

PCS Review

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Gender and the Media

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Foreword



This issue of the Philippines Communication Society Review is a collection of research papers, essays and interviews focused on stories and narratives of women in diverse contexts and circumstances. In many ways, this is a celebration of women's voices and insights from a gender perspective, which are too often muted in many studies.

With the theme, "Gender and the Media," this volume highlights key discourses on gender as they are negotiated and performed within specific, localised contexts.

The study of gender roles in Philippine Cultural Dances reveals that in general, the representation of women and male roles does not reflect subjugation nor subordination of men over women but instead emphasizes complementarity and equity. In *Ngilin* and *Tinikling* both men and women perform the same dance routines with similar if not equal grace and agility. The author surmises that the less influenced by Western culture the dances were, the more equal they portrayed women.

In "Trailing Spouses", blogging has become a platform for the many ways women, construct, negotiate and present their identities, subjectivities and realities to make sense of the situation they find themselves in. Through their personal and professional narratives, women in three case studies examined – the Diplomatic Wife, Almost Diplomatic and Diplomatic Garbage – grapple to find meaning in their enviable position of being diplomatic wives lest they become mere "footnotes" in their husband's lives. To construct a world that diplomatic wives/ bloggers create for themselves is an important way to communicate to an audience with whom they can share their varied interests, ideas and insights. In so doing, they affirm their relevance, importance and value made almost invisible by living in the sidelines of their spouses' diplomatic careers.

How can marriages withstand and sustain the challenge of long distance relationships? In dealing with this interesting topic, the author juxtaposes the concept of marriage underpinned by the promise of forever on one hand, and the harsh reality of long distance and long term separation between seafarers and their wives or girlfriends. For many spouses

whose partner /husband/wife are working abroad, this poses one of the most difficult aspects of maintaining relationships . How can intimacy, desire, exclusivity and love be nurtured given the reality of long term separation between husbands and wives. Using a gender discourse analysis of women’s narratives , the study provides a glimpse of the dominant insights of women engaged or married to seafarers about their notions of permanence or “forever” in relationships. Precisely because of the reality of distance, women’s narratives describe “forever” as a “long and winding road”, “a road less travelled” and a “ship being tossed by the waves of the sea,” which reflect the difficulties and challenges that they face in keeping the relationships, which they are willing to face. By keeping mutuality and reciprocity in their long distance relationships , wives work very hard to keep the communications with their husbands open , sustaining hopes and dreams alive by planning for the future and delighting one another through gifts and tokens. To women, what is important is the constancy of relationship—a “forever” and distance is something that they can overcome .

In “Iconic Performance and the Media: The Case of Kris Aquino”, the author interweaves the rise of Kris Aquino as a media icon with the historical milestones of Philippine history that helped to maintain, sustain and nurture the so-called “Aquino magic” in Philippine politics. Tracing Kris’ emotional appeal to support her father Ninoy when she was a child , her media construction as an iconic figure in media, the author continued on when her mother Cory ran for President and when the latter died. In spite of her scandalous affairs with married men and tactless revelations of her private life, Kris Aquino’ appeal, connection and resonance with the masses were tolerated and accepted by the public. Kris’ personality was in direct opposition to the image of her mother and sisters’ proper manners, but it is precisely her weakness and her flaws which were viewed as transparency and authenticity that demystified the “Aquino magic” and made it accessible to the common people.


AURORA JAVATE-DE DIOS

Executive Director
Women and Gender Institute
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Prof. Aurora Javate-De Dios is a feminist leader who combines academic excellence and advocacy for women's human rights and gender equality. She is currently the Senior Project Director of the Women and Gender Institute after serving as its Executive Director for 10 years. A specialized center for feminist learning and teaching; research and training at Miriam College, in the Philippines.

Prof. De Dios has had a long academic career as a former College Dean and Professor teaching courses on international relations, global governance, migration and gender, development and feminist leadership at the Miriam College.

She held various government positions as the Philippine Representative to the ASEAN Commission on the Promotion and Protection of Women and Children's Rights (2010-2017) Chair of the National Commission on the Role of Filipino Women (2001-2003); Member of the UN Committee on the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women, where she became Rapporteur from 1994 to 1998. Prof. de Dios represented the Philippines (1994-1998) and was a Member of the Philippine Interagency Council Against Trafficking in Persons. She presently sits as a Member of the CHED Technical Panel on Gender and Women's Studies.

