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## FOREWORD

We are deeply elated to present to you the maiden issue of *HanPil: Studies on Korea and the Philippines*—the official journal of the UP Korea Research Center (UP KRC). *HanPil* started as an Occasional Paper Series (OPS) on Korea and the Philippines and served as the venue for the research outputs of the UP KRC core research grant recipients from 2016 to 2018. Setting up the first peer reviewed Korean Studies journal in the Philippines was one of UP KRC’s visions and to have accomplished it in less than five years after its establishment is an admirable feat and we are extremely proud to be part of this significant milestone.

The first issue of *HanPil* as a full-fledged refereed journal was scheduled to be released last year (2019) but just like any other newly minted journals, the transition was met with several challenges. The call for papers was released as early as February 2019, and while we received a good number of manuscripts, only a few made it to blind review after the rigorous editorial screening. In the end, four articles and three essays were accepted for publication and since we hinged on this number to be able to have a sufficient line-up for this volume, we had to consciously keep each author engaged in the tedious process of revising one’s work. The COVID-19 pandemic has for certain made things even more challenging, which is why we are extremely grateful to the authors for patiently and diligently responding to the comments of both the reviewers and the editors.

The four articles featured in this volume not only add to the growing number of available resources on Korea-related studies in the Philippines but also foreground the role of research and the academe in the ongoing conversations about issues concerning Korea/Koreans and the Philippines/Filipinos. All four are reflective of a scholarship “responsive” to the intensified interplay between the Filipino and the Korean cultures and the various socio-economic, cultural and political currents that are shaped out of this flourishing relationship.

Cruz et al. in their work entitled “East and West: Filipinos’ reception of Korean and non-Korean news” aimed their analysis upon one specific interplay—the kind of information or news gateways and the Filipinos’ level of reception (of) and attachment to Korea, the Koreans, and/or the underlying ideologies featured in the information or news that they engage with. This is an interesting follow-up to Paragas, Chico & Caloyloy’s “A Critical Discourse Analysis of South Korea and its Citizens in Philippine News”, published in the second volume of *HanPil* as an occasional paper series (2017). While the latter provides a more straightforward scrutiny of how Korea and Koreans are covered in the Philippine news in select domains, the current work extends its investigation to foreign news channels and analyzes the varying levels of Filipino’s engagement with Korea-related news and/or information pieces. The study, while exploratory, cites how Korean culture’s influence is challenging the Western cultural hegemony in the Philippine mass media while illustrating the “negotiated position” that Filipinos take when they engage with information gateways. It also shows how such negotiation yields a spectrum of news engagement as well as ideological dissonance/resonance.

Another exploratory study in this volume is Tulipat’s work entitled “When Migration Interacts with Gender: An Exploratory Study on the Implications of Gender and Migration to Filipinos Living and Working in South Korea”. As the title suggests, the study analyzes how gender “enmeshes with migration” by examining salient points in the life histories or lived experiences of three Filipino migrants in South Korea. The short but interconnected narratives of these three migrants revealed a number of interplays between aspirations and realities, bringing forth significant issues that revolve around “gender selectivity in labor and marriage migration, gender role trajectories, and kinship issues.” In the third and the last issue of *HanPil* as an occasional paper series (2018), we published Encinas-Franco, Lumampao & Bae’s research entitled “Narratives of Filipino Bride Returnees from South Korea: Implications to Research and Policy” and this recent work by Tulipat amplifies further the significance of gender and migration as a research theme in the study of Filipinos’ experience in and of South Korea.

Capistrano's study entitled "Purchase and consumption behaviors of Philippine concert-goers: A qualitative management discourse" is his second work to be published in *HanPil*. His research entitled "Hallyu and Corporate Performance: The Case of South Korean Skin Care Companies in the Philippines" was part of *HanPil* Vol. 2 published in 2018. In this volume, Capistrano employed prescriptive grounded theory in coding the behavior of Filipinos who patronize concerts. While the paper investigates Filipino concert-goers in general, the study interestingly revealed the striking uniqueness of concerts performed by Korean Pop (K-pop) music artists, suggesting the need to make it a separate group in a "grouping variable" alongside Filipino artists and Western artists. The study also highlights the importance of the "entire purchase process" as well as the "views and experiences" of concert managers, apart from the concert-goers.

The last article included in this volume is Medriano and Pangan's study entitled "Using Topic Models to Examine Online Discourse about the Introduction of a Korean Language Elective in Philippine Basic Education". Their work investigates the thematic patterns in the online discussions regarding the inclusion of the Korean language as a foreign language elective in the Philippine basic education, as part of the Department of Education's Special Program in Foreign Language (SPFL). While the Korean language is not the first foreign language to be offered as a foreign language elective—and even if it underwent a long and tedious process before an agreement was finally signed in 2017—the reports made by major news outlets on the pilot offering of Korean in select public schools in late 2018 sparked an online uproar among the Filipino netizens, unjustly targeting the Korean language and the Filipino Korean language learners and advocates. Employing a mixed-methods approach to discourse analysis, Medriano and Pangan's investigation yielded four salient themes that cut across the online conversations with the most dominant ones highlighting the (Filipinos) preference for English and Filipino. The study also attributed the drastic reactions on the timing of the news reports, which coincided with the Supreme Court's decision on the constitutionality of the Commission on Higher Education's (CHED) Memorandum No. 20, series of 2013, that excludes Filipino and Philippine Literature from the required subjects in the tertiary education.

We are hopeful that the four papers described above will not only provide additional reference for students and scholars of Korean Studies in the country but will also stir up more interest in the same research themes and we are excited to receive manuscripts that either extend or modify these works.

Even as an occasional paper series, *HanPil* had already been publishing short essays, albeit non-refereed. In its first two volumes as an OPS, reactor notes were published alongside the corresponding research articles. In the third volume, we decided to publish the winning pieces of the 2017 and 2018 UP KRC Essay Writing Contests. In this volume, as mentioned above, three brief essays are featured, concomitant with the journal's decision to accept manuscripts other than full-length research papers. The first essay by Mikaela Cloie Perez entitled *70 Years: Past, Present, and Future of the Philippines-Korea Relations* tackles some of the major breakthroughs in the seven-decade formal bilateral ties between Korea and the Philippines. This is a very timely piece, since the year 2019 marked the 70th anniversary of the Philippine-Korea relations. The second short essay by Mark Anthony Cabigas entitled *Christianity and Korea: A Critique to Filipino's Perception of Korea's Dominant Religion* pushes for more information channels regarding Korean religions to be more accessible to Filipinos. In the third and the last short essay included in this volume entitled *Dokdo: An Island with Many Names but still Korea's*, the author Christine Marie Lim Magpile reflects on issues surrounding the controversial island of Dokdo, which she discovered while planning for a leisure trip to South Korea. While all three are brief and opinion-oriented, we hope that they could further meaningful conversations about Korea and the Philippines among our readers.

As we all know, this year has been a breakout year for Korean cultural products. Aside from the tremendous success of K-pop, the Korean cinema also gained worldwide recognition with the success of *Parasite* (기생충) which became the first Korean film to win at the prestigious Academy Awards. On February 26, a few weeks after *Parasite* won at Oscar's, the UP KRC organized a Special Forum on *Parasite*, in collaboration with the University of the Philippines Film

Institute (UPFI). Given the utmost importance of the film *Parasite* in the study of Korean cinema and of Korean society in broader terms, we have decided to include in this volume the transcript of the lecture forum. We thank Pamela Jacar for the transcription and we hope that it will benefit those who are interested to expand their knowledge on Korean cinema and more particularly, on the breakout movie *Parasite*.

Lastly, we thank you—our readers— for your continued support. We are fervently looking forward to the time when we could personally thank you for your interest in the study of Korea in the Philippines.  
진심으로 감사합니다!

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# **RESEARCH ARTICLES**

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# East and West: Filipinos' Reception of Korean and Non-Korean News

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## Abstract

In the 1980s, the New World Information and Communication Order (NWICO) highlighted the need for diversity in news sources given the dominant west-to-east and north-to-south direction of news flows. Today, West-centric wire agencies and cable networks remain dominant in the global production and circulation of news. However, diasporic ethnic media and regional news services with a global reach — such as Arirang, Channel News Asia, and Nippon Hōsō Kyōkai — aim to balance news flows by providing the global audience non-Western alternatives.

We looked at how Filipinos receive news about Korea, either through local news firms or through transnational wire agencies. We used Hall's Reception Theory and Gramsci's assertions about cultural hegemony as our frameworks and interviewed 28 informants who were purposefully chosen through maximum variation sampling.

The informants represented degrees of news consumption and specific levels of interest and disinterest, consequently comprising a continuum of apathy to sympathy about Korea. Incidental news exposure and apathy were at the bottom of the pyramid, whereas news production and sympathy were at the other end. In between were those whose interest in Korea was due to their curiosity or direct or indirect engagement. Socioeconomic status was also a distinguishing characteristic, such that lower-income and less-educated informants who grew up watching free TV were more

sympathetic and likely to produce news content. Our study finds implications on the global news flows and contributes to the long-standing and still-relevant debate raised by *NWICO* during its time.

*Keywords: Korean wave, news, Korea, reception, Philippines, hegemony*

## **Introduction**

The roles of information dissemination intensify with the continuous, rapid evolution of the globalized world as they create a sense of belongingness and connection (Hachten & Scotton, 2006). However, the inherently complex phenomenon entails problematic aspects as centers of powers in the contemporary global village (McLuhan & Fiore, 1997).

The role that these centers of powers have in global information dissemination has been tackled in the political proposal of the *New World Information and Communication Order* (Padovani, 2008; Lee, 2020; Phuong & Ibrahim, 2020) - an effigy in the enterprise of media and globalization. Building on the premise that a colossal number of media consumers adhere to products from the Western superpowers, *NWICO* aimed to address the one-way flow of information from the general broadcast media. Ideally, a counterbalancing mechanism between the "core" countries and the less developed would be established; realistically, with an emphasis on the West, the global and broadcast media are still monopolized (Dizard, 1994; Padovani, 2008; Lee, 2020; Phuong & Ibrahim, 2020; Ryoo, 2009).

In the context of the contemporary Philippines, the Western broadcast media's imperialistic tendencies arguably clash with the cultural products stemming from an emerging soft power, Korea, whose cultural influences have been dramatically intensifying (Correa, n.d.; Espiritu, 2011). Hence, with news outlets in its media landscape being paramount to global gateways, since news outlets

allow consumers to receive information about foreign affairs and allow them to interpret its content in the context of their cultural milieu (Takuya, 2017), the Philippines becomes an ideological battleground—bounded by the information flow rooting from within the country, the West, and Korea.

In line with this, we have come up with the following research question, “How do news about Korea and Koreans permeate Filipino culture?” The following are the research objectives:

1. To examine how Filipinos decode Korean and non-Korean news
2. To explore the dominance of transnational cultures in the Philippines
3. To deconstruct the role of cultural hegemony in Filipinos' decoding of news about Korea

## **Related Literature**

### ***The Medium and Interactions Within***

News consumption, especially with the *millennial generation*, or individuals born between 1981-1996 (Dimock, 2019), has shifted platforms through the years, with some scholars positing that the millennials are becoming "non-users of news" (Poindexter, 2012, as cited by Gulyàs, 2015). Poindexter (2012, as cited by Gulyàs, 2015) further argues that the availability and accessibility of new technologies—that is cited in the Internet and social media—meant that information and entertainment choices led to a decline in traditional news consumption. The growing use of social media has also become an integral part of how news is produced, disseminated, and discussed (Nielsen & Schröder, 2014). Many social media users, however, do not purposefully seek out news content when checking their social media accounts. The majority of Facebook users only encounter news incidentally when using the site for other reasons, such as scrolling through their feeds

or chatting with friends (Newman, Fletcher, Kalogeropoulos, Levy, & Nielsen, 2017, p. 44).

Online media work with algorithms that are highly reliant on online engagement and personal preference (Kreiss & McGregor, 2018). However, social media friends also have an influence on the news people read because online endorsements and discussions intervene in deciding which content to consume, outweighing selective consumption (Anspach, 2017). The exposed user is more likely to engage with recommended news if the news curator is an opinion leader. Finally, the exposed user/news receiver's characteristics are influenced mainly by the “stored knowledge, abstracted by personal and/or vicarious experiences (Kwan, Agapito, & Bascos, 2008).” This representation explains the “audiences’ attention to, interpretation and evaluation of news, as well as retention and recall” (Pernia, 1993, as cited by Kwan et al., 2008)

Coverage of foreign news in a country establishes a perception to its citizens that the nation is relevant and important to their country's interests, given how the scope of this foreign news are mostly driven by transnational ties or geographic proximity (Aalberg, Papathanassopoulos, Soroka, Curran, Hayashi, Iyengar, Jones, Mazzoleni, Rojas, Rowe, & Tiffen, 2013). However, positive coverage does not influence the public's perception (Wanta, Golan, & Lee, 2004). News about Korea and Koreans were usually wired from international agencies (Paragas, Chico, & Caloyloy, 2018). Still, political news, especially Western-made content, can elicit opinions as framed according to the institutions’ agenda. Thus, consuming Western-opinionated news with persuasion affects attitude change and information processing (Feldman, 2011).

## **The Decoding of International News**

### ***Media-and-Identity Discrepancies***

Individuals are bound to meaning frameworks—ideological landscapes that constitute their identity (Appel, Mara, & Weber,

2014) and identity development (Craig & McInroy, 2013)—in making sense of how the media (Gitlin, 2007) and reality (Heine, Proulx, & Vohs, 2006) interact. Heine and others (2006) posit that disruptions to these meaning frameworks, such as the collective network of ideologies rooting from the media landscape (Jenkins, 2007), would motivate people to seek validation from their original frameworks, or from completely different ones. Gitlin (2007) finds resonance with this plane of thought. The latter argued that there exists an interplay between one's concept of identity and self-esteem and the network of media products he/she patronizes. As identity is bound to the external world (Heine et al., 2006), media consumers will be motivated to re-establish congruence amidst the dissonance in terms of the media choices (Gitlin, 2007) and pastures to which they find belongingness (Jenkins, 2007).

Moreover, conforming to a “cultural drama” (Greenberg, Pyszczynski, & Solomon, 1986, p. 206) or a well-known media narrative (Kim & Lennon, 2007) may also increase self-esteem because approval (Baumeister, 1982, p. 39) and being recognized as “a valued participant in such a cultural drama” (Greenberg et al., 1986, p. 206) often comes as a result.

### ***Cultural Resonance***

News plays a significant role in a transnational fan's cultural immersion to such drama, as they enable fans outside Korea to keep in touch with Korean idols, notwithstanding the geographical barriers between them (Siriyuvasak & Hyunjoon, 2007; Williams & Ho, 2016). Consumption of news is part of a fan's immersive activities which include learning the Korean language (Siriyuvasak & Hyunjoon, 2007), translation of song lyrics (Siriyuvasak & Hyunjoon, 2007; Yoon, 2017), and following Korean idols as they move around a place (Williams & Ho, 2016). In effect, fans outside Korea that are invested in their idols become more immersed and loyal to South Korea (Lee & Yoo, 2015).

The empowering effects of the Internet enable the fans' free expression of their preferences and opinions (Galuszka, 2015). The Internet also allows fans to have direct contact with their idols

(Galuszka, 2015) and build communities, regardless of geographical distance (Galuszka, 2015; Guschwan, 2016). Because the Internet also improved the delivery of news, expectations on what constitutes a true fan have changed. For instance, football fans are expected to know more than trivial facts about football games, such as "who is dating a celebrity or which player is looking to leave the club" (Guschwan, 2016, p. 351).

Sharing a resonant affinity with conformity to cultural dramas (Greenberg et al., 1986), news content also plays a role in creating a cultural bandwagon effect. Fan communities have a part in amplifying this effect. The participative activities of fans help their idols become more popular in mainstream culture, for example, through sharing news about their idols (Williams & Ho, 2016) or by purchasing their idols' cultural products to make them top the popularity charts (Yang, 2009). People are more inclined to cultural products that "appear as popularity stars" (Xu & Fu, 2014, p. 215). This situation becomes more apparent when a person has limited information about a cultural product's quality. In this case, the person tends to rely on other people's assessment, as shown in their actions towards the product in question (Xu & Fu, 2014). Combined with the availability bias brought by news about Korea or Koreans, people outside fan communities are similarly more susceptible to the informational cascade (Bikhchandani et al, 1992) when it comes to Korean cultural products, thus leading to a bandwagon effect.

### ***Process of Negotiation***

Overall, these dissonances and resonances manifest in the concept of a global village - the idea that the world is shrinking (Wirtz, 2016), due to advances in technology. The accessibility of media platforms has given Filipinos the means to consume foreign content. However, because of the Philippines' history as a colony (Igno & Cenidoza, 2016), Filipino identity is effectively "hybrid," which theoretically makes the people more open to negotiating what the foreign content they consume could mean for them (Mulder, 2013).

In terms of news consumption, Filipinos, who traditionally built their meaning frameworks based on Western content, then find



the entry of a new player, the Korean wave, as means to construct their meaning frameworks around new content (Igno & Cenidoza, 2016).

## **Framework**

Our study made use of Stuart Hall's (Hall, 1973; Hall, 1980/2006) Reception Theory and Gramsci's (1971) Theory of Cultural Hegemony.

### ***Reception Theory***

Hall (1973) posits that misunderstandings between producers and audiences of news are due to differences in how they encode and decode messages. Accordingly, audiences can have three positions in decoding messages (Hall, 1980, 2006). Audiences can take either (1) a *dominant-hegemonic position* where they decode the message in the way the encoders wanted, (2) a *negotiated position* where they decode the message the way the encoders intended, but with situational reservations, or (3) an *oppositional position* where they decode the message opposite of the encoders' intentions.

### ***Theory of Cultural Hegemony***

Cultural hegemony addresses "the relation between culture and power under capitalism" (Lears, 1985, p. 568). Antonio Gramsci originally conceptualized it in 1971. Unlike the usual theories of culture and power relations, cultural hegemony described domination in a sense that the subordinating groups are accomplices in the existing power relations. This idea was seen to be contradictory to the previous historical and intellectual concepts of inequality. However, it must be noted that cultural hegemony requires "spontaneous consent" (Lears, 1985, p. 568) by the great masses of the population to be directed as imposed by the dominant fundamental group. This consent is not linear and can be more complicated than it may seem. It can be "historically" influenced by

prestige and position enjoyed by the dominant groups.

Rather than imposing a dominating authority, hegemony could occur by seeking to win consent. By consent, it may involve "contradictory consciousness" (Lears, 1985, p. 569) that includes apathy, resistance, and resignation. There can be a seeming conflict between a person's conscious thoughts and the implicit values embedded in his actions.

As such, "discursive practice" (Lears, 1985, p. 569) plays a significant role in reinforcing domination. Sources and various vital players play different roles in sharing and interactions, enabling subconscious consent to dominate countries.

### ***Integrated Conceptual Framework***

When it comes to reception, the audiences are seen as active consumers who read content and contexts, as reflected by their background and media habits. We argue in this framework that current media habits are an interplay of past media habits, genre and content preference, and current daily rituals.

People interact with different sources of news information differently. Interaction with different kinds of medium is also argued to show different levels of news engagement, which again are supported by their subjectivities.

With the interplay of their subjectivities, medium, and news engagement (Hall, 1980, 2006), reception would fall under three possible ideologies: (1) dissonance, resisting the hegemonic intent of the message, (2) resonance, compliance or unconscious consent to dominant groups and (3) negotiation when one has reservations to either resist or succumb (Gramsci, 1971).

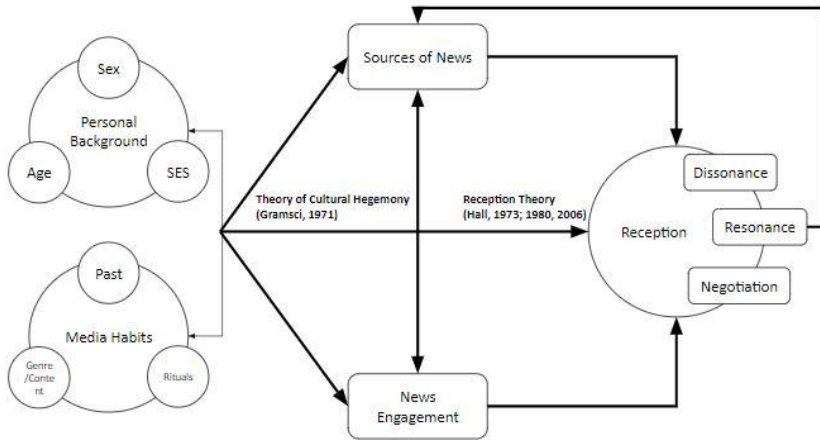
Thus, under the premise that Korea is the dominating group and the predominantly-Western Philippines is the subordinating group, we posit that all of these interactions and media consumption would lead to exploring whether or not cultural hegemony is present between Korea and the Philippines.

Overall, our integrated conceptual framework is summarized by the figure below, which we made with Hall's Reception Theory (1973; 1980, 2006) and Gramsci's Theory of Cultural Hegemony

(1971) as the basis:

**Figure 1.**

*Conceptual Model*



## Methodology

This study is exploratory. Given how active South Korea has been promulgating its culture in the Philippines and other countries around the world, understanding how Korean culture has become hegemonic in the country then becomes a worthy subject of investigation. We conducted interviews with 28 Filipino adults who are 20-55 years old and have access to the Internet and television. Using maximum variation sampling, we recruited informants such that we account for varying degrees of exposure to and experience with Korean culture as much as possible (see Table 1). Doing so helped us understand the personal background of each participant, along with their media consumption and habits.

**Table 1.**  
*Sampling Scheme*

Type	Sex	No. of Informants
Passive personal experience	Male	2
	Female	2
Active personal experience	Male	2
	Female	2
Traditional news consumer	Male	2
	Female	2
Online news consumer	Male	2
	Female	2
Passive non-news consumer	Male	2
	Female	2
Active non-news consumer	Male	2
	Female	2
Active non-news producer	Male	2
	Female	2
<b>Total</b>		<b>28</b>

Following the proposed sampling scheme, 28 informants were successfully interviewed, with every four (4) informants belonging in an interview group. These groups are people with passive [1] personal experiences with Koreans, people with active [2] own experiences with Koreans, traditional news consumers of Korean news, online news consumers of Korean news, passive Korean non-news [3] consumers, active Korean non-news

consumers, and active Korean non-news producers.

The data gathered from them then underwent individual initial coding conducted by each of us. Afterward, these codes were revised as new axes were conceptualized. The typologies stemming from the axes then became the foundation of the results of the study. In order to protect the privacy of the respondents, pseudonyms were used to identify them in this study.

## **Finding and Results**

### ***The Gateways of Korean News***

**Incidentally Exposed to News.** Most informants in this study are “digital natives” or were born and raised after the introduction of digital technologies (Palfrey & Gasser, 2008; Selwyn, 2009; Verčič & Verčič, 2013). A considerable part of their daily routine was accessing the Internet. At the fundamental level, the medium that they all have access to and was actively using was social media (mainly Facebook and Twitter). This media habit allowed for the consumption of news in a passive yet network-derived manner. Two kinds-natures of passive internet consumption can be noted, “Social Media. *Nagsho-show up lang tapos sunud-sunod na.*” [4] (Social media. Things show up then things show up continuously.) and “When [my friend] posts online, I just see it there *lang*. Whenever people share, but I don’t consume it directly.” [5]. The difference lies in virtual friends as drivers for news propagation.

The informants’ background must also be noted because this mirrors the findings of Anspach (2017), which posits that social media friends influence one’s decision on what news to read and is usually because of what their friends share. Regardless of one’s level of affinity to Korea, people could see Korea-related news because of their network.

**Subscribed to Western Media.** Many informants were subscribed to either local Filipino content or Western media. Many of these informants said that they mostly consume news from CNN, ETC,

Time Magazine, and Business Insider; news consumption is not limited online.

Informants who were subscribed to Western content, adopted ideas about issues regarding Korea from a Western perspective. For example, the news about the unification of North Korea and South Korea was seen by one of the informants as an event which has to do with Trump manifesting his powers, with her conscious consumption of American news and commentaries serving as her premise.

**Personally Connected to News Gateways.** Compared to the gateways discussed earlier, communicating Korean news is different when it involves gatekeepers, opinion leaders, and peers involved with news or content about Korea. It is more engaging and most likely to occur if two or more parties have basic information or news about Korea or Koreans. Rodney, an online news consumer shared, “The last time I talked about Korean with family/friends *ay yung* about football. It’s a really nice conversation... Fan *din sila ng* football.” [6] (The last time I talked about Korean with family/friends was about football. It’s a really nice conversation... They’re also fans of football).

Peer to-peer communication generates a deeper two-way mechanism of sharing information related to Korea. It sometimes becomes a catalyst for a person to intentionally seek news about the subject. There were also one-way personal transmissions of news when an informant cannot share any news about the subject but is receptive in appreciation for their peer’s interest.

**Subscribed to Korean Media.** Online media has offered a niche for people with a higher cultural affinity to Korea. People can filter the vast information by subscribing to Korean media written by Koreans, or content which is purely about Korea or Koreans based on their interests and biases. On the other hand, Sophie, a traditional news consumer, noted that active subscribers of Korean content could also contribute to the production of news information because of their exposure to particular and direct news sources.

## *The spectrum of News Engagement*

**Aware but Apathetic toward Korean News.** Some informants feel either neutral or indifferent towards news about Korea despite being admittedly aware of it. This can be seen with traditional news consumer Albert and passive Korean non-news consumer Joseph when both narrated that they do not deliberately search about Korean news because the former is not a fan of South Korea and the latter lacks interest in the Korean culture. Yuliana said that she is indifferent towards Korean news because she prefers Western sources. She also concedes to passively getting Korean news from Western sources.

**Leaning toward Korean News from Curiosity.** It has been recognized that there are factors that influence the shift from exposure to news into engagement with the news (Kümpel, 2019). The personal characteristics of the exposed or the news receiver is a key factor. An active non-news consumer, Isis, shared that her father constantly checks the stocks in Korea through a Korean channel. As an active consumer of Korean products, Isis also found these stocks interesting and, consequently, checks it. She was then interested in the Korean entertainment industry, becoming an asset to Korea. Another factor for the shift from exposure to engagement is the news curator or the recommendation from peers and the like (Kümpel, 2019), which is embodied by Lea's father to her.

Another instance is when an active non-news consumer, Paolo was suddenly interested in Korean news when he realized that Koreans dominate his field of interest, which is gaming. This case mirrors Kümpel's (2019) proposal that factors that affect a person's interest in the news include his characteristics influenced by stored knowledge and/or experiences. Thus, the sudden interest in Korean news about gaming was shaped by his pre-existing interest in games per se.

**Immersed and Interested in Korean News.** Informants immersed in the Korean narrative beforehand usually have the drive to seek

Korean news further. Twenty-five-year-old Jaylyn, a traditional news consumer, has been to Korea, which is why news about Korea interests her. She adds that she feels a mild affinity after having stepped foot in Korean land. “I was curious how bad it is *'yung sa illegal camcording na nangyayari*. A lot of Korean males are planting those cameras to make home porn videos” [7] (I was curious how bad the cases of illegal camcording are. A lot of Korean males are planting those cameras to make home porn videos).

It has been established that the exposed or the news receiver's personal characteristics is a key factor that influences the shift from exposure to news into engagement with the news (Kümpel, 2019). Having set foot in Korea greatly influenced her view and interest in Korean news while Ernan's personal experiences with Korea, also having set foot in Korea and having a lot of Korean acquaintances, accordingly, shaped him.

**Sympathetic Filipinos toward Korean News.** It is prodigious that Filipinos strikingly sympathize with Koreans. Recent news about the reunification of North and South Korea gained many positive remarks from the Filipino informants.

Dismal news from Korea also seems to appeal to Filipinos. Ernan, who has direct experiences with Koreans and is an active consumer of Korean news, expresses his sympathy to the Sewol Ferry incident in which many Korean high school students died and went missing. Moreover, the suicide of a Korean also drew feelings of compassion as an informant narrates, “...*'nung* suicide *'yung* favorite K-pop artist *ko*. It was December 19, so *mag-Chri-Christmas, tapos kakatapos lang niyang mag-concert... ayaw kong maniwala*” [8] (...the suicide of my favorite K-pop artist. It was December 19, so it was almost Christmas and they just finished their concert... I couldn't believe it). This statement follows the argument that all individuals belong to one “global village” (McLuhan & Fiore, 1997). Despite varying dispositions, whether one is very interested or apathetic towards the Korean narrative, people (in this case, Filipinos) innately sympathize, especially about emotional and dismal news, Korean or not.



## *Ideological Dissonance*

**The Clash For Dominance Between Western and Korean Broadcast Media.** There exists an echoing narrative from about half of the informants who were not fanatic about the Korean wave. These informants are passive consumers of the existing Korean cultural artifacts in their environments. However, they are adamant about becoming more active. The “meaning frameworks” (Heine et al., 2006) they have always used to create meaning from and inflict coherence into their reality as shaped by the media (Gitlin, 2007) are inherently Western—finding resonance with the claims of Tolentino and Santos (2014). Hence, the intensification of Korean content and consumption—further amplified by the conformity of the entities in their immediate realities—were perceived as threats to their subconscious identities and personal developments as the Korean wave presented a different yet equally appealing meaning framework in terms of how they could receive news about Korea or Koreans. Consequently, these “dissonant” informants reaffirm meaning from the domain of the Western cultural content-landscape in an attempt to regulate the expected relations that constitute their “external world” that has been greatly influenced by the media (Gitlin, 2007; Appel, et al., 2014; Craig & McInroy, 2013). We go beyond the literature highlighting the interplay between media and identity (Appel. et al., 2014; Craig & McInroy, 2013; Tolentino & Santos, 2014; Joaquin, 1988) and the philosophy-paradigm of inherent predispositions that influence meaning and reality (Heine et. al., 2006; Bruner & Postman, 1949) as we argue that exposure to news about Korea or Koreans strengthens the motivation to reaffirm meaning by returning to the “traditional” meaning framework – that which stems from the ideological pasture professed by the Western content. Hence, there exists a clash between the Western and Korean culture, with news as an amplifying mechanism. Corinne, an online news consumer, states that “*Yung mga news na nababasa ko, New York Times or Time so most likely Westerners' yung nagsulat*” [9] (the news that I get to read [were from] New York Times or Time so mostly the authors were Western), and adds that it's not that she's not interested in Korean content, but merely “*Meron lang mas*

*interested ako na bagay. Mas Western*” (I just have more interest in other things – mostly Western).

