aim and strive towards in their teaching, less than half of secondary school educators agreed. In the interviews, secondary school educators explained this goal as difficult due to the demands of their job scope, reiterating that the demands of a neo-liberal meritocratic state design may not leave room for genuine and critical engagement with one's citizenry.

> "There is always so much to do and new things are constantly being introduced such as the demands of home-based learning, co-curricular activities, and all that. It is no longer just going to class to teach, give homework and leave. There are pre-readings for teachers to do, assigning online and offline homework and

> constant reviews. Teachers need to do everything these days so when it comes to citizenship education, even with the new CCE timeslot given in class, most teachers wouldn't take the time to go through it unless they are very interested in it themselves.''
> (James, Secondary school)

> "I think it is very personal to each teacher whether or not they discuss citizenship education or social and civic issues. For me, I am interested in sports so I always end up talking more about sports with them but teachers with very good general knowledge might facilitate such discussions. So, I don't think it is very uniformed. We do have time set aside for CCE lessons, but some teachers just want to complete the task without really discussing further.''
> (Lilla, Secondary school)

The section of the survey pertaining the perception of students' engagement with social and civic issues garnered more divided responses. While most educators agreed that their students are aware of social and civic issues, a small number of respondents from Primary and Secondary schools stated that they were neutral in the opinions of their students' knowledge of social and civic issues. A small number of respondents disagreed that their students are engaged with social and civic issues while a few respondents marked 'neutral'. The surveys supported sentiments in the interviews with the educators when they expressed that most of the students they know seem to be unaware or uninterested in engaging with social and civic issues. Furthermore, these teachers once again reemphasized the demands of the neo-liberal system as something that may hinder critical engagement with one's citizenry. In doing so, through the interviews, it is demonstrated that both teachers and students face multiple barriers engaging or encouraging critical engagement with social and civic issues.

> "None of the students seem to care too much about social and civic issues especially if it is not tested. It is very exam based. Especially in Social Studies. They just learn and memorise for the exam so if you give them something that isn't being taught in class, they wont know what to do.'' (James, Secondary School)

> "Students are aware of issues but they might not be very engaged with them. I think it really depends on their age too. Younger students might not care as much and maybe they will be more interested when they are older. There are a lot of programs available for students to engage both in and out of the classroom but in the end some students will just be more focused on their academic studies.'' (Kenneth, Secondary school)

While most of the respondents felt that the school provided adequate knowledge for students regarding social and civic issues, some respondents were unconvinced. The biggest deviation arrived amongst the secondary educators. Only primary school educators had unanimously agreed that students gained adequate knowledge about social and civic issues through the school. In contrast, approximately three quarters of respondents felt that their students gained their knowledge about social and civic issues through external sources with many agreeing that their students developed their knowledge through external online and digital sources not provided by the school. This is reflected strongly in the interviewees' responses too. The teachers interviewed shared that students seemed to be getting much of their information online, indicating concern over how students are consuming the information.

> "Many of our students want their voices to be heard both online and offline so we are trying to educate them to be more constructive and discerning with the ways they interact online with information especially since that is where they seem to get most of their information and interaction with social and civic issues

most through.''

(Kenneth, Secondary School)

> "Students don't read the newspapers these days. There is so much fake news and misinformation going around on other social media websites which are not reputable but students tend to be more into these sources.'' (James, Secondary School)

Many of the teachers agreed that resources in the formal education have helped their students develop their knowledge and engagement of social and civic issues. All of the primary school and pre-university educators surveyed indicated positively towards their opinions regarding the use of extra-curricular activities to develop students' knowledge and engagement toward social and civic issues while secondary school educators were less enthusiastic. The interviewees however seem to differ in their opinion regarding the responses to the survey, indicating that there are many spaces available to students in the formal and extracurricular structure of the school for students to engage in social and civic activities. This might suggest that ultimately, spaces for citizenship education are co-constructed and maintained by policy actors (in this case, the educators) and like the works of Moi (2017) & Sim & Print (2005c), educators practice of educating social and civic issues are dependent on their personal engagement.

> "I am heading a uniformed group co-curricular activity so students who are part of it naturally get taught citizenship education through the activities and lessons that we plan.'' (James, Secondary School)

> "Students are given opportunities through the extra-curricular activities outside of classrooms called ''Values in Action'' (VIA). Through the VIA program students volunteer and advocate for social and civic issues that matter to them.'' (Kenneth, Secondary School).

Respondents in both the surveys and interviews were less optimistic regarding whether the school is effective in preparing students for elections. Like the previous statement, more educators were unoptimistic that students were aware of the election process. When asked if students are aware of the election process, over half either disagreed or were neutral. The primary school educators demonstrated a majority response towards neutral. This is perhaps due to the age gap between primary school students and the legal voting age in Singapore (21 years old), it is less of a priority for primary school students to understand the election process. Many of the teachers in secondary schools, however, were not agreeable that their students were aware of the election process with only one educator agreeing with the statement. Surprisingly, all the pre-university teachers indicated that they believed their students were aware of the election process, reflecting present literature (Sim & Print, 2005c) indicating that pre-University students are educated more regarding the political processes of the state. However, it could also be due to their age as Pre-University students are much closer in age to the legal voting age in Singapore.