Prof de Dios has long been engaged in various NGO work with the Coalition Against Trafficking in Women International (as President), the Women's Studies of the Philippines and the Women's Crisis Center. Most recently, she is Co-Convenor of the Women's Peace Collective which is working with Muslim women in conflict affected communities to strengthen their political participation in peace processes and in the governance of the Bangsa Moro communities.

Prof. de Dios was also Chair of the External Advisory Board of the Asian Development Bank and works as Gender Consultant and Trainer on Women's Rights, CEDAW and Gender Mainstreaming with government agencies, international organizations and NGOs.

Among her notable publications include: Dictatorship and Revolution: The Roots of People's Power (1988); Springbook: Readings in Women's Studies (2001) Violence Against Women is Not Inevitable (2008 Social Cost of Migration (UN Women, 2012); Stories Told in Whispers (2014).

Issue Editor's Note



Gender has always been an issue and a concern in studies about and on the media. It is an issue that never ends, has never been resolved, and has always been evolving through generations. I argue that there is no end to the pursuit of this concern, it can never be resolved because everything and everyone is changeable, and the concept of gender will always evolve as long as there are people who continuously explore its still little known vast territory. The basic concern about gender and the media is how the mass media create social constructions, representations and discourses about and on gender. It is a serious concern because the media have been perceived as being powerful or influential and can create and influence people's perceptions about different genders. There have been various and diverse developments in understanding gender and the discursive formations of gender, such as the concept of the fluidity of gender, the contradictions between performed gender and gender identity preferences, and the various new gender terms (transgender, intersex, transman, transwoman, etc.).

Gender interacts with the media because media forms carry images of how people represent themselves, how people perform their identities, and how people articulate both. With a continuously developing technology that the mass media operate with (to increase media reach) and with people in the media organization ensuring that the messages and the visual and aural texts that they produce are securely reinforced on the media consumer (and that includes us as well), there is a clear and present danger that the media can influence cultural norms and values on and about gender. Hence, it is important and salient to carry on the examination and exploration of the various interactions of media and gender to open the doors of inclusivity and to hopefully think no more of personal choices that are usually based on negative constructions, beliefs, and narrow-mindedness.

This issue of the PCS Review navigates the reader through the meanderings of aspects of Philippine life, culture, and the media where influences of gender come into play.

The article “Complimentarity in Movement and Performance: Critiquing Gender Roles in Philippine Cultural Dances” by Cheeno Marlo M. Sayuno, examines the meaning of dance movements in relation to gender roles by comparing dances across four suites: *Ngilin* from the Cordillera suite, *Lancers de Tayabas* from the Maria Clara suite, *Tinikling* from the Rural suite, and *Karasaguyon* from the Moro/Tribal suite. Using Eisler’s Partnership Model, Sayuno attempts to evaluate the presence of complementarity in movement and performance of female and male roles in the dances using the standards of 1) equality and partnership; 2) body integrity; 3) self-determination of the female gender, and 4) promotion of peace between genders. The article is a fresh look at how dance can create discursive formations through its performativity.

Joanna Cay S. Garcia’s article entitled, ““www.iamtrailingspouse.ph”: The Constructed Identity of a Trailing Spouse in Blogs” looks into the constructed identity of a trailing spouse that is narratively presented through blogging. Garcia’s article sheds light on the little known concept of the “trailing spouse” in the Philippines but is a concept well-known in Western countries. Garcia analyzes three trailing spouse blogs to see how each one uses socially constructed concepts in their sense-making and where the concept of gender is located within the blog posts. Using a Social Constructionist lens, Garcia subjected the blogs to document analysis of the communication narratives that revealed three levels of identity presentation among the blogs.

Thea Pamela Pauline A. Javier’s article, “The Concept of Forever as Perceived by Women in Long-Distance Relationships (LDR) with Seafarers” investigated the intricacies of long distance relationships (LDR) in the context of Filipino women who are in long distance relationships with seafarers. Javier’s interest in the topic was brought about by the thriving marine industry in the Philippines. The concept of “forever” is understood in the context of permanence in a relationship; as Javier finds out in her study, “a permanent relationship is possible despite the permanent distance.”