**Dyssynchrony of Korea and the Philippines due to Cultural Differences with News as a mechanism.** We argue that another manifestation of an ideological dissonance as expressed by those who did not place a strong premium on engaging with news about Korea roots from a lack of synchrony between the ideological packages (Kellner, 2003) of the originally Western-dominated Philippines and emerging soft-power Korea. As such, we present the argument that the Philippines have become the “middle ground” of sorts when it comes to the Western and Korean-informed psyches. Moreover, we argue that one aspect of the collective enterprise of the sotto voce anti-Korea sentiments is greatly influenced by the Western ideological landscape that has already been handed down to the Filipino psyche (Tolentino & Santos, 2014). Jenkins (2007) explored that in the Western context, fans are disliked for being stereotyped as passive consumers who fail to recognize the boundary between what is fictional and real. The same thought then holds in the Philippine context: *“Yung fans nila dito, parang minsan nagq- question ako as to why. ‘Ganun talaga, parang grabe rin sila mag-dedicate ng effort and time”* [10] (Their fans here, sometimes I question why. It’s really like they are earnest in dedicating their effort and time), says Julia, an informant with passive personal experiences about Korea, and whose media preferences—including news outlets—are American. Similarly, media preferences and the ideologies therein have translated into the concept of identity. In fact, Yuliana, another informant whose meaning-framework adheres to the West’s media landscape and whose background with Korean content also stems from passive personal experiences, stated that *“Di siya part ng identity ko. Hindi rin siya nagre-reflect ng identity ko”* [11] (It’s not a part of my identity. It also doesn’t reflect on my identity).

## **Ideological Resonance**

### **Korean Wannabe: Aspiring to be Part of the Korean Narrative.**

In direct contrast to those whose meaning-frameworks have already been informed by the Western psyche, those who heavily engage with news about Korea or Koreans have exhibited, in their actions, a desire to be involved with an idea of a “Korean narrative.” We posit that this is because the informants have seen the reality of the Philippines, inasmuch as politically, economically, and culturally, it arguably leaves much to be desired. Oliver, an active non-news producer exposed to Korean sources of news about the country, has “started learning Korean” so he can “really know what Koreans are saying” and so that he can understand Korean culture as well. Meanwhile, Karlo, another active non-news producer, claimed that he cried so much when he got the news that Jessica Jung, member of the Korean girl group Girls’ Generation, left.

Because heavy engagement with news about Korea or Koreans, and the subsequent desire to become part of the narrative also entails immersive cultural activities (Siriyuvasak & Hyunjoon, 2007; Williams & Ho, 2016; Yoon, 2017), informants who are heavy consumers of such products find themselves ultimately becoming more immersed with much of the other aspects of South Korean culture as well. These immersions include, but are not limited to, joining fandoms and purchasing fandom merchandise, paying for online subscriptions to follow Korean celebrities, buying and using products made or marketed by Korea, watching Korean shows with English subtitles rather than Tagalog-dubbed ones to hear the Korean language, and then eventually learning the language and having the desire to travel to Korea. This reflects the hegemonic nature that the West previously had a monopoly on the Philippines. We posit that Korean culture has indeed entered the fold and is competing for dominance among the psyches of the Filipinos.

**The Greener Pasture: Korea for Frustrated Filipinos.** Many Filipinos project their desire for economic prosperity through comparisons with Korea and Koreans. Yuliana wishes that the Philippines would become as rich as Koreans, noting Korea’s “modern, very civilized” lifestyle. The informants also lament the pitfalls of Filipino identity, as they compared the Filipinos’ lack of

discipline to the Koreans whose discipline is, according to them, commendable. Again, this follows the argument that the desire to become part of the Korean narrative stems from their awareness of the Philippines' current conditions.

To elaborate, their direct and indirect exposure with the Korean narrative gives Filipinos a basis in assessing their current economic and cultural situation, with news about Korea or Koreans as the amplifying mechanism. For them, South Korea is a place that has greener pastures, with economic and cultural maturity that the Philippines unfortunately lack.

### ***Ideological Negotiation***

Ultimately, the informants' level of engagement to news about Korea or Koreans is negotiated, since there are certain aspects in which they do not necessarily find themselves resonant or dissonant. This finding is consistent with Mulder's (2013) findings when he posited that the Filipinos are more open to negotiating what foreign content would mean for them.

**The Global Village and Its Conflicts.** As individuals belonging to a country that is subject to the effects of globalization, the informants' idea of a global village is ultimately indirectly touched upon in their discussion of news about Korea and is manifested through their awareness of South Korea's ambivalent relationship with North Korea. We find this awareness unsurprising, given that regardless whether the news is informed by the Western or Korean perspectives, and regardless whether the news itself is local, Western, or Korean in nature, developments regarding South Korea's conflict with its northern counterpart is consistently reported. Their awareness is consistent with how the content that they consume from their media platforms are inherently foreign in nature. Furthermore, we found that the informants see war as a purely antagonistic concept, with one informant Julia even saying "*Siyempre, sino ba may gusto ng war?*" [12] (Of course, who wants war?). Therefore, certain importance can be attributed to the preservation of the global village when it comes to the informants'

consumption of news about Korea or Koreans.

**The Mind and Its Immediate Locale.** Within the context of an overarching “hybrid” identity (Igno & Cenidoza, 2016), the informants’ backgrounds are echoed through the type of news they consume. An example is how the news of the South Korean ferry that sank with students onboard struck one informant because of his background as a college professor. Therefore, an argument for how meaning negotiation transcends mere cultural attribution in the case of the informants can be made, as it is revealed that their consumption of news about Korea or Koreans may become contingent on those that resonate with their immediate psyches, which again, may be inherently Western, Korean, or a hybrid of those and of other cultures altogether.

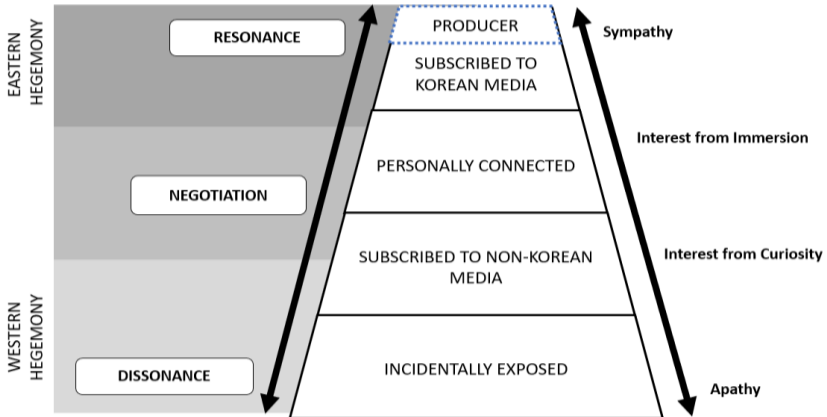
## **Discussion**

News information plays a vital role in nation-building. In the past, the existence of news information in the Philippines came mostly from the West. This situation can be said to instill a Western worldview to its audience. Due to the Philippines’ history with America, Western ideologies have long been dominating the country’s cultural, socio-political, and economic arenas. But as Korea has become a significant global producer and distributor of cultural and digital products (Jin & Yi, 2020), Korean culture becomes more entrenched within many Filipinos’ preferences, with Western cultural hegemony appearing to be challenged.

Based on our study’s findings, we made a model in Figure 2 that describes how news about Korea and Koreans permeate in Filipino culture. The model considers the interplay between used news gateways, engagement with Korean news, disposition toward Korean news, and the clash between Western and Korean hegemony. The model also illustrates a hierarchy, such that Filipinos who are at the bottom of the hierarchy are not as close to Korean ideologies as those at the top.

**Figure 2.**

*Permeation of News about Korea and Koreans in the Philippines*



In the model, Filipinos who only have incidental exposure with news about Korea and Koreans, usually through passive use of social media, appear to be apathetic about Korea. These Filipinos also feel dissonant when receiving news about Korea and Koreans and tend to subscribe to a Western viewpoint. Because social media is the most basic and most accessible news gateway, as found in our interviews, incidentally-exposed Filipinos make up most of the hierarchy shown in the model.

At the second level in the hierarchy are Filipinos who encountered news about Korea due to their active consumption of news. However, these Filipinos tend to seek news through Western sources and express views about Korea that are still rooted in a Western viewpoint. Filipinos who encounter news about Korea through Western sources are interested in Korean news out of curiosity. However, they tend to either be dissonant or negotiating when receiving news about Korea and Koreans.

At the third and fourth levels in the hierarchy are Filipinos who are immersed and sympathetic with Korea. They were more engaged in news related to Korea as they had direct experience with Korea or had indirect experiences due to their peers. These Filipinos also tend to be sympathetic when consuming news about Korea and Koreans, and some of them consume news related to Korea through

Korean news outlets, such as Arirang. Filipinos who are personally connected with Korea or subscribed to Korean media tend to either be negotiating or resonant with news related to Korea or Koreans.

At the fifth and top-level in the hierarchy are Filipinos who produce news content related to Korea to consume their immediate networks. These Filipinos tend to be sympathetic to their engagement on the news related to Korea and feel very resonant when consuming news about Korea and Koreans. Filipinos who produce news content about Korea and Koreans tend to subscribe to Korean ideologies.

It must be noted that Filipinos who feel dissonant with news related to Korea seem to belong to the higher income group and grew up exposed to paid subscriptions, which is, more often than not, Western content. These traditional elites cannot fully embrace the Korean wave because Eastern ideologies contradict their Western perspective and ideologies. On the contrary, lower-income and less-educated informants tend to be resonant with news about Korea because they grew up exposed to free television and canned programs, making them more familiar and connected to Korean cultural products and content. Resonant informants intentionally interact with gateways of information because they feel much affinity and are sympathetic to Korea. They subscribe to the idea that Korea is a better nation than the Philippines in social, political, and economic terms, making them want to be part of the Korean narrative. Meanwhile, some people tend to be neither resonant nor dissonant because they negotiate meanings based on their relationships, experiences, and/or worldviews.

As findings from the interviews suggest, however, Filipinos seem to have already given unconscious consent to hegemony when they subscribed to foreign news. The dissonant traditional elite is dominated by Western worldviews, though they can patronize Western or Korean goods anytime they wish. Meanwhile, the resonant is continuously giving consent to Korean hegemony by allowing the cultural products to infiltrate Philippine socio-political, economic, and cultural systems. Given Western and Korean cultures in the Philippines, the hybrid Filipino culture is faced with a challenge to remain relevant in contemporary times.

## **Implications**

### ***Practical Implications***

The dominating hegemony is arguably intense in societies that have inherently been melting pots of different cultures throughout the ebb of history. The people are troubled by the idea of an “objective” identity—as is the case in the Philippines. With the country being the battleground for these cultures, and all of them trying to win the Filipino people, it is essential to put a strong premium on Filipino culture. With the availability of news about foreign cultures through various gateways, there seems to be a preference for news from foreign sources, whether Korean, Western, or other notable content-producing countries. The dilemma at hand is to locate Filipinos’ interest and engagement toward news about their own culture.

Nonetheless, the prevalence of cultural dominance of Korea in the Philippines is a manifestation that there is a need to protect the local cultural industries, and our own culture—a cognition stemming from the tenets of NWICO vis-a-vis the monopolization of information flow (Padovani, 2008; Dizard, 1994; Zehle, 2012; Phuong & Ibrahim, 2020). Although some informants stated that we should patronize Filipino news like how Koreans prioritize theirs, it is still apparent that Filipinos also want to patronize either Korean or Western ideologies and culture through their news gateways. Therefore, there is a need to expedite and further the local news situation in the Philippines so that Filipinos will choose to consume foreign news encoded by Filipinos, not just Western or Korean media. After all, Phuong and Ibrahim (2020) remind the importance of recognizing the issues related to communication development stemming from having homogenous information gateways.

### ***Theoretical Implications***

Gramsci (1971) argued that the elites in a culturally-besieged society avoid cultural products that the hegemonized masses consume in an attempt to maintain power and validity. However, our work argues that even the elites can subscribe to the prevailing-hegemonic pasture by availing and paying for different media



platforms and services that can satisfy their desire for consumption and belongingness in the Philippines. Cognizant that Gramsci's (1971) framework is a critical constituent of cultural communication studies, we note that the objectivity of its tenets may not hold for different socio-cultural spaces.

Similarly, implications relate to the issue of the governance of global communications as expanded in NWICO. Our study reaffirms that while there exists a call to patronize one's own, there is still an imbalance and lack of regulation in the global flow of information. While the Korean broadcast media landscape poses an alternative to the Western status quo, certainly, the Western latter is still in a dominant position in the Philippines' context. In exchange for the country's global knowledge, awareness, and the pleasure that is derived from perceiving oneself as a stakeholder of a grander narrative and a global village, the Philippines may be dominated by another cultural and ideological landscape.

## **Summary and Conclusion**

Our inquiry illustrated the interplay between information gateways that vary in availability and intimacy, Filipinos' depth of engagement with news about Korea and Koreans, and Filipinos' dissonant, resonant, or negotiated position on Korea and its ideologies. More accessible gateways are less personal and command less engagement and thus cater to Filipinos who have a dissonant position regarding Korea. On the other hand, more intimate but less accessible gateways allow for more immersed and involved engagement, being more suitable for Filipinos resonant with Korea.

Thus, this information gateways allow foreign news to amplify Western and Korean cultures' influence, with the latter challenging the former's dominance in the Philippines. Nonetheless, Filipinos reflect on this foreign news and react accordingly, with reactions ranging from being resonant towards Korea (or the West) to explicit wishes for a better and more prosperous Philippines. These reactions, however dissimilar on the surface, are rooted in

Filipino's colonial and regionalist history.

It is this colonial and regionalist history that gave birth to a Filipino identity that is hybrid and fragmented. With the rise of an interconnected global village (McLuhan & Fiore, 1997) where the West has monopoly over global and broadcast media (Padovani, 2008; Lee, 2020), there is a risk that the hybridized Filipino identity will be overpowered and dominated by foreign countries that have a stronger and more distinct identity and, subsequently, ideologies. Moreover, since questions concerning competing ideologies vis-a-vis identity formation are consequently manifested, audience reception's limitations ought to be recognized. Other equally important factors, such as the dynamics of co-communication and co-creation adhering to the Filipino news consumers and their respective immediate social networks, should be problematized.

## **Recommendations**

It is important to note that news coming from overseas, as a result a globalized world, is encoded with foreign ideologies as a frame of reference. Thus, we recommend that local news outlets make an effort to re-encode foreign news to strip off its hegemonizing effects on Filipinos, especially if the news comes from foreign news agencies. By retraining producers and journalists to re-encode foreign news in a way relevant to the Filipino perspective, Filipinos would step closer to a less fragmented, if still hybrid, identity.

However, we recognize that re-encoding news from foreign agencies alone is not enough to pave the way for a distinct national identity for Filipinos. While news and information can exert cultural influence on a country, cultural products such as music and television dramas also play a role in establishing cultural dominance, as demonstrated by the Korean wave itself (Jin & Yi, 2020). Thus, there is a need for social, cultural, economic, and political sectors to create and promote cultural products that lay the foundation for a strong Filipino identity that can stand the hegemonizing effects of a globalized world. Recommending a

holistic cultural policy is beyond our expertise. Nonetheless, we hope that our study becomes a starting point for nationalistic policymakers.

We are also aware of the fact that our study has its limitations. Our findings may not represent how Filipinos interact with news about Korea and Koreans due to the exploratory and textual nature of our research. It is also possible that Filipinos consume Western news in a more distinct way, which may entail that there is a difference in receiving Korean and Western news. Thus, we urge future scholars and researchers to conduct quantitative studies to validate our findings. We also recommend them to conduct studies that focus on the permeation of Western news in the Philippines.

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### **Endnote**

- [1] Accidental or unintentional
- [2] Planned or intentional
- [3] Includes cultural products
- [4] Corrine (pseudonym), online news consumer, interviewed by Samantha Gabronino, September 2018.
- [5] Kanye (pseudonym), passive non-news consumer, interviewed by Juan Christian Nadong, September 2018.
- [6] Rodney (pseudonym), online news consumer, interview by Nadine Lacuarta, September 2018.
- [7] Jaylyn (pseudonym), traditional news consumer, interviewed by Gwy Lozada, September 2018
- [8] Ernan (pseudonym), with active personal experiences with Korea, interviewed by Justine Lester Cruz, September 2018.
- [9] Corrine (pseudonym), online news consumer, interviewed by Samantha Gabronino, September 2018.
- [10] Julia (pseudonym), with passive personal experiences with Korea, interviewed by Brian Angelo Sereneo, September 2018.
- [11] Yuliana (pseudonym), with passive personal experiences with Korea, interviewed by Arjay Torno, September 2018.
- [12] Julia (pseudonym), with passive personal experiences with Korea, interviewed by Brian Angelo Sereneo, September 2018.

# **When Migration Interacts with Gender: An Exploratory Study on the Implications of Gender and Migration to Filipinos Living and Working in South Korea**

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## **Abstract**

This is an exploratory study of how gender enmeshes or interacts with migration. It depicts this interaction through the use of narrative method. Here, the three narratives of Filipinos living and working in South Korea revealed that the seemingly 'gender neutral' entry to South Korea is actually 'gender-specific' or gender-selective process in migration, and it speaks of different outcomes for men and women migrants. Also, integration into the South Korean society is differently affected at the very outset by this entry position of migrant women and men.

*Keywords: labor and marriage migrants, narrative method, gender trajectories*

## **Introduction**

This paper is an exploratory study that uses gender and cultural perspectives to understand the situations of three Filipino migrants living and working in South Korea (SK). It adopts Altamirano's (1999) definition of migration as a "*movement of people to other parts of their countries or overseas for reasons reasons vitally important for their own, their family or their country's development*" (to this effect), and it also adopts Boyd and Grieco's framework that sees migration in three stages (pre-,



transition and migration proper), and sees gender as both structure and process which involve gender roles, relationships, and the hierarchies embedded in these roles and relationships (Boyd and Grieco 2003). Gender is defined as *“a matrix of identities, behaviors, and power relations that are constructed by the culture of a society in accordance with sex... [and] when people interact with each other, [either] adhering to this content or departing from it, they either re-affirm or change what is meant by gendering; thus, affecting social relations at a particular time or in a particular setting”* (Ibid.).

Thus, this paper focuses on the points in the life stories or lived experiences of the three migrants when gender enmeshes or interacts with migration. It can be at the level of the body or self, the familial, and societal (Ibid.). It thereby aims to describe and analyze what has been produced in these dynamics or encounters using a reflexive research method called narratives. The ‘open-ended style’ of narratives enable the study to track or follow those points or paths where gender enmesh with migration; though these points of enmeshment refuse to be bounded by theories, the study noted Giddens’ ‘structuration theory’ which postulates that *“structures, roles and norms emerge as outcomes of people’s daily practices and actions, both intended and unintended...”* (In De Haas, 2010: 241) as applicable in the analysis of life stories.

Moreover, it can be said that gendering forms part of cultural processes, such as integration vs assimilation, and can also become outcomes of these social interactions. Here, integration does not necessarily lead to *“losing one’s identity, [rather] it is about maintaining identity and belief while being able to celebrate differences and work with others in civic society”* or it can be *“best seen as mutual compromises”* (Sanders, P. n.d.). It can also *“add to the existing culture which in turn transforms and enhances society”* (Ibid.). Assimilation, on the other hand, is when *“outsiders, immigrants, or subordinate groups become indistinguishable within the dominant host society, eventually conforming to the existing cultural norms of society”* (Ibid.).

Crucial in these processes is the concept of self-identity which does not merely refer to the psychological but also includes

the socio-historical, politico-economic, and cultural contexts (Hallowell, I. In Bock 1984, pp. 333-335). Culture is the very environment where migrants found themselves interacting with the host country (Ibid). This is where integration vs assimilation paradigm takes place. With this, the study was able to compare and contrast the outcomes of the three migrants' and their lived experiences as men and women (Handegneu-Sotelo, in Parrenas. p.10). In doing so, the study also shows how much integration or assimilation happened at the individual level (Tavarayuth, pp. 191-194), and shows how the gendered selves of the three migrants in South Korea was shaped and reshaped in such inter-cultural encounters. Here, integration vs assimilation paradigm can be seen in the ways the three migrant Filipinos adopt for themselves the South Korean language, food, clothing, and communication styles (e.g., interaction with in-laws, co-workers, among other social relationships). Concomitantly, the concept of 'cultural capital' (sum of valued knowledge and practical behavioral disposition) is also crucial for it determines what gives opportunities or constraints at the personal, familial and societal levels (Nohl et. al., p.472). In short, when agential actions of the individual migrants enmesh or interact with social structures in their everyday lives (which Giddens termed 'recursivity'), it can produce changes in the structure itself, however limited it is, as well as changes with the actors themselves (Ibid. Giddens, In De Haas).

## **Methodology and Limitations of the Study**

Narrative method was used here to capture the continuity of each migrant's lives: past, present, and future aspirations. Narrative method aims to *“collect ‘individuals’ or ‘groups’ lived experiences in the past and present which is analyzed by researchers who then place the narrative accounts within the social, political, economic, and historical contexts where these experiences took place. The focus... is to understand the interplay between social changes, individual, group lives and agency”* (Scherto and Goodson. In Somekh and Lewis 2011: 157-165)”. The choice of method is

crucial because it has a profound implication on the concept of self-identity, as noted above, is “not simply a psychological concept of ego-identity... [but] simultaneously cultural, historical, social, and personal” (Ibid. p. 158). The purpose of narrative analysis is “*to unfold the ways individuals make sense of their lived experiences and how its telling enables them to interpret the social world and their agency within it*” (Ibid. p.160).

These narratives are interconnected because it posits that each experience is not in isolation for it bespeaks of being Filipinos working and living in SK. Emplaced in SK, these three Filipino migrants are in search of a ‘better life’ as they articulated it. This methodology, as Nayak Anoop puts it, enables us to see “*within place-specific relations... the contexts that give rise to the landscape of emotions, opportunities, and constraints that shape personal histories*” (pp. 29-30). A ‘better life’ in migration was enmeshed with gender ideologies as illustrated in the lived experiences of two marriage migrants and a labor migrant. Thus, through narratives, this paper tries to capture this movement or search for a ‘better life’ at the individual or personal lives of these migrants.

The limitation of the study comes with time constraint because the interviews or narration was done within the week (third week of April 2018) the writer was in Seoul. However, the writer’s primary purpose is to deliver a talk in Jeju Island on “*Holistic Healing of Prostituted Women in Olongapo: The Buklod Experience*”. Her brief encounter-interviews with the three migrant Filipinos in Seoul, near Hyehwa Church, inspired her to compose these narratives, with their permission, using pseudonyms. Thus, the unevenness of the data can be attributed to the length of time or session the writer spent with each individual. The first narrative actually began in 2015 and another session in 2018; while the second and third narratives only began in 2018.

### ***Three Short Interconnected Biographies***

The Philippines has sent more than ten million migrants abroad categorized as permanent (4.8M), temporary (4.2M). and irregular migrants (1.2M); this includes labor as well as marriage

migrants (Chinsung, et al., 2012; CFO 2020). The writer arrived in SK for the first time in 2015, which is when she had her first interview session with the first narrator, an illegal migrant worker, who introduced her to the Hyehwa Church where most Filipinos congregate to listen to mass delivered in Filipino language on Sunday afternoons. The researcher's second visit was in 2018 when she was given the opportunity to interview the second and third narrator who introduced the issue of marriage migration for the first time. As noted above, there were time constraints in that the second interview with the first narrator happened via cellular phone; and the other two narrators were interviewed face-to-face.

Two types of migration were tackled here: legal to 'illegal migrant labor' and marriage migration. The first narrative was about labor migration. 'Cheng' whose status upon entry to SK was that of a legal laborer and later became an 'illegal worker'. The second narrative was about 'Thina', a young woman who got married to an SK soldier. The third narrative was about 'Lila', a maturing woman married to an SK businessman. After fourteen years of living in SK, Lila still says, "*Ang hirap ng buhay dito*" or 'Life here is difficult'.

Actually, it was Cheng who referred the writer to the Hyehwa Catholic Church in Seoul where she met the second and third narrators. A lot of Filipino migrants go to this church every Sunday for the 1:30 PM mass in Filipino. When the researcher went there, the church was full of Filipino mass goers and she was invited to offer something at the altar.

On the way to the Hyehwa Church, lined up were food stalls serving Filipino foods. The researcher interviewed Lila, one of the food stalls owners, early morning and interviewed Thina inside a cafeteria near the walkway of the church, just before the afternoon mass started. The walkway then was a bit slippery due to the pouring rain.

***Lived Experience of Cheng (1): From Legal Laborer to Becoming an 'Artista' (An Undocumented Male OFW)***

Way back 2015, the first interview with Cheng began. He was actually referred to the researcher by his relatives knowing she was going to SK. Actually, they have difficulty contacting him. The writer did not initially know that he was already an ‘illegal worker’ at that time. It was late in the evening when she met him in a secluded area in Seoul. He has to come out at night because there is less chance of being caught by the police. Cheng was about 5’3 in height. He wore a tight-fitting black pants and a blue t-shirt covered with a maong jacket, with a black cap over his head. The interview happened while eating in a restaurant inside a spa. Unfortunately, the second interview happened in 2018 via cellular phone due to his ill health and time constraints for the researcher: she has to fly to Jeju Island the next day.

## **WORK**

Cheng is a 40-year-oldFilipino male, living and working in Ihksan City, Jeolla Province. He came to South Korea on 7 December 2009 as a legal OFW. First, he worked as a construction worker for four years and ten months. He arrived in Pohang City, Gungwondo on 9 December 2009 and stayed till April 2010. It was wintertime then. He had a co-worker who died of ‘*bangungot*’ or nightmare in March 2010. The company denied benefits for this kind of death for it is not covered by their policy. Thus, the rest of his Filipino co-workers filed a complaint at the SK Department of Labor. The representative of the Korean Labor department visited their site and rendered the decision of the company ‘illegal’. But the company released them or terminated all of them from work. So, they protested. Instead, the company divided them into three groups. He was sent to Daejeon where he worked at the Suwon company till 2013 (for one year and three months).

Some Korean companies, according to Cheng, actually ‘pulled-out’ workers from field sites every four months and transferred them to workplaces. In his case, after every four months,

he was sent back to Daejeon. Fortunately, he was able to finish his contract. He then went to Iksan City, Jeolla province and worked under the Dongbo company (for one year and five months). Here his legal status ended.

He became an illegal worker from October 7, 2014 till the present. In 2014, he worked at Hyongwa (a subcontractor of Hyundai) as production operator and handled four machines (multi-tasking): 800 tons, 1000 tons, 1500 tons and 2500 tons. His usual workday is from 8:00 in the morning till 8:00 in the evening or a twelve-hour work per day. 'Flexi' working hours do not apply to foreign migrant workers. Sunday is his only rest day. The basic salary here is W7,500 per hour. They receive incentives during holidays. Giving of a bonus depends on company policy. In his work, it is fortunate if he can have a five-hour sleep a day. He lamented that he knows not how to enjoy life anymore. However, he learned something in Korea on how to become a good worker for during his span of stay there, he had worked as a steelman, carpenter, helper, and at the time of the interview he was regarded as an '*artista*' or an undocumented worker in Filipino parlance.

**As an 'Artista' (code for an undocumented worker).** When one is released from work, he or she still has a three-month grace period to look for a new job. In case one failed to find a new one, she or he will be declared an illegal worker (see EPS Korea). At present, he is an undocumented or illegal worker, without a visa. He had inflamed hands when I interviewed him because he accidentally sprained it. His hair was a little long because he had not visited a barber lately. Of course, he cannot access any health services because of his illegal status. His family in the Philippines does not know that he was then unemployed. Having no job brought fears in him especially at the time his three daughters needed some money to pay for their tuition. He said there were a lot of Filipino TNTs ('*tago ng tago*') in SK.

However, he did not agree that deportation would solve this problem. He suggested that the Philippine government needed to know first the reasons why they became illegal. And this has something to do also with the labor system of SK.

**SK Employment System and Practices.** Cheng observed that in SK, there are Koreans who in their senior years, still work for a living though they are already receiving pension from the State. This is part of the Korean underground or ‘UG’ economy, according to him. Most young people do not want to work in factories or construction, so Korean companies hire old people to do those jobs, which the young workers despised. ‘Old’ or senior workers receive salaries but not the usual or mandated basic salary. Also, they are not given benefits that accrue to a regular worker. He said that young South Koreans are ‘*maarte*’ or very hard to please; this attribute applies to both men and women. They regarded them as “*arobite*” or “*alba*” in Korean language. Most young South Koreans, according to him, only want to do sideline or part time jobs, such as those found in convenience stores. They do not want to work in jobs defined as 3Ds or “*difficult, dangerous and dirty jobs*”. They just want to study or go to school and ask money from parents. But the government of SK still invited their youth to do 3Ds jobs but they often refused. He had worked with a young man once who initially showed up and then disappeared from work. Thus, this so-called underground system of labor in SK was born. But Cheng still admires Korean workers for being ‘workaholic’. For instance, even when they are ill, they still go to work.

**Support Social Institutions.** According to Cheng, when one is an illegal worker, one can actually ask for help at a migrant center like Ansan Migrant Center to assist her/him in finding a job. This is the biggest migrant center in SK and is headed by a Filipina. They help in securing benefits for the Filipino workers, issuing certificates of employment and processing of other employment papers, which usually takes only a day. Migrant centers usually have connections with Korean companies or businesses. They offer free services as well as shelters for workers in distress. For health needs, they

usually refer them to health facilities.

Also, the Roman Catholic Church helps migrant workers in trying times. For instance, in his case, they served as a mediator between worker and employer. But his employer did not accede to his demands, so the church did not anymore push or struggle to win favors from the employer. He cannot bring his case to court because of his illegal status. As an underground worker (UG) himself (who are called '*artista*' in Filipino parlance), they have no more proof that they are migrant workers primarily because they do not have any visa.

**Socio-Cultural Adjustments.** Cheng observed that discrimination is high in SK. This was affirmed by Mr. Dae-Han Song of the International Strategic Center in my interview with him. He said one needs to understand the Korean language to avoid this. When one cannot speak their language, they think they are being rude to them. Thus, one needs to use “yo” when talking as a sign of respect.

True to what Mr. Song said, Cheng also observed that SK people, especially men, usually throw invectives (e.g., “shibal”) at foreigners. He learned to speak the Korean language to hasten his adjustment to the culture. One advantage of this is he can easily deliver what they want or need. But he had difficulties adjusting to Korean food and partly its culture. Thus, he learned to observe their bodily movements. If they move slowly, he moves slowly; if they move fast, then he moves fast. Also, he learned to use his own instinct by not imposing his ideas or ‘messing up’ with them.

## **FAMILY**

As a child, Cheng was born and raised in a poor family, with four siblings, in the Philippines. He was able to finish high school by supporting himself. He wanted to go to college, but his family cannot support him. This became his motivation to work abroad. He realized that human beings do not only live for today and for food alone but must look toward a better future.

While working in SK, he usually saves money from March



to May of every year for this is the time his three children do not need to pay for their tuition yet. His wife uses such savings for their jewelry business. She was a former accountant and resigned from work to attend to their three children. Back in the Philippines, he knew very well that several drug addicts frequent their home because of a sister who is still into drugs. Thus, he asked his wife to stay at home so that she can protect their children. Actually, he himself during his younger years had been a drug addict. Now, he saves for his children's future because they are intelligent and hardworking. When one of his children contracted dengue, he had to ask for loans in SK so that he could send money back home. For him, his family is his main responsibility at this stage of his life.

At present, his own family lives with his biological or extended family. He helped them in paying for electric bills (P3,000/month) and water bills (P1,500/ month). He cannot anymore extend money to pay for their food. Since when he was single, he used to help with family expenditures. Now that he is a married man, he cannot possibly do that. Also, he is not sure he will stay strong for life. He works hard for the future of his children and does not want them to suffer as he had and still does.