In the survey, when educators were asked about the ways schools and education support students' knowledge and engagement of civic issues, most responses highlighted the examinable subject in the formal curriculum, social studies, reflecting previous scholarship (Moi, 2017; Sim & Adler, 2004; Sim & Print, 2005c) and the interviewees' responses. Another small number of respondents described the use of current affairs for discussion in classroom settings. One respondent questioned the support towards teachers in educating students on social and civic issues stating a mismatch in policy goals and realities of policy actors.

> " How about empowering the educators first? I know of quite a few very sound initiatives shared across policy makers/education boards/academic seminars. On the other hand, the very person who is delivering all the National Education/civic engagement on the daily basis, is not aware of such roadmaps or teaching

resources.''

(Survey respondent, Primary School)

The interviewees also added that extra-curricular activities and allocated timeslots for CCE lessons were spaces through which the schools support their students' knowledge and engagement with social and civic issues.

Through the neo-liberal arguments that frame students' relationship to political and social engagement, it is evident that the ruling ideology of meritocracy and technocracy is a mechanism utilized to maintain the hegemonic regime of the state. Through the system of high-stakes examinations, it seems that students are not given or allowed more space to challenge the state. Thus, being hailed into their position as students with academic duties, in reflection of their future roles of citizens with economic duties. In this logic, students are inculcated into submission to the state through the mechanisms of schooling and meritocratic ideology, hindering deeper criticality and engagement with political and social issues. Furthermore, knowledge of social and civic issues is filtered through the school as an apparatus of the state, reproducing the ideologies of the state that disciplines masses into the social and cultural norms of the elites through encouraging homogeneity via centralized citizenship education.

Subunit: Students (Results from 11 interviews)

This subunit consists of eleven interviewees who have completed all of their compulsory schooling years in Singaporean state schools. At the point of the research project, the interviewees have completed their compulsory schooling from between 1983- 2019. Most of the respondents have attended different schools and come from a variety of socio-economic groups in Singapore. With this subunit, I draw on their experiences as citizens and students to

understand their interpretations and constructions of citizenship in relation to their educational memories.

Students' Interpretations and Constructions of Citizenship

Firstly, in discussion of their definitions of citizenship, the informants tend to give narrow definitions such as legal citizenship, lawfulness, and economic/ social contribution.

> "Citizenship is where your home and your domicile is at and being a good citizen would mean contributing back to the society through taxes or voluntary work.'' (Abed)

> "Citizenship is related to the ID or passport that you have. If you have the status of a Singaporean, then you are one and this entitles you to some privileges. So a good citizen would help in maintaining all of these privileges by maybe following the law and staying within the lines.'' (Jiemin)

However, there are also a few informants who highlighted the sense of conformity as their definition of citizenship while still reiterating the social structure as where good citizenry lies.

> "I think in my opinion, I would say belonging. I don't want to give a textbook answer of it being like you were born in a certain country because I think it goes beyond that. Like where you belong and where you define as home. But being a good citizen is about conforming to the rules and social norms of the nation even if it's coerced.'' (Lillian)

> "I think it is a sense of identity and how you view yourself in society and how society views you. But within that, I think it is also how the government has

carved your place out in this society.'' (Weijun)

These definitions all highlight the state's role in relation to the construction of citizenship. The state's presence is central to how citizenship is conceived as a relationship formed between the state and citizens' responsibility or duties towards each other. This brings me to discuss the state-citizen relationship as constructed by my interlocutors.

Students' Construction of State-Citizen Relationships

The interlocutors located the state-citizen relationship through various lenses but the most dominant of all which reiterates present scholarship is that the state is located in political parties, namely the dominant incumbent party, PAP. This notion of the state being located in PAP is also highlighted in their interactions of narratives inculcated to them through schooling.

> "We don't really learn about politics in school. What you learn in school and in social studies always favours PAP but you don't really learn what actually goes on. You only learn what good the PAP has done for Singapore and there isnt really space to discuss this in school.'' (Annabelle)

> "The public service and the PAP are very different, but I think when people talk about *the government,* they often mean PAP.'' (Royston)

Like the scholarship of Tan (2012) and Chua (2010), the ideology of pragmatism is prominent in the understandings of state-citizen relationships amongst the interlocutors. The relationship between the state and the citizen is perceived to be transactional and business-like through

which citizens abide by the rules and structures set in place by the state in return for global economic opportunities and privileges. There seem to be high trust in the state as an economic power. Despite all the interlocutors perceiving the interactions with the state as coercive, many still decide that such a transactional relationship is beneficial towards the economic interests of the state and citizens. Thus, simultaneously rejecting the structure constructed by the state for the citizens in their private spheres through individual discontent but ultimately reproducing the state through a general weakened public dissent towards the state's coercion.