Investigating on mass media icons, Mae U. Caralde's article, "Iconic Performance and the Media: The Case of Kris Aquino" examines the celebrity of Kris Aquino, the daughter of a past Philippine president and the performance of her icon. As a Philippine media icon, Kris Aquino is "worshipped" by the Filipino mass audience. Whatever her performance is, she has a large following of admirers and haters at the same time. Dubbed as the "queen of all media" in Philippine pop culture, Caralde conducted a thorough document and textual analysis of archival videos and photographs of Kris Aquino and the Aquino family, being a Philippine political figure. Caralde argues that "Kris's popularity in media is attributed to how she skillfully transgressed kinship and social norms, and asserted herself as a woman in control of herself, in spite of her entanglement in different controversial relationships." Caralde also provides a "historical approach in the role of media as instruments in the construction of a personality cult or icon that obliquely advances a political economic agenda at specific moments in history."

The article, "Look Who's Watching: An Audience Reception of ABS-CBN's 'The Legal Wife'" by John Evan Orias, Jezreel Lopez, Rachele Pascual, Janice Roman, and Regina Mariano studies a newly emerged genre in Filipino soap operas known as the "adultery genre." Such genre has proven to be popular and enjoy high ratings because it depicts complex family relationships and fuels the voyeurism of its audience to get sneak previews of extramarital affairs. Orias et al. examined the television soap opera entitled, "The Legal Wife". The article inquiries into how its viewers are influenced by the TV series' representation and depiction of marriage and marital life.

This issue also contains two relevant and timely essays, namely, Anna Lorraine D. Galura's "*Si Mocha at ang Kanyang High Tech na Pluma*" and Ma. Daniella Louise F. Borrero's "*Tiis Ganda: Beauty as a Tool for Consumerism within the Context of the Filipino Media*".

Galura's essay deals with the rise to fame and notoriety of Ms. Mocha Uson, with her journey from being an admirer of President Rodrigo R. Duterte as a blogger, to becoming a staff member of the Presidential Communication Office, and presently as Assistant Secretary in the same office. Galura argues that Mocha Uson may be considered a

“Nationalist Feminist” or in her essay, *Peministang Nasyonalista*. Galura further writes in her essay how Uson has impacted in the flow of information through the web. Galura’s essay is an oppositionist view of Mocha Uson from the usual grain of critics and discriminators.

Borrero’s essay explores the commodification of Filipino beauty. She writes about the continuous and persistent search for beauty by Filipino women and men as constructed in various mass media forms by producers and manufacturers of beauty products. She discusses the techniques of pushing and marketing a beauty product as well as the bombardment of the concept of beauty as much like the Western mold of beauty.

Another interesting feature in this issue of the PCS Review is the interview with broadcast journalist and documentary maker, Ms. Kara David by Julienne Baldo-Cubelo. The interview article is very insightful and offers a glimpse of the inner workings of broadcast news and how this impacts on persons like Ms. David. It also articulates the way women journalists meander within and without the multi-faceted world of constructing and producing news and various forms of text through the media.

The articles, essays and interview in this issue of the PCS Review has shown that the concept, notion, and ideas on and about gender have permeated into the social and cultural life of Filipinos through the mass media. Moreover, a new platform has penetrated the usual arena of media forms – we now have the Internet, where it has become an agora or marketplace of various engendered messages. The complexities of gender have become noticeable even in our cultural dances. Gender as a performed icon is also explored through a celebrity. New ways of entering into relationships have been articulated. These are indeed new explorations and examinations of gender and the media. The discourse on gender continues. And that is a good sign!



ARMINDA V. SANTIAGO Ph.D.

Issue Editor, PCS Review December 2017 Issue

Research Article

Complementarity in Movement and Performance: Critiquing Gender Roles in Philippine Cultural Dances

Cheeno Marlo M. Sayuno

Abstract

The Philippine cultural dances are reflective of our ancestors' way of life. These dances have become art forms used to enrich and pass on to our country's rich culture from one generation to the next. This preservation of the dances is sustained amidst changes in culture and downpour of Western influences aided by globalization and cultural hybridization.