Being an *artista*, he earns less and can only send P35,000 a month. This money is used to pay for utilities (P3,500), for his children's allowance in school, school projects, and for food. At least, he can still save P1,500 per month. He has no more money for emergency purposes, such as when one gets sick. His problem now is the security of his own family. Some members of the house like his sister are also drug addicts so she usually invites people 'of the same feathers'. He does not want to argue anymore with his family of origin because they usually become emotional when he talks to them. Up to this time, he still sends money to his mother because she is already weak and ill. For so long, he wanted his own family to separate from his family of origin, but he insisted they stay with them because he wanted them to be uplifted economically. Sometimes when his wife had conflicts with his own siblings, he advised her to keep cool and he will be the one to talk to them. His family of origin sees his wife as "*madamot*" or stingy in terms of money. His wife explained to him that if his siblings have money

to buy drugs and alcohol, why is it that they do not have money to buy for food. His family of origin does not know about his own resentments toward them. For instance, his siblings would ask him why not just transfer his children from private to public schools. He does not want to heed their advice because he wants his children to taste the experiences, which he was not able to experience when he was a child. His second principle in life is *“as long as one lives or breaths, there is still hope.”* He was once a drug addict. But he wanted to straighten his path unlike his sister who after having been imprisoned for eight years still takes drugs. He is also saddened when people only look at one side of the issue. For him, both sides must be heard. By the way, his three daughters already visited SK twice in a span of nine years he had been in SK. This is through the courtesy of the pastor who invited them. His wife saved money for the airfare of his three children. He lamented though that no one Korean co-worker approached him to share his joy. Although this is understandable because most South Koreans are deep into work that they spend less time with their children; most of their time is spent drinking alcohol after work.

**Aspirations for himself and his country.** He desires for a decent job in the Philippines and vows to return only if he will receive a salary equal or almost equal to what he has been receiving in SK. Back when he was a legal worker, he usually received P50,000 per month; now, he receives around P35,000 per month. Also, at the age of 43, he wants to go back to the Philippines (he is now 40 years old). At present, he puts some money to the Philippine SSS (Social Security System) so that he has a fallback when he retires from work.

More importantly, he demands that Filipino lawyers be deployed to remote areas in SK to serve OFWs in trouble with the law for free. Most Filipinos pay more for Korean lawyers in pursuit of their lawsuits. Paying for a lawyer's bill consumes most of Filipino workers' salaries especially when they are UG or illegal. According to him, the Philippine government must know first why they become illegals. In this regard, they must know the Korean system of employment and why OFWs face problems in this kind of

labor system.

However, he observed changes during President Duterte's time. It used to be that they have to wait for long in government offices abroad before they are attended to. At present, the Philippine government officials attend or respond to them fast enough.

### **Lived Experience of Thina (2): A Young Filipina married to a young Korean soldier**

Thina was sitting on a table inside a cafeteria, with her biological mother when I met her. The cafeteria is located along the walkway going to the Hyehwa Church. She was wearing an orange sweater in combination with black slacks. Her fair skin resembled that of the 'glass skin' typical of South Korean women.

#### ***FAMILY***

Thina is 23 years old and married to a young Korean soldier (24 years old). She had been living in SK for three years now. Initially, she and her husband never planned to get married. The first time Thina applied for a visa as a single or independent woman she was rejected. So as a strategy, she and her Korean soldier boyfriend resorted to marriage in the Philippines. True enough, when she re-applied as married to a Korean soldier, she got the visa. Her in-laws got angry at that move or marriage in the Philippines. So, when they moved to SK, they did not conduct a traditional Korean wedding ceremony for the two — it never happened until this time of interview. A Korean traditional wedding is necessary for foreign wives to secure her status as a wife in SK society. Also, Thina knows too that during that traditional wedding the family of the groom will give money to the family of the bride. This never happened. But she thought she is still fortunate because her in-laws treated her fairly even though she is not married via traditional wedding to their son and now, they have their own child. Though without a traditional wedding, she and her child can access services such as medical, legal, educational, among other social services in SK.

While living in SK, she used to call her own mother via phone and cried because she missed her a lot. Her mother used to tell her it was her decision to live there. Actually, Thina met her husband in a hotel in Subic where she worked. In SK, her husband and in-laws would not allow her to work primarily because of their child. But before going to SK, she dreamed of building a house for her parents because they were only renting a house in the Philippines. She is hoping that her in-laws and husband will allow her to work. In the SK culture, they say a wife can work when her child is already seven years old. She also complained that everything in Korea is so expensive and that the whole system works via use of cards.

After three years of not seeing her mother, finally her mother visited SK that year. Her own mother longed for her granddaughter who is now three years old. The irony was her own mother was not allowed to take care of her grandchild because in SK there is no such thing as hiring a ‘househelp’ or a ‘child minder’. Her own mother got bored doing nothing in SK. So, a Filipina friend referred her to another Filipina to do some house cleaning. Her mother did an ‘extra’ or ‘bit’ job and from her earnings she was able to buy her Filipino foods which she longed for. One of Thina’s problems up to these days, she is not yet well-versed in speaking the Korean language. Now, she is taking Korean language lessons at home with a teacher.

At present, she is still living with her in-laws ages 57 (mother) and 58 (father) because her husband is still serving in the military. Thus, they are economically dependent on her in-laws. She felt ashamed to ask for anything from them. Her mother-in-law often chooses her wardrobe or buys her clothes. Also, they tour her around the city. During weekends, she also goes out with her husband. Sometimes, Filipino friends visit her in Seoul. Her husband does not want to live in the Philippines mainly because he likes Korean food a lot. He only wants to visit the Philippines as a tourist.

Moreover, she observed that Koreans have very different culture especially in terms of gender roles: “*Sa atin kasi, kapag ano puedeng tumulong... sa kanila, hindi kasi ano daw ho, babae. Pero sa atin, kahit na babae, pantay*” or in Korea, the woman must do all

the household chores including serving the in-laws because it is the primary duty of women. She adjusts by “*pakikisama*” or she does some housework such as cooking, among others. However, she often complains of her mother-in-law who bad-mouthed her or “*nakakainis yung bibig*” as she noted. The mother-in-law often told her “*hindi ka nakakapagdesisyon sa sarili mong anak*” (in Korean language) or she cannot decide for her own child. She often blamed her when her own daughter got sick. To which, she will ask her own mother, “*Nay, pababayaan ko ba naman ang anak ko eh anak ko yun!*” or how could she neglect her own child, she is her only child. When she sought her own mother’s advice about this, she often advised her: “*pagpasensiyahan mo na lang*” or bear the brunt patiently. Also, she advised her to bow down her head, listen to what the mother-in-law is saying. Of course, she said sometimes she cannot bear it anymore. Her husband had similar advice.

Thina did not seek help from any groups, particularly non-government organizations (NGOs), unlike Cheng. There are about 226 NGOs in SK “involved in international migrants” welfare, labor conditions, and cultural issues where she can “bring grievances occasioned during the marriage process or after marrying; along with various government measures, they provide education and training programs to empower migrant women” (Chinsung et.al 2012).

### ***Lived Experience of Lila (3): A Maturing Filipina married to a Maturing Korean businessman***

Lila’s migration to SK happened when she attended a ‘Moonies’ assembly in Tanay, Rizal in 2004. Actually, this kind of matchmaking activity is illegal in the Philippines, but—“these regulations are easily flouted” (Chinsung, et, al, 2016). That time was also regarded as the “second peak of international marriage of South Korean men to foreign wives...which can be attributed to the burgeoning commercialization of international marriage agencies in SK” (Ibid.). Ironically, those matchmaking agencies are legal in

South Korea and this “creates confusion in marriage migration” (Ibid).

### ***WORK AND FAMILY***

Lila has been in SK for fourteen (14) years now. She already has teenage children from her Korean businessman-husband. Also, she has three small businesses in SK: a meat shop titled “Kosong meat” in Myeongdong; another one is a carinderia near the Hyehwa Catholic Church; and a *sari-sari* or ‘everything all’ or ‘everything and all sorts’ store. She wakes up very early every day at 3:00 in the morning and sleeps late at night. Her son helps her in the carinderia while her daughter helps in the meat shop. She hails from the northern part of the Philippines and both her parents are farmers. She rarely goes home to her province because she already has two children from her Korean husband.

It is worth noting here that the food stalls before the Hyehwa Church; mostly of Filipinos coming from different regions of the country: Pampanga, Ilocana, Tagalogs, Pangasinense, among other ethnic groups in the Philippines. I had so little time to spend but this would be a very good and interesting site to study on how Filipinos bonded together economically and culturally in an Asian country like SK. This can be said that organized livelihood is one of the strategies that Filipino migrants in SK came up with to survive or to thrive in SK (De Haas, p. 242). Of course, as Lila admitted it is more of “to survive”.

She admitted having survived SK “the hard way”. A South Korean society expects that a wife must clean all the dishes especially after a celebration or occasion (e.g., Chuseok or Thanksgiving). Here, the wife is also expected to cook and help in the serving of food. She must know at least seven to eleven side dishes and ideally, she must know up to thirty main dishes because

this is what they serve during big occasions. After fourteen years of living and working in SK, she says, “*Ang hirap ng buhay dito*” or “*Life here is difficult*”. Like Cheng earlier, she also speaks fluent Korean. It is a necessity for her to speak in the Korean language especially when she orders meat for their business.

Actually, she is a very charming woman. As we entered her carinderia which is made up of a light green tent, she welcomed us saying “*Magandang umaga*” or good morning in Filipino language. She is *morena* or brown skinned and not wearing any makeup . She wore a flowery duster with an apron on top. Because we ran out of won (Korean money) and had to withdraw from a nearby bank, she offered us to eat first and then pay later to which we agreed. Thus, during our meals we intermittently interviewed her. Lila’s food was “*lutong bahay*” or personally cooked by her, as we say in Filipino. It is composed of well-known Filipino foods such as *adobo*, *pansit*, and Ilokano foods such as *diningding*, *igado*, among others. Two Filipino women assist Lila in the carinderia because she cannot cope with customers coming in to eat breakfasts. She invited us to visit her in Myeongdong (which we were not able to do because we are bound for Jeju the next day).

Aside from Lila’s carinderia, the streets leading to the Hyehwa Church were lined up with stalls offering Filipino foods. There were canned goods and *sitsiria* (or pick-your-food) stand. Some also sold packed *ginataang halo-halo*, *suman*, among other Filipino rice delicacies. Mostly the customers were fellow Filipinos, although there were also some Koreans who bought some Filipino foods. This appeared to be an organized livelihood strategy among Filipino migrants living in SK. It must also be a way to introduce Filipino culture to the host country via selling of Filipino foods.

## **Discussion**

Based on the above narratives, aspirations for a ‘better life’ for the three Filipino migrants and for their families of origin at first seemed neutral but when subjected to gender and cultural lens, the real power of these ideologies was played out in the following areas of their lived experiences:

### ***Gender Selectivity in Labor and Marriage Migration, Gender Role Trajectories, and Kinship Issues***

First, the lived experiences affirmed what Chant found out in his regional studies that, “the migration of men is more...linked with direct access to employment” while women migration, in contrast, is regarded by the receiving government as ‘dependent’ or related to family role (Altamirano, p.6). This is typified in Thina’s lived experience. When she applied for a visa the first time as a single or independent woman she was rejected. But when she re-applied as married to a Korean soldier, she got the visa.

On the other hand, Lila’s entry to SK was during the time when the second peak of international marriage migration happened in SK (Ibid. Chinsung et al, 2016). There was a notable fall in the national fertility rate; so, the SK government including the local government units encouraged the legal creation of matchmaking agencies. In fact, there were two periods in the SK history when marriage migration was at its peak (Ibid.): first is called the ‘Korean Wind’ when ethnic Koreans living in China were matched with SK farmers or men living in rural areas. The second wave happened in 2005, which was brought about by large scale modernization in SK prompting rural to urban migration of most men which also pushed the search for foreign wives among men from rural areas. This was supported by the national and local government through licensing of



matchmaking businesses, which ironically is illegal among the sending countries like the Philippines. With this policy intervention, the SK government and society assumes that women are always in a 'dependent' or family role position, compared to men which is seen as 'independent' and in a market role position as 'laborers' (Ibid. Boyd and Grieco, 2003). Also, this can be traced from the fact that traditional Korean society sees that women's virtue lies in their obedience to husbands and filial piety (Kim, Y. In *Korean Women and Culture*, 2003, p. 181). In this connection, the two Filipinas did not expect that they would be facing other forms of gender stratification in SK society in terms of age, position of men and position of in-laws (Ibid.). The researcher believes that marriage migration may serve as a 'way out' for most SK women who do not want themselves to be put in a 'multiple burdened' life or life of obedience to husbands, though this belief has yet to be correlated with studies.

Therefore, the seemingly 'gender neutral' entry to SK is actually 'gender-specific' or gender-selective process in migration (Ibid. Boyd and Grieco, 2003). Cheng, being a young man and able-bodied, entered in the so-called '3D' jobs: 'dirty, difficult and dangerous' while Thina and Lila entered as 'marriage migrants.' Thina recounted that she and her boyfriend who is a SK soldier decided to get married so she can smoothly enter SK because the first time she applied for a visa as a single woman, she was rejected. Lila, on the hand, attended an assembly of 'Moonies' which holds matchmaking activity, and this serves as her smooth entry to SK. As noted above, this was the period when the number of migrant wives was at its peak in SK. Thus, the entry to SK speaks of different outcomes for men and women: Cheng admittedly learned how to be a 'good' worker; while Thina and Lila, however, learned how to be 'good' wives, mothers, and caretakers.

Thus, integration to SK society is affected at the very outset by this entry position of migrant women and men. An example is how Thina was treated unfairly by her mother-in-law because she

would not allow her to get married to her son via the Korean traditional wedding which is a necessary step to secure one's status as wife in Korean society. This was exacerbated when she was not allowed also to work and made her only attend to her child and husband. According to her in-laws, she will do this till her child turns seven. Worse, she is also expected to attend to the needs of her in-laws. At this point, she initially resisted those roles assigned to her. But her own mother and husband advised her to endure such treatment.

Concomitant to the women migrants' lived experiences is the influence of media or culture in the choice of becoming a migrant wife. Thina, for one, was enamored at that time watching Korean *telenovelas* in the Philippines (for instance, the 'Descendants of the Sun': a love story between a female health service provider and a soldier). This 'imagined' love story was translated into reality when she met an SK soldier in Subic where she works. They dated in Subic and she decided to migrate with him to SK. Her personal aspiration is to earn more so as to be able to save money and build a house for her parents. But little did she know that no matter how highly skilled she was (she was a graduate of HRM and a worker at the Subic Hotel), she ended up in traditional roles she never dreamed of in the first place: as a wife, a full-time mother to a child, and worst, an unemployed.

Worth noting still is the woman-to-woman disempowering relationships where Thina found herself. Her mother-in-law drummed up those motherly and wifely roles almost every day and it is the very reason she was not allowed to work by her husband's family. Worst still, the control of her mother in-law ranges from subtle into harsh. Subtle because she chooses and buys her clothes. Harsh because she kept on nagging and shouting at her every day, especially when her own daughter got sick.

On the other hand, Lila's short narrative portrays a common issue among women in general which is termed "multiple burden" (Op. Cit. In Parrenas). This is juggling three roles at the same time: mother, worker, and community roles. Her routine usually begins at three o'clock in the morning and ends up very late in the evening. Availing of house help is not a practice in SK.

In comparison, Cheng's lived experience is one of dreaming a 'good' life abroad but ended up in '3D' jobs ("difficult, dangerous and dirty"), which he has to endure so as to earn additional money for remittance to the Philippines. SK young men shied away from these 3D jobs because it falls below their expectations (see interview with Mr. Dae-Han Song). But it can be said that the SK government policy is only in line with most receiving countries policy or principle of upholding "masculine identity as 'work, work and work'" (Prof. Del Aguila's Lecture on "Work and Masculine Identity". 13 March 2018). So, governments see men as workers, and they enter receiving countries in a 'productive role' or as 'independent' human beings. But this is not the case for women migrants. As noted above, women are regarded as 'dependent' or in their familial role. Parrenas (2000) referred to this kind of global arrangement as the 'international gender division of reproductive labor' (Op. Cit.).

Thus, SK, despite its seeming modernity, is caught in this kind of global arrangement where women are defined solely by their reproductive roles (as narrated by both Thina and Lila). In addition to that, Filipino wives of Korean husbands are expected to obey and serve their in-laws, which is another layer of hierarchy in social relationships.

Perhaps, it could be said that Filipino male migrants are still 'better off' in SK because they face only 'labor discrimination', such as issues of lower wages, strict employers, 'illegal transfer' to another employment sites, non-coverage of some benefits that must accrue to them, among other labor issues; while women, also suffer the same issues when they work, and more so with the issue of 'multiple burden'.

Worth noting here is the issue of fatherhood among men migrants. Fatherhood is another path through which masculine identity is shaped (Prof. Del Aguila's lecture on "Fatherhood and Caring Masculinities". 27 Feb 2018.) With Cheng, it is enlightening to know that he has no qualms having three daughters. In fact, he loves them very much that he works twelve hours a day and sleeps four hours a day just to be able to send them to private schools and let them go to SK to visit him. He still dreamed of a 'better life' for

them: a future he never had because he was born in a big and poor family. Fatherhood defines his masculinity at present. It is also comforting that Cheng's wife, unlike Thina and Lila, enjoys some autonomy through economic power because the remittance of Cheng was channeled to a family jewelry business. Yet still, she too experienced 'multiple burden' because she single-handedly attended to the needs of their three daughters. Unfortunately, she was not able to visit Cheng in SK. They only communicated via Messenger or Facebook.

### ***Intergenerational and Kinship Issues***

Cheng actually aspires to break the intergenerational cycle of ignorance, violence, and poverty in his own family of origin by giving his daughters a big chance in finishing their desired college degree. He saves at least P1,500 per month for each daughter's education needs in the future and sends them to private schools in the Philippines. This has been affirmed in previous studies that remittance often went to the education of children (De Haas, 2010). It is good news that Cheng also spends his remittance in productive investment (jewelry business in the Philippines).

While for Thina and Lila's, the role of the in-laws in SK is so powerful and cannot be ignored. As noted above, their control extends from subtle too harsh. Gender traditionalism is so intact that up to now, wives are not allowed to work by in-laws especially if they have grandchildren below seven years old. This can be attributed to Confucianism which is still prevalent in SK society (Op. Cit. Kim, Y.).

Further, the narrative of Cheng also affirmed what Chant has found out in his regional studies that "the temporality or long absence of migrant men from domestic space means that women obtain certain autonomy, although their access to resources, often is limited" (In Altamirano, p. 6). As noted above, Cheng's wife manages a jewelry business from the remittance sent by him.

## *Intercultural and Discrimination Issues*

Admittedly, according to a Korean male labor activist, “there is still a bias in SK, and it is called ‘colonialist mentality’” (Interview with Mr. Dae-Han Song). It means most of the Koreans held in high esteem those people who come from wealthy countries and looked down at those who come from poor countries like the Philippines, regardless if they are highly skilled. He also acknowledged there are reports of abuses such as losing limbs in Korean factories, which are not taken to the hospitals, and there are also cases of sexual harassment and sexual violence. He commended the role of trade unions in SK because they really fight for migrant workers’ rights especially for the undocumented. He believes “there has to be safeguards for them regardless of their status”. At present, there are almost three hundred organized groups or non-government organizations working for the welfare of migrant workers in SK (Op.cit. Chinsung et. al).

Despite these negative comments, Cheng still sees the SK culture as a model in work ethics and conflict resolution at the workplace. He admires SK workers for being “workaholic” and in fact, he already adopted the SK workers style of work: he prods himself to work even when he has a fever. He also looked up to them in terms of conflict resolution in the workplace. He observed that male SK workers utter invectives at each other to the point of being physically violent; but later at night, they sit, drink, and embrace each other.

More importantly, Cheng believes that he himself is an epitome of a “changed or transformed ‘drug addict’”. He used to be a drug addict in his teen years in the Philippines. When his grandmother died, he went into depression and survived it. Thus, he went abroad for work. This kind of determination to break the intergenerational cycle of poverty, violence, addiction, and ignorance in his own family of origin via labor migration is indeed a very commendable and relevant experience in this time when the Philippine government is ‘hell bent’ on its ‘war against drugs’. Thus, the writer believes that Cheng’s aspirations and convictions can serve as an alternative path or creative way of addressing drug

addiction, poverty, and ignorance.

At a macro-level, it can also be said that the structural inequality suffered by the three Filipino migrants stemmed primarily from the relationship between the sending and receiving countries (Alcid 2004). Particularly, the neo-liberal policy of the receiving country which peg wages of Filipino workers at a low rate compared to their own workers, is still comparatively high compared to the prevailing wage rate in the sending country or country of origin. This applies for both low-skilled and high-skilled laborers. But this perpetuates the so-called “culture of migration” or the vicious cycle of poverty and more out-migration (Op. Cit. De Haas, pp. 237-238). The researcher believes that this kind of labor strategy or platform of action of economically advancing countries like SK and Japan may serve as a ‘way out’ for young Korean and Japanese men to avoid the so-called 3D jobs they despised, which, in turn, is filled up by young able-bodied men from the sending countries such as the Philippines, though this belief may have yet to be correlated with studies.

## **Conclusions and Recommendations**

First, all the three migrants’ lived experiences, despite their long years of living and working hard in SK, still says, “*Mahirap ang buhay dito*” or ‘*Life here is difficult*’. It was said in the context of gender dynamics and in the context of illegality. “*Mahirap*” connotes a sense not only of the physical but more so of emotional and socio-cultural contexts. As a guidance counselor, the researcher sensed the emotionality as she listens to the rantings about in-laws, conflicts between wife and family in the Philippines, and missing one’s loved ones in the country of origin. This psychological concept of self was even tested in its “robustness” and “fragility” (in Giddens’ term) (Scherto & Goodson. In Somekh and Lewin, 2011, p. 159) during their migration in SK. The ‘robust self’ can be seen at the very entry and transition period in migration; while the ‘fragile self’ was tested during the migration proper especially when Cheng’s status slid down from being a legal worker to an illegal one;

when Thina encountered a mother-in-law who forced her to stay at home and would not allow her to work outside for pay; and when both Lila and Cheng, can no longer find time to sleep because they have to attend to work and find no time to enjoy life in SK. As to the question of what happened to their dream of a ‘better life’, it is encapsulated in the above statement ‘Life here is difficult’. This is the psychological self -speaking. But the self-in-relation to others showed us that Cheng invested this ‘better life’ to the education of his children and a jewelry business for his family of origin; Lila has joined an organized strategy of Filipino business in SK with her food stall; and Thina has yet to find a job. One can explain this in what Giddens termed as “life politics” (Sherto and Goodson, p. 159). This is the ‘structuration theory’ (Giddens term) at work, when “agency – the limited but real capacity of individuals to overcome constraints and potentially reshape structure” (In De Haas, p. 241). Cheng has shown this when he joined the protest against his first company for unfair labor practice; Lila also has joined an organized Filipino business community to introduce Filipino culture through foods; Thina has yet to show her grit in this life politics.

Second, these three short interconnected biographies had shown that despite the seeming modernity of SK, gender roles are still traditional. It was experienced at the very entry to the SK society when women are treated as ‘dependent’ and men as ‘independent’; during their stay in SK where women have to perform traditional roles (e.g., being a wife, doing all the housework for all members of the extended families, etc). Yet, marriage migration has been happening since the 1980s in SK as a strategy to address the social problem of falling fertility (Ibid. Chinsung, et al.). The researcher believes that for this policy to last for more than three decades now, it may mean it provides better or more options for the Korean women, though this assumption must also be correlated with studies.

Third, the illegality of Filipino migrant workers has not been studied hard enough to be able to address its very roots. The Philippine government must look at it not only from the policy of the receiving country, but more so of its own overall development direction. True enough, the salaries of Filipino workers abroad are more compared to what they can earn in the Philippines which is

actually why they stay in the host country even when their status is 'illegal'. According to Cheng, if the government wants to 'lure back' the 'brawn and the brain' workers then it should address the employment problem in the Philippines. True enough, because according to studies, unemployment serves as the bedrock that produces the vicious cycle of poverty and more out migration (Ibid. De Haas). Perhaps, bilateral agreements between and among governments may address this issue.

Fourth, based on the above cited lived experiences, proficiency in speaking the Korean language is a big cultural capital. It works well for Cheng and Lila. Despite having low education, they managed to earn or gain employment and survived the highly discriminatory attitude of both ordinary Koreans and Korean employers because they speak the Korean language very well. They did not study this formally but through what they call 'wido' or '*pakapa-kapa*' method or using one's instincts. Thus, the gender trajectory for both of them changed. But at present, Cheng is actually disturbed that when he wakes up each morning, he realized he had forgotten how to read the Roman alphabet and only see in his head, the Korean calligraphy or orthography. Perhaps, this may be called an 'assimilation effect' (Ibid. Sanders). Paul Sanders likened integration and assimilation into a food metaphor: integration is like eating salad where one can still taste the individual ingredients, while assimilation is like eating soup when one cannot even distinguish the individual ingredients (Ibid.).

Fifth, as to reflections and insights on narrative as a research methodology, the researcher realized it takes a lot of patience and timing to interview women and men migrants because they are engaged in multiple activities. With Lila, the researcher has to serve customers in the carinderia while interviewing her. With Cheng, she has to find the right 'timing' of interview for the risk of getting caught because Cheng is still an 'illegal laborer'. So, the interview with Cheng occurred very late in the evening so as not to be tracked down by the SK police. Interviewing also requires tact and sensitivity because 'button pains' is all over the individual narrators; when one touched it, tears would fall, whether it is a man or a woman interviewee. Thus, in this kind of methodology, dynamics



of emotions need to be factored in, contrary to what Boyd and Grieco suggested. As a guidance counselor, the researcher also believes that narrating one's lived experience brings some emotional relief to the narrator and it is also crucial in establishing rapport and trust during the narration phase. Ideally, there must be enough time spent conversing with the narrator so that the data will get even and richer through time.

Corollary to the above, the researcher realized that there needs to be a set of questions composed beforehand so as to map out the scope of the narratives before setting out for interviews so that data can be more coherent and even toward recommendations and applications. The researcher also realized that 'unevenness' of data was glaring when she can mention only some details of both women's lives during the analysis part; mention more details in the man's narrative. True enough, this paper is just the beginning of her interest in this area of study. She hopes to do her future dissertation delving on the topic "gender, migration and emotions".

Sixth, as to policy recommendations, the study affirms the recommendation of Cheng that Filipino labor lawyers must be deployed to the remote areas in SK so that Filipino OFWs can avail of legal services for free. Most of them access Korean lawyers and they pay so dearly for it; in the end, they lose all their earnings just to pay for the lawyer's bill. As Cheng has related, Filipino illegal laborers lost legal battles in South Korea due to lack of institutional or governmental support. This is a very important support for them.

Concomitant suggestion is setting up women's centers, which are accessible to Filipina marriage migrants and women workers can truly be of help. This is needed especially in times of 'crisis' or those times they need to take a respite from the daily grind of housework and emotional work with their 'intercultural' or transnational families. Accessibility denotes not only geographical distance but psychological which means it provides Filipinos with service providers who can speak their own language and whom they can talk to and vent out 'hardships' of adjustments especially those related to gender roles.

Lastly, for future Philippine studies, the researcher missed the chance of interviewing children of the migrant workers (because

they were not there during the time of interview) and interviewing other Filipino owners of the food stalls along Hyehwa Church. The owners come from different regions of the country: Pampanga, Ilocano, Tagalog, Visayas, among others. This can be seen as an “organized livelihood strategy” of migrants in SK (Ibid. De Hass, p. 242). It was only featured in the narrative of Lila. Actually, these two aspects of migration deserve separate and good ethnographic accounts of their-own.

For future Korean studies, it pays to delve into these two research questions raised earlier: “what motivates Korean women to become marriage migrants in other countries” and “what motivates young Koreans to do part-time jobs in their society”. This kind of parallel studies may serve as a beginning towards seeing that migrants’ agency, as contained in their lived experiences, is interconnected regardless of gender, race, class, among other elements of intersectionality.

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# Purchase and Consumption Behaviors of Philippine Concert-Goers: A Qualitative Management Discourse

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## Abstract

Managing a concert in the Philippines is a high-risk business. Not only is this expensive to produce, organize, and control, but Filipino concert-goers also display a wide variety of behaviors that are also different from those of other audiences, even within the same region. This research, employing prescriptive grounded theory, aims to document the purchase and consumption behaviors of Philippine concert-goers. Using the arts marketing, consumer behavior, service manage, and purchase process as theoretical anchors, narrative data from 38 respondents was subjected to the process of extracting categories, formulating relationships, and identifying other variables, ultimately proposing a theoretical model spanning pre-concert, during the concert, and post-concert phases, shedding light and fleshing out the details of what Filipino concert-goers experience. Implications emphasize on having a broader purview of managing a concert from the day of its announcement, rather than focusing efforts on just the concert day itself. The idea is to entice better customer involvement and engagement and increase perceptions of value and feelings of satisfaction.

*Keywords: purchase process; consumption process; consumer engagement; arts marketing; concert-goers; events management*

## Introduction

The phenomenon of live music performances is an important channel for pop music production and consumption. With millions of people regularly attending live music performances, including concerts (Kruger & Saayman, 2012b), many direct and indirect economic, social, and cultural considerations contribute to the interesting dynamics in live music performance audiences (Kruger & Saayman, 2012a, 2012b, 2015). And because of this, there is much effort to convert recorded music listeners to live music performances attendees (Bennett, 2015; Westgate, 2019), and to understand why, despite expensive ticket prices, fans find ways to find value in their concert experiences (Baxter-Moore & Kitts, 2016).

The Philippines has seen its fair share of live music events in the form of concerts and music festivals performed by both local and international artists. The demand for such is increasing over time. For example, the American indie pop group LANY decided to add two more nights to their Philippine stop of the Malibu Nights tour at the SM Mall of Asia Arena, giving in to the clamor of the Filipino fans (Rappler.com, 2018). For the first time in their careers, K-pop girl group sensation TWICE has decided to hold a tour stop in Manila at the SM Mall of Asia (Hicap, 2019). The preselling of the tickets for these particular K-pop concerts, which was supported by Globe Telecoms and held at Bonifacio High Street, even coincided with the Korean Cultural Center's K-Street event, a showcase of Korean traditional and popular culture that was open to the public.