> "I think the government facilitates provisions to the citizens, providing the necessary means of services necessary for citizens to function and have a perceived quality of life. So I would say it is a very transactional relationship where the government provides services to the citizens, and we adhere to the rules and regulations set by them to receive these privileges.'' (Elvira)

> "What I appreciate about the Singaporean government is that they of put a lot of emphasis on stability. Political, economic and social stability. Unlike other places, we don't see internal riots or wars, so I think we need to appreciate that about our government. But that is not to say that we can disregard the fact that in Singapore, we still have inequality which I think we have a social responsibility to contribute back to, especially for the wealthy to be taxed more to help the lower income groups.'' (Betty)

> "I think the status quo is very comfortable for everyone so no one wants to change. The ruling party (PAP) has made things very comfortable for everyone and I think a lot of people are too comfortable to want to seek change or see the

point of improvement.''

(Jiemin)

Specifically, the state-citizen relationship was likened to an authoritarian parent-child relationship through which the ''child's''/ citizen's obedience and compliance is rewarded by the "parent's''/ state's support and provisions.

> "So, the Singaporean government is known to be paternalistic. They behave like a parent and takes care of the citizens. In a way, we are provided with a lot and we expect a lot from the government... But then again, they are also very restrictive and you have to live within the preset lines drawn by the state.''
> (Jiemin)

However, one interviewee also pointed out that there is generational difference between citizens' relationship to the state, highlighting that youths today tend to lean towards a growing distrust towards the state.

> "I think in my age group (mid-fifties), there is an understanding that to be a good citizen, you have to help maintain the status quo. There is also a high respect for minsters and policies because of the strife that they had to face when Singapore was not as economically strong. But the younger generation these days are more critical and skeptical, I think it is also because there is no longer this need for immediate survival which allows them a broader perception of what the state could do.''
> (Betty)

Students' Perceptions of State Narratives and Spaces of Engagement

Just like the growing distrust towards the state, there seems to be a growing distrust and discontentment towards the narratives and socialization of citizens through state apparatuses such as education. Interviewees perceived the narratives from schools as pro-PAP and criticized the problematics of teaching citizenship as an examinable subject (social studies), stating that in the context of high stakes examinations amid a meritocratic/ technocratic system, they were not encouraged to think for themselves, but rather taught to regurgitate pre-set "correct'' answers which favoured the state. These contrast the statements of the educators in which they expressed students tended to be disinterested and only regurgitate the textbook answers while here, students seem to blame the school and educators for this outcome. Additionally, it seems that students were often not taught the political processes of the state and the state is enacted upon them, reemphasizing the illiberal democracy that the Singaporean state has been criticized for (Barr, 2000).

> "They do teach us through social studies how the government works, why they are successful, and what we can do to be a responsible citizen. But I don't think they teach you much about the political processes. In the social studies classes, it is not very in depth knowledge about Singapore's social and political issues. I tend to get such information online instead.'' (Wilbur)

> "In Secondary schools, you tend to get a very baseline understanding of why Singapore operates in a certain way through social studies lessons, and civics , and moral education... but we were not really taught to question it. We were just taught to regurgitate that information in exam papers.'' (Lillian)

> "To be a perfect Singaporean student (in the eyes of the state), it is easiest to blindly accept whatever the school teaches you. At least that is the good students

> as prescribed by the government.''
> (Anika)

However, interlocutors have also mentioned that through their interactions with peers of different socioeconomic statuses and racial ethnic groups in schools, they were able to learn more about social and civic issues that impact their friends and in turn, question the state's narratives regarding these issues.

> "If I were to contextualize my schooling experiences, I got to interact with people of different socioeconomic backgrounds and understand through my friends' experiences the struggles they go through. So I would say my interactions with people through schooling helped me learn and question different social issues in Singapore.''
> (Hafiz)

On the other hand, some interlocutors found that the school was of a different plane of existence in the fabric of the state as they stated many of the inequalities like racist treatments were only experienced after they finished schooling. Their discontentment with the state's narrative laid with the impression that schools portrayed an idealistic version of Singapore that they later came to learn was not true.

> "I think in schools, there wasn't much understanding on social issues. There is a very basic understanding, but you are still living in a bubble.''
> (Lillian)

> "The state keeps refusing to acknowledge that there are such things as racism. They pretend it does not exist and it delegitimizes my experiences. In school, that was how they seemed to teach us though. I did not really experience racism until I was out looking for jobs or doing my internships and I think such issues

are not discussed in schools, keeping me in a bubble.'' (Anika, Indian)

The distrust towards the state extends beyond education as a state apparatus. Increasingly, the interlocutors are leaning towards alternative sources for information, choosing to rely on social media platforms over newspapers. In the impressions of the interviewees, newspapers have been co-opted by the state to promote their ideologies and censor dissenting opinions. Additionally, some of the respondents have also noted that by drawing their information through social media, they were able to also filter opinions that suited their political outlook on the political spectrum.