As a cultural dancer, I conducted this study to explore the meaning of movements in relation to gender roles by comparing dances across four suites: *Ngilin* from the Cordillera suite, *Lanceros de Tayabas* from the Maria Clara suite, *Tinikling* from the Rural suite, and *Karasaguyon* from the Moro/Tribal suite.

Using Eisler's Partnership Model, I attempted to evaluate the presence of complementarity in movement and performance of female and male roles in the said dances as performed by the Sanghaya Dance Ensemble following the routine of the Ramon Obusan Folkloric Group. Specifically, the following standards were considered to determine complementarity: 1) equality and partnership; 2) body integrity; 3) self-determination of the female gender; and 4) promotion of peace between genders.

Results show various forms of partnership between dances and among different suites, which can be related to the roots of each of the dance suites. The study contributes to the body of knowledge on Filipino feminism using the performativity of the Philippine cultural dances as basis.

Keywords: *Philippine cultural dances, dance, Eisler's Partnership Model, Feminism, Ramon Obusan Folkloric Group*

Introduction

The Philippines is a gem with a culture far beyond compare. The kind of culture that we have was honed by a rich history that takes us into a joyride from the mountains of the Cordilleras where maidens walk the hillside carrying clay pots filled with water and warriors hunt in the wild, to prim women in Maria Clara curtsying and laughing softly behind their fans, to joyous fiestas in the rural towns, and to the tribes and barangays ruled by sultans and royalties down south. Indeed, the Filipino race, albeit influenced by foreign merchants and invaders, has developed into one that has cultures and tradition that we can truly be proud of.

To enrich and pass on this culture, various forms of art were made as representations of the stories of our forefathers. For instance, dance has become instrumental in creating a vivid picture of these stories, put together in an artistic ensemble of patterned movements by dancers wearing authentic costumes, performed to the beat of an array of instruments used during the old times to create a melody that sets the atmosphere of the past. Past these aesthetics, there is something about each movement in each dance that represents the daily life of Filipinos back then.

Francisca Reyes Aquino, National Artist for Dance, was a pioneer in researching on Philippine cultural dances, turning her thesis in the late 1920s into a field work aimed at dance research and tours to the provinces to perform and inform in schools. Meanwhile, the Bayanihan Dance Company was established in the 1950s, with various performances that showed cultural music, dance, and design (Villaruz, 2015). However, it was Ramon Obusan, also a National Artist for Dance, who was more prominent when it comes to research on the authenticity of cultural dances. Once a member of the prestigious Bayanihan Folkloric Group, Obusan came to realize how the Bayanihan's routines had too much emphasis on formulas, appearances, and overall decorated costumes (Ramon Obusan Folkloric Group website, n.d.). According to him, for the sake of theatricality, there were exaggerated clockwork precision movements that led to the genuine movements being put to compromise. Thus,

he pursued research on faithful and authentic folk dances by traveling all over the country to discover the true richness of these indigenous tribes left undiscovered.

As these dances mirrored society in the different eras that led to what we came to be, there would always be a tendency for the representations to be romanticized no matter how researchers try to make it as authentic as possible. Dance is a discipline that would have to follow rules to create a good performance, and at the same time, these would be viewed by a mixture of audience. Thus, these dances, while still maintaining at best their story and roots, might have been altered not for the sake of theatricality and showmanship but to convey a rich culture open to all their viewers and to observe the discipline of dance.

A feminist perspective in studying dances is a common practice in the literature. Butler (1990) claims that gender is a performance, “a set of repetitive acts within a highly rigid regulatory frame that congeal over time to produce the appearance of substance, of a natural sort of being” (p. 25). There is a degree of doing with gender, and it exists in the act and not the doer. Foster (1998) uses the theoretical work of Butler in her *Choreographies of Gender*, where she writes that there are values assigned to physical bodies and this affects culture. She also claims that, through performance, a dancer can resist a given role, such as gender. Zdrojewski (2014) discusses further the representation of the female body in performance by saying that choosing to move in a way that is not aligned with one’s sex is feminist choreography.

However, the case of cultural dances is different. Cultural dances are very much rooted in history and the daily lives of people from the past, and because of this, roles that the society prescribe are more rigid. The male and female members of the community perform specific roles that are very much constrained by gender, class, and even race. Butler (1990) asserts that sexual difference does not precede race or class, but in the case of cultural communities, the deep-rootedness of strong traditions and the people’s reverence to such only makes gender roles more clear cut and hard to dismantle.