As seen, there has been quite a significant number of live music events happening in the Philippines for the past four years. As per Statista[1], revenue from music events rose from US\$27 million in 2017 to US\$32.8 million in 2018, drawing in a total of 2.13 million audiences, up from 1.96 million within the same period. However, despite these increases in live music performances, there are still incidences where management lapses are resulting in disgruntlement and disappointments amongst many concert-goers. For instance, the Philippine K-pop community suffered a significant embarrassment at the cancellation of the prestigious Golden Disk

Awards, which was one of the “Big Four” music awards shows that was supposed to be held in SM Mall of Asia last January 2018 (ABS-CBN, 2017). Official statements shared that the cancellation is due to the Philippine organizers not meeting all of the requirements and failing in their Korean counterparts’ responsibilities. The feedback from the Philippine K-pop fans was expectedly widespread and negative. In another incident, a Coca-Cola Studio Christmas concert held for free at the SM Mall of Asia Open Grounds last December 2018 was disrupted by a rowdy audience numbering 15,000 (Dava, 2018). The incident resulted in at least 50 injuries and the cancellation of the rest of the concert, especially for fear that the ensuing chaos would end in a stampede. The backlash, especially online, exposed the many weaknesses in the management of the event and the audience’s behavior, prompting an investigation by the Philippine National Police (PNP). More recently, e-commerce giant Shopee fared very poorly in managing its June 2019 fan meeting event for its brand endorser, K-pop sensation BLACKPINK (Rappler.com, 2019). The resulting repercussions from disgruntled fans have caused so much uproar that the Department of Trade and Industry (DTI) has stepped in to investigate. These all reflect that while the Philippines is developing to be a good market for live music events, its management still has much to improve. This market potential must be exploited to the fullest, and this would require a better and more thorough understanding of the Philippine concert-going audiences.

Understanding how, and also how much, concert-goers become involved, become attached, and engage with the different phases of their purchase and consumption processes is a vital academic and practical discourse. By studying the overall purchase and consumption process, marketers may be able to find ways to help consumers move through it (Kotler, et al., 2018), and generate more value. Even within the same event, different attendees derive different benefits from these experiences (Kruger & Saayman, 2012a). As such, analyzing these consumer behaviors helps live music performance event managers and organizers to know these audiences better and why they choose to go to concerts (Kruger & Saayman, 2012b), better position their work (Scott, 1995),

effectively plan and market these events (Kim et al., 2002), monitor (Crompton & McKay, 1997) and ensure (C. Lee & Lee, 2001) satisfaction, predict future behaviors and patterns (Cha, et al., 1995) and strengthen product development and management (Gnoth, 1997). These result in better crafting of effective marketing strategies for such events (Kruger & Saayman, 2012b, 2015). Managers and organizers must continuously do all of these because of the dynamic nature of the concerts and other forms of live music performances. Most notable is the fierce competition in both the performer and the audience side (Goulding & Saren, 2010), fueled by a “once-in-a-lifetime” mindset (Kruger & Saayman, 2012a). Therefore, this research considers these aspects in understanding why audiences do what they do and experience what they experience, and later on how to make customer's purchase and consumption experiences more satisfactory, and even more memorable.

As such, the following research questions for this study are as follows:

1. What are the narratives, feelings, and perspectives of the concert-goers during pre-concert based on a given chronological time frame?
2. What are the concert-goers' actions and behaviors during the concert based on a given chronological time frame?
3. What are the emotional, behavioral, and physical responses of the concert-goers during post-concert?
4. How to propose relationships and models in concert management as drawn from the narratives, feelings, and experiences of concert-goers from pre-concert to post-concert?

Even early on, many researchers have been amazed at the degree of public attention to live music performances. Concerts are a risky business (Pamaran, 2017). From an economics point of view, live music performances compared to recorded music is a very inefficient and even outmoded means of purchasing and consuming music (Earl, 2001; Montoro-Pons & Cuadrado-García, 2011; Rondán-Cataluña & Martín-Ruiz, 2010). For one, tickets typically

cost at least as much as a CD of recorded music, and significantly more for top-tiered events. Still, it can neither be used nor shared repeatedly and carries a lot of inconveniences and caveats to purchasing and consumer (Earl, 2001). In the Philippines, ticket prices have been observed to be among the highest in the region (Pamaran, 2017). But still, it has contributed much to the economic and market development of not only the artists and producers, but also of music communities as well, directly (through ticket, merchandise, and album sales), and indirectly (through customer expenses on transportation, food, and accommodations) (Kruger & Saayman, 2012a, 2012b, 2015). Despite the repeated highlighting of disadvantages of live music performances, there is an increase in the number of live music events such as concerts and festivals, compared to the decline in the recorded music business (Rondán-Cataluña & Martín-Ruiz, 2010).

Even with just examining the ticketing process and ticket prices prove to be a complex and continuous topic for research. Aside from the above-mentioned economic and market forces, there are other factors to consider such as time-related costs and benefits derived from the experience, the engagement, the perceived novelty, and the liveliness of the concert (Westgate, 2019). Others have also cited several social, personal, emotional, and even psychological reasons why concert attendance continues to be an attractive means to patronize music (Baxter-Moore & Kitts, 2016; Botha, et al., 2012; Montoro-Pons & Cuadrado-García, 2011; Rondán-Cataluña & Martín-Ruiz, 2010; Westgate, 2019). Therefore, this research attempts to understand these somewhat competing factors further to appreciate better the underlying consumer behaviors of attending concerts.

The rest of this research is structured as follows. Section 2 presents the literature review, making exhaustive theoretical and practical arguments and justifications on the applications of marketing concepts to the arts. Following this, there is a discussion on the methodologies employed in the data gathering and analysis. Section 4 presents the analysis and results, formulating and proposing the theoretical framework and answering the research questions. Lastly, Section 5 covers the research discussions,



including conclusions, theoretical and managerial implications, and limitations for future research.

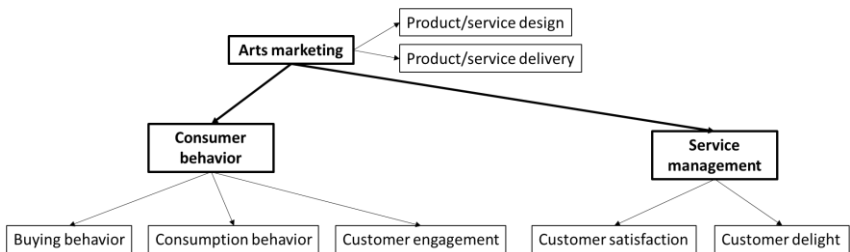
## Literature review

### *Theoretical foundations: Applying marketing concepts to the arts*

This research primarily draws from the marketing literature to establish its theoretical foundations, as there is little application of such in performing arts, even though the development of its audiences is a marketing activity (Hand & Riley, 2016). This section discusses the most applicable marketing concepts to the field, starting from the broad definitions to introduce marketing management, and ending with the specific marketing management issues involved in this research.

### **Figure 1.**

#### *Application of marketing to the arts*



### ***Defining and contextualizing arts marketing***

Arts marketing is the strategic application of marketing concepts and practices to further the sale of and engagement with the arts (O'Reilly & Kerrigan, 2010). Marketing management as a broad field entails an analysis of a wide array of customer orientations as part of designing a product or a service and developing strategies and tactics to deliver it to the satisfaction of the target customers. Over time, to introduce such management concepts to other fields of discipline, many have increasingly argued

that art audiences act like other consumers in the same way that they consume products and services (Hand & Riley, 2016). Therefore, such can be subjected to typical consumer behavior discourse, and that art performance is a service which can be evaluated via similar measurements (Rondán-Cataluña & Martín-Ruiz, 2010). Therefore, this research argues that it is appropriate to examine art performance goers' behaviors using a similar theoretical context that is employed in product or brand purchase and consumption behaviors. Particular to this context, theoretical arguments on consumer behaviors and service management are used.

### ***Defining and contextualizing consumer behavior***

As previously argued, the behavior of art audiences can be scrutinized through consumer behavior's general lens (Hand & Riley, 2016). Consumer behavior pertains to the activities people undertake when consuming products and services that they have availed (Blackwell, et al., 2001). The patterns of consuming products and services are affected by many factors on the how, where, and under what circumstances (Chen & Hu, 2006) people are interested or attracted to the product or service (Copeland, 1924). Consumer behavior covers a broad spectrum of activities (Blackwell et al., 2001), two of which are considered in this research. The first is obtaining the activities leading to the purchase and receipt of a product or service. These activities include searching for information and managing several factors influencing their purchase decisions and their actual purchase actions. The second is consuming, which entails considerations on the effects of prices, convenience, and personal interests, such as on their postpurchase attitudes while using the product or availing the service.

However, to generally say that live music performance audience behavior is similar to brand buying behavior is an oversimplification of the whole discussion. Buying patterns may be similar, but consumption patterns may not (Hand & Riley, 2016). As a result, others have argued that several personal and interpersonal characteristics of the customers can also play significant roles in the formation of consumer behaviors (Chen &

Hu, 2006), which were originally posited to heighten feelings of attachment and involvement with the purchase and consumption processes. In previous studies on the arts, these factors include cultural sensibilities (Ateca-Amestoy, 2008), various demographics (Kruger & Saayman, 2012a, 2012b, 2015), risk attitudes (Montoro-Pons & Cuadrado-García, 2011), degree of knowledge of the music (Blackwell et al., 2001), and prior experiences (Mayfield & Crompton, 1995), to name a few. And these factors can also influence concert ticket purchase behaviors and actual concert attendance and participation (Botha, et al., 2012), which is the entire purchase and consumption process. Some even have argued that personal reasons drive live music performances (Copeland, 1924). Therefore, these reasons are perceived to further heighten and intensify their emotions of involvement and attachment during the process of buying tickets and attending the actual performance. Subsequently, this increases the intensity of their participation, or engagement, towards live music performances.

What is further interesting in consumer behavior research is examining different ways and means to achieve a certain degree of customer engagement. Customer engagement is a major marketing objective (Calder et al., 2016) measuring the intensity of a customer's participation with a product or a service (Vivek et al., 2012). And therefore, understanding how customers engage with the different phases of the purchase process, and discerning the intensity of this engagement, are important academic and practical discourses. This can be achieved through iterative and interactive, and even co-creator experiences with a focal agent or object that is context-specific and involves a customer's cognitive, emotional, and behavioral actions (Brodie et al., 2011). Additionally, these experiences can also be collated and analyzed to reflect what happens in the purchase and consumption processes. For concerts, what makes this more interesting is the fact that the customer engagement is time-bound (Montoro-Pons & Cuadrado-García, 2011). There are limited time frames that exist during the purchase of concert tickets and the consumption of a concert experience. Interestingly enough, these are characteristics that classifies an offering as a service, rather than a product. Therefore, these

particular characteristics now lead to an examination of the concept of service management.

### ***Defining and contextualizing service management***

What makes this research focus on consumer behaviors, specifically on customer involvement, engagement, and participation leading to certain levels of customer satisfaction and delight is that live music performances, concerts included, is argued to be a service. As previously mentioned as well, arts performances can be scrutinized through the general lens of service management, to which live music performances are included (Rondán-Cataluña & Martín-Ruiz, 2010). As a pure service, this means that live concerts can be subject to typical service measures and assessments in which consumer behaviors contribute significantly to supplying such feedback, such as actions of satisfaction and delight. In marketing literature, customer satisfaction is just the minimum requirement for organizations to make a profit. Rather than just merely achieving satisfaction, organizations should also strive to achieve customer delight, as this increases the chances of gaining sustainable loyalty (Oliver et al., 1997). Providing customer delight is a dynamic, consistent, and forward-looking process that usually takes place in an unknown environment (Chandler, 1989). Therefore, especially in a service setting, satisfaction is something that is expected by the customer, whereas delight is not expected, but when it does happen, provides exceptional value to the customer (Oliver et al., 1997). As such, customers already have a certain set of expectations when they engage and undergo the purchase and the consumption processes. It is now a matter of both satisfying these expectations and giving them something unexpected but of immense value that they would enjoy and find delight.

To put these into the research context, live music events can be unknown environments, or at least inherent with many unknowns and uncertainties. Therefore, the viability of a music event depends on the organizers' ability to ensure that what they are offering is continuously attuned to the benefits sought by audiences (Mayfield & Crompton, 1995). And what they are offering not only

covers the music event itself, but all other things leading up to the event, and whatever events that can occur immediately after the event. And it is their job to ensure that these unknowns and uncertainties existing within these events are reduced to their best efforts. These patterns can be better visualized by describing their purchase and consumption processes.

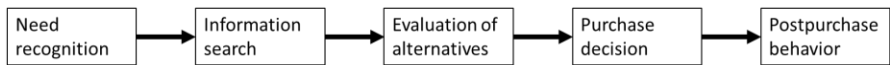
### ***Framing and visualizing the research: The purchase process***

The typical purchase process consists of five distinct steps, starting from need recognition all the way to postpurchase behavior (Kotler et al., 2018). Need recognition is triggered by either an internal or external stimulus that can lead the consumer to a product or a service. For live music events, this can be an announcement or a teaser that such will be held in a certain location, with more details coming soon. The second step is information search, in which its intensity mainly depends on how involved the consumer can get towards the product or service. For live music events, this can range from researching the venue, to how to purchase tickets and, referring to past performances of similar events. The aim is to gain insights into what to expect. The third is the evaluation of alternatives, which is arguably the most context-dependent step in the process, as different consumers have their ways and means of making such evaluations. For the context of this research, which can be highly competitive for consumers, this can mean more about creating different plans and contingencies depending on which ticket they want to buy vis-à-vis what ticket they were able to buy. The fourth step is purchase decision, which is subject to consumers' varying degrees of attitudes and intentions that would influence their decisions, to other consumers' behaviors, and some other expected and unexpected factors that can potentially affect the decisions. For live music events, this could include any considerations regarding the concert goer's personal preferences, if he or she is going alone or with a group of friends, and what other things he or she needs to prepare for should a ticket be successfully purchased. Lastly, the postpurchase behavior reflects the level of satisfaction and dissatisfaction depending on the resulting gaps between the

consumer's expectations and the product's perceived performance. It can be quite tricky for live music events, as there is a significant amount of time between the purchase of the ticket to the actual attendance to the music event. The same can be said between the actual presence in the event, and the experiences felt afterward. It is with this process that the research anchors its data collection and analysis.

**Figure 2.**

*The buyer decision process (Kotler et al., 2018)*



**Methods**

***Data collection: Introspection and narrative***

In marketing management studies, introspection aims at shifting the focus from a policy-driven approach to brand decisions to capturing the consumption experiences of customers (Earl, 2001). Such is done by documenting experiences and comparing them to theories and frameworks about the purchase and consumption of a product or service. Live music brings audiences, and especially fandoms, to the forefront of academic discourse and practical conversations, where fans derive so much meaning from live music in so many different ways (Westgate, 2019). Much of the demand for live music is framed in terms of information gathering and processing (Earl, 2001) and other aspects involved in purchase and consumption processes. Activities and events occurring before, during, and after the purchase and consumption of live music performance are rich sources of interesting insights. Identifying, capturing, and classifying the deep and rich meanings derived from the purchase and consumption experiences are key objectives in events management (Botha et al., 2012; Calder et al., 2016; Goulding & Saren, 2010), as this gives marketers the thoughts,

feelings, and actions experienced before, during, and after the purchase and consumption processes.

For this research, 38 respondents were asked to recall their most recent experience of attending a live music event, banking on the notion that, consistent with the arguments for introspection, what people remember may be the crucial things that have significantly great value to them (Earl, 2001). There was no personal demographic and economic profiling considered in an attempt to get a wide and relatively diverse range of responses and narratives to eliminate any personality-based biases from the narratives. In the course of their recalling and documenting these experiences, the respondents were also asked to narrate their actions on the following time frames chronologically:

1. the moment the schedule of the live music performance event was announced,
2. the time the tickets went on sale,
3. the time they went and bought the tickets,
4. the time preparations for going to the event were made,
5. the time they went and attended the event, and
6. the time covering post-concert activities

Narrating these events considers two critical things (Coffey & Atkinson, 1996). The first is that narrations describe how social actors produce, represent, and contextualize their experiences. The second is that these accounts and stories of their experiences, while chronological, can also create a web of events revealing decisions, conflicts, and actions. Also, this approach captures critical elements of such form of consumption, including

1. the context in which the performance is executed,
2. the actors and their respective roles and statuses in the performance, and
3. the audiences and their respective roles and statuses as well (Goulding & Saren, 2010).

## ***Data analysis: Grounded theory***

However, the reality is that these thoughts, feelings, and actions vary across different degrees, levels, dimensions, and considerations. Within these processes, consumers take action based on a complex mix of attitudes, intentions, constraints, and behaviors (McCarthy & Jinnet, 2001) vis-à-vis a specific combination of their profiles (e.g., demographic backgrounds) (Kruger & Saayman, 2012b). How they process all of the resulting commentaries, interpretations, and other feedback on their experiences with these processes can also result in differing consumer behaviors (Kruger & Saayman, 2015). It should also be kept in mind what the two objectives of achieving satisfaction and delight entail. Satisfaction is a result of both cognitive and affective processing, whereas delight is a function of arousal and affect (Oliver et al., 1997). How these thoughts, feelings, and actions contribute to achieving satisfaction and delight through purchasing and consuming live music performances is a critical aspect of this research.

Grounded theory is employed to analyze the collected data. Given the increasing emphasis on the consumer and the changing nature of the customer experiences with culture and the arts, grounded theory has been suggested as an alternative approach in arts marketing contexts (Goulding & Saren, 2010). For this research, the prescriptive and more mechanical approach to grounded theory (Strauss & Corbin, 1990) will be employed. Since the research objective is on enriching what is known about concert goers' purchase and consumption behaviors, the data is analyzed and coded according to the contextualized purchase and consumption processes.

## **Analysis**

### ***Grounded theory approach***

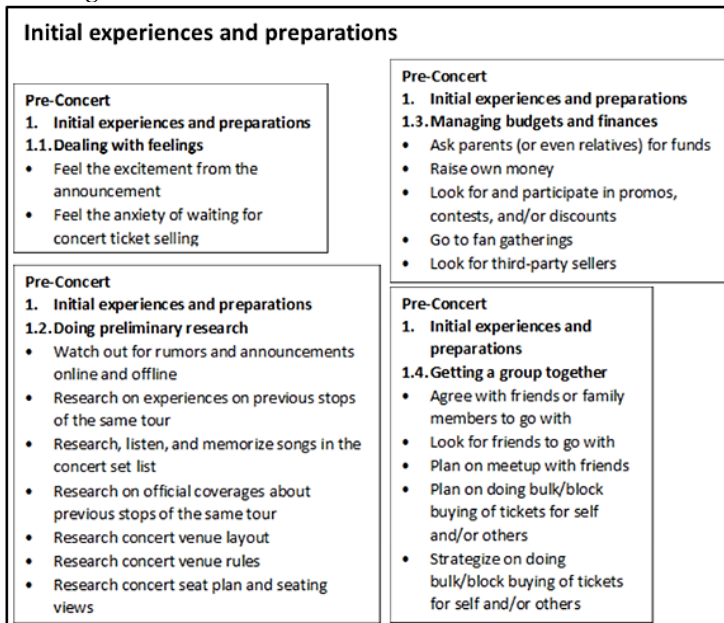
**Open coding.** Following the coding process in grounded theory, the responses in narrative form were broken down and categorized according to the broad dimensions as posited by the typical purchase



process, as discussed in the literature review, and according to the time frame events as instructed by the interviewer. After several rounds of examining and breaking down the data, the following categories have been formulated.

Three major categories were formed for the pre-concert phase. As indicated, these are the "Initial experiences and preparations," the "Managing ticket selling experience," and the "Experiences after (making a successful) purchase." The "Initial experiences and preparations" are further categorized into four sections. Each document what the potential concert-goer feels and does from the moment the announcement is made to the time ticket sales open. "Managing ticket selling experience" has only one subcategory depicting the actions done during the actual sale of tickets. "Experience after purchase" was further determined to have three subcategories, each describing the feelings experienced and activities done after successfully purchasing and securing tickets to a concert.

**Figure 3.**  
*Open coding results: Pre-concert*



## Managing ticket selling experience

### Pre-Concert

#### 2. Managing ticket selling experience

##### 2.1. Purchasing tickets

- Plan and strategize on how to purchase tickets
- If possible, get online reservations
- Line up early to purchase tickets online and/or offline
- Purchase tickets early from reputable sources as early as possible
- If possible, upgrade tickets later
- Meet up and purchase tickets from third party seller
- Make new friends while in queue

### Pre-Concert

#### 3. Experiences after purchase

##### 3.1. Managing feelings and expectations

- Feel more excitement after purchasing tickets
- Feel more anxiety as the concert draws closer
- Do a concert countdown

### Pre-Concert

#### 3. Experiences after purchase

##### 3.2. Research on concert rules

- Research and check on the rules regarding what items are allowed to the concert
- Research and check on the rules on behavior

## Experiences after purchase

### Pre-Concert

#### 3. Experiences after purchase

##### 3.3. Things to prepare

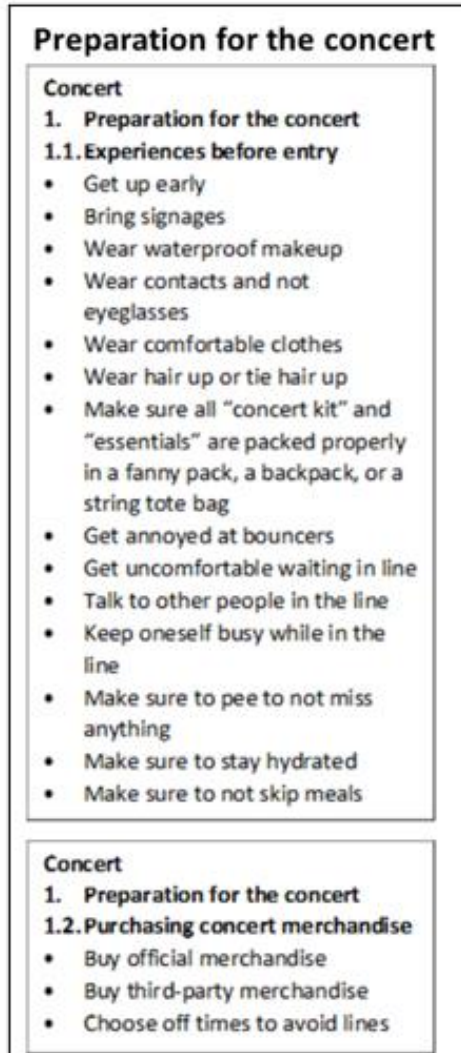
- Clear space in phone
- Plan for outfit/what to wear
- Plan for transportation/on how to get to the venue
- Plan for dinner
- Prepare signs and banners
- Plan on the "concert kit" to bring
- Plan on the "essentials" to bring
- Know your light stick color

Many considerations are being made even with the pre-concert phase of the entire concert-going experience. Based on the data and analyses, this is where most of the concert-going efforts go. In other words, there are extensive preparations done by consumers

during this phase of the entire experience. Unfortunately, these efforts are not usually seen by event organizers, and therefore must be made more known and visible to them. These initial results shed light on these efforts, providing valuable contributions to the entire process.

At this phase, customers' behaviors are more easily seen and observed since most of these occur onsite, where both organizers and fellow concert-goers can share these experiences. Two major categories were extracted from the data. These are the "Preparation for the concert" and the "Being inside the venue". The "Preparation for the concert" is further described by two subcategories that cover all of the activities done on the day of the concert, but before its actual start. "Being inside the venue", comprising three subcategories, literally means that, documenting all of the concert-goers' feelings and actions while watching, or "consuming" the concert.

**Figure 4.**  
*Open coding results: Concert*

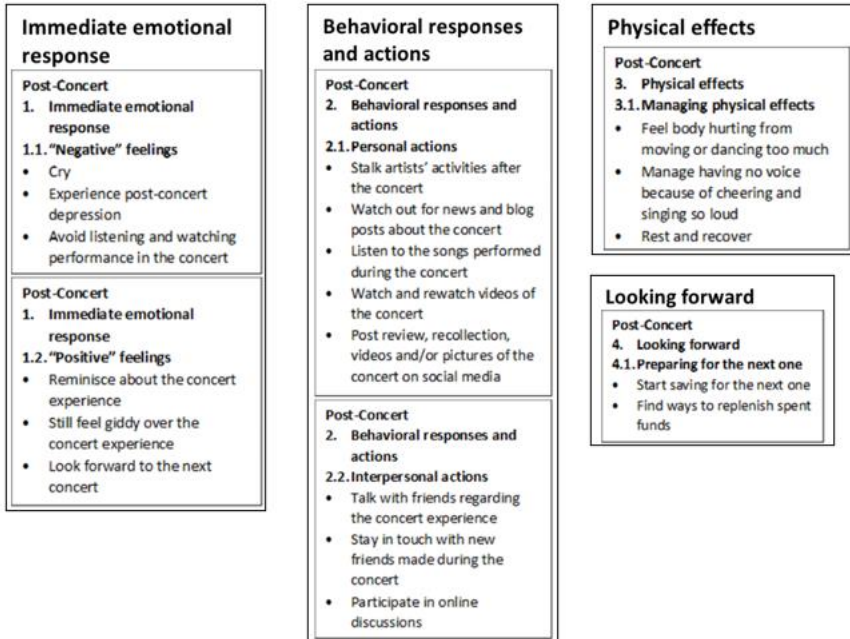


<p><b>Concert</b></p> <p><b>2. Being inside the venue</b></p> <p><b>2.1. Feelings during the concert</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cry</li> <li>• Scream</li> <li>• “Fangirl”/“Fanboy”</li> <li>• Hold up sign and banner</li> <li>• Try to catch the artists’ attention</li> <li>• Feel the adrenaline</li> <li>• Feel speechless</li> <li>• Feel ecstatic, super-duper happy, and uplifted</li> <li>• Sing-along with friends</li> <li>• Fanchant with friends</li> <li>• Dance and move around with friends</li> <li>• Enjoy the show</li> <li>• Let loose</li> </ul>	<p><b>Being inside the venue</b></p> <div data-bbox="560 331 978 701" style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px;"> <p><b>Concert</b></p> <p><b>2. Being inside the venue</b></p> <p><b>2.2. Maintaining concert etiquette</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Respect artists on stage</li> <li>• Follow what the artists instruct</li> <li>• Be mindful of own behavior</li> <li>• Be aware of surroundings</li> <li>• Keep things and belongings safe</li> </ul> </div> <div data-bbox="560 708 889 1008" style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px;"> <p><b>Concert</b></p> <p><b>2. Being inside the venue</b></p> <p><b>2.3. Capturing memories</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Take videos</li> <li>• Take photos</li> <li>• Do live feed or live stream</li> </ul> </div>
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For the post-concert phase, four categories were generated. These are “Immediate emotional response,” the “Behavioral responses and actions,” the “Physical effects,” and “Looking forward.” The first, the “Immediate emotional response,” consists of two subcategories to differentiate the “negative” vs. “positive” emotions that the concert-goer immediately feels right after the concert. The “Behavioral responses and actions” are further divided into two subcategories to distinguish what the concert-goer does by himself or herself from what he or she does with a group of friends and fellow concert-goers. The last two categories of “Physical effects” and “Looking forward” each have one subcategory, describing the resulting physical and bodily after-effects of going to a concert and the thoughts and actions on anticipating for the next

one, respectively.

**Figure 5.**  
*Open coding results: Post-concert*



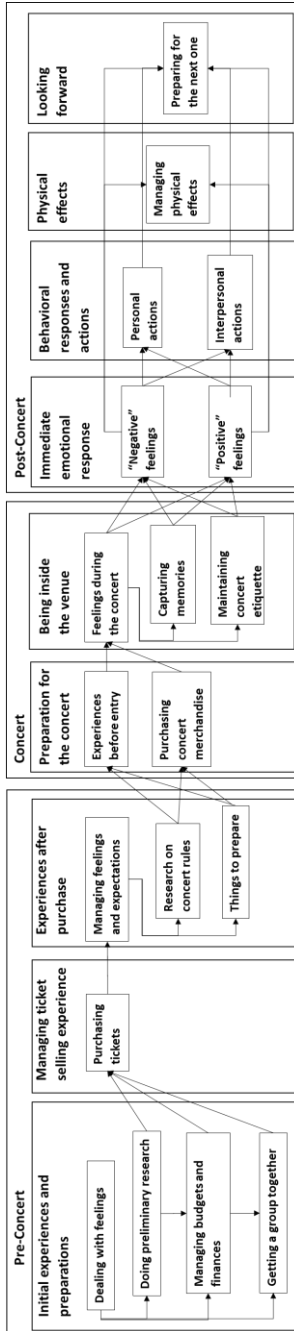
**Axial coding.** Afterward, the categorized data were further analyzed to form relationships between and amongst the formed categories. The other observations and insights found during the open coding phase were organized into memos, and these were also included in the axial coding aspect of the analysis. Additionally, the frequency in which the categorized data appeared in the responses was also considered in estimating the envisioned degree of influence of the generated relationships.

The following insights drawn from the narratives that are also crucial for the axial coding are as follows:

- The concert experience does not start and end with the concert itself.

- An external factor triggers the whole process and rarely does an individual initiate the process on their own volition. Additionally, peer pressure (from friends or siblings) is considered a strong external factor.
- The entire process is a shared experience, as there are many common feelings and insights in the whole process, and across the different narratives. Additionally, each part of the process also has some incidences of shared experiences amongst different people, and different concert and event genres.

**Figure 6.**  
*Axial coding results:  
 Proposed relationships*





The overall governing sentiment here is that most of the actions and other behaviors are driven by the emotions that concert-goers feel throughout the process. Because concerts are deemed to be a service offering and would be more appealing to customers' emotional responses than their cognitive mechanisms, this is not surprising.

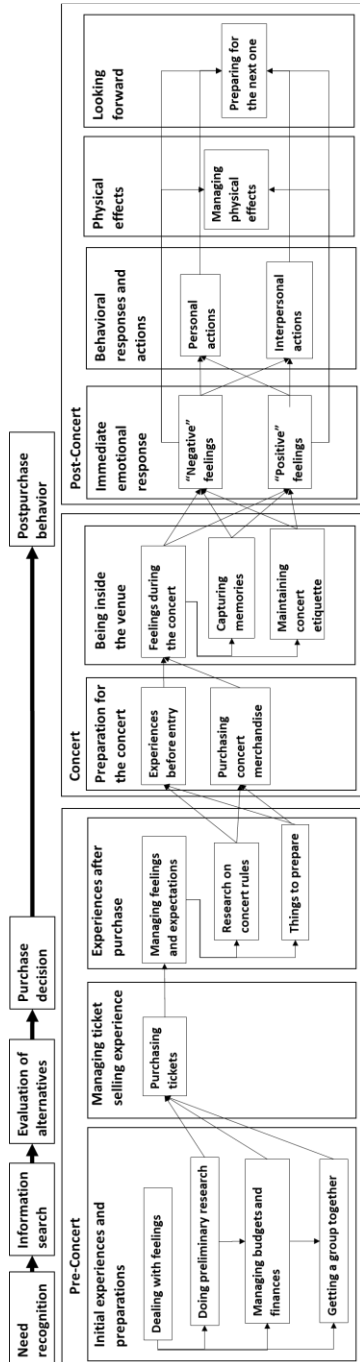
These proposed relationships reflect two essential things. The first is that the entire model espouses a chronological process across the three phases of pre-concert, concert, and post-concert, especially under the assumption that an individual has successfully purchased concert tickets and has successfully made it to the concert venue. The second is that within each of these three phases, several things are occurring, either simultaneously or chronologically as well, that detail what is going on. In contrast, an individual goes through the motions in each phase.

**Selective coding.** The selective coding phase is where the generated model is further improved after axial coding, anchoring it to some existing theory and further validation. In other words, since this research follows the more prescriptive approach to grounded theory, it is the process of integrating the generated model with what is known about the purchase and consumption processes.