"I often get my information through Reddit, and sometimes Instagram... There are a lot of people that I follow, and I think they share the same mindset as I do. Not to make it sound like an echo chamber but because we come from similar backgrounds, we tend to be more acute to the left leaning side of information...As we know, most of the media companies are paid off by the government so there isn't much freedom. When we do have that bit of freedom for dissenting opinions, they tend to get shut down or get restricted by the government in their speech.'' (Lillian)

"I generally get my information from social media because a lot of our (Singaporean) newspaper articles and everything is quite controlled by our state media so I mean, if you are only going to read things like that, your views tend to be quite narrow. But I think they are also trying to control our social media nowadays... Like you are not allowed to put out things like that (opinions that are too critical of PAP) on social media here in Singapore.'' (Anika)

However, despite the mistrust for state co-opted sources of information and the pessimism towards censorship in Singapore, some of the interviewees did not share this sentiment and highlighted multiple platforms where they state they were able to voice their concerns. Stating also that they perceived social media as an accessible space in the public sphere to express their concerns with social and civic issues.

> "There are many different channels to voice your opinions. Like for example, maybe our MP (member of parliament) meet-the-people session, you could speak to them to discuss what you want improved and I think they do listen to us. If not, you could also garner a crowd on social media to fight for what's right.''
>
> (Wilbur)

Some of the interlocutors who have completed their tertiary education abroad also stated they felt they were better equipped to criticise the state due to the dissenting perspectives they were given the space to explore with some distance from the state.

> *"*But I think for me, I'm educated differently because I was educated in Australia. So I was taught to be very critical, especially since Australians tend to challenge those in power.''
>
> (Betty)

> "My university program was done overseas and I got to develop my perspectives of social issues. It was not just localised, and it was not just about Singapore's social issues. I think the broader perspective I obtained helped me to draw a broader understanding of Singapore's social issues in the global context.''
>
> (Jiemin)

Despite the growing discontentment and cautious criticism towards the state, the question for me returns to the notion of why it is so difficult to enact change or for citizens to reject the state. While the discussion earlier points to the social contract between state and citizens that maintains the hegemonic relationship of dependency, there are further reasons highlighted by individuals as to why they have chosen not to engage too deeply with social and civic issues.

Many of them highlighted the fears and consequences of expressing their dissenting opinions, especially if they were working in public service. Others highlighted fatigue as the main reason why they do not engage with social and civic issues. The interlocutors stated that often times, they were too tired from the demands of their work to further employ their time and energy in engaging with social issues. Furthermore, their fatigue translated into their feelings of helplessness.

> *"*If I am working eight to six, then I don't have much time to just sit down and read stuff and ponder about it. I am also employed as a government official as a civil servant. So I do read about these policies but I don't think I am really allowed to disagree with it and I can't really voice my opinions. So in a way, I think why should I bother if I can't even do anything about it. Maybe if I am no longer a government worker, then maybe I might be more vocal about it. But I still have a job and I don't want to lose my job.'' (Abed)

> "When I was in school I was a lot more engaged with social and public issues but you know, when you start working, you don't really get a chance to read the news because every day you come home and feel tired. '' (Jiemin)

Tension of Teachers as Cultural Workers and Citizens

While it is clearly shown here that educational spaces are used to perpetuate national values and maintain social order, there is a tension between the educators' roles as cultural workers and their identities as individuals and citizens. While the formal educational goals determine the tasks of teachers as cultural workers dictate that they should inculcate in students the moral values and citizenship education outlined by the state, teachers as individuals and policy actors may still hold some space within their classroom settings to reject the demands of the state. While some of the interviewees seem to account for educators not engaging students in the citizenship education outlined by the state, it could also be argued that it is a form of counter conduct through which teachers are rejecting their role as a cultural worker but rather, establishing their personal interests instead.

However, it is too simple to state that teachers consciously reject the state through working on their personal interests. Ultimately, the ideology of the state promotes meritocracy and technocracy. By rejecting the state's explicit citizenship education goals in the classroom in favour of academic subjects amid the highly competitive meritocratic education system, teachers may still be reproducing the state's structure in its ideology.

On the other hand, it seems as though educators are trying to imbue critical thinking and social citizenship into their students which speaks towards a counter conduct that could actively seek to question the interpellation of teachers and students as subjects of the state. However, while educators may try to imbue that into students, it seems as though the demands of the high-stakes examinations might still train students into providing the "correct'' answer as noted by the interviewees in the "student'' subunit. There are teachers who also noted in the interviews that they are not sure how engaged or interested their students are especially in schools that are not

classed in the elite tracks. In turn, legitimising and maintaining a space that does not engage students more deeply in social and civic issues.

Through the interviews, tension between the educator's role as a cultural worker and their position as citizens could be perceived. While many of them hold their own ideas about the state, they seem to work within the boundaries of the educational space and do not share about their personal political outlook with their students. This tension maintains the divide between citizens through their interpellated roles within the structure of the state that mirrors the vertical politics of the state and the citizen. As the data and my literature review has established over and over again, the state of Singapore operates vertically and paternalistically in which the state looks after the people and provides pragmatic and economic comforts and asks for obedience in return. While some of the informants from the "student'' subunit have pointed out that the school seemed like a separate space from society and operates on its own plane of existence, I would argue that the school is a reflection of how the state intends to create a space that reflects its ideals. While the school might be different in reality to the outside world according to the interviewees of the student subunit, it is a space that centres the state and aims to prepare students for their future participation, or in the words of informants from both subunits, "contribute to society''. Just as the vertical politics of the state demands the obedience of the citizens in return for its provisions, educators and the school (representatives of the state) reflect this dynamic with their students through the structure of the school even though some teachers attempt to reject this dynamic. Therefore, teachers in their role as cultural workers either subconsciously or consciously are in tension with their selves as citizens and individuals.