As a cultural dancer with the Sanghaya Dance Ensemble in Cavite, I prescribe to the notion that there should be an effort to perform these dances with as much sameness with the original as possible. The purposes and meanings in cultural dances diminish the moment they are performed outside the community and more as a spectacle onstage than a ritual, and the least cultural dancers and enthusiast could do is to retain what can be retained. Thus, I find it difficult to situate the ability of a performer to execute movements outside the gender conventions in terms of movement, because changing, for instance, the soft and mincing steps of *kini-kini* in Kinakulangan, a Maranao dance, where proud women walk to attend royal gatherings, would remove the regal in *kini-kini*, which exudes the royal walk of the Maranao women. Changing such walk so as not to conform with the stereotypical notions of female movements would change the remaining meaning of the dance that cultural performers would want to preserve. Despite this, I firmly believe that there is a way to reconcile the gender segmentation in cultural dances and female empowerment.

I attempt to prove this claim by using the concept of partnership from Riane Eisler. Focusing not only on feminist studies but also in systems theory in the societal level, Eisler (1988) acknowledges the presence of a domination culture, i.e., that history has presented a dichotomy between the oppressor and the oppressed in an unequal and violent clash, but there are also societies that, over the years, are much more equalitarian and peaceful. Furthermore, she proposes moving to a partnership system by looking into the relationship of key elements of a social system in maintaining or changing the system's basic character and by identifying the kind of relationship that the social system supports. In Eisler's interview with the P2P Foundation (2016), in a partnership system, there is gender equity and "a greater valuing of 'feminine' traits and activities such as caring, caregiving, and nonviolence—in both women and men." She supports the idea that neither men nor women dominated one another and posits that these two opposing genders, along with other opposing social categories, complement each other. Power should not be bestowed to one; instead, both have powers in different forms and the powers that each of them possesses are equal. As distinct from matriarchy, she proposes

that partnership is necessary to eradicate the subordination of women. While men and women had roles to play in the society as told by history, they were also portrayed in these dances in parallel to their actual roles. With the rules of dance interplaying with this portrayal, it is the aim of this study to point out how the two genders, particularly the female, were showcased in some of the more male-favoring cultural dances in the Philippines. According to Zdrojewski (2014), based on her reading of Foster, “[male and female bodies] gesture toward, touch, or support one another. They follow in one another’s pathways, reiterate, or vary one another’s moves.”

This paper uses this concept in order to criticize four selected dances on a feminist lens. Four dances coming from the four suites of cultural dance repertoire, i.e., *Ngilin* from the Cordillera suite, *Lancers de Tayabas* from the Maria Clara suite, *Tinikling* from the Rural suite, and *Karasaguyon* from the Moro/Tribal suite, were critiqued from the feminist perspective through the standards of equality and partnership, body integrity, self-determination of the female gender, and promotion of peace between genders.

Equality and partnership have something to do with how the female and male performers are given equal roles. These roles may be different in movement and choreography, but equality is about how the movements complement each other without one being the less powerful character in the dances.

The body integrity of a female dancer is shown in her being celebrated as a woman and not just imitating male movements. If the body integrity favors feminism, the female movements are not brought about by the male movements; instead, the female dancer performs her own steps to complement those of the male and not just in response to those steps, showing her grace, control, and femininity.

Having self-determination in a dance means that the female is considered as a vital performer of the dance and not just an object of the male. The female dancer is not a possession of the male dancer; she performs her parts and she is identified for it.

The male–female relationship, as a promotion of peace, is shown to be not fighting for power because they are ranked equally. A dance that favors the feminist view does not show domination of the male over the female. Identifying whether the dances promote peace/partnership or domination follows Eisler’s assertion that societies fall under either.