The following insights drawn from the narratives that are also crucial for selective coding are as follows:

- Much of the narratives' depth and breadth came from pre-concert experiences. Several preparations and experiences occur even before one purchases concert tickets.
- Hying up through social media is more heavily done these days, and these are done before, during, and after the concert experience.
- Social media is a primary source for researching reviews, experiences, videos, and other information on the previous concert stops. This gives would-be concert-goers a good idea on what to expect for the next concert stop.

**Figure 7.**  
*Selective coding results:  
 Initial proposed model*



As seen, the consumer purchase decision process is skewed to the left as far as integrating it into the proposed model. In other words, many of the phases in the consumer purchase decision process happen at the pre-concert. The period postpurchase behavior spans both the concert and post-concert stages. While this can be typical for services, as services, in general, are purchased and consumed mostly on-the-spot, this type of service also presents some interesting insights when compared to the consumer purchase decision process. Unlike a regular service, there is a significant time lag between the purchase of the service and its actual consumption. In concert-going, what an individual purchases is admission to a live event, the service itself, to be held at a future date, hence delaying the service's actual consumption. Such offers the most significant reason why the results of the selective coding look this way.

### **Further analysis**

To further strengthen the results of the grounded theory approach, confirmation from another set of sources was integrated to do some triangulation. The triangulation process is a qualitative method to strengthen the analysis and results of another qualitative method (Jick, 1979). Because the analysis partly depends on the researcher's interpretation of the phenomenon (Strauss & Corbin, 1990), some angles relevant to the research context that is overlooked (Jick, 1979), may add significant breadth and depth to the analysis made (Flick, 1992). This inherent weakness of employing one qualitative method can be addressed by performing some triangulation, recognizing that no one method can completely capture a topic or a phenomenon (Torrance, 2012).

Many commentaries in circulation document the authors' observations and experiences of attending and covering concerts, in either an online or offline media channel, such as newspapers and magazines. These commentaries are also geared towards a more conscientious, a more casual approach to prepare for a concert, or both, and assuming that one has been successful in purchasing tickets (Ticketmaster, 2018). The more conscientious approach included planning for transportation, researching the venue,

listening to the artist to be more familiarized with what will be played during the concert (Salazar, 2016), and reminders on proper concert etiquette (Brennan, 2016). Others shared tips and tricks from the mundane, such as picking the perfect set of clothes to wear and doing a concert countdown. Still, there are tips that not all people would think about, such as carrying multiple power banks and ensuring that one's phone has enough memory space (Williams, 2016). These additional insights provide additional support to the proposed variables and relationships generated in this research. Upon closer examination of these commentaries, this level of conscientiousness vs. casualness can be introduced to the proposed model as a moderating variable.

Another set of commentaries described the differences of “fanboying” or “fangirling” based on certain criteria, such as degree of intensity of actions made and levels of behavioral involvement. These commentaries also proposed some classifications or categories of “fanboys” and “fangirls” in varying numbers. These behaviors can be observed during various stages of the process (Garza, 2015; Harris, 2014; Horan, 2013) or during the actual concert itself (D. Lee, 2016; Wooten, 2016). For this research, these categories of “fanboying” and “fangirling,” known in academic discourse as “fan intensity” can be introduced to the proposed model as a grouping variable towards respondents.

Upon further observations, an interesting grouping variable for further scrutinization of the outcomes of this proposed model is concerts performed by Filipino artists vs. Western artists vs. Korean Pop music artists. Especially over the last few years, these groups of artists have dominated the Philippine live music performance scene, and have even sparked many debates over their patronages. And even with this grouping variable alone, many other demographic, cultural, and social insights can be produced. Many have pointed out that there are several instances where audiences of each group of artists exhibit comparatively unique behaviors, indicating some form of subculture. As previous researches have pointed out (Ateca-Amestoy, 2008; Blackwell et al., 2001; Kruger & Saayman, 2012a, 2012b, 2015; Mayfield & Crompton, 1995; Montoro-Pons & Cuadrado-García, 2011), many of these other insights have proven

to be interesting discussion points. For instance, the research data show that while singing and dancing along during performances are common across all groups, audiences of Filipino and Western concerts do more cheering and screaming in displaying consumer involvement. K-pop concerts, on the other hand, up the intensity of consumer involvement through carefully rehearsed and perfectly timed fan chanting of specific phrases and shoutouts and waving lightsticks of the same fandom color.

Further observations yielded those perceptions of intimacy and connectedness to the fans are also different amongst these three groups. Filipino artists spend more time talking in between performance sets than Western artists, and these talks seemed freer flowing and spontaneous. K-pop artists, on the other hand, visibly more rely on memorized scripts, which is at no fault of their own since English is not their mother tongue. While hugely appreciated, this is made to seem more mechanical by the presence of translators, consuming more precious seconds off the allotted talk time compared to Filipino and Western artists. Empirically examining these differences will produce further fruitful consumer, and maybe even production, insights for the industry as a whole, and for concert organizers wanting to diversify their portfolios and improve on their capabilities.

## **Conclusion**

### ***Discussions***

This research aims to enrich the understanding of purchase and consumption behaviors specifically for Philippine concert goers. The analysis and results yielded specific actions being experienced and done that would serve as useful insights for concert organizers, and even live music event organizers as a whole, to improve on the design and delivery of this relatively unique type of service.

Overall, expressions of satisfaction or dissatisfaction are mostly based on their interactions with the process of purchasing

tickets and with their fellow concert-goers. These are on top of the more prominent sources of satisfaction, such as the artists' overall performances and the impact and length of the show. Expressions of value, on the other hand, are mostly based on eventually what seat they got vis-à-vis the price of the ticket that they were required to pay.

The dynamics in the Philippine concert scene are also interesting because of the extensive use of social media in almost all phases of the process. Social media is used to gather information about the concert, to participate in promos, to search out potential fellow concert-goers, and, most extensive of them all, document their experiences by posting pictures, videos, and fan accounts of the concert, among others.

***RQ1: What are the narratives, feelings, and perspectives of the concert-goers during pre-concert based on a given chronological time frame?***

This research showed many considerations in the pre-concert phase. A case in point is the need for recognition to the point before the purchase decision. An external factor triggers the pre-concert phase and rarely does an individual initiate the process on his or her own. Additionally, the need to watch a concert with a group seems to be a strong influence. There is an emphasis on preparing what the respondents called a “concert kit.” A concert kit refers to a collection of items essential to fans’ “surviving the concert experience (e.g. proper clothing and footwear, proper hairstyle, face towel, etc.)” and “enjoying the concert (e.g. lightsticks, smartphones, power banks, etc.)” There is also much focus on the venue, such as transportation routes, parking, and nearby restaurants. Doing preliminary research, managing budgets and finances, and getting a group together all influence decisions on purchasing tickets. After securing the desired tickets, concert goers would then prepare for the big day, concretized by their research on concert rules and gathering their “concert kits.” This preparation is influenced by their attempts to manage their feelings and expectations for the said big day.

***RQ2: What are the actions and behaviors taken by the concert-goers during the concert based on a given chronological time frame?***

Concert-goers engage in several activities even before entering the venue, highlighted by their various experiences of actually traveling to the site, and their experiences of purchasing concert merchandise. During the concert proper, there is growing degree of attention on proper concert etiquette, such as concern about one's surroundings (e.g., whether an audience is blocking another's view, especially when taking photos or videos), and following concert rules and artists' instructions.

***RQ3: What are the emotional, behavioral, and physical responses of the concert-goers during post-concert?***

Afterward, there are a lot of post-concert “feels” (which many concert-goers dub as “post-concert traumatic disorder” or “post-concert withdrawal syndrome”) that trigger many personal and interpersonal actions. The research results yield that the post-concert phase has the most interactions that occur and can occur well after the concert itself has been done. Furthermore, both these “positive” and “negative” “feels” can potentially govern, aside from just triggering, whatever personal and interpersonal actions, perceptions of the physical effects to the concert-goers, and responses of looking forward to the next concert. What is interesting as well is that there is not even a ballpark estimate on how long these feelings and interactions would last.

***RQ4: How to propose relationships and models in concert management as drawn from the narratives, feelings, and experiences of concert-goers from pre-concert to post-concert?***

What should be understood is that the concert experience does not start and end with the concert itself. Instead, every step of every phase can be equally important and hence would require increased attention from managers and organizers of the event in

question. Many experiences leading up to the actual concert can play a role in their overall evaluations of its value. As this research has pointed out, initial expressions and later assessments of satisfaction and dissatisfaction are based largely on concert-goers' physical interactions outside the scope of the concert performance itself. These interactions include encounters with queueing facilities for both ticketing and entry to the venue, and exchanges with concert staff and fellow concert-goers. Such experiences would impact how concert-goers would determine if the ticket price, coupled with the seat that they got, is worth it. In other words, in experiencing these three phases of pre-concert, concert, and post-concert stages, their evaluations would still be influenced by their expectations of value-for-money of not just the concert itself, but all other experiences.

Therefore, the management of such behaviors should not be limited to the confines of the concert venue. Many other things before and after the concert day, and outside the venue, play significant roles in shaping both customer satisfaction and customer value.

### ***Theoretical implications***

This research provides some qualitative empirical support towards greater emphasis on the entire purchase process, and not only on the actual purchase and consumption of the product or the service. But especially for services, researchers must realize and appreciate that both the monetary and non-monetary efforts that consumers put in before and after they purchase and consume the service have significant value to them as well. Therefore, it is not always the case that the actual service experience provides the most "value for money" for the customer. Because it is a process, the quality of the experiences leading to the purchase and the consumption phases influence the attitudes and perceptions towards the product or service.

For instance, the quality of results that concert-goers acquire from their research and information searching can be more easily done these days. Right after the need recognition is realized, it does play a significant role in the expected quality of the rest of the



experience of the purchase decision process, making the evaluation of alternatives much easier for them to do. But also, concert-goers can research and acquire a significant amount of information from different sources to evaluate their options. Theory-wise, consumer perceptions of satisfaction is no longer limited to the purchase and consumption of the product or the service. Instead, consumers are now more aware of the value that need recognition, information search, and evaluation of alternatives contribute to the end product or service.

This research also provides some theoretical directions towards other aspects and perspectives of the concert-going experience, namely the views and experiences of those who manage concerts. For instance, if this research describes the sentiments of the concert audiences, then acquiring and analyzing the sentiments of concert management personnel through similar theoretical underpinnings can add value to further valuable understanding of how concerts ought to be managed.

### ***Managerial implications***

The most crucial managerial implication is that concert-goers' perceptions of "value-for-money" not only stems from the actual concert performance, but also from the other phases of this concert-going process that occur before and after the actual performance. In other words, their experiences in virtually or physically queuing up to purchase concert tickets, for instance, weigh heavily in their overall evaluations if the concert was "worth it." This insight becomes more critical given that tickets in the Philippines, especially for foreign acts, are very expensive compared to their Southeast Asian counterparts, giving more credence to previous observations that concert-going is a very inefficient way to consume music. Therefore, concert organizers should not only focus their attention and resources on creating the best concert experience but to also ensure that customers will not find a hard time lining up for tickets and gaining entry to the venue. Practically speaking, no matter how popular or how good the concert performers are, providing poor ticketing and crowd control

services, for instance, will diminish the overall experience, widening the gap between what was expected, and what was actually experienced.

Additionally, providing some additional marketing activities through extensive social media use before and after the concert are also highly recommended. As the results show, many fans take to social media frequently and extensively not only to search for information and avail of special promos regarding the concert, but to also share their experiences in almost every step of the purchase and consumption process and doing so well after the concert. This should come as no surprise, given that the Philippines has been widely credited to by a global social media hub where many Filipino are very active, especially when it comes to topics and themes on entertainment. Therefore, concert organizers would do well to continuously engage fans and concert-goers at different phases of the entire purchase and consumption process. The idea is not only to make the event more exciting, but also to make fans feel that they are indeed in the center of what ultimately is a service encounter.

What is also interesting is that there are also some differences in their attitudes and behaviors, depending on the genre of the concert that they are attending. As seen in this research, many cultures and subcultures exist within the Filipino concert-going market. Therefore, it is important for concert organizers and managers to know precisely and describe who they are catering to. It is not enough that such market profiling is limited to the general fandom behaviors of a particular artist, or worse, genre. This research further recommends that to deliver a much better concert experience, organizers and managers should tailor their marketing strategies, particularly in distribution and promotions, more closely to these cultures and subcultures.

This research also espouses that acquiring and analyzing the sentiments of concert management personnel through a similar academic discourse can be valuable in confirming the validity and feasibility of Filipino concert-going markets' insights. In other words, now it has been made clear as to what Filipino concert-goers expect, determining if these are achievable and doable by the concert management side is the next logical step to do.

### *Directions for future research*

The next step for this topic is to empirically test the proposed model for further refinement and establish its validity, reliability, and robustness. As implied, many homogenous and heterogenous factors make concert management and live music events management, in general, a more difficult endeavor than it looks. One direction for the more immediate future is to perform further triangulation via a series of participant observation and immersion, refining what has been developed thus far in terms of the proposed variables and relationships. These observations and immersions should be set in different contexts according to the proposed moderating and group variables added to the initial model.

From an entirely different angle, this research can also be used as a springboard to conduct a possible process review, comparing the results generated by the grounded theory approach to what is planned and done in practice. This review would serve as another means to validate what event organizers are practicing and to initiate any feasible improvements to serve concert-goers better.

Lastly, on the particular note raised in the previous paragraph, what can also be done is to conduct similar research involving concert management personnel, and later on, even the artists themselves, and compare their results with the findings of this research. This research will further strengthen the triangulation efforts that are most valuable for qualitative research and provide a holistic view of the entire concert-going experience. In this manner, this can contribute more valuable theoretical and practical insights to the discipline of arts marketing in general and concert-going in particular.

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[1]<https://www.statista.com/outlook/264/123/event-tickets/philippines#market-revenue>

# Using Topic Models to Examine Online Discourse on the Introduction of a Korean Language Elective in the Philippines

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## Abstract

Using data from Facebook, we employ probabilistic topic modeling to identify latent themes in online discourse about the introduction of a Korean language elective in the Philippines' basic education curriculum. All comments from all posts in November 2018 regarding the program's introduction were mined from the top eight most popular Philippine media outlets on Facebook. The data was pre-processed and used to train a Latent Dirichlet Allocation (LDA) model using the gensim package on Python. Mixed methods analysis of model results and representative comments generated four salient themes. Our model suggests that discursive utterances mainly comprise of: (1) pleas for the preservation of the status quo, (2) nationalist backlash against the policy, (3) grievances against perceived government ineptitude, and (4) calls for the instruction of other “economical” foreign languages.

*Keywords: Topic Modeling, language policy, online discourse, SPFL*



## **Introduction**

In late 2018, posts circulated in social media about introducing a Korean language elective in the Philippine basic education curriculum. Major news outlets reported that the program would soon be piloted in select public schools across Metro Manila. Interestingly, it was met with extreme public backlash. Thousands of users reacted, flooding posts with comments criticizing the planned introduction. Comments among users were varied, ranging from claims that Korean will replace Filipino to vehement denouncements of the Department of Education (DepEd). Our research intends to unravel the subjective meanings of the issue by analyzing online discourse regarding the program's introduction. Thus, we ask the following research questions:

- What are the salient themes in online discussions regarding the planned introduction of a Korean language elective in Philippine basic education?
- Which among the topics are dominant?

First, we discuss the contextual backdrop of concurrent policy changes that led to backlash online. Afterward, we elucidate the research approach employed in the study. Lastly, we discuss the results of the analysis and connect it to broader language education issues in the country.

## **Policy Context**

Before understanding why the program suffered backlash online, it is important to discuss the developments in language policy that occurred during the same period. In this section, we trace the context of policy changes during the time of the announcement of pilot schools for the program.

### ***CHED's Removal of Filipino and "Panitikan" (Filipino Literature) in the General Education Curriculum (GEC)***

On 10 November 2018, the Supreme Court of the Republic of the Philippines (SC) released a decision on petitions assailing the constitutionality of the Republic Act No. 105332 (K to 12 Law) and related issuances (SC, 2018). The K to 12 Law expands the country's basic education program by adding two years for senior high school where students can specialize in different fields of concentration. The SC deemed it constitutional because it is an exercise of the state's police power or its "authority to enact legislation that may interfere with personal liberty or property in order to promote the general welfare" (SC, 2018, p. 55).

Even though the decision was primarily regarding changes to the country's basic education program, it also impacted the educational system. The same also upheld the constitutionality of CHED Memorandum Order No. 20, series of 2013 (CMO No. 20) (SC, 2018, p. 75). The memorandum excluded Filipino, *Panitikan*, and Constitution as required subjects in tertiary education (CHED, 2013). When the SC decision was released in 2013, it was met with backlash among politicians, language advocates, the academe, and other civil society members, resulting in the issuance of a Temporary Restraining Order (TRO) (SC, 2015).

In its latest decision, the SC lifted the TRO, ruling that it is constitutional, and it does not violate any other laws in Philippine jurisprudence (SC, 2018, p. 75-78). The decision had three salient points. First, it asserted that CHED's decision to exclude said subjects were in accordance with its authority to set the "general education distribution requirements" as mandated by the Republic Act No. 7722 (Higher Education Act). Second, it argued that the study of Filipino, *Panitikan*, and Constitution are already found in the basic education curriculum from Grade 1 to 10 and senior high school. Thus, the changes in the curriculum were implemented to avoid duplication of subjects. Third, it claimed that the decision should not be misconstrued as limiting the academic freedom of universities and colleges. It is incumbent upon higher education

institutions to require these subjects in tertiary education if they wished to (SC, 2018; De Vera, 2018).

### ***DepEd's Special Program in Foreign Language (SPFL)***

During the same time that the SC decision was announced, the list of pilot schools was released in social media through several news outlets, triggering a backlash. As a response, the DepEd (2018) released a statement clarifying the program's nature and attributing the reaction to the unfortunate timing of news reports.

The program introducing foreign languages as electives in basic education is not new. The Special Program in Foreign Language (SPFL) was introduced as early as 2008 through DepEd Memorandum No. 560, series of 2008 (DM No. 560). The memo announced the Special Program in Foreign Language (SPFL) implementation on a pilot basis starting school year 2009-2010. It initially offered Spanish as "a foreign language in one school per region, at two classes of 35 students each, per school." The program was dedicated to "schools whose students have demonstrated competence in English and are capable of learning another foreign language" (DepEd, 2008).

DepEd Order No. 55, series of 2009 (DO No. 55) titled "Guidelines on Offering Foreign Languages Like Spanish, French, and Nihongo (Japanese) as Elective Subjects in the Third and Fourth Year Levels of High School" expanded this. It states that "public and private secondary schools are encouraged to offer foreign languages like Spanish, French and Nihongo (Japanese) as elective subjects starting SY 2009-2010" (DepEd, 2009). In 2011 and 2012, German and Mandarin were added, extending the offerings to five languages (Calleja, 2012).

On 21 June 2017, the Embassy of the Republic of Korea in the Philippines and the Department of Education (DepEd) signed a Memorandum of Agreement (MOA), allowing DepEd to teach Korean in public high schools under the SPFL program. It also discussed the plan to pilot it in ten schools in Metro Manila (Geronimo, 2017).

## Research Approach

The study employed a mixed-methods approach to discourse analysis, involving natural language processing and qualitative content analysis. In this section, we delve deeper into this methodological approach by explaining the data collection, cleaning, and analysis procedures.

### *Data Collection*

The researchers collected all posts in November 2018 containing materials related to the institutionalization of Korean language as an elective subject. The materials are from the Facebook pages of the top eight most popular (by number of likes) news outlets in the Philippines (i.e., ABS-CBN News, CNN Philippines, GMA News, Inquirer.net, Manila Bulletin, News5, Rappler, Philippine Star). The search generated a corpus of 28 posts. Afterward, we gathered all comments. Our database includes a total of 18,414 comments.

### *Data Cleaning*

We pre-processed the comments in the data analysis software R using standard data cleaning techniques such as tokenization, bigram modelling, thesaurus creation, stemming, and stopword removal. Data cleaning ensures that we can get robust topics that capture the discourse's content by minimizing noise.

**Tokenization.** The first part of the cleaning pipeline involves tokenization of the data. Tokenization is the process of splitting comments into individual words or tokens that are the basic unit of analysis in natural language processing. The tokenized words are stored into a bag of words where further pre-processing would be conducted.

**Bigram Modeling.** Some words generate more meaningful content to the discourse if they are interpreted as a set of word pairs

rather than individual words. After tokenizing each word into separate terms, some words that were originally word pairs were reformed back into bigrams. Forming these bigrams allows the reintegration of their original content to the pool of data to be analyzed later on.

**Thesaurus Creation.** We created a thesaurus that includes all unique words used in the comments from the bag of words. The thesaurus contains the original form of the word as it appears in the comment and its corresponding base form and category (whether it is a stopword or a meaningful token). It was created manually due to the lack of a comprehensive Tagalog/Taglish thesaurus that would facilitate data cleaning.

In the thesaurus, words that had no profound meaning in the discourse were manually tagged as stopwords, and variations in the language used were straightened (i.e., urban slang and typing shortcuts). Due to the limitations of manual encoding, our thesaurus only transforms the roots of the 1,000 most frequently used words in the data. However, this accounts for the majority of the words used in the data corpus.

**Stemming.** Stemming is transforming the prefixed and compounded words into its base concerning a given thesaurus. Using our manually created thesaurus, we were able to stem the different variations of Tagalog words into their base forms. For example, the word "palitan" which means "to replace" in Tagalog is reduced into its root "palit" in the stemming process.

**Stopwords Removal.** Afterward, we removed stopwords to minimize the noise in the data. Stopwords are words that are not meaningful or significant for analysis such as articles, connectives, prepositions, and honorary words. We removed English stopwords using existing lexicons in R and used our custom list to account for Tagalog stopwords.

## ***Data Analysis Procedures***

After data pre-processing in R, we exported the data and created topic models using the gensim package in the Python programming language. Topic modelling has been used by social science studies, such as sociological research, discourse analysis, etc., to assess qualitative data quantitatively.

It is an unsupervised machine learning tool that identifies hidden semantic structures in provided documents and the affinities of each material to identified structures (Nikolenko et al., 2015). Topic modelling treats documents as a collection of topics. In turn, topics are composed of keywords. Analysis of these keywords lend insight into the thematic structure of the discourse.

**Latent Dirichlet Allocation.** One form of topic modeling is the Latent Dirichlet Allocation (LDA). LDA determines the thematically coherent topics in a given text through the co-occurrence of certain words (Brookes & McEnery, 2018). The LDA Topic Model's algorithm automatically searches for patterns of word co-occurrences found in specific texts and establishes them as thematic topics. The pattern of word co-occurrence enables the model to recognize the set of words that are part of a topic (Blei et al., 2003).

LDA uses probabilistic algorithms to cluster words into aggregate topics (Blei et al., 2003). Words are plotted in an n-dimensional space through the probabilistic algorithm set in the LDA. Clustering becomes possible as certain words appear in an established pattern through the text, and it is reflected in the space a certain word occupies in the n-dimensional space. It is exploratory as there are no set clusters or classifications expected to arise from certain data sets (Brookes & McEnery, 2018). Because of this, the process is iterative, inevitably involving researchers' subjective participation in the search for topics that “make sense” in the research context.

**Iterating through LDA Models.** The primary parameters set by the researchers in LDA are the number of topics to be determined by the topic model and the number of keywords that

determine a topic. Since LDA is an unsupervised algorithm, these parameters are often subject to the researchers' discretion as a result of trial and error to find the topics that make the most subjective sense.

However, there are also quantitative ways to aid this iterative process, one of which is measuring the perplexity and coherence score of a model (Nikolenko et al., 2015). The perplexity of the results of a topic model is the quality of a set of topics generated by a topic model computed through iterative training and comparison of results of each iteration (Asuncion et al., 2009). On the other hand, the coherence score is a metric of quality, which is a ratio of the instances of co-occurrence of words and the number of documents where the co-occurrences are present (Röder et al., 2015).

We ran iterations of the LDA model to find the optimal number of topics ( $k = 4$  to  $7$ ) using both quantitative measures and qualitative assessment of the generated keywords. The optimum resulting iteration is the model run with four topics, having the best perplexity and coherence scores, and making the most sense in terms of the generated keywords. The LDA model's resulting quality metrics with four topics produced a perplexity score of  $-8.42$  and a coherence score of  $0.56$ .

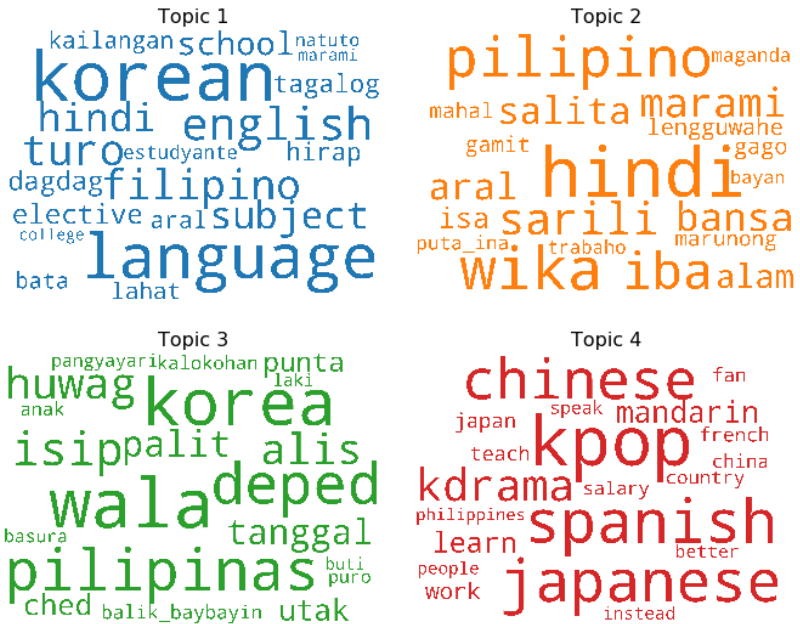
**Mixed-Methods Interpretation Strategy.** Because it is an unsupervised algorithm, the model's analysis requires human intervention. The idea is to see if results are thematically coherent. Because of this, we decided to employ a mixed-methods approach in analyzing the model output. First, we visualized the results through word clouds and listed the top keywords in each topic using their probability distributions. Afterward, we identified representative comments, utterances that comprise dominantly of words from a particular topic, to aid subsequent content analysis of salient themes. After running these analyses, we used various metrics to assess the composition of the data corpus enabling us to identify the notable themes dominant in the discourse.

## Results

### *Identifying Keywords through Topic Word Clouds and Probability Distributions*

Word clouds and probability distributions enables us to interpret underlying themes in topics by identifying salient keywords that are likely to occur in that particular cluster. Here are the keywords for the four clusters of the trained model:

**Figure 1.**  
*Word Cloud by Topic*





**Table 1.***Probability Distribution of the Top 12 Words by Topic*

	<b>Topic 1</b>	<b>Topic 2</b>	<b>Topic 3</b>	<b>Topic 4</b>			
Korean	0.094	hindi (no / not)	0.061	wala (none / out)	0.043	K-pop	0.03
language	0.075	wika (language)	0.045	Korea	0.038	Spanish	0.023
English	0.036	Pilipino	0.04	Pilipinas	0.031	Japanese	0.021
turo (teach)	0.032	iba (other)	0.033	deped	0.029	Chinese	0.02
Filipino	0.03	sarili (own)	0.025	isip (mind)	0.019	K-drama	0.014
hindi (no / not)	0.027	marami (many)	0.021	huwag (do not)	0.017	Mandarin	0.013
subject	0.025	bansa (country)	0.019	alis (remove)	0.016	learn	0.012
school	0.018	aral (study)	0.017	palit (replace)	0.011	work	0.008
elective	0.012	salita (speak / word)	0.017	tanggal (remove)	0.011	Japan	0.006
dagdag (add / added)	0.012	alam (know)	0.013	utak (mind / brain)	0.008	teach	0.006
Tagalog	0.011	isa (one)	0.01	ched	0.007	French	0.006
hirap (difficult y)	0.011	lenguwa he (language)	0.009	punta (go)	0.007	fan	0.006

### ***Identifying Representative Comments per Topic***

The word clouds and the probability distribution of the topic weights show the top words that constitute the different topics. Although it is possible to get a sense of what the topic talks about by merely looking at the keywords, it is apt to look at the usage of the words in actual talk to give thematic coherence to our algorithmically derived themes. Thus, we also included representative comments to guide interpretive content analysis. To select the representative comments, we quantitatively derived comments with high topic percentage contribution, which means that most of the words in the comment come from one particular topic. This intervention minimizes any subjective bias that researchers might have in sampling comments for qualitative assessment.

**Table 2.**  
*Representative Comments by Topic*

<b>Topic</b>	<b>Topic Percentage Contribution</b>	<b>Representative Comment</b>
	0.7142	<p><i>"English nga hirap ang mga bata korean language pa kaya. Ihasa na lang sa english mga bata kasi international language ang english."</i></p> <p>(Children are already having difficulty learning English. Much more, if they learn Korean. Just focus on training them in English because it is the international language.)</p>
Topic 1 (Status Quo)	0.7109	<p><i>"At dyos ko Filipino language nga marami ang walang comprehension koreano language pa dagdag bigatin pa ito ng student bat Hindi na lang may focus sa mother tongue at international language."</i></p> <p>(Many students are already having difficulty in comprehending Filipino. They'll even encounter more challenges with Korean. It's just an added burden to students. Why not just focus on teaching students their native languages and the international language?)</p>
Topic 2 (Nation-alist Sentiment)	0.691	<p><i>"Ika ni dr.jose rizal ang hindi magmahal sa sariling wika ay higit pa sa amoy ng mabaho at malansang isda..sana itaga nyo yan sa isipan nyo."</i></p> <p>(As Dr. Jose Rizal stated, "He who does not love his own language is worse than an animal and smelly fish." Please imprint that on your minds.)</p>
	0.6894	<p><i>"Nakakadurog! nakakawasak! Nakapanggagaliiti ang balitang ito! Sariling wika binabaliwala samantalang ang wikang banyaga ay binigyang halaga! Nasaan ang hustisya! Kolonyalismo sa Pinas laganap na talaga! ANG HINDI MAGMAHAL SA SARILING WIKA AY DAIG PA ANG MABAHO AT MALANSANG ISDA binaliwala ang mga</i></p>

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*katagang ito ni Rizal”*

(This is crushing! This news makes me mad! We are forsaking our own language while we put foreign languages up a pedestal. Where is justice? Colonialism continues to be pervasive in the Philippines. “HE WHO DOES NOT LOVE HIS OWN LANGUAGE IS WORSE THAN AN ANIMAL AND A SMELLY FISH.” It seems that people are just neglecting Rizal’s words nowadays.)