The Construction and Maintenance of Perfect Hegemony

The question of this research lies in how the manifestations and constructions of hegemony in Singapore becomes normalized? Through discussions with the informants, it seems that while education plays a large role as an ideological state apparatus, many informants of the "student'' subunit seem to leave their schooling experiences simultaneously questioning and reproducing the narratives expounded to them through the school.

However, what struck me is the notion of "contribution back to society'' that was reiterated by almost every informant of both subunits. While their definitions of "contributions'' might differ, it seems as though there is a notion of exchange citizens have with the state and each other. This is further concretized through the school's formal and hidden curriculum. The idea of contributing back to society through the citizenship education curriculum over time has shown that there is a notion to contribute either through social citizenship or through neo-liberal citizenship. Through the morals and values education, and related activities, students are inculcated to the narrative that states it is their duty to serve their fellow citizens. Through the high-stakes examinations, students are taught to regurgitate the narratives of the state as "correct'' answers, leaving them little space to question the position of the state. Informants have also noted that any attempts in questioning the state was disciplined out of them, a statement that seems to differ with what the teachers seem to relay. In combination with each other, the citizenship education and social studies curriculum as highlighted by the informants seem to create an image of the state that disciplines the citizen into perceiving the state as a knowing authority. Simultaneously, citizenship education also attributes the needs of society as a project of social citizenship rather than needs for structural and systemic change.

While I have mentioned dynamics of the vertical politics between state and citizen in the previous section, I want to highlight in this section the ways that citizens as individuals hold up the order of the hegemonic rule established by the state. While the informants generally display some degree of rejection for the state, there is also a degree of reproduction of state narratives.

This is evidenced in several ways. Firstly, educators were apprehensive and hesitant about participating in the research project for fear that their perspectives might land them in trouble, choosing to avoid participation in fear of potential repercussions. This sentiment is also reflected in the statements by individuals from the student subunit who were also working in public service. They stated they were limited in their ability to be too overtly critical against the state for fear of losing their jobs and income.

Secondly, one of the common narratives seems to be repeated amongst both subunits is the notion of pragmatism. Informants from both subunits seem to be aware that there is much for the state to work on through their discussions of inequalities and social issues that they are concerned over. However, they have also stated that there is limited mental, emotional, and physical space that they are able to commit towards engaging with social issues given the demands of a highly competitive neo-liberal reality of the state. As many of the informants have mentioned, they often have no time or mental space to consciously and actively engage with rejecting the state.

While Foucault's (2007) theory of counter conducts is helpful in outlining everyday ways one can reject the hegemonic engineering of the state, often times the economic demands of a highly competitive and neo-liberal state disallows the space for individuals to truly engage with counter conducts. As some of the informants have highlighted, they do not see the ability to risk their economic and material comforts (I.e., their employment) through being too overt about rejecting the state.

Cracks in the Hegemonic State through the Lens of Social Media

Social media seemed to be the space through which both subunits have expressed youths and students engage socially and politically through despite the doubts expressed by some of the

informants from the "educator'' subunit. Through the sentiments expressed by the "student'' subunit however, it seems that citizens feel their speech and opinions are governed very closely and many feel they have limited spaces to express their criticisms towards the state. More importantly, despite formalized spaces such as meet-the-ministers sessions and state-managed platforms where some interviewees have noted might give some space for expressing their opinions, there is a sense of mistrust for such spaces by the informants. Many of their sentiments seem to reflect that they perceive such spaces to be uncritical, undemocratic, and while there is limited space to discuss social issues, it ultimately favours the state. Therefore, many of them turn to social media sites for alternative voices and alternative sources of information regarding social and civic issues, perceiving such spaces as far more critical and inclusive.

While there is much literature on the limitations and risks of digital democracy, I do not intend to focus on them. More specifically, I wanted to highlight the mistrust of formalized spaces and observe how social media could be understood as where the cracks of Singapore's "perfect hegemonic engineering'' might be challenged through. While the state has tightly limited public demonstrations through strict laws and the negative narratives, people are finding spaces through online platforms for their voices to be heard. While there is a risk of creating an echo chamber, it also poses the potential for citizens to gather digitally when physical gatherings surrounding political issues are often limited or inaccessible to the wider population. Therefore, through this research, I propose that further investigations should consider where the cracks lie and chip away at them further to explore the way social movements operate despite the tight controls of the Singaporean state.