It should also be noted that this study operates on the researcher being the instrument in analyzing the dances. Piantanida & Garman (1999) introduced a qualitative inquiry that explicitly highlights the notion of the “researcher as research instrument” (p. 24) According to them, the researcher plays a vital role in the intent and inquiry in a qualitative study, adding that the researcher’s thinking can be found at the heart of the inquiry. The researcher channels his/her own biases, experiences, intellectual concerns, and assumptions in conducting research, which becomes vital in the whole study. Chenail (2011) also supported the notions of the researcher as the instrument, adding that it is only essential for the researcher to be well-rounded and well-prepared as he/she becomes the key to the rigor of the research. Since the dances that I have studied are the dances that we perform with our cultural group, which we have learned from the teaching passed down from the Ramon Obusan Folkloric Group, I put myself in the position of a researcher–performer.

However, this study is not without limitations. Aside from the non-situatedness of dances, which deteriorates their meaning as aforementioned, I acknowledge that I interpret these dances based on how I learned them. While we follow the routine based on Obusan’s research, passing dances from one person to another can also be subject to small changes in movements, which become basis of analysis in this study. I compensate this by relating the movements of the Obusan routine with the stories or origin of these dances. Thus, following the choreography proposed by Obusan based on his research, the four dances were performed and recorded as material for this paper, and they were critiqued using the above standards. The movements and the routine were considered, in comparison with the background story from which these dances have been derived.



Figure 1. *SYMBOL OF POWER. The Kalinga woman crowns the warrior his headdress in Ngilin. Who has power, the bestower or the bestowed?*

Ngilin: A Love Play of Genders *Ngilin*, originating from Lubuagan in the Kalinga tribe, is a marriage dance performed in celebrations and peace pacts. The movements in this dance imitate the interactions of a rooster and a hen at love play. The dance starts with the male circling the stage with his blanket and turning to welcome the female in her entrance. The female carries with her the male's headdress, which she presents to him (see Figure 1). This headdress has feathers, and it is believed that each feather represents each person killed by the warrior who wears it, and having a lot of which had become a social status among men back then.

At one point, it might be taken as the male's domination over the female because the latter seems to serve him, with the female bestowing him his symbol of power, the symbol that makes him even more superior in a mixture of gender and social status. However, on the other side of the context, the female is the one who bestowed that power. It comes from her. She possesses that power before she gave it to the man. Seeing this dance, we can look at that lens and realize that the female is powerful as well.

Also, the female is the one who initiated the action. The dance would not start without her, a woman, who does the crowning of the headdress. There is self-determination on the part of the female because she is given an important role to play, which starts the ceremonial dance.

The female is further honored and identified in the next part of the dance, where the male starts waving his blanket while the female kneels. This can be interpreted as the male performing for and giving respect to the female. This is also shown in the part of the dance where the female raises her hands with the male doing the same step behind her, their hands moving in some sort of worship.

This honor leads to the body integrity of the female, as she is celebrated as a woman, having her own steps composed primarily of fine movements of the hands and traveling and turning with her pot balanced on her head. She does not necessarily have to imitate the movements of her partner to have power.

The partners perform equal roles, as specifically shown in the part where the male waves his blanket and kicks his foot as the woman turns in place in front of him. This shows that they acknowledge each other, with the woman turning for the man and the man kicking his foot for the woman. Their actions are performed for each other, showing that neither is necessarily dominant nor being objectified by the other.

The dance ends with peace and not domination. For the finale, after doing their last turn, they clasp each other's hand as if showing that a pact has been made. Then, the male leads the female out of the stage, accompanied by a chant. This shows the reconciliation of the genders, without the male dominating the female. Unlike forms of marriage in other tribes particularly in the southern part of the country where selection is more patriarchal, which will be discussed later, when the females in the northern tribes are already fertile, the elders would be the ones to give them their match. In this process, the male does not really show that the female is his property.

In the whole dance, the male has big movements, an indicator of strength and agility that are natural for a warrior. On the other hand, the female has soft and small movements. While these differing movements are already hints as to who is more powerful and dominant, it can still be viewed in favor of the female. Why? First, the female's soft movements can show her grace and control as a woman. It should be understood that power is not only in the physical strength but also in the discipline of performing these steps with finesse and discipline that only the female can embody. Second, the female's balancing of clay pots, which can be from one clay pot to several, as she dances shows her control amid the challenge, since she can still perform well despite her skillful tasks. This is her way of showing that she has power.