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		<i>“Ipapalit nyo ang pagtuturo ng Korean language eh ano ito gawa ng south korea ang tingin sa Pilipinas basurahan .Ibalik nyo basura ng korea you south korea understand.Tayo naman mga Pilipino umalma naman kapag mali ang ginagawa ng ibang bansa ok. peace to all.Mahalin natin ang Pilipinas ok”</i>
	0.5148	
Topic 3 (Government Incompetence)		(You are going to replace it (Filipino and Panitikan) with Korean even though South Korea thinks that the Philippines is a trash can. Take back your trash, South Korea. Filipinos, let’s fight back when other countries are doing wrong things to us. Peace to all. Let’s love the Philippines, okay.)
		<i>“Ano ba nangyayari sa Pilipinas.. inalis ang panitikan. Totoo ba papalitan ng korean language.. loko loko yang deped”</i>
	0.4951	
		(What is happening to the Philippines? We removed [Philippine] literature [from basic education]. Is it true that it will be replaced by Korean? DepEd is crazy.)
		<i>“Please give me a concrete rationale why Pinoys should learn[the] Korean language besides helping those millennials – turned Kpop / Kdrama fanatics understand what they are singing or their conversations in Kdramas?”</i>
Topic 4 (Language Communication)	0.6325	
	0.6287	<i>“It’s better if SPANISH ang ituro nila sa mga school. It’s because when you want to work abroad especially Europe countries and Latin america</i>

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*Countries, mas madali na silang makasabay at makaintindi. And in addition, related din ang spanish into italian and french."*

(It's better if they teach Spanish in schools instead. It's because when you want to work abroad, you could easily adapt and understand. In addition, Spanish is also related to Italian and French.)

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### ***Exploring Themes in Online Discourse***

Topic 1 (Status Quo) includes words such as *Korean*, *language*, *English*, *Filipino*, *dagdag* (*added*), and *hirap* (*difficulty*). Upon interpretively analyzing the representative comment and the words that belong to the cluster, we found that comments within this thematic group revolve around reifying the status quo. In other words, the comments assert the impracticality of introducing the program, given the current status of the Philippine educational system. Salient comments within this cluster argue that students are already experiencing difficulty with the current basic education system, which teaches English and Filipino. Thus, it would just be an added burden for students if Korean is taught. Alternatively, it is better to focus on improving the educational system and specialize in teaching English because it is the international language of communication that makes us globally competitive.

Topic 2 (Nationalist Sentiment) includes words such as *hindi* (*no/not*), *wika* (*language*), *Pilipino*, and *sarili* (*own*). Comments within this thematic cluster highlight the phenomenon as an affront to our national identity. Within this vein, the discourse is framed with neocolonial undertones, viewing the Korean elective's introduction as a form of foreign imposition. Drawing parallels with our forefathers' struggle, comments implore people to respect the Philippine national hero, Dr. Jose Rizal, and think of what he would do in this situation. They cite the oft-misattributed quote to Rizal, stating, "He who does not love his own language is worse than an animal and smelly fish" (Ocampo, 2011). Moreover, comments are

often coupled with calls to action to show love for the country by protecting the national language.

Topic 3 (Government Incompetence) includes words such as *wala* (*none / out*), *isip* (*mind*), *DepEd* (*Department of Education*), *CHED* (*Commission on Higher Education*), *palit* (*replace*), and *tanggal* (*remove*). Comments within this cluster frame the issue in terms of government incompetence, calling out CHED and DepEd for upholding a program that is viewed to remove and replace Panitikan and Filipino with Korean. Such moves are represented to be lapses in judgement or silly decisions by "out of mind" officials in the government. Moreover, the decision is also criticized by alleging that South Korea views the Philippines as a garbage dump, alluding to the issue of garbage shipments sent from South Korea to the Philippines (Cigalar, 2018).

Topic 4 (Language Commodification) includes words such as *K-pop*, *K-drama*, *Spanish*, *Mandarin*, *Japanese*, and *work*. Comments in this cluster frame languages as commodities, highlighting their commercial utility. In this regard, languages are also ranked in terms of perceived value of economic return. Comments argue that compared to Korean, teaching languages such as Spanish, Chinese, and Japanese are better because they are more useful for labor export or for finding work abroad. Compared to these languages, Korean is belittled to be no more than Hallyu, K-drama and K-pop.

### ***Topic Composition of the Data Corpus***

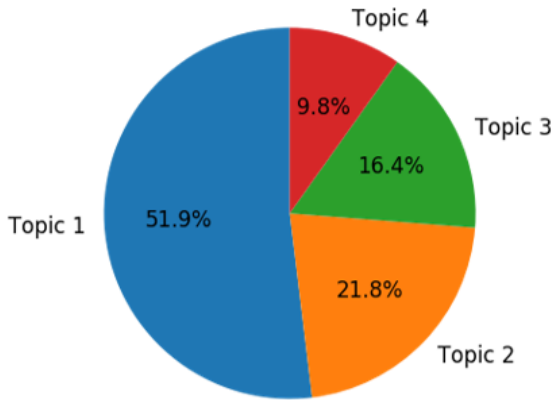
We assessed the topic composition of the data corpus to see which topics are most salient. In doing so, we looked at two metrics: the dominant topic and topic weightage. Evaluating frequency by dominant topic involves assigning each comment to the topic that holds the most weight and counting the number of comments. Measuring frequency by topic weightage entails summing up each topic's weight contribution to all documents to assess its salience.

**Figure 2.**  
*Frequency Distribution of Comments by Topic*

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**Distribution of Comments by Dominant Topic**

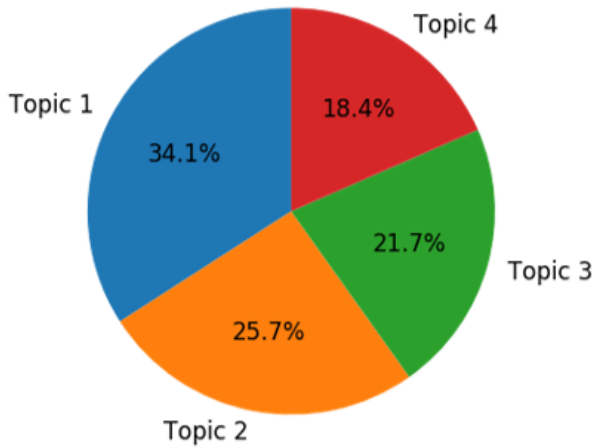
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**Distribution of Comments by Topic Weightage**

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In terms of dominant topic, majority of the comments belong to Topic 1, highlighting the salience of comments that reify the status quo by asserting the need to focus on Filipino and English because of existing deficiencies in the educational system. Topic 2 or nationalist sentiment that sees the teaching of Korean as a threat or an affront to our national identity, follows. The third most salient theme is Topic 3, which involves framing the phenomenon as the removal and replacement of Filipino and Panitikan and criticizing CHED and DepEd for their perceived incompetence. The least salient theme belongs to Topic 4, which frames Korean as just something for K-pop or K-drama and judges its benefit compared to languages that are perceived to be more apt for labor export such as Spanish, Mandarin, and Japanese.

However, it is also useful to assess the number of comments by topic weightage. As explained earlier, LDA treats documents as a collection of topics. Thus, the comments in the data corpus consist of different themes. The results show that the rank of the topics in terms of frequency remains the same using this different metric. However, it is more apparent that the comments are more distributed when one looks at topic weightage rather than the dominant topic. The disparity in the distribution shows that many of the comments share overlaps among themes. For example, framing the issue in terms of government incompetence often melds with nationalist discourses and other themes, as evidenced by the sample comments discussed earlier.

## **Discussion**

The study analyzed online discourses about the introduction of a Korean language elective in the Philippines' basic education curriculum. We were able to identify four salient themes in the discourse using topic modeling, which we labeled into: status quo, nationalist sentiment, government incompetence, and language commodification. We also found that dominant topics highlighted



the desire to focus on improving the status quo of teaching English and Filipino and a nationalistic backlash against the policy.

From the topics that we were able to extract from the data corpus, the overarching theme present is that the Korean language is generally represented adversarially. It was discursively portrayed as impractical and a burden to students and an assault on national identity. Years of government ineptitude brought language education to a dismal level. Furthermore, there is a sense in the comments referring to having Korean language skills as less economically advantageous than proficiency in Spanish, Mandarin, and Japanese.

Perhaps such drastic reactions could be attributed to news reports' timing as the DepEd (2018) asserted. Technically, DepEd and CHED are separate government departments with their mandate. Moreover, the SPFL program has been going on even before the CHED decision to remove Filipino and Panitikan as required subjects in tertiary education. Korean was just simply added to an already-existing program.

However, the comments still have something to say about the general context of language education in the Philippines. Looking at them closely, they bring up real issues and valid concerns. Comments asserting that we should focus on improving the status quo of teaching Filipino and English highlight existing deficiencies in literacy and comprehension among Filipino students.

Moreover, comments exhibiting nationalist sentiment highlight calls to reinforce the education of subjects that foster national identity. Comments arguing for the instruction of other languages recognize the difficulties of labor export, an important contributor to the Philippine economy. These are valid concerns that must be addressed in framing language policy.

Nevertheless, the public's reactions are a far cry from the shared vision articulated by former Korean ambassador Kim Jae Shin during the 2017 signing of the MOA. He declared that the program would be “very helpful to deepen the bilateral understanding between two nations or cultures” (Geronimo, 2017). In taking further steps towards pursuing the program, agencies from both governments have a role to play to ensure that this shared vision

is met. DepEd must continue to clarify that the initiative is part of an elective program established since 2008 to mitigate any confusion. Moreover, it is also paramount to address concerns on broader issues that were presented. On the part of the South Korean government, reciprocal steps in promoting the teaching of Philippine language and culture among Koreans may be welcomed as a sign of their commitment to mutual understanding and cultural exchange.

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# ESSAYS

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# 70 Years: Past, Present, and Future of the Philippines-Korea Relations

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## *ABSTRACT*

As the Philippines and Korea enter another era of cooperation, it is essential to look back on the peaks and valleys of both countries' bilateral ties, as they commemorate their seven decades of friendship. Amidst the Korean culture's growing influence on Philippine society today, the two neighboring countries' relationship is more complex than its people-to-people exchanges. Due to their longstanding history of partnership, these two countries have deeply rooted ties in different areas such as political and security, economic, trade, and investments and socio-cultural and development. This paper aims to discuss some highlights of the long, shared history and address the possible areas of improvement, while taking into account the current developments under the recent Duterte and Moon administration, respectively. Additionally, the paper will tackle both countries' socio-cultural progress, particularly the impact of the Korean wave to tourism, education, and migration to Korea vis-à-vis the Philippines. The author concludes by providing a summary of the evolution of the Korea-Philippines ties through the years and giving recommendations related to the existing areas of cooperation between the two countries.

## **Breakthrough**

Being one of the first countries to recognize the Republic of Korea in 1948, the Republic of the Philippines had posed itself as a strategic ally after establishing formal bilateral relations with South Korea on March 3, 1949, and deploying the Philippine Expeditionary Force to Korea (PEFTOK) to Busan under the United Nations Command to combat the

communist aggression of North Korea when the Korean War broke out in 1950 (Embassy of the Philippines in Korea, n.d.).

Decades later, the two countries' bilateral ties have continued to flourish, as they began to explore other areas of cooperation such as political, security, economic, trade, investments, as well as socio-cultural and development through their consistent high-level exchanges. Both countries have newly inaugurated State leaders—President Moon Jae In (2017-present) for Korea and President Rodrigo Duterte (2016-present) for the Philippines.

In the case of Korea, Moon's revival of his predecessors' Sunshine Policy, which paved the way for a historical summit between the leaders of the two Koreas, together with the United States President Donald Trump, has resulted in the Panmunjom Declaration (Pardo, 2018). The declaration aims to persuade the North to desist military provocations and give up its weapons and missiles, as well as improve inter-Korean relations by engaging with dialogues and economic, cultural, and people-to-people exchanges. Moon's pragmatism and multilateralism in dealing with the North allowed his administration's efforts to gain international and domestic support (Park, 2018).

On the other hand, the Philippines' unconventional President Duterte has drawn mixed reactions on the international and local arenas. These are for reasons relating to the country's war on drugs, terror sieges, and the administration's soft stance over the West Philippine Sea compared to the past administration's efforts to claim the disputed islands.

### **Giving back, then and now**

As a longtime ally, Korea has continuously expressed its support to combat both traditional and non-traditional security threats to the Philippines. The country has deployed around 540 members of the Korean Armed Forces to help during the rehabilitation of affected cities after the 2013 typhoon Haiyan (Local name: Yolanda) struck the Philippines (Embassy of the Republic of Korea in the Philippines, 2013). It also donated patrol cars and motorbikes to the Philippine National Police in 2018 (Ranada, 2016) and fighter jets to the Air Force and patrol combat corvette to the Philippine Navy in 2017 (Parameswaran, 2017), respectively.

In terms of development, both countries signed Memorandums of Understanding in 2018 to support the Philippines' sustained economic growth over the past decades. In fact, Korea remains to be one of the Philippines' biggest foreign aid donors, after the country gave \$1 billion to support infrastructure and technology improvement plans of the current administration, dubbed as "Build, Build, Build" program (Avedaño, 2018). Moreover, portions of the official development assistance for 2017-2022 aim to build Hyundai's production facility, generating about 50,000 jobs. The grant will also help create the Cebu International Container Port, Dumaguete airport and the rehabilitation of the war-torn city of Marawi City in Lanao Del Sur, Philippines (Placido, 2018).

Korea's New Southern Policy aims to strengthen its ties with the Southeast Asian region, making it one of the largest trading partners of countries comprising the area. According to the Department of Trade and Industry (DTI), Korea is the Philippines' fifth largest trading partner in 2018, with agricultural products such as bananas, pineapples, coppers as the top export products, and industrial products as the top imports. DTI also stated that Korea's investments have reached \$35.79 million in 2018, primarily focused on manufacturing and real estate. These economic and investment interactions are boosted by the ASEAN-Korea Free Trade Agreement (2010) and the ROK-ASEAN Commemorative Summit, easing market access for agriculture, technology, vehicles, and electronics. Additionally, the two countries are currently negotiating for a Free Trade Agreement to be concluded in November 2019, making South Korea a prospective second economic partner of the Philippines after Japan (Mogato, 2019).

As the new chapter unfolds for the Asian allies, Philippine President Duterte's visit to South Korean President Moon in 2018 has allowed both countries to reaffirm their cooperation, friendship, and partnership. The two countries highlighted their people-to-people exchanges. The two countries' socio-cultural ties have evolved as the Philippine society has embraced the Korean culture due to the mass influence of Korean dramas and pop culture, among others.

For education and employment, the number of Korean students wanting to study in the Philippines, both for the short and long terms, has dramatically increased because of its reputation as one of the top English-speaking countries in Asia. Some contributing factors include the country's high quality education, relatively low cost of living and



affordable education fees (Sausa, 2017). In contrast, Filipinos are also exploring international education opportunities such as the Korean Government Scholarship Program.

On the other hand, there are about 60,000 Filipino migrants and workers based in Korea. Most are blue-collar workers since Korea is one of the countries, which the Philippines have secured an agreement with to ensure proper recruitment by the Philippine Overseas Employment Administration (POEA)-accredited agencies and regulated through the issuance of the Employment Permit System (EPS). About 93,000 Koreans have resided in the Philippines (Balinbin, 2018), whereas Filipino tourists bound for Korea have significantly increased due to the Korean wave, such that the Korean Embassy had to designate travel agencies for visa processing in July 2018 (Embassy of the Republic of Korea in the Philippines, 2018).

### **Evolution, for the future**

Taking all these into account, the Philippines has expressed its stance in promoting peace in the region through dialogues, thus, fully supporting the latest inter-Korean summit that eventually resulted in the Panmunjom Declaration signed in April 2018 and the “New Southern Policy” of Moon. The latter aims to improve the economic relations of Korea in the ASEAN region. On the other hand, President Moon has stated its commitment to actively participate in Philippine development goals by expanding its support in areas of transportation, energy, infrastructure, among others. Lastly, both countries have agreed to protect their nationals’ rights, safety, and interests in each other’s states (Avedaño, 2018).

There’s still a long journey ahead for the Philippines-Korea relations. The two countries can further solidify their cooperation by 1) allowing more people-to-people exchanges by relaxing the visa requirements or considering visa-free travel for short-term visits, 2) providing more cultural, language, and educational exchanges through the English Program In Korea (EPIK) or Korea Global Scholarship Program (KGSP), among others, and promoting the Korean language as one of the options in the language electives to be taught in schools in the Philippines, 3) opening more windows of opportunity for both teaching and non-teaching jobs for Filipinos in Korea and lastly 4) ensuring the rights and

dignity of the peoples of Korea and the Philippines. Therefore, the celebration of the 70th year of shared history and partnership of Korea and the Philippines serves as a milestone of holistic regional cooperation and global partnership, as they continue to work towards the preservation of international peace and security.

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# Christianity and Korea: A Critique of Filipino's Perception of Korea's Dominant Religion

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To intellectualize the study of Asian cultures, Asian Studies has emerged as a discipline to scrutinize, analyze, promote, and conserve Asian heritage and successes. In the Philippine education setting, Asian Studies (*Araling Asyano*) is not only a discipline taken as an undergraduate and postgraduate specialization, but a general subject studied in the junior level of high school (Grade 7) under the Social Studies subject with the learning standards: "*naipamamalas ang malalim na pag-unawa at pagpapahalaga sa kamalayan sa heograpiya, kasaysayan, kultura, lipunan, pamahalaan at ekonomiya ng mga bansa sa rehiyon tungo sa pagbubuo ng pagkakakilanlang Asyano at magkakatuwang na pag-unlad at pagharap sa mga hamon ng Asya*"<sup>1</sup> This initiative is not surprising as the Philippines is an Asian country; hence, it is essential and imperative to educate Filipinos of their rich and diverse heritage as an Asian nation and community. With this endeavor, the Philippines, through its Education Department, has produced educational materials, mainly textbooks and modules, to be used as references by junior high school students and social studies teachers across the country.

Essentially, one of the significant topics, as indicated in the curriculum guide, to be discussed in Asian Studies for Grade 7 is the Asian Religions and Belief Systems – which highlights Asia as the

<sup>1</sup> Department of Education. (2016). K-12 Gabay Pangkurikulum (Curriculum Guide), Araling Panlipunan.

cradle of the world's faiths and belief systems– e.g., Confucianism, Taoism, Judaism, Buddhism, Hinduism, Islam, and Christianity. For a religiously diverse continent as Asia, indeed, a single religion cannot concentrate in a finite area, but it's however possible to dominate a nation, just as how Catholicism dominates the Philippines and how Islam dominates the Arab countries, and Indonesia and Malaysia in Southeast Asia. These religious denominations of countries, we have to remember, are deeply rooted in their respective histories – histories of both triumphs and sacrifices – that continue to the present time. These chronicles are widely documented in books.

In Korea, religion also had a crucial history of pursuit and plight. Several religions have converged in their peninsula and respectively collected their believers and faithful. Today, Christianity dominates among South Koreans. However, this reality in Korean society is seemingly missed by most people and even by Philippine textbooks.

### **Let us look further**

The advent of the late decade has introduced the Philippines and many other nations, especially its Asian neighbors, to the Korean pop culture craze we now know as the *Hallyu*. With Korea's success in public diplomacy, it has added value to its cultural status. From Korea's high-end technologies, convincing cosmetics, music, and dramas, indeed, it became the most beloved and influential culture in the world today. Moreover, this overwhelming patronization of Korean cultural exports has also caused many people to get interested in Korean culture and history. In the Philippines, many became avid fans and enthusiasts of Korean history and culture, especially with the spreading popularity of *sageuk* or historical drama. Nonetheless, the Filipino public seems to be boxed in the *sageuk*'s settings and interrupted history's continuity that led to the present time. Many Filipinos have

relatively limited and probably misconceived information about Korea's dominant religion today, perhaps due to the little information provided in textbooks used in schools, among many other reasons.

Asian Studies textbooks for junior public schools document the spread of various religions in Korea only until during the dynastic era. Dominant in these accounts were the spread of Buddhism and Confucianism. The only belief systems mentioned in the widely used and recommended textbook of the Department of Education, published through the National Program Support for Basic Education, Secondary Education Development and Improvement Project — '*Asya Pag-usbong ng Kabihasanan,*' Vibal Publishing (2008), are Mahayana Buddhism and Confucianism. The textbook documents that due to China's Han dynasty's proximity and influence to Korea, it acquired its two most widespread religions in China during that time. Moreover, the textbook mentions the baptism of more than 10,000 Koreans to Christianity; however, due to xenophobic tendencies by King Yi Hae-ung (Daewongun), they were executed. Thus, it left the impression that no other religion has endured Korea until today but Buddhism and Confucianism. Hence, until today, people outside Korea, especially many non-scholar Filipinos, still believe that Korea is a Buddhist and a Confucian dominant nation.

Additionally, in my review of the other existing and widely used textbooks of Asian Studies for junior high schools: (1) *Asya: Noon at Ngayon* by C&E Publishing, 2014; (2) *Asian History* by St. Bernadette Publications, 2006; (3) *Kayamanan, Ang Pilipinas sa Asya* by Rex Bookstore, 2014; (4) *Asya: Noon, Ngayon at sa Hinaharap* by SD Publications, 2000; (5) *Asia: History, Civilization, and Culture for High School* by Anvil Publishing, 2007; (6) *Asia: History, Civilization, and Culture* by Anvil Publishing, 2006, there was no mention of the entry of Christianity to the Korean peninsula and how it helped in Korea's embrace of western ideas. Even the Department of Education's module titled *Asya: Pagkakaisa sa Gitna ng Pagkakaiba* (2014) hardly contains

sufficient information on the thriving Christian religion in South Korea.

Furthermore, Korean dramas patronized by many Filipinos, unfortunately, intensify this misleading belief. Historical Korean dramas or *sageuks*, popular among Filipinos as *Jewel in the Palace*, *Jumong*, *Dong Yi*, *Saimdang*, and *Empress Ki*, which were set during the Joseon Dynasty, only feature Buddhist and Confucian cultures, traditions, and heritage structures like temples, pagodas, Buddhist and Confucian rituals, and monks. This limited view of the past furthers the viewers' parochial belief regarding how most people in Korea pray and believe.

Based on the 2015 National Census conducted by the Korean Statistical Information Service, many Koreans today have no formal religious affiliation (56.1%); hence more than half of the population shall be ineligible from the measure of the dominant religion in Korea. Yet, the census has declared Christianity as the topmost dominant religion in Korea, baptizing 27.6% of the population (13.4 million people); wherein 19.7% (9.6 million people) are Protestants, which are mainly – Presbyterians, Methodists, and Baptists, and 7.9% (3.8 million people) are Catholics. Therefore, the census contrasts the common belief that Korea is a Buddhist and/or a Confucian dominant nation; in fact, only 15.5% of the populations are Buddhists, and only 0.8% are members of other religious denominations, including Confucianism in 2015.

Nevertheless, the Academy of Korea Studies (AKS) assures that despite being the most successful and influential religions in the peninsula, Catholicism and Protestantism still maintain harmonious coexistence and respect among other faiths in modern South Korea, such as Won Buddhism, Confucianism, Cheondogyo, and Islam.

In Korean history, it is said that it was the penetration of Western ideas or the *Seohak* led many people to adopt a Western religion — i.e., Christianity. This conversion to Christianity has been triggered more by the intellectual elite's encouragement, the

decaying state of Korean Buddhism, and the Christian teachings' implication to national sentiment. Due to the threat of being rebellious to the state's policies and Confucian traditions, the House of Joseon had enacted repressive laws against Christian proselytes. Many of them were brutally executed. Nevertheless, the proliferation of Christianity has not stopped even amidst the rampant cases of persecution against converts. Christianity still thrived for a long time. According to James H. Grayson, in his "Korea a Religious History," Pyongyang was an important Christian center before 1948. Confucian influence in the North is less compared to the South. About one-sixth of Pyongyang's populations, amounting to 300,000, were converted. However, when the North adapted the communist ideology, more than a million of Korean Christians escaped and resettled in South Korea as refugees.

Consequently, the intensified growth of Christianity came to its peak during the 1970s and 1980s. Due to the marked increase in its Christian population, Korea is now considered a unique nation – a Christian-dominated country in the East Asian Region. Korea is considered to be one of the largest sources of Christian missionaries around the globe.

## **Catholicism in Korea**

Though Protestantism predominates Korea today, the Catholic Church has a strong and elaborate play in Korean society. The Catholic Church antedates Protestantism in Korea, which only started in 1884 via American missionaries. Catholicism had its advent as early as 1784 with the baptism of Yi Seung-hun (then named Peter) in Beijing, China.<sup>2</sup>

Currently, South Korea has fifteen territorial Catholic dioceses (three archdioceses and twelve dioceses), and one military

<sup>2</sup> Peterson, M. (2016). Korea's Religious Places, Understanding Korea Series No. 6. Seoul: Seoul Selection. p.80



diocese spread across the Korean peninsula. According to a report by the Catholic Bishops' Conference of Korea (CBCK) titled "Statistics of the Catholic Church in Korea 2017", there were 5,813,770 Catholics in Korea (which is 11% of the total population of Korea in 2017 – i.e., 52,950,306). Moreover, it has baptized 96,794 new members in the same year – records that the CBCK proudly claims to have consistently increased since 2005<sup>3</sup>. This Christian domination is much evident in the Western corner of Korea, including Seoul, Incheon, and Gyeonggi, and Honam. This continuous escalating number of Catholic believers in Korea through time makes Korea deserving of attention from the Vatican itself. Thus, in August 2014, it has been one of the blessed countries visited by Pope Francis in his Asian mission. It was a four-day visit (14–18 August) that culminated with a Papal Mass at Myeongdong Cathedral, the seat of the Archdiocese of Seoul, on August 18. During a mass conducted during Asian Youth Day in Gwanghwamun Plaza, Seoul, on August 16, the Pope beatified Paul Yun Ji Chung and 123 Catholic martyr companions. This move solidified Korea's niche as the country with the fourth-largest number of saints – a rank they have been holding since 1984 when Pope John Paul II flew to Korea. The visit coincided with the 200th anniversary of the Catholic community's birth in Korea to officially canonize 103 Catholic laypersons who suffered martyrdom during the 19th century Catholic Christian persecution.<sup>4</sup> One of the most notable Korean saints is the first Korean priest, Andrew Kim Taegon, who after succeeding in entering Korea as a missionary, suffered execution in 1846 at 26.

Significantly, Korea is currently home to 15 Catholic cathedrals of grandeur Gothic and Romanesque architectures, which

<sup>3</sup> Catholic Bishops' Conference of Korea, Announced by President Most Rev. Hyginus Kim Hee-joong. (2018). "*Statistics of the Catholic Church in Korea 2017*". Retrieved from: [http://www.cbck.or.kr/bbs/bbs\\_read.asp?board\\_id=K1300&bid=13013298; https://cbck.or.kr/en/news/19250#](http://www.cbck.or.kr/bbs/bbs_read.asp?board_id=K1300&bid=13013298;https://cbck.or.kr/en/news/19250#)

<sup>4</sup> Baker, Don (1999). "*Catholicism in a Confucian World*." In *Culture and the State in Late Choson Korea*. Edited by Haboush and Beuchler. Cambridge: Harvard University Asia Center, p. 201.

are both principal European styles, notably, those as in the cathedrals of Jeondong in Jeju and Myeong-dong in Seoul – a beautiful taste of Western culture in the East. Nevertheless, though many of the Catholic churches in Korea have European architecture, there are also Catholic churches that have syncretized to the Asian architecture of temples and pagodas like Saenamteo and Danggogae Martyr's Shrines. Indeed, there is no way for someone not to notice the great Christian foundation in Korea.

Despite the obvious fact, many Filipinos are still unaware of Korea's dominant Christian faith due to limited documentation in textbooks and even often in multimedia. Filipino people are boxed in the information way back 1700's. Textbooks fail to continue the saga of Korean religions, which is now dominated by Christians. Many are still unaware that most Koreans kneel and recognize Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior. Many prefer reading the Bible than meditating in a temple. Nuns, priests, and pastors also exist as religious leaders and mediators other than Buddhist monks and Confucian *junzi*; Catholic churches of Western architecture exist across the peninsula other than temples and pagodas.

The lack of much knowledge among Filipinos about Christianity in Korea is saddening because, among their respective allies, the Philippines and Korea started linking with each other through the Catholic faith. The earliest recorded history of Filipino-Korean direct contact was when the first Korean Christian named Tomas took refuge in Manila with his father after several Japanese attacks in Korea in 1593. His story is the earliest documented contact of a Korean to the Philippines. Following this, the first Korean Catholic priest, St. Andrew Kim Taegon also escaped to the Philippines. Thus, religion, specifically Christianity, played an essential part in converging the destinies of both the Land of the Morning Calm and the Pearl of the Orient Seas. Hence, it is deemed remorseful that our Filipino published textbooks could not even include the story of Christianity in Korea, considering its significance in Korea-Philippines relations history.

## **Recommendation**

There are many ways to change the Filipino perception of Koreans' religious affiliation. First, the Korean Cultural Center (KCC), through its educational arms and instrumentalities from universities, must encourage Asian Studies writers to teach the present religious status and other updates about Korea in writing textbooks and scholarly references. Second, introduce great Korean martyr saints, blessed and venerable through the cordial celebration of their feast days, and disseminate prayer and invocation pamphlets addressed to them in collaboration with the Philippines' Catholic community. Third, include pilgrimages as a form of tourism in Korea through inculcating Korea's magnificent churches and religious shrines in tourism materials, such as in print, online, or multimedia. Fourth, increase Korean missionaries across local communities. Finally, occasionally conduct public lectures, book launches, and documentary screenings regarding the life, martyrdom, and legacies of more than a hundred great Korean martyr saints, blessed and venerable, and the status of Catholicism and Christianity at large in Korea.

Hopefully, the *Hallyu* world will become more accurate in depicting Korean religions. Aside from Korean dramas, songs, language, and exported commodities of technology, cosmetics, and food, it is time to highlight the aspect less seen by many, especially today in the globalized world – religion. It is a significant component of culture; hence it is equally important to clarify this matter. Such knowledge stands to build a more respectful and plural spiritual community between Korea, Philippines, and the rest of the world. Additionally, Filipinos, and other international scholars need to rewrite and expound Asian Studies – enriching and deepening Filipinos' understanding of each Asian nation's culture.

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# Dokdo: An Island with Many Names but still Korea's

*Christine Marie Lim Magpile  
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## **Introduction**

If asked to give a famous island in Korea, Jeju-do would probably be my answer because this is a world-class tourist destination. Planning for a leisure trip to South Korea next year, I researched online and encountered the website (<http://www.adventurekorea.com>).

The Adventure Korea website offered tourists a trip to Dokdo Island. I was stunned by its beautiful landscape. Even from pictures, one can see Dokdo's uniquely shaped volcanic rocks and gulls. The website cited that Dokdo is an island disputed between South Korea and Japan. With its stunning scenery, Dokdo Island is certainly abundant with natural resources. Is this the reason why South Korea and Japan are fighting over the territorial claims to Dokdo?

An isolated islet off Korea's east coast, Dokdo looks like a miniature paradise in the middle of the sea because it is a habitat for various kinds of plants, birds such as sparrows, insects, marine creatures like crab, squid, shrimp, and many more. Thus, Korea's National Assembly designated Dokdo as a Natural Preservation Zone in 1982.

**Figure 1.**

*The Liancourt Rocks viewed from the North.*



Note: In Korean, “Dokdo” means solitary island. Meanwhile, the Japanese calls Dokdo as Takeshima Island, which means “bamboo island. ([https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Liancourt\\_Rocks#/media/File:Dokdo\\_20080628-panorama.jpg](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Liancourt_Rocks#/media/File:Dokdo_20080628-panorama.jpg).)