Limitations and Implications

This research captures a snapshot of how citizenship education is practiced, exercised, and imprinted onto the individuals in Singapore through an investigation that employed an embedded case study methodology. Through my study, I have captured the notions and sentiments expressed by educators as policy actors, cultural workers, and citizens as well as the individuals who have completed all their compulsory schooling years in Singapore. However, the sample size captured by my research can only serve as a snapshot and is not representative of the entire population of Singapore. What it does contribute however, is a narrative that explores how the vertical state-citizen relationship is constructed, rejected, and reproduced simultaneously. Thus, contributing to current literature examining political engagement, educational socialization and "hegemonic engineering'' in Singapore with an investigation that aims to begin tugging at the flailing threads of the cracks in Singapore's exterior of a "perfect hegemony'' to unravel the spaces through which the state is challenged and rejected. By examining how the state is constructed and reproduced, this research also contributes to the current literature by exploring beyond the criticisms of inequalities in the state to understand how despite the understandings and scholarship already present, individuals continue to actively reproduce the state or disengage politically. While my findings are limited, I believe they serve as a steppingstone through which further research could consider the findings of towards developing research questions that aim towards further pinning the reproduction and rejection of the present hegemonic state-citizen relationship. The importance of my contribution lies in its focus on how hegemony is constructed and maintained amongst citizens, offering a different lens to understanding the illiberal democracy of Singapore.

I contest that while my research has failed to include archival data due to my lack of access to the records and resources, I do believe that this research could be made more robust with archival research. Archival sources in a further research project developing from this one could serve as an important subunit to compare and contrast the statements of the current two subunits.

I believe that further research could also consider the challenges that I have faced accessing the field specifically regarding educators. Furthermore, if I did not face the geographical and economic limitations in accessing the field in person, I believe that the research findings could be bolstered with ethnographic observations of the citizenship education activities in action.

This research has also highlighted the use of digital spaces by interlocutors as an alternative space of political engagement. However, this research is limited in its scope regarding the mechanisms of digital democracy employed by the interlocutors which I believe further research could also consider. While digital democracy poses new challenges and criticisms (Gainous et. Al., 2015), it is evident that digital spaces are where the cracks of the ‘’perfect hegemony’’ are beginning to crystalize for potential mobilization (Collin, 2015), especially in states such as Singapore whereby speech and civic engagement is tightly controlled by the state (e.g., Kennedy, 2022; Kwan, 2021; Zhang, 2015; Sreekumar & Vadrevu, 2013).

Despite the limitations, I believe that the research being organized and conducted from outside of Singapore allowed some of the participants to feel more comfortable being critical towards the state. As many of the interlocutors have expressed their cautions regarding critiquing the state from within, it seems to me that the research being written and organized from outside of Singapore might have allowed them more ease with sharing their opinions. Organizing the interviews online also allowed my interlocutors the flexibility of time and the comfort of participating from the comfort of their homes, which might have allowed them to express themselves more freely. Something they may not have been able to do if we were to meet in public. Ultimately, I think this research has served its purpose in contributing to the wealth of literature that examines the hegemonic workings of the Singaporean state by offering a snapshot of how citizens reject, maintain, and reproduce the hegemonic regime through their relationships to the state and each other. Through offering such a snapshot, this research has served to offer a different lens of understanding hegemony in Singapore through examining the

expressed constraints and freedoms people face in constructing their relationship to the state and their citizenry.

Conclusion

Since Singapore's independence, the PAP has achieved majority approval through the ideologies of pragmatism and meritocracy, leading a seemingly "perfect hegemonic'' regime (Tan, 2012; Chua, 2010). Their successful non-violent approach towards independence via diplomatic discussions with the British has been the genesis of the PAP's strength and resilience in achieving a high approval rate and perceived consent from the masses over the paternalistic ruling over the matters of the nation-state (Barr & Skrbis, 2008). Over the years, Singapore's success in global capitalism further legitimized the reign of the PAP through the ideology of pragmatism (Tan, 2012). As evidenced in the work of this research, the PAP has been perceived as the state in the eyes of the citizens and its resilience demonstrates its successful project in "hegemonic engineering'' over the years through its various institutions (Holoday & Lee, 1999; Barr, 2000; Chua, 2007; Barr & Skrbis, 2008). Furthermore, it is demonstrated through this thesis that citizens also perceive through the notion of pragmatism, that the paternalism and rule of the state is justified in its economic success and provision of economic opportunities to its citizens. From discussions with the respondents, it is reflected that obedience of citizens towards the state is a trade-off for the economic security provided by the state.

However, as Gramsci (1999) discusses, hegemonic regimes are unstable and require the manufactured consent of the masses. Despite the dominance of the PAP as state, there has been growing criticisms against the PAP's means and methods (e.g., Teo, 2019; Tan & Tan, 2014; Goh, 2015; Chua, 2007; 2010). Especially in an ever-globalizing world, people are becoming more critical and have grown to challenge and question the hegemonic regime of the state (Tan, 2012). Wavering trust in the PAP's regime has also been evidenced in their ever-declining

approval in the election results of the past decade while there has been increasing support for its oppositional parties in the last elections. Additionally, this research has explored the "cracks'' behind this "perfect hegemony'' and demonstrated that citizens may not trust the state as much as their compliance might suggest. Rather, citizens reject the state in various ways, namely expressing themselves through social media, rejecting state-funded media sources in favour of alternative platforms where the state is perceived to have less control over.