The big and small movements of the male and female, respectively, showcase the partnership of the two genders. Their execution of the steps complements each other, creating balance in the dance. This is a reflection of the kind of society where they belong. In communities in the Cordilleras, men and women do their respective daily tasks. While men hunt and prepare the animals that they have caught for cooking, women do the household chores, which go from nurturing their young, cleaning the house, and even fetching water using pots balanced on their heads as they go down the mountainside. They do different jobs that are equally difficult, and these tasks make them survive together. They complement each other, the way they do in Ngilin, which does not take the females for granted but instead put them to position that is equal to that of the male.

Lanceros de Tayabas: Courtesy and Entertainment during the Spanish era, lancers (*lanceros*) and other royalties, upon visiting the Philippines, were welcomed through a ballroom performance where noble gentlemen crossed lines with graceful ladies. Originating from Tayabas, Quezon, *Lanceros de Tayabas*, usually performed by four pairs of dancers, is one of the more known and loved dances from the Maria Clara suite due to its Rigodon-like routines featuring the males' royalty and the females' poise.

Domination of the male is evident because of the aforementioned historical background of the dance. The dance is actually performed

for the males, with the females joining the performance for the sake of the men's entertainment.

Despite that, there is celebration of the women in the dance. The females are treated with high regard, from the males guiding them as they enter the stage, to their show of courtesy in their saludo, where



Figure 2. SALUDO. Lanceros de Tayabas features how Spanish royalties and well-off Filipinas express their courtesy to each other through saludo.

females curtsy in return (see Figure 2). In the ending part where the males reach for the females for them to dance in circles while in *abre siete*, the males are the ones who run to where the females are standing before they turn together. This also shows the respect of the gentlemen toward the ladies in the dance.

In spite of such courtesy, the dance generally shows how males objectify the females. There are many instances when the females turn in front of their respective partners. The males watch as the females turn, showing what the scholar and filmmaker Laura Mulvey called the "male gaze," i.e., how the males look into the physical aspects of

the females as they perform the step for them. There is also a part in the dance where a male holds two females while the other male claps behind. In Philippine movies, this is parallel to a goon having two girls in each of his arms, with his minions laughing and cheering them, thus exemplifying the blatant objectification of the females, although *Lanceros de Tayabas* was romanticized to fit the kind of society where it has been derived and the prestige of the members of the upper class who performs the aforementioned dance, both Filipino and Spanish, at that time.

There might have been domination favoring the male in the dance, but peace between the genders is showcased as well. In the part where the pairs hold and sway hands as they walk (the dance step is also referred to as *lanceros*), it was depicted that the pairs are interacting and establishing small talk to know each other. In this part, there is peace in the sense that the males try to get to know the females, finally showing that they are interested to know the females beyond entertainment. The females are further acknowledged in the last part where the males try to kiss them but they retreated, showing power, since the males were not able to kiss them by force.

The movements of the male and the female in the dance, while showing partnership only in the sense that they have to form the dance together, are more male-centered than *Ngilin*, since female movements are done for the males, following the males' lead to go this way or to turn to that direction. Simply put, no complementarity of steps was shown.

This domination of the royal males in this dance reflects the Spanish era, where there were issues not only on gender but also on class and race.

***Tinikling*: An Equal Challenge of Speed**

An imitation of the *tikling*, long-legged and long-necked birds in Leyte and nearby provinces, *Tinikling* is a dance that depicts how these birds walk between grass stems or run over tree branches. Dancers demonstrate skill in keeping the feet from being caught between

clapping bamboo poles. This dance became a favorite not only in the Visayan region but around the country, due to the challenge of speed and strength that the dancers should have in order to perform well as the clapping of bamboo poles become faster as the dance reaches its conclusion.

In rural areas at that time, farming was the way of living of people, but different from the Cordillera tribes where men and women had different tasks to fulfill. Here, men and women do the same thing, that is, they both do farming. Whatever the men can do, the women can do as well. Labor has to be distributed so that they would all be able to plant or harvest more for the day, which was important for them in order to acquire their daily needs.



Figure 3. JUMPING AMID CLAPPING BAMBOO POLES. Tinikling showing the equal strengths of men and women.