**Figure 2.**

*Liancourt rocks, in Japan called Takeshima and in North and South Korea called Dokdo (Tokto).*



Note: Map showing the location of Dokdo, which is also referred to as Liancourt rocks ([https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Liancourt\\_Rocks#/media/File:Location-of-Liancourt-rocks-en.png](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Liancourt_Rocks#/media/File:Location-of-Liancourt-rocks-en.png).)

## A Summary of Dokdo's History

For most Europeans and perhaps, the rest of the world, *Liancourt* is Dokdo's international name derived from *Le Liancourt*, the French whaling ship that reached the islets in 1849 and placed it on the map. For the Japanese, Dokdo is referred to as Takeshima or Bamboo Islands (Jennings, 2017).

Tracing Korea's history, the "Chronicles of the Three Kingdoms" or *Samguk Sagi* (1145 CE) mentioned that both Ulleungdo Island and the Dokdo Islet formerly belonged to Usan-guk.<sup>5</sup> Usan-guk was a state which became part of the Silla Dynasty (57BCE–935 CE) under King Jijeung's<sup>6</sup> thirteenth year of reign (New World Encyclopedia, n.d.).

Meanwhile, there are references that Sambongdo, Gajindo, or Usando was the Dokdo Islet based on its geographical description, as stated in the *Seongjong Memoir* from the Joseon Dynasty. In 1881, the name was later changed to Dokdo. However, Dokdo's official name was first used only in 1906. By 1914, Dokdo officially became an administrative district of the Gyeongsangbuk-do Province (Lee, 2005).

Furthermore, records from the *Sukjong Sillok* or the Annals of King Sukjong (1674–1720) cites that a certain An Yong Bok went to Japan and filed a protest against some Japanese fishermen who trespassed into Korean territory. He asked the Japanese officials to acknowledge Korea's sovereignty over Ulleungdo and Dokdo by forbidding the Japanese to sail to the islets without permission (The Digital Local Culture Encyclopedia of Korea, n.d.).

On the other hand, the Japanese government claims that Dokdo refers to the Matsushima<sup>7</sup> Islands (松島) and formerly known as

<sup>5</sup> At present, Usan-guk (state of Usan) is now Ulleungdo and Dokdo.

<sup>6</sup> King Jijeung was the twenty-second ruler of the Silla Kingdom. King Jijeung is attributed for naming the country "Silla," which became a centralized kingdom under his reign. In 512 CE, King Jijeung dispatched General Kim Isabu to conquer the island nation of Usan-guk.

<sup>7</sup> Matsushima comprises tiny islands located at the Miyagi Prefecture situated on the northeast coast of Japan.



Takeshima or Isotakeshima. It can be seen on the *Kaisei Nippon Yochi Rotei Zenzu* or the *Revised Complete Map of Japanese Lands and Roads*, which was first published in 1779 (Ryall, 2017).

The Takeshima Islands was a fishing ground and stopover port en route to Utsuryo Island during the mid-seventeenth century at the Edo period (1603–1867). At that time, merchants needed to secure permission for passage from the feudal lord. The Japanese government contended that the Shogunate should have banned the merchants' passage to these islands and implement Sakoku<sup>8</sup> (鎖国), as Japanese people were prohibited from traveling to foreign territories. Therefore, this shows that Takeshima is part of Japan (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan, n.d.).

After the Russo-Japanese War, Japan moved Dokdo to the Shimane Prefecture and renamed it Takeshima. Under the 1905 Eulsa Treaty, the Korean empire became Japan's protectorate and controlled Korea's entire affairs (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan, n.d.).

### **Who Has Rightful Claims over Dokdo?**

Considering the historical roots from both sides, it clearly shows that Dokdo belonged to the Korean empire since they already have a record as early as 1145 CE compared with Japan's account, which dated back only to around mid-seventeenth century CE (Ministry of Foreign Affairs Republic of Korea, n.d.). Japan's move to put Dokdo as part of its prefecture in 1905 should be disregarded as Dokdo's acquisition was by force since it was done at the onset of war.

Furthermore, the *Dajokan* or the Grand Council of State officially recognized that Dokdo was not Japan's territory in 1877. Additionally, Japan's Ministry of Foreign Affairs released a similar

<sup>8</sup> Literally, *sakoku* means "closed country." Sakoku refers to Japan's foreign policy during the Tokugawa shogunate, which limited the country from trading and relations with other nations.

report entitled, “*Chosenkoku Kosai-Shimatsu Naitansho*” or *Confidential Inquiry into the Particulars of Korea's Relations with Japan* in 1870. It stated that a confidential investigation took place and revealed Takeshima (Dokdo) was part of Joseon (Ministry of Foreign Affairs Republic of Korea, n.d.).

Geographically speaking, the Dokdo islets are located 92 kilometers southwest away from South Korea’s Ulleung-do island while it is 157 kilometers northeast away from Japan’s Oki Islands. South Korea regarded the islets as part of the Ulleung County of the North Gyeongsang Province. On the other hand, Japan noted it as part of Okinoshima, Oki District, from the Shimane Prefecture. Considering its proximity to Korea, Dokdo islets is a/in Korean territory (Ryall, 2017).

On September 4, 1951, delegates from over fifty countries met at San Francisco to draft a peace treaty with Japan. Part of this treaty is to resolve how nations defeated during warlike Japan will smoothly turnover the countries occupied during the war. Under Article 2, Japan should recognize Korea's independence and renounce all rights, titles, and claims to Korea, including some islands. However, the San Francisco Peace Treaty omitted Dokdo as part of Korean territory. With this exclusion, Japan made territorial claims over Dokdo (Doh, 2017).

Both North and South Korea strongly rejected the exclusion of Dokdo in the treaty. A Korean representative wrote to the United States government and pointed out this matter. Unfortunately, the United States showed neutrality and expressed that this issue should be taken elsewhere (Ryall, 2017).

Analyzing the subsequent events that took place, the United States seemingly made negotiations with Japan to undertake military exercises on the region in 1952. By remaining neutral on the Dokdo issue, the US government would have avoided (political) conflicts with Japan. Additionally, US officials could have sensed that communist Russia and China are backing-up Korea’s northern region and realized that it would pose an even bigger problem by helping Korea over Dokdo.

It is highly probable that Japan became interested in utilizing the Dokdo Island to rebuild their country and recover war losses. Strategically located, Dokdo has rich marine resources and believed to have natural gas reserves. On the part of the United States, they would have earned a good alliance with Japan by remaining neutral.

A Korean flag stands on the Dokdo islet. There are also Korean citizens permanently inhabiting Dokdo. Hence, the Korean government deployed police officers for security and assigned relevant ministry personnel to assist the residents with their daily needs, especially in potable (drinking) water. Some Korean-owned telecommunication service providers also put up stations in the islet to offer wireless telephone network coverage. There is also a regular ferry service for Korean and foreign tourists who would like to go to Dokdo.

## **Conclusion**

At present, A Korean flag stands on the Dokdo islet. There are also Korean citizens permanently inhabiting Dokdo. Relevant Ministry personnel assist the residents with their daily needs especially in terms of potable water (Sripala, 2018).

If K-Drama and K-Pop can penetrate the international arena, territorial claims over Dokdo could be realized if all Koreans unite and solicit a world-wide petition seeking international support to turnover Dokdo.

As a Filipino, I empathize with Korea's predicament over Dokdo because the Philippines is also experiencing the same plight with our Scarborough (Panatag) Shoal<sup>9</sup> from China (Zambrano, 2019). May it be Korea's Dokdo islets or Panatag Shoal for our case, the best way to resolve this matter should be a diplomatic dialogue. Representatives from both parties (South Korea and Japan) should

<sup>9</sup> The Scarborough Shoal is located in the West Philippine Sea. The Chinese government is claiming it as part of their territory.

observe the utmost cordiality to maintain peace for their people's best interest.

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UNIVERSITY OF THE PHILIPPINES  
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# SPECIAL FORUM ON "PARASITE"

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# SPECIAL FORUM ON

## <PARASITE>

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- Organizers: UP Korea Research Center and UP Film Institute
- Date: February 13, 2020
- Panels:
  - ✓ Noy Lauzon (Film Institute, University of the Philippines)
  - ✓ Richard Bolisay (Film Institute, University of the Philippines)
  - ✓ Bubbles Asor, PhD (Department of Sociology, University of the Philippines Diliman)
  - ✓ Michelle Correa (Communication Department, Ateneo de Manila University)
- Transcription prepared by Pamela Jacar (UP Korea Research Center)

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# PANEL DISCUSSION

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**Noy Lauzon:** I'd like you to see it again once we get to have a screening run for *Parasite* this March—subject to confirmation. The dates are yet to be finalized but we posted an announcement so it could draw the interest of the UP Diliman Community.

Of course, we all know about *Parasite*. It's the film that achieved what was thought impossible. The first non-English language film to win the top prize at the Oscars last February 2020. And to help us discuss this achievement or feat. We have with us colleagues from the academe.

We have Prof. Michelle Corea of the Ateneo De Manila University. And we also have from the Department of Sociology of the UP College Social Science and Philosophy, Prof. Bubbles Asor. Later, we'll be joined by UPFI's own, Prof. Richard Bolisay.

We would want participation from the audience. So, we'll just ask our panelists some questions and then later we'll open the floor for all your questions, comments, reactions, or your own insights on *Parasite*. Not just *Parasite* but also on South Korean cinema—and its relation to the Philippine experience. Because we are all fans of anything Korean. It's like the world acknowledges that the #1 fans of Korean pop culture are Filipinos.



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# HOW DO YOU SEE KOREA DEPICTED IN PARASITE?

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**Dr. Bubbles Asor:** So, I am here but I'm not into films. I do Sociology of Migration and migration of Filipinos to South Korea and the role of the Catholic Church in the migration landscape in South Korea. When I was asked to give my ideas and insights regarding this film, I was hesitant because I am not a film expert hence I am kind of hesitant to be here. So what I would just like to share with you is the context of the film, especially the socio-political context that we may have missed out on while watching the film. I am particularly interested in the social nuances of the backdrop of the movie. Maybe you know better than I do in terms of Korean popular culture. On my end, I have been researching on Korean economic-political and social landscape for about ten years now. Although Korean politics and society is not exactly what I do for research but I need to understand it before I could say I study migration to and from South Korea so I am kind of familiar with the context. This movie has really depicted the *quasi*-universality of economic inequality, using South Korea as a particular illustration. We may think of South Korea in a very glossy term like it is all good there as depicted by Korean drama. K-Pop idols are all those beautiful people but a part of K-pop or the *Hallyu* that we know are part of what we call *developmental neoliberalism* as Seoul National University Sociologist Chang Kyung-Sup would call a *product of compressed modernity*. So, I would like to discuss that a little bit. I know it's a little boring. We, sociologists, are pretty boring. I know you are more interested in the film *per se* and the symbolisms used in the film but I will also discuss that in a little bit. So, what is this exactly? South Korea has gone through radical social changes. It is

a product of transformation but at the same time a product of paradoxes. This compressed modernity has not only influenced South Korea but also what we called the newly industrialized economies such as Singapore, Hong Kong, Taiwan. Compressed modernity has had a lot of impact on ordinary people especially the middle class. This compressed modernity and speedy industrialisation was highly celebrated by Koreans in the same manner that they celebrated Seoul hosting the 1988 Olympics and its membership in OECD (Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development) because Koreans felt that they were now on the way to earning a much coveted position within the global hierarchy. However, this pride and economic high was shaken when in 1997, South Korea was badly hit by the Asian financial crisis which greatly impacted the ordinary Koreans' everyday life. Although then President Kim Dae-Jung was deemed to have done a good job in leading the Korean economy to bounce back at the macro-economic level, ordinary Koreans were left fending for themselves in terms of individual growth and prosperity as well as in terms of social safety net. In the name of national development, ordinary Koreans were not only demanded by the state to contribute to national progress but they also willingly agreed to collude with the state in sacrificing individual freedoms and access to social services. Given the tempo of compressed modernity, ordinary Koreans were subjected to and normalised state-led and market-oriented strategies such as spartan educational system and very long working hours thought to a sign of diligence and perseverance in the workplace. Koreans have one of the shortest sleeping times in the world. But this hard work and very long hours ordinary Koreans put in on their education and work does not necessarily translate into individual success. Education and employment are two important spheres in the Korean society that are given utmost importance by ordinary people. For example, in the movie, *Parasite*, some of the characters mentioned, *"you know if you were a college student, you will have more vigor than the others, but you are not a college student."*

Because education and future employment are intricately linked, parents send their children to the best schools, best universities and best cram schools. In short, Koreans do a lot more than their counterparts in other societies to achieve their goals for themselves, for their dreams, for their families plus the supposed collective responsibility of doing so much for the country. This narrative can be gleaned from the Korean dramas and how they portrayed the hard work of ordinary Koreans. If ordinary Koreans do not work hard, they perceive and are perceived as unable to keep up with the fast changing development of the Korean society. Children who do not do well in school may be deemed as “slow” or “failure” hence the need for and stress of attending cram school. For those who are underemployed or unemployed, they may be regarded as “losers” in what Saskia Sassen calls the sorting of winners and losers in late capitalism expulsion. In this compressed modernity, the Korean state and the market mostly composed of the *chaebols* like the *Samsung, LG, Hanjin, Hyundai* or *Lotte* collude to achieve macro-level economic development which has excluded many ordinary Koreans in the larger project of national development. This collusion necessitated further by the neoliberal economic reform in the form of restructuring of the financial market under the International Monetary Fund and the furthering of flexibility in the labour market led to the increase of precarious employment, casualisation of work, emergence of new types of nonregular employment and self-employment in the formal sector (Shin 2012). In the movie, the precarious employment of ordinary Koreans was captured in the scene where the rich employer decided to fire the housekeeper and driver. According to the rich male employer, he would fire them gently without explicitly telling them the reason/s for their employment termination. Such economic strategies have had immediate effects on the individuals and their families when some people in dire need resort to borrowing money from loan sharks especially when self-employment leads to bankruptcy or when employees are fired from their jobs.

**Prof. Michelle Correa:** A lot of us are fans of Korean dramas and films, right? And in here Bong Joon Ho shows us two sides of Korea. On one hand, we see something we are familiar with because we see this in a lot of Korean dramas and films, but at the same time Bong Joon Ho also shows us another side of Korea which isn't often depicted in the Korean dramas that we see and this is the side of the less fortunate ones in Korea. Probably, if you visited Seoul, you will have seen homeless people on the subway but of course you don't see them represented on tv or film but they're there. BJH shows us that side of Korea and if you see it, the first few scenes might be familiar to you because we see a family in a basement home. The house is dirty. The bread they're eating could have been pan de sal and what they could have been drinking would have been the coffee that we usually we drink - *Nescafe* or something. When you see a bug crawling, it feels normal. You've probably seen a bug on your table so it's very Filipino. Something you can relate with. It's something that we can relate with. It's an aspect of Korea which Ma'am Bubbles said is kind of a remnant from the past of Korea when they were still struggling. During the last few scenes, you will see the other side of Korea during the flood which is also familiar to us because we experience flooding every June-July. This is also something we can relate with, which is the poor side of Korea. And that aspect may be kind of unsettling for us because it is kind of new. we don't often see it in contemporary Korean films or tv series but it's there. I'm glad that BJH showed this through Korean setting.

**Prof. Richard Bolisay:** I was a tutor for Korean students myself (when I was in college). This was in the early 2000s in a subdivision in Fairview with a rich family as well. I was paid Php 100/hour. It lasted for two years. It was a time when a lot of Koreans were coming to the Philippines as exchange students, mura 'yung education, etc. I'm sure there are a lot of factors (that informed *Parasite's* story) but when I saw the film (I knew) it wasn't an idea that came overnight. The narrative is a product of its time, years and

years of class inequality in society, and the Korea I saw in the film is something very familiar to every country, to every nation suffering from class inequality. You can see that in the portrayal of the rich and the poor. You can see a lot of class markers in the film. How they portray the poor people; how their language is very different, very markable. I think what I like most is the use of smell as a marker of class. It started as something symbolic and it contributed to how the plot turned out. It manifested in the actions of the character played by the father. It was something built upon in the plot, in the beginning, in the middle towards the end, and to think this act (of commenting on someone's smell) is something we do randomly on a daily basis. It is also remarkable how Mr. Park said Mr. Kim smells like someone who came from the subway. For us here in Manila, if we took the MRT, ang baho natin, mukha tayong gusgusin, pawisin, etc., and that is a marker of class in itself, the lack of privilege. I see clearly that such a metaphor is deliberately written. It is scripted. So, when I see a film it is more than a reflection of reality. I don't just see it as a representation of reality; in fact it's a construction. No matter how uncomfortable the scenes are in the film, I can see them from the outside, in the sense that I know that they are constructed, they are written. This is a film. I am aware that there is a story, but I am also aware that the story is rooted in reality. There is no separating what's happening from the film from what's happening in real life. In a way that they have incidents of people (in real life) living in semi-basements. One of the news I read recently is that upon its win in the Oscars, the government addressed the issue. *Syempre kailangan nilang ma-pressure*. The film addressed this social problem that needed attention.

Unfortunately, it needed that kind of push. They needed that kind of Western validation. It is also important to point out that *Parasite* is a festival film. A product of a film festival. It won the top prize in Cannes Film Festival, so the producers are very much aware that their key audience is (art) cinephiles. One of the major things they are able to accomplish is to traverse from that art audience towards

a more commercial audience. If you see the box office returns in the U.S., 300 million, or 200 million — that’s a lot for a foreign film and for an audience who is (usually) allergic to subtitles. I know a lot of people who consider it a disadvantage to read subtitles, and I had to explain that it is commonly white people who complain about reading subtitles. It’s something that we (Asians) are used to. In fact, whenever we watch English-language films, we want to see them with English subtitles. The accents sometimes put us off, or it is hard for us to understand (what’s being said). I had to tell a friend that you are showing a lot of white privilege when you say that (it would have been a better film without subtitles) (the said friend, incidentally, is white). I told him that Asian people do not think that way. We’re used to reading (subtitles) and taking notice of the acting at the same time. Maybe it’s a talent? Skill? But it is also related to post-colonial experience. It’s something that we’re used to doing. We don’t question it. It’s part of what we have to do as a consumer of foreign cinema, and I’d like to emphasize that *Parasite* is a foreign film for us. It’s an Asian film and there’s a lot of similarities to our culture. There’s a lot of things we see that’s similar to what we experience, but it’s still foreign to our experience. There are elements in the film that is very specific to Korean consciousness. I think it’s also the demarcation about the art film and the audience-friendly film; it is able to embrace those two elements. It is also important to point out that like Philippine cinema, Korean cinema is also celebrating its centenary (or has celebrated its centenary last year or two years ago), so it brought some parallelism with our own history. They’re luckier in terms of government support. They’re luckier in terms of policies. They have the quota system. You won’t be surprised that the films that rake in the box office in their country are Korean films. People are forced to see them because they have a system that limits the number of Hollywood films shown locally and people are encouraged to see their own films. And I think it is something that we can apply to our own cinema and industry as well. There is a reason for the popularity of Korean films, because the Koreans see them first and foremost, and there’s financial, moral, a

lot of levels of support that their filmmakers get. *Parasite* is a film that's a product of years and years of the government and the people pushing for it. I am not saying that Western validation is the be-all and end-all of things, but its (Oscar) victory was something that we can also celebrate along with the Korean audience. The kind of pride that they felt.

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## OPEN FORUM

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**Question: what's your take on the violence that was shown in the last part of the film?**

***Prof. Richard Bolisay:*** The layer of my appreciation for the film is also contextual in the sense that I've seen it before the Oscars, before the hype, and after the Oscars. And I see it as a technical film in a way that BJH was able to prepare you in the beginning as though it's an art film, then masterfully shifted into a genre film. If you've seen his other movies — *Okja*, *Memories of Murder*, *The Host* — he's really a genre director. He's very adept in building suspense. He's very good in making you feel for the characters. I think the turning point of *Parasite* is when the previous maid comes back and presses that doorbell. It really spun the narrative around. We know it's a commentary on class issues. But then again it became suspenseful. narratively speaking, it prepared us towards the violence at the end. On one hand it's commenting on the class struggle between the two families, but on the other hand, it is also a skillful manipulation of your emotion as an audience. The violence in the end is something that we see on a daily basis in our own

society. It's a familiar item of news stories. The kind of anger that the poor family experiences is painful and the rich family isn't even aware of what's happening.

**Dr. Bubbles Asor:** For me, it's like hyperbole, an exaggeration as it were because the film really asked a very crucial question. Who is the *parasite*? More often than not, we think of the rich as the *parasite* in the capitalistic and neoliberal sense because the rich are the ones who benefit most in these two economic systems. But in the movie, *Parasite*, the so-called poor represented by the Kim Family have the maneuverings and makings of "parasites" themselves by taking advantage of the rich people's naivety, pretentiousness, flashiness and materialist excesses. Rather than treating the rich and the poor in binary and dichotomy, the film tackles the characteristics of the poor and the rich as "parasites" in a more fluid manner. Departing from the formula of Korean TV drama whereby the poor is characterized as someone with "pure heart" and the rich as the antithetical scheming prey, the movie, *Parasite*, treats both the rich and the poor as analytical categories of being a "parasite" that is produced by the sociopolitical, cultural, economic contexts. The parasite here takes advantage of and maximizes the scarce and temporal resources for survival. Each of the characters in the film was portrayed as a parasite in its own right. Who is exactly the Parasite? It's a beautiful question that the movie leaves us.

When it comes to the treatment of violence in this film, I am not really bothered or shocked by it because for me, it is a hyperbole, an exaggerated depiction of the society that is in chaos. BJH is a sociology graduate from Yonsei University so I surmise that the way he portrayed the social order or disorder in the Korean society may have a sociological undertone. This may be a bit of overstretching or I may be overreading BJH in this film but I see violence here as a symbolism and/or illumination of anomie as conceptualised by Emile Durkheim, one of the founding fathers of sociology. For



Durkheim, anomie is a state of normlessness or social disintegration which arises after a radical social change occurs. In the case of South Korea, compressed modernity and high level of industrialization is an illustration of this radical and far-reaching social change that may lead to social differentiations (such as the widening gap between the rich and the poor) and the weakening of social rules, withering of social cohesion and loss of moral control. When uniformity and social solidarity disappear due to rigid social differentiation and social inequality, people may lose their moral convictions and there would be deviations from the norm. Another sociologist, Robert K. Merton developed the anomie theory by positing that most of us have the freedom and choice to achieve the culturally recognised goals such as economic success and good educational performance. However, there will be a state of anomie if the pathway or access to achieving these goals is impeded by structural limitations. As a result, people opt to be deviant towards social rules and norms by employing any of the following: rebellion, retreat, conformity, ritualism and innovation (i.e. crimes). We can see the deviant actions of each of the characters in the film. To survive the complex demands of the Korean society especially under the neoliberal economic transformation in the post-South Korea crisis under the International Monetary Fund governance, ordinary Koreans were left fending for themselves even resorting to “deviance” as huge social costs were experienced such as poverty, social exclusions, inequality, and cultural gaps.

***Prof. Michelle Correa:*** The two instances of violence that I can remember was when Moon-Gwang’s husband killed Ki-Jung/Jessica and when Ki-Taek killed Nathan Park. I think that it’s the natural way of how things would progress on the film because these two characters (Moon-Gwang’s husband and Ki-Taek) and their whole family have been victims of structural violence in Korea. Well, Ki-Taek is jobless. The whole family is jobless. They earn very little from folding pizza boxes. When Ki-Taek was driving

Nathan Kim he was trying to connect with him on a personal level, asking about his wife, calling their relationship something akin to love, and yet Nathan just dismissed it, and of course, there was the issue of the smell. So, if you are a victim of structural violence, if you're homeless and if you live in a basement house, and if your employer treats you like that, I think it all piles up until you just burst.

**Prof. Nick De Ocampo:** I just want us to be sensitive to film-related elements *naman* which of course cinematize many of the very important things that you are talking about. And I am talking about the use of space because it's a cinematic space. I mean, let's just relish that whole idea.

How can an abstract notion of space be cinematized? As much as you want to talk about BJH here, I also want us to make a comparison to somebody that, as we've heard, he admired his films, and this is Lino Brocka, and I can only really see the big relations between the two of them in their use of space.

This whole idea of class structure can really be seen in the way *Parasite* made use of space showed through the camera movement, through the *mise-en-scène*. For example, the camera going down. Remember that sofa wherein the husband and the wife suddenly do their kinky sex. Imagining they're at the back of a car and all of that—the camera was moving down to the table and who would you see lying on the floor stiffed and the one being alluded to? These are the ones doing it at the back of the car, they were all stiff and petrified but the camera movement was there. You can really see the up and the down.

And also try to look at all those climbing that the poor characters are doing. The first arrival of this young boy, who's going to be a translator, the first shot you will see is him going up a hilly road going up to the house. He has to pass through the stairs going up.

It's always going up and going up. In other words, where does he come from? I'll find out later, from the interviews with the director, it was really plotted. In fact, all the sets were really set up.

Now, let us talk about Lino Brocka. We need to reappraise Lino Brocka because his notion of space and how he politicized that space is very very important. For example, in his film *Tinimbang Ka Ngunit Kulang*, the use of the margins for example is very articulate. And not only that, in *Hello Soldier* the way he uses the penetration of an American penetrating the slum, the ghetto, coming from the outside getting into all the way to the consciousness of the laundry woman that he impregnated and later on he wants to extract his child. All this act of penetrating spaces, Lino Brocka was articulate about this as early as 1978.

So, big deal with BJH but I see a lot of parallels and for us students and for you to realize as well, *masarap pag-usapan 'yung mga* context, I totally agree and that's reason why I came here and I wanted to validate exactly *whether sa likod ba ng bawat galaw ng camera nila, sa likod ba ng composition na ito, na va-validate ba itong mga* social context that I see: Who's being marginalized? Who's up, who's down? And *ano ang relationship nitong cinematic codings?* Because all of these are codes: The movement, the images, the semiotic, the imbrication. Would all have social meanings?

**Noy Lauzon:** It's good that you mentioned Lino Brocka because the Director specifically mentioned that he was one of his inspirations, the cinema of Brocka. Way back in his film school, he studied Brocka and was inspired by Brocka. That's why he went into this kind of cinema.

**Dr. Bubbles Asor:** If I may say something about the living space shown in the movie? I did my field work in the Seoul Capital Area. I interviewed Filipino migrant workers in their homes, mostly in the

semi-basements apartments. In Korea, rent for semi-basement apartments or what Koreans call the *banjiha* is way cheaper than the rent of the typical apartments. In the past, *banjihās* were originally constructed as air-raid shelters just in case North Korea bombed or invaded the South. During the Cold War in the 1970s, there was an exodus of internal migrants from rural South Korea to Seoul, and the Korean government allowed homeowners to lease or rent out their basements to these rural migrants. These days, however, the “new poor” have no choice but to call these *banjihās* their homes, too. Who are the new poor in Korea now? These are the elderly, the migrant workers, urban poor, poor students and young couples who are deemed as losers in the late capitalism and neoliberal competitive sorting of winners and losers. The impact of the economic crisis especially after the 1997 Asian Financial Crisis was so severe especially in the real estate market.

The *banjiha* is a very tiny, cramped apartment. Little or no light streams into it. From outside, the semi-basement apartment could be seen by bystanders and bypassers hence most residents would cover the window. It has extreme humidity during summer but tends to get too cold during the winter period. Some of my respondents mentioned that they battle with moulds and cockroaches on a daily basis. The movie also describes some flooding inside the apartment. For some elderly living in the *banjiha*, they may stay there for the rest of their lives. While for younger couples, students and migrant workers, the *banjihās* are temporary homes until they are able to catch up with the fast-paced neoliberal society.

To respond to Professor Nick de Ocampo’s comment on the walking up and down the streets depicted in the film, in South Korea, the logic of urban planning is melding tradition and modernity. While there is a lot of gentrification and modernising of urban spaces and cityscapes in Seoul, Korean urban planning adheres to a kind of geomancy or similar to feng shui in Chinese. There are sets of rules to follow in building tombs, a city, and houses, and these traditional

rules are still the organising principles in the urban planning in Seoul. Using the logic of geomancy, if a space or neighborhood is located or close to mountains and an easy access to a body of water, this area becomes more expensive when it comes to real estate. Many of the rich houses or rich neighborhoods depicted in Korean movies and Korean dramas can be seen with mountains as their background, lush greenery and spacious lawn and backyard. In this sense, the entire spatial organisation of Seoul is also based on this rule of geomancy - mountain and body of water.

In many Korean dramas, we see characters renting a cheap apartment on top of the hill in the inner city. I am not sure if these apartments are part of the other form of cheap housing accommodation called *jjogbang* (translated as divided rooms) or a kind of boarding house. These are also tiny rooms with poor facilities and tenants pay on a daily basis. According to Korean urban sociologists, *jjogbang* bridges the gap between the housing needs of the poor and the lack of housing supply in Seoul. There is also the *goshiwon* or one-room apartment, very small rooms with minimal furnishings, that are rented out to students mostly. Both *jjogbang* and *goshiwon* are the response to lack of affordable housing in urban areas. Korea has a rental system called *wolse or jeonse* which basically means that tenants do not have to pay a monthly rent. Instead, people have to pay an enormous amount of money as “key money” which is about 50 to 90 percent of the market value of the property. For many urban poor and the “new poor”, this is a lot of money.

**Prof. Richard Bolisay:** Both houses were specifically constructed for the film. They're not real. The poor family's house and the rich family's house. Those were created from scratch and the neighborhood as well. The rich family's house is originally one floor. The second floor is just visual effects. Like what Prof. Nick De Ocampo said, I really see it a lot as a technical film. How the production design, the editing, the cinematography, all come

together to create the cinema as it is. As someone who's formalist and very particular about how the shot is created, how the composition is made on the screen, that knowledge contributed a lot to our understanding of the film. I think it created that kind of "ambiguity" towards the end, in its discourse on class issues. Is it really a film that sides with the poor or does it really portray the rich as the villain? Those are the questions. You may think that the difficulty to answer the questions is important. We don't see things in black or white. We don't demarcate something as good or bad and I think that is very much exemplified in the climax, in the sense that it's the only moment in the film when all the members from the rich family are present. The Park and the Kim families, it culminated in that moment and I think late capitalism plays a huge role in viewing that sequence in the sense that we see how the two families try to move up. They want to feel comfort.

Remember that iconic scene where the line goes, "she's nice because she's rich." It's easy to be nice if you live a comfortable life, and that line comes from a person who's experienced a lot of difficulties in life. Also, that scene reveals how the rich become complicit in the perpetuation of violence in society. It's not literal violence, it's how they regard money in a capitalist society. How they continued to employ people in their household etc. And it's also a cycle of violence. If some of you are on Twitter, you might have seen it already: the first shot of the film is similar to the last. How it tilts down, that shot, and it reveals the face of Choi Woo Shik. In the beginning of the film, it shows him looking for wi-fi. It reveals a lot about their financial problems, where they are in the society and why do they have to look for wi-fi. But then again, when it tilts down for the scene in the end, it's already very different. The sister died; the father was lost. Their lives have already changed. We thought he's dead also. I am surprised and I can't believe that Choi Woo Shik was still alive because he was hit two times by that stone, and he even came out of it alive. And I think that is also the magic of cinema

but also the conceit of cinema that he has to live like his life is still not finished. He has to fulfill something.