This research drew on the theoretical contributions of Althusser (1970), Foucault (2007; in Rose, 2011; in Lemke, 2001; in Daldal, 2014) and Gramsci (1999) to understand how the school as a state apparatus was utilized by the Singaporean state as a means to discipline citizens into the ideologies of the state through educating narratives and social norms to students as citizens. Through exploring education as a state apparatus, this research specifically explores the use of citizenship education in schools from both the lens of educators as cultural workers and the impressions of citizens from their memories of state education in disciplining their citizenship. In doing so, this research explores the mechanisms of how such a generalized tolerance of the authoritarian rule of the state (Chua, 2010) is simultaneously maintained and rejected by citizens. As the ideologies of the state are maintained and perpetuated through its institutions, I have decided through this thesis to focus on education as a state apparatus as one of its key purposes is aimed at socialising citizens to the norms of the society (Biesta, 2009) which according to Gramsci (1999), reflects the values and norms of the ruling elite. While many authors have criticised the tracked education and shifts in citizenship education over time (Lim & Apple, 2015; Teo, 2015; Sim & Print, 2005c; Sim & Adler, 2004; Moi, 2017), few have discussed the hidden curriculum (Giroux & Penna, 1979) which this research has aimed to address and contribute to the present discussion with. This research also aimed to contribute to present literature critiquing the inequalities perpetuated in the state's regime by understanding how consent is manufactured and maintained by citizens though exploring state-citizen

relationships. Through such an investigation, this research was able to capture a snapshot of the tensions in the relationships between the state and citizen that alludes to the simultaneous rejection and reproduction of state narratives by citizens in creating the notion of a "manufactured consent''.

What this research discovered is that firstly, the notion of good citizen and good students are often perceived simultaneously, reflecting how the vertical political structure of the state-citizen relationship is mirrored and socialized into citizens through the vertical teacher-student relationship. Secondly, this research also explored the challenges and perceptions of both educators and citizens regarding their engagement with social and civic issues and it seems as though there is often little room or space amid a competitive economic structure such as Singapore for people to engage deeply with social issues either due to fatigue from the demands of their work or demands of a competitive academic environment leading to little priority attributed toward citizenship education over academic subjects. Furthermore, it is noted that there is a notion of fear or caution that people might lose their economic provisions and comforts if they were too be too publicly critical. This is especially so for those working in public service. Therefore, many citizens and educators tend to disengage from political involvement due to their perceived individual lack of impact against the state's structure, leading to another reason for the perceived compliance and ''consent'' of the masses. Thus, it seems the demands of meritocratic, technocratic, and pragmatic ideologies work towards ensuring a neo-liberal citizenship as a means of maintain the hegemonic rule and preventing mass counter hegemonic action.

Thirdly, this research also explored the tension educators face in their roles as both cultural workers of the state and citizens. As policy actors, while they are limited in their positions, it seems as though through their personal interests and interpretations of the state and citizenship education, educational spaces are co-constructed in their own image which could be a form of

counter-conducts as teachers hold some space within classrooms to reject the state. However, through their relationships with students they continue to perpetuate the hierarchical relationships with the state. Furthermore, in rejection of the state's design of citizenship education in favour of academic subjects, teachers may be reproducing the state's ideologies of meritocracy and technocracy.

Finally, it is discovered through this investigation that digital spaces are perceived as a site of democratic engagement for its perceived freedom from the constraints of the state's structure. Despite the seemingly strong controls over dissenting voices by the state which instils fear in many of the respondents, it seems as though the online public sphere is perceived as a space where the "cracks'' in the "perfect hegemony'' of Singapore could be perceived. However, this sentiment is not shared by the educators as they seem to believe that digital democracy often leads to uncritical dissenting opinions by students. However, despite the cautions required in understanding the online space as a space of democracy and counter hegemony (Gainous et. al., 2015), I would propose that social media and digital spaces are important spaces for future research to explore in understanding the counter hegemonic mechanisms amongst Singaporean citizens and youths.

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Appendix

1.1 Survey form

Master's Thesis Research: Exploring the impact of state education on citizenship.

Dear Participants,

I am Shuang Yin Cheryl Ng, a Singaporean Masters student at the Department of Sociology and Social Anthropology, Central European University (CEU) in Vienna (https://www.ceu.edu/). I previously studied in Pei Hwa Presbyterian Primary School, Bukit View Secondary School, and Nanyang Polytechnic in Singapore before continuing my tertiary education in Education studies in Manchester Metropolitan University.

I am currently writing my Master's thesis on the influence of schooling and curriculum on how Singaporeans perceive citizenship and what makes a 'good' citizen. I would love to invite you to take part in this anonymous survey.

I am conducting this research project with educators to explore the extent of state education's influence over the construction of Singaporean's relationship to their citizenry. This survey consists of questions about (i) your perspectives and opinions on education's/ and schools' engagement of social and civic issues (ii) your impressions of students' knowledge and engagement with social and civic issues.

Your participation is voluntary. You are free to stop your participation at any point. Refusal to participate in the study will not result in any penalty. All records and your participation would be confidential and promptly destroyed after the completion of the thesis.