**Prof. Michelle Correa:** In Korea, rich people would usually live at the top of the hills or mountains. So probably if you've been to Bukchon in Seoul, that's where rich people live. Basement houses - that's where poor people live. Sunlight is also important. If you live in the basement, you don't get much sunlight and if you see the house of the Park's, they have a sprawling garden. So aside from space, sunlight is also a big factor in the class divide.

**Dr. Bubbles Asor:** I am not quite sure if the premium land on top of the hill could be bought and owned because some of these lands may be government-owned or owned by Buddhist temples. During the Joseon dynasty, Buddhists accumulated these lands located in the mountains and have access to bodies of water. Fast forward now, even in the Gangnam area, the premium land would always be on top of the hills, near a lush forest and spacious land.

**Prof. Richard Bolisay:** There are also elements of food. The ram-don, (*jjapaguri* in Korean), it's expensive. The meat that's used in that dish is expensive and that's why the (Kim) mother doesn't know how to cook it.

**Dr. Bubbles Asor:** Regarding the treatment of Korean meat in the movie, it is interesting to note that in Korea, local meat is preferred over imported meat from Australia or the U.S. Local beef is also way more expensive than the imported meat which is considered by local Koreans to be "less sophisticated." There are various reasons that I can think of for this viewpoint. First, there is national pride when it comes to the traditional Korean foodways from production to preparation, presentation and consumption. Second, there was a political issue surrounding good beef in South Korea. In 2008, there was a public outcry and mass-based protest against Lee Myung-

bak's reversal of the ban on U.S. beef imports within the discussion of U.S.- Korea Free Trade Agreement. Koreans showed collective indignation whether the U.S. beef was safe from mad cow disease. U.S. beef import was banned in Korea from 2003 until 2008. After months of protests from May to October 2008, support for and popularity of Lee Myung-bak weakened. In some ways, BJH may be alluding to this social issue of free trade agreement between the U.S. and South Korea. Under the neoliberal economic reform, domestic agricultural produce in Korea has to compete with imported products. In this regard, the safety nets for the local market become debilitated and weak. Also, local produce such as Korean beef becomes more expensive and only the rich could afford to purchase it. Social differentiation and social inequality becomes highlighted even in terms of foodways and food consumption. It is not just food per se that differentiates the rich and the poor but even the smell as discussed and depicted in the film.

The discussion of social inequality in this film is not so in our face. Apart from the discussion of Korean beef, the politics of smell and odour was seen all throughout the movie. Rather than explicitly stating that the Kims are poor, they were described as a category in terms of their smell. Ki-taek being the new driver for the Park family had the same smell as the housekeeper according to Park's son. For me, as a sociologist, the smell, body odour or stench that could not be shed or removed even with good clothes and perfume is a symbol of what Pierre Bourdieu calls habitus or the physical embodiment of one's cultural capital. Habitus is both our "feel for the game" or our capacity to navigate our social contexts. In the case of Ki-Taek and his family, their "feel for the game" is fit or apt to survive in their semi-basement apartment (finding wifi connection, welcoming the fumigating smell by the street cleaner, etc.) but their habitus symbolised by their body odour becomes a barrier as they try to go up the social ladder since they could not get rid of it fully.



## **Question: What do you feel is the relationship of BJH with his work in the western context in terms of space?**

**Prof. Richard Bolisay:** I am a fan of *Snowpiercer* myself and I think it is also important to see Bong's other films (for context). It did not become as successful as *Parasite*. There's a lot of layers to it. How it's marketed, who's the producer, cinema artists, etc. and Harvey Weinstein is one of the film's producers. You know that anecdote that BJH had to lie to retain a scene in the final cut. He told Weinstein that his father is a fisherman, but his father is not. There's a lot of compromises with the making of the film and it did not become successful, financially. It affected a lot of BJH's decisions after that. But I think he's still working within that framework of critiquing a capitalist society. And that's what I wrote here, that in *Parasite* it is clear that no one wins in a capitalist society. Your observations about movement and mobility are good, and I think that says a lot about Bong's proficiency as a filmmaker. And it is important to see him as someone very accessible. Commercial cinema. I don't think he's pretending to be an arthouse cinema director, although many of his films are recognized in arthouse festivals, but his audience is big. There's a reason why in his best director's speech (at the Oscars) he recognized Martin Scorsese. There's a reason he talked about Quentin Tarantino putting his films on his lists, which allowed a lot of Western audiences to watch his work, because it connects a lot with their sensibilities as American filmmakers. If you've seen *The Host* and *Memories of Murder*, the films have commercial sensibilities. Fantastical stories, *allegorical*. I think if you want to read deeply into the films, that's the word you use. But in *Parasite*, it's metaphorical. In all his films, BJH is obviously talking about society. He's using a lot of symbolisms to talk about that inequality between the rich and the poor, even if there's a monster (in it). That monster that the society has created for the longest time. I think he's a very technical filmmaker in the way that his films are so sleek and sophisticated, and it is something that not all directors can attain. His films are different from Hong

Sang Soo's or from Park Chan Wook's or from Lee Chang Dong's. Actually, Lee Chang Dong is very arthouse, and *Burning* is an amazing movie of his from two years ago. They campaigned it for the Oscars, but it did not make the cut. So, it is important to see what kind of sensibility *Parasite* has that it was able to connect to a huge (Western) audience, and the fact that people from all over the world are talking about it. It says a lot about accessibility and I don't see accessibility as something negative, because people say when your film is accessible, it's not as artful as art should be. But I think the fact that people are able to crack open a lot of discourses, it says a lot about the film already, and I don't think it betrays the kind of filmmaking philosophy that BJH has. If you see him in interviews, if you see him in his speeches, you can see his personality that he doesn't take himself seriously. I'd met him myself 5 years ago, when I attended a festival and he didn't take me seriously. I would ask him film questions because I want to learn, but he's a modest and humble person and he doesn't want to talk about himself.

**Dr. Bubbles Asor:** Some of my Korean friends do not fully understand *Snowpiercer*. These are ordinary Koreans. Maybe because they are not film critics and they said that they don't really like *Snowpiercer*. But they immensely appreciate his other films *The Host*, *Okja* but not that one. So, I watched the *Snowpiercer* with them and they asked me what the film was about.

Maybe BJH customizes based on his target audience. He knows how to go about this. Maybe, he already studied what ticks and what will not tick for the international audience hence this film won an Oscar. I read somewhere that this is the paradox of the film. *Parasite* was produced by CJ Entertainment, and CJ Entertainment used to be a subsidiary of *Samsung*, the richest *chaebol* in Korea. To win an Oscar, there is a lot of campaigning that goes with it. There were rumours that CJ Entertainment exerted a lot of effort in campaigning to get an Oscar for the *Parasite*.

**Prof. Nick De Ocampo:** This is exactly the subject that I want us to talk about. I am so glad that you brought up the concept of chaebol. I don't know if we have enough knowledge about it but can you talk about it as a political economic concept which can be related to the political economy as well of *Parasite*.

Because I strongly believe that *Parasite* could really emerge from a society with such a political economy because the film, if you will see all the notes that BJH has been making, it has really been almost like in the very tailorist way. The division of labor; the whole thing is just almost like a car that was being put together. I look at it in a technical way, that's exactly how I would like to respond to it. That the film has really been put together in such a technical way.

Sure, there is a creative concept but so is there in a Samsung car. It's a very aesthetic car or whatever it is that they produced. It's beautiful, it's well done, you'll feel comfort, you have pleasure in using it, it's pleasant to look at all these things.

My feeling is, I'm really looking now at the more materialist way and not just the creative, artistic as if BJH was a gift from heaven. No, it comes from a culture that really devised and invented. I'm sure even the number of steps that will go up and down. They even counted this, and it was so *sadya*.

My issue here is: If you can talk about the relations between a society that is so industrialized so that its art right now is very much a product of a much-industrialized society.

**Dr. Bubbles Asor:** So, *chaebol*, you may have encountered it frequently in your favorite Korean drama, is a large family-owned business conglomerate with subsidiaries in various economic sectors. The South Korean economy has been dominated by the chaebols since the 1970s, and the chaebols have had a very close alliance with the Korean government. Under the Park Chung-hee

regime, this chaebol-state alliance was institutionalized. Although the *chaebols* were patterned after the Japanese zaibatsu system, the chaebols were not allowed to own banks. Rather the state nationalized Korean banks hence the state could channel capital to any economic sectors or economic institutions that the state deem as ‘partners’ in achieving national objectives. As a result, there were chaebols which could be heavily favored by the state and in return the chaebols do their best to be on the good side of the state. Some chaebols expanded exponentially in this economic system. Ideally and at the beginning, the state-chaebol alliance was seen as a mutually beneficial relationship since the chaebols contributed greatly to what is now called the ‘miracle on the Han River’ or the rapid transformation of Korean economy from agricultural to industrialized and now to a technology-oriented economy. However, the chaebol-led South Korea economy has been criticized for its monopolistic tendencies whereby there is a large concentration of capital and wealth in the hands of the few. As of the moment, chaebols produced two-thirds of South Korea’s exports and continue to attract large foreign investments. According to Nikken Asian Review, the top five chaebols - Samsung, Hyundai, SK, LG and Lotte - alone owned 54 percent of the total business assets and obtained 57 percent of the total profits in 2019. Ordinary Koreans often joke that if the chaebol businesses stop to operate, the Korean economy would collapse. While the Korean economy and Korean state appear to be highly dependent on the chaebols, chaebols are likewise deeply embedded in the Korean politics. In every presidential election in South Korea, the recurring issue and debate is on how to reduce the monopolistic competition among the elite chaebols. There were laws being implemented but according to critics, changing the economic reconfiguration is rather slow and the entangled relationship between chaebols and the state persists.

For BJH, he may not have a choice but to deal with chaebols but he can have “fun” at the same time. “I am being funded by CJ Entertainment. I will critique them. It’s all fun.” So, when he got his

award, he mentioned that they were going to paint LA Town in red. Because for them, might as well have fun because at the end of the day, they cannot do without CJ Entertainment.

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## COMMENTS FROM THE AUDIENCE

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**Audience:** There's an ironic recurrence throughout the film for the upper regress. There's like *respect*, and there's Nam Hoong version. Every time they say it, with some division, they are bitter about it. They're only kind because they are rich. There's this one character that maybe BJH loves and that would be Min. When you noticed the lines mentioning Min throughout the film. He's there the first part, he goes to school overseas. But whenever they always talk about him during the flood scene, Ki Joon would often say that they would not be on that position on the first place. Everything points at the positive point of his small cameo.

**Dr. Bubbles Asor:** I would not put it as respect or reverence for Min Hyeok who I believe represents the migration imaginary and migration experience of Koreans. Yes, I agree that there seems to be a positive treatment of his character. But it is not as straightforward as respect for those Koreans who left for the "greener pasture." Koreans associate migration with various historical events or radical social transformations within the Korean society. For example, the first wave of large-scale migration to Northeastern China and

Russian Far East between 1860s and 1910 was mainly a labour diaspora and later on to Japan as indentured labourers and prisoners of war from 1910 to 1945. Many older Koreans and even the younger generation deem this as a part of the Korean dark history. In the 1960s, migration was perceived as a way to grab better economic opportunities in more developed countries such as Germany and the United States. However, it was during the Cold War, when Korean adoptees who eventually became Korean emigrants became a source of another ‘shame’ and debates within the Korean society. From the 1990s to the present, migration can be deemed in various ways - an escape from the exhausting and *pali-pali* pace of the Korean society, an expulsion as some ordinary Koreans ended up as “losers” under the neoliberal economic system or a lifestyle migration whereby individuals from developed countries like South Korea move to developing countries like the Philippines to maximize their capital and resources at a lower cost. In this way, Min Hyeok was treated with “respect” and “awe” by the Kim family, especially Ki-taek as someone who could “escape” but at the same time a “loser” in the much more complex and challenging life in Korea. So, Min Hyeok has been satirized. A good guy but he left.

**Noy Lauzon:** Which brings us to the ending, is it still satire? Prefigurative of the future?

**Dr. Bubbles Asor:** I think so. I believe that the film is a satire. The future for some Koreans may be bleak. Following my argument about Korean diaspora, some Koreans are “expelled” in their society as a product of the systemic inequality produced by late capitalism. The “losers”, as Saskia Sassen posits, are not exactly losers in the literal sense but those who are not able to keep up with the rigid competition in, say, Korea, a highly developed country. Some choose to relocate to less developed countries, for example, the Philippines, to maximize their capital at lower costs. In sociology, this is called geoarbitrage. Hayes and Perez-Gañan, in their work on

geoarbitrage, posit that transnational relocation as a strategy in which individuals perceive mobility and migration to a developing society as “increasing the relative value of savings and academic credentials by relocating them across the latitudes of the global division of labour.” But for the much richer family, Koreans usually relocate to North America because North America and Europe are the desired destinations in the hierarchy of countries as it were. In the movie, *Parasite*, Ki-taek’s daughter used the name “Jessica” as her English name as someone who is supposed to have studied art studies in Illinois and who is being hired as a tutor to the Park’s family’s youngest son. Jessica is also a symbolic character there. Jessica is also a Korean- American and is a former singer from Girls’ Generation. It may also be a symbol for those Korean-Americans who are return migrants or 1.5 generation Americans seeking greener pastures back in their homeland. We all know that it may be more competitive in the U.S. so some of them are returning to Korea.

I think the film portrays the extremes of and in South Korea. BJH tries to portray and capture the extremes and the paradoxes of South Korean society - traditional culture and modernity. There’s an element of time there that seems to elicit nostalgia of the past and of the traditional Korea but at the same time, there were a lot of references to the American culture because perhaps this is the concern of Koreans and the Korean state now: to be part and to be recognized and acknowledged in the global hierarchy. South Korea, it seems, has already reached a kind of plateau, it has reached the status of a regional power but that is not enough. For Koreans, Japan has reached the top of the global hierarchy, why can’t we? From *segzehwa*, which is the state engineered idea of globalization and *damunhwa*, the state rhetoric of multiculturalism, the Korean state aims to be recognized as one of the top or elite global cities just like Paris, New York, and Tokyo. At the moment, Seoul is still attempting to become part of the elite circle of world-class cities and global cities

**Prof. Nick De Ocampo:** So, you think winning the Oscar now has cut the confidence or what is the film equivalent of the winning in the Oscar?

**Dr. Bubbles Asor:** The winning of the Oscar by Parasite, for me, is equivalent to Kim Yuna's winning of the Olympics for figure skating. She is Queen Yuna in South Korea. That is what they call her there, and she is everywhere in numerous advertisements. She achieved what South Koreans thought might be impossible to do since they did not have the history of training figure skaters. The movie, Parasite, is similar to Kim Yuna in this way. It has paved the way for other Korean films to be formally recognized as the best.

**Prof. Richard Bolisay:** I think that's why BJH said the Oscars is a local festival. He made fun of the Oscars by saying it's a local festival and this is where he is now. If I may just add to the American part, there is a problematic scene in the end when Song Kang-ho was asked by Mr. Park to dress like a Native American. It's a satire, but we feel in the intention that there is something happening. How it's representing a specific image of the Native American in the film. And then the child who likes playing with arrows. The mother always mentions that they order toys from the US and I think it says a lot about the complex relationship between the U.S. and Korea.

**Dr. Bubbles Asor:** Like for example, every time the rich Mrs. Park would speak in English. The interesting Kongglish accent and pronunciation is a satire of middle class Korean obsession with English. They are crazy about English but at the same time they cannot really 'perfect' or master it unless they go overseas. That is why Min Hyeok has to go overseas, specifically to the U.S., to be fully 'sophisticated' or assumed to be sophisticated. For ordinary Koreans, going to the U.S. or overseas means obtaining certain symbolic and cultural capital. Linguistic capital such as speaking English can be translated into many things for many Koreans such



as getting a good high-paying job, finding a good partner who also has a high-paying salary or being respected by the society. This capital accumulation can also be seen at the macro-level process of maintaining political, economic, social, cultural and diplomatic ties with the U.S. South Korea knows they need to pragmatically deal with the U.S. They need the U.S. for various reasons such as for balancing powers between and among neighboring countries like Japan, China, and North Korea, and recognition by the U.S. can also be translated into a stable huge market for Korean products and soft power artifacts. In many respects, the U.S. and South Korea have a love-hate relationship. Some Koreans no longer want the U.S. military presence in South Korea but at the same time, they know Americans balance and/or add to the ambivalent ties of South Korea with China, Japan and North Korea.

**Audience:** I was struck by what you said about *chaebol*, Samsung is a producer and yet they allow themselves to be in the sense made fun of?

**Dr. Bubbles Asor:** The *chaebols* are similar to the Philippine elites in some ways and different in other ways. The Filipino business elites are similar with the chaebols in the way that they both have the monopolistic tendencies and dominate the economic sphere. But the chaebol as a category or group departs from the Filipino elites in such a way that they try to downplay their position and status and they are somewhat insulated from the public gaze. But this has changed recently when some members of the chaebol family were involved in controversies such as the Korean Air “nut rage” or “nutgate” whereby Korean Air heiress and vice-president ordered the aircraft to return to the gate before takeoff. She was dissatisfied with how a flight attendant served nuts to her. The case was eventually taken to the court and Heather Cho was found guilty and served five years of the ten year sentence. When chaebol family members get involved in controversies which anger Korean publics, they often have to make public apologies to appease the long-

standing and simmering anger and discontentment of Koreans with the *chaebols*.

For this movie, I think CJ Entertainment, originally a subsidiary of Samsung until it separated in the 1990s and became CJ Group, may obviously want to earn money from this film. As a business franchise of a chaebol, CJ Entertainment knows that this kind of film would sell very well especially overseas by tackling a seemingly Korean phenomenon but which deals with a quasi-universal theme of social inequality. So, they tried to show it first in Europe. Of course, the British Academy of Film and Television Awards or BAFTA did not recognize it as the best film against *1917*, a British film.

To answer the question regarding the situation in the Philippines right now. I must say that our situation right now in the Philippines is very grim in such a way that there seems to be no clear plans and vision by the Philippines state. I am not in the position to discuss the ABS-CBN case because I am not an expert on that. The case of chaebols is very interesting because of the state-chaebol relationship whereby the chaebols and the Korean state are highly dependent on each other. This relationship is crucial in the shift of South Korea from a capitalist development state whose goal is a highly developed market economy into a neoliberal state which perceives liberalised economy as both the means and goal of development. When we say, liberalized economy and politics, we pertain to “less and less government interference” by transferring control of economy from public to private sectors. In the Philippine case, the economic system is organized by a supposed free market system where the private sector mainly controls supply and demand.

**Audience:** But what about all the rent seeking on what’s going on? I don’t really think it’s a totally free market.

**Dr. Bubbles Asor:** I think it's more of the patronage politics working here. It is not the market which is in a very sad state but the political sphere. It doesn't have a vision. We have not had economic vision for a few years now. In Korea, they have a very interesting relationship between the market and the state which I already mentioned a while ago.

**Prof. Richard Bolisay:** I think it is good that it was being brought up because when it won best picture, it was the *chaebol* who spoke last in the speech in the Oscars. It's kind of fishy. You didn't really see her much during the awards season and suddenly she spoke on behalf of the film, and the funny thing she did was she thanked the Korean audience. I don't know if that's sincere or anything, but I think part of the success of Korean films across the world is the support of the audience. They really patronize their films a lot. Also, we, the Filipino audience, we've been affected by the kind of mania they have for cinema and that's where the paradox came about. The film is a critique of the rich society and here goes the daughter of the mogul of CJ Entertainment. Here she is talking as though she is not part of the problem and a lot of people in that room does not know her. There's that discomfort in watching it and it adds to the complexity of the film. I like films that don't exist merely as text, something that grows beyond what it is, and I think it is important to embrace the complexity and contradiction. I got this from Prof. Nick, that aesthetics is just one function of cinema. We shouldn't be reduced to merely saying we like the film, or we don't like the film. The very fact that we're confronting the difficulty is actually part of the experience, part of the appreciation, and we shouldn't limit ourselves to aesthetics.

**Dr. Bubbles Asor:** If I may comment on why they thanked the Korean people in the speech at the Oscars. Ordinary Koreans have always played an important role in supporting state projects or programs that the state-chaebol relationship may have engendered. The state and the market often involve these ordinary Koreans and

bestow collective responsibility on them in the name of state and nation building. I think this is one of the differences between the Korean and Philippine case, in the way the individuals are given responsibility in the name of public good. So in terms of the developmentalist and neoliberal projects by the state-market collusion, the individuals are demanded to co-opt as well by sacrificing individual freedoms and even tangible contributions. In the 1970s under the Park Chung-hee regime, the state slogan was “development first, distribution later” which referred to the sacrifices of ordinary Koreans or being forced to sacrifice in terms of allocation of resources, wealth and social services and hard work in factories and manufacturing industries in the name of “national regeneration” (*minjokjungheung*). In 1997, during the Asian financial crisis, Koreans were asked or demanded again to help the ailing Korean economy through “pains-sharing” (*gotongbundam*). In both state-market projects, the individual and collective Koreans were given huge responsibility to help in the larger project of economic development. There were stories of ordinary Koreans donating their gold jewelry and even gold teeth to the banks during the 1997 financial crisis. The state and the market convinced or forced Koreans to believe that the state and market win something, it is for the collective good. It’s about nation building. So I guess, the CEO of CJ Entertainment had to thank the Korean people for their award because of this intricate relationships between chaebols/market, state and grassroots Koreans.

**Prof. Michelle Correa:** Maybe it could be that America is getting ready for subtitles. That’s why a lot of people watched *Parasite* in the US. If we’ll see the movement of *Hallyu*, especially in K-Pop, a lot of idol groups have tried to penetrate America. There was Girls’ Generation, Rain, Wonder Girls, and they didn’t really achieve huge success. And here comes BTS, with their active social media relationship with their fans and even if these Americans can’t really understand all the Korean lyrics, they appreciate the music. I guess it also shows that maybe America is also starting to embrace more

diversity. Maybe. That's why we have had BTS at the social charts for a lot of years now and we have people watching Parasite even if it has subtitles. So, maybe that's another way of looking at it.

**Dr. Bubbles Asor:** In terms of language, I had a lot of trouble looking for a good translation of the movie. I did not buy from Amazon prime because it is too expensive. So, what I did was to scour the internet for a free video. Although I watched it a long time ago when it was first shown in the theater, I needed to watch it again. I thought the translation of the movie that I watched did not capture some of the nuances. For example, the word *nice*. Oh, you're nice and rich. It's not just nice like in the English language. It meant kind-hearted, and in Korean language, the word kind-hearted may entail stronger and deeper meaning and affect. I am not sure if Korean-to-English translation would always be an issue and may get in the way of capturing some of the nuances in Korean culture. Just like the BTS songs and other K-pop songs, maybe we cannot speak the language but movies and songs may have a universal language which can transcend all types of barriers.

**Prof. Richard Bolisay:** I think one of the key people in Parasite's success is Sharon Choi, the Korean interpreter who has an American accent. The way she speaks and interprets for Bong and the cast all through the awards season. I think there was a Twitter thread about that iconic line Bong said, about the one-inch barrier of subtitles, in which she was able to encapsulate what Bong was trying to say quickly and succinctly. Not word for word, but impactful. I think in Korea, they tend to say things in more words than in English.

**Dr. Bubbles Asor:** Korean language is very metaphorical, for me at least. It may come from the thought process of Koreans which, for me, is more deductive, intuitive and affective, as opposed to Western thought process. When they think, process their thoughts, and articulate their thoughts, they can begin with more intuitive or metaphorical ideas before they touch the argument or main theme.

**Prof. Richard Bolisay:** I just noticed it because sometimes when BJH speaks, it's usually long, but the translation is short. I feel that they speak in longer sentences, longer words.

**Dr. Bubbles Asor:** My Korean friends used to tell me that I sound cold because I articulate my thoughts inductively. I go directly to the point of conversation. But when I listen to my Korean friends when they speak in English, they tend to speak longer and more wordy I suppose.

**Prof. Michelle Correa:** I was able to watch an interview of BJH with Sharon Choi, I think the essence of what he said is captured. If you are speaking formally, it's quite long.

**Dr. Bubbles Asor:** They do have many adjectives, and very metaphorical.

**Prof. Richard Bolisay:** Because I like reading translated books. I don't expect her to be faithful to the original text, but I think she's good at what she does because she is able to capture the essence of what the person is saying in a very understandable and accessible manner. Because it is a difficult task to translate.

**Dr. Bubbles Asor:** Maybe she is targeting the American audience. She knows that this is what the American audience would appreciate in terms of phrasing. But if she translates it to Koreans, she would do it the Korean way to be fully understood by Korean audience in terms of phrasing, thought process and accent.

**Prof. Richard Bolisay:** I think I brought it up because the point is that language is also political. Language is part of how we understand things. It's very mediated, we lay a lot of subtitles, we lay a lot of interpretations to other people to understand it and that kind of viewpoint already sets our understanding of the texts.

**Prof Nick De Ocampo:** It's an interesting the discussion, the use of language. I am just reflecting again in terms of our filmic experience wherein maybe *Parasite* might be palatable because it's speaks in a metaphorical language.

M project right now is to look at the career of BJH and Lino Brocka. Why is Lino Brocka not palatable?

Is it our perception of reality on how film mediates that experience of reality? Because our view in film, it is really in-your-face realism. We are so literal with the way we look at reality whereas in *Parasite* there is universality, there's technical finesse, and metaphorical aspect. But both are dealing, especially with *Parasite* and *Hello Soldier* of Lino Brocka, the cinematic use of space—it is very articulate and yet why is it that our films that are not palatable?

I don't think we can ever reach this level of *Parasite* despite the best of Lino Brocka because *galit 'yung films natin. Pag galit tayo talaga, galit talaga. Kapag poverty, mabaho talaga siya. Ipamukha mo 'yung dumi na yan.*

I just wonder whether one could extend this discussion of the use of the very language structure that they have. Or whether BJH was actually able to bring it now to the cinematic levels. I just need your thoughts.

**Dr. Bubbles Asor:** I would relate it to our research or publication, for example. Film is like a written publication. Just like in our written works which necessitate a concept, an imagery or metaphor that ties the article or book together, the film must also have this clear concept that can resonate to a larger audience. In sociology, we have what we call middle range theories which bridge rich empirical data and grand theories. Middle range theories often call for deep conceptualisation or substantiation or abstraction of raw

data or empirical illustrations. It starts with empirical or social reality that needs to be abstracted to create more generalising ideas. This is when it becomes readable, relatable, understandable to a larger audience. I have watched Lino Brocka films and his portrayal of stark social realities in the Philippines may need to be “abstracted” to concepts, imagery and metaphor that may resonate with other cultures. Those social realities captured in the film may not be too particular or indigenised in the Philippines.

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## CLOSING: WHO IS REALLY THE PARASITE?

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*Dr. Bubbles Asor:* I think one of the strengths of Korean films is its attempt to be open-ended and be fluid. It is not Manichean. When we say Manichean, it is not dichotomized and bifurcated between good and evil. Parasite versus prey. In this case, it is up to the audience to decide who is the prey and who is the parasite. There is also a kind of universality about the film that captures the ambivalences of social realities. When we say ambivalence, there is this gray area and the gray area is the strength of it. It is hard to conclude that just because one is rich, that person is automatically a parasite. The poor can also be parasites. But at the same time, people can maneuver, circumnavigate the role of being a parasite and even get out of that role or position or status. The wide chasm between the rich and the poor, the social distance between the rich and the poor is being narrowed in this film by the possibility of being a parasite regardless of the status. On the part of the rich, yes they



have the capital in terms of economic, social, cultural and symbolic capital but they can also be naive which is their main weakness that was taken advantage of by the poor who were navigating life for survival. The habitus of the rich to be prim and proper, cultivated and civilized was taken advantage of the poor as a category.

**Prof. Richard Bolisay:** I think one of the most important things I learned from film school is this quote from Ricky Lee, “*Ambiguity is a sign of good fiction. Ambiguity is one of the most important aspects of compelling fiction.*” — and the fact that the nature of the film makes us think says a lot about it, that we’re not drawn to black or white assumptions, and that ambiguity already provides (room for) a lot of discussions and discourse and the very fact that we’ve been talking a lot about it for two hours says a lot about the quality of the film that goes beyond answering that question. The more important question is, what enables the parasitic relationship? I think it’s important to view more of the situation, it’s more of a structural approach to it, and coming from a formalist like myself, I see a lot of the formal elements of the film. But then the socio-political aspect of the film is also big aspect of the text. It is not a simple question. It is something that will drive you nuts if you try to answer it. I’ve always regarded films that allow you to question those things and raise those questions as something more important than answering whether it is a good film or not. And if I may add, there are better films than *Parasite*. I think it goes without saying, but if it helps you to be introduced to these films, if it opens a window or a door to you to be able to see other foreign-language films, not just Hollywood films, not just Western films, then I think that already serves its purpose. I think people who are into arts, into cinema, know that it’s just one thing. There are bigger things about its importance as a film and I think if you’re a budding moviegoer, if you’re someone who’s curious about world cinema, you’re in the U.S., you’re a 15-16-year-old kid going to the cinema, seeing *Parasite* for the first time, watching a subtitled film for the first time, this is important. It allows you to open yourself to films of this kind. To listen to other cultures.

I don't see it as mere entertainment. It also allows you to understand the world around you. It also allows you to educate yourself. To humble yourself in the sense that America is not just the world. Other people are better than you. You need to learn more things, and I think it has served its purpose if it's able to do that.

***Dr. Bubbles Asor:*** If I may just add with a more positive note, let me bring in the notion of care. To be a parasite may be analysed in a more positive way by equating it with dependence and vulnerability. In the ethics of care, dependence is not considered to be problematic because at some point in our lives, we have been dependent on another human being. Every life course and every moment in our lives, we are in fact, dependent on another person. When we were babies and when we were younger, we were all dependent on our parents or other caregivers. Even as adults, everything we do is relational hence dependent on others. Our actions and decisions will affect another person. For me, rather than looking at each other and examining each other in a very parasitic relationship, I think it is more of dependence and if the system such as capitalism or neoliberalism, requires interwovenness of social relationship, interdependence on each other, we cannot help but be dependent and dependency is not necessarily a bad thing.

# NOTES ON CONTRIBUTORS

## RESEARCH PAPERS

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## ESSAYS

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#### <PARASITE FORUM>

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On April 27<sup>th</sup>, 2016, the University of the Philippines launched the Korea Research Center, with the support of the Academy of Korean Studies (AKS) Korean Studies Promotion Service, aiming to provide Filipino scholars and researchers with opportunities to widen their interest in Korean studies. The Center hopes to be a venue for students and professionals to produce meaningful comparative researches and also to promote collaborative partnerships among Korean and Philippine institutions.

The Center serves as a university-wide hub that helps promote and develop Korean Studies in the University and the country. It sponsors interdisciplinary and inter-college research and education activities on Korean studies, as well as facilitates the training of the next generation of Koreanists in the country.

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