This research is supervised by Dr. Prem Kumar Rajaram (Department of Sociology and Social Anthropology, Central European University). If you have any questions about this study, feel free to contact me at ng_shuang-yin-cheryl@student.ceu.edu or +44 (0) 7753906368 (Whatsapp).

Sincerely,
Cheryl Ng

1.I am currently an educator in a...
Single choice.

- ❑ Primary School
- ❑ Secondary School
- ❑ Junior College

2.I have been an educator for...
Required to answer. Single choice.

- ❑ 0-2 years
- ❑ 3-5 years
- ❑ 6-8 years
- ❑ 8-10 years
- ❑ >10 years

3.I am working as a:
Required to answer. Multiple choice.

- ❑ Teacher-in-training
- ❑ Subject Teacher
- ❑ Department Head
- ❑ School Administration

4.If you are a subject teacher, please list the subjects you teach.
Multiple choice.

- ❑ English
- ❑ Math
- ❑ Natural Sciences (including Physics, Biology, Chemistry, Computer Science, and Environmental Science)
- ❑ Mother Tongue Languages
- ❑ Foreign Languages
- ❑ Social Studies
- ❑ Social Sciences Subjects (including: History, Geography, Literature, Sociology, Religion, General Paper)
- ❑ Art and Design Subjects
- ❑ Others

5.Why did you decide to be an educator?

_____

6.Could you describe what makes a 'good citizen'?
Single line text.

_____

7.Your opinions on the role of education in developing good citizenship

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree
a. Education plays a role in developing good citizens					
b. The school provides academic opportunities for students to develop into good citizens					
c. The school provides non-academic opportunities for students to develop into good citizens					
d. As an educator, I am involved in ensuring my students develop into good citizens					
e. I perceive other educators to be involved in the citizenship construction of students					
f. I think the school could play a larger role in developing good citizens					
g. Citizenship education is					

discussed regularly in the educational goals of my school					
h. Citizenship education is a goal I aim to achieve in my classroom teaching					

8.Your perception of student's engagement with social and civic issues
Likert.

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree
a. My students are aware of social and civic issues					
b. My students are interested and engaged in social and civic issues					
c. My students gain adequate knowledge about social and civic issues through the school					
d. My students gain knowledge about social and civic issues from external sources					
e. Digital resources and social media has helped develop my					

students' knowledge and engagement of social and civic issues					
f. Academic resources of their education has helped develop my students' knowledge and engagement of social and civic issues					
g. Extra-curricular activities students participate in help students to develop their knowledge and engagement with social and civic issues					
h. The school prepares students for their future participation in elections					
I. Students are aware of the election process					

9.What are some ways the school and education support students' knowledge and engagement of social and civic issues?
Single line text.

10.What makes a good Singaporean?
Single line text.

_____

1.2 Survey Results

Results for Questions 1, 2, 3, 7 & 8.

Coding for Question 2:

0-2 years = 1; 3-5 years = 4; 6-8 years = 7 ; 8-10 years = 9 ; > 10 years = 10

Coding for Questions 7 & 8:

Strongly Agree = 2; Agree = 1; Neutral= 0; Disagree= -1; Strongly Disagree = -2

	I am currently an educator in a...	I have been an educator for...	I am working as a:	7a	7b	7c	7d	7e	7f	7g	7h	8a	8b	8c	8d	8e	8f	8g	8h	8i
1	Primary School	10	Department Head	1	1	2	2	1	1	1	1	0	0	1	1	1	1	1	0	-1
2	Primary School	10	Department Head	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	2	2	0	2	1	1	0	0
3	Primary School	10	Department Head	2	1	2	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	0
4	Primary School	10	Subject Teacher	1	2	2	2	2	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	-1	0
5	Primary School	10	Subject Teacher	1	1	1	1	1	0	0	0	2	1	2	2	1	2	2	0	0
6	Secondary School	1	Teacher-in-training	1	1	2	1	1	1	1	1	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	0
7	Secondary School	4	Subject Teacher	1	1	1	1	1	0	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	2	1	1
8	Secondary School	4	Subject Teacher	1	0	1	1	1	2	2	0	1	-1	1	0	1	1	1	1	-1
9	Secondary School	4	Subject Teacher	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	0	1	0	1	1	1	0	0	0	0
10	Secondary School	7	Subject Teacher	2	0	1	1	0	2	0	-1	1	1	-1	1	2	-1	-2	-1	0
11	Junior College	10	Subject Teacher	1	0	1	1	1	2	1	2	1	1	0	1	0	1	2	-1	1
12	Junior College	9	Subject Teacher	1	1	1	1	1	-1	1	0	2	1	1	1	2	1	0	1	1
13	Junior College	10	Subject Teacher	1	1	1	1	1	-1	1	1	1	0	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
			Average:	**1.231**	**0.538**	**0.885**	**0.923**	**0.885**	**0.423**	**0.885**	**0.423**	**1.269**	**0.308**	**0.231**	**0.962**	**1.115**	**0.462**	**0.269**	**0.308**	**0.923**
			Standard Deviation:	0.494	0.599	0.599	0.494	0.494	1.032	0.599	0.776	0.641	0.768	0.801	0.555	0.555	0.689	1.092	0.801	0.689