Equality between the male and the female is also manifested in the dance because they perform the same routine even if it would be easier for the male, who is physically stronger than the female (see Figure 3). Different from the clappers in *Singkil*, a Moro dance where there are four male clappers who were slaves of the Maharlika in service of the princess (Princess Gandingan in the legend from which the dance was based). In *Tinikling*, clappers can be male or female. At

the same time, both dancers perform the routine, and since they do it at the same time, they both experience the same increase in speed amidst the clapping of bamboo poles. There is no belittlement of the female capabilities, which deems the dance as being egalitarian.

The body integrity of the female, despite the aforementioned equality, is still highlighted in the dance. In Kuradang, the step performed by the dancers outside the bamboo poles, the female is the one in front first. There is celebration of the feminine gender, which is different from the masculine, even though they have equal labor in the dance. There is still a special highlight where the male gives way to the woman to do the Kuradang in front first.

In relation to that, femininity is still evident, especially in the part where the male dancer clutches the female to his embrace as they do turns while jumping over the bamboo poles, with the male guiding the female. This shows the soft side of the female that is still there. And just because they have same routines does not mean that the female is trying to imitate the male movements.

Also, the female is portrayed as a dancer who has her softness and strength at the same time, jumping at matching speed so as not to be caught by the bamboo poles while doing every step with grace that only a woman can exemplify.

The dance promotes not only peace but also celebration common among barrio folks. The festive dance creates a picturesque representation of the barrio life, accompanied by the celebratory atmosphere of the townspeople watching this dance and other rural dances such as Sayaw sa Bangko, Binasuan, and Maglalatik, which are dances that are skillfully performed for the sake of entertainment for all. There is no domination of the male observed because, since these performances and festivities are usually done after a bountiful harvest or simply as a breather after a tiring but successful day's work, both the male and the female equally work hard and they both deserve to be part of the celebration. The two genders peacefully gather together to celebrate without favoring any one of them.

Karasaguyon: The Male's Pick

The T'boli tribe in Lake Sebu, South Cotabato, cradles a rich culture seen in their tribal dances under the Moro/Tribal suite. One of these dances is the Karasaguyon, which portrays a polygamous male as he scrutinizes usually three or four female dancers vying to be chosen, in search for his next wife. The male looks for a female who is beautiful but has strong bones for child rearing and heavy work, dirty fingernails, and calloused hands as these would imply that the female is a hard worker (see Figure 4).



Figure 4. EYEING FOR THE NEXT CATCH. The male epitomizes the male gaze as he chooses his next wife in the polygamous system of the T'boli tribe.

The feminine gender is celebrated in this dance in the sense that each of the female dancers gracefully performs and imitates beautification in order to attract the male seeker. They perform steps that imitate applying makeup, fixing hair, and showing their body curves, which are identifiers of their celebration as a woman in the dance, emphasizing their beauty and hand movements that are soft and very feminine.

However, this show of body integrity in favor of the female will lead us to thinking that they are being objectified by the male who actually

only considers each female as an option to be the next wife. The male not only looks on the beauty of the females but also on the body of his choices, which is an epitome of the male gaze, the way he touches the body of the females as if choosing what to buy on a market or garage sale. This is harshly combined with the fact that the male will only treat the female as his slave since he is considering not only beauty but also strength and hard work as he chooses her.

The actions of the female, although showing body integrity, are performed for the male. Thus, they are only receivers of the action, performing and beautifying not because they are beautiful and graceful and they want to express these things, but because the male is picking the wife and they want to be the next pick. Being picked as the wife would improve their social status.

Thus, the male is very much dominant in this dance. He has the power to choose and the decision depends entirely on him. While the women can be powerful in the sense that they can lure the man into their beauty, this would only lead to their being a possession of the man. In the part where one of the female dancers had to push the other female in order to attract the male's attention, it was not the power of the female that was exemplified but still that of the man. He was powerful enough that he could make the females compete just for them to be his choice. The play of power is being juggled solely by the male, with the females being his pawns, wait to be chosen next.

The dance ends when the male has already chosen his next wife. He uses his malong to entrap the chosen female, and he pulls her out of the stage in the dance and probably toward his house or room for intimate moments. This highlights the domination of the male in the dance even more and the female being identified as merely an object the male owns, and this is a representation of their ways in their tribe.

The societal system in the Moro tribes are very much different to that of the Cordillera even though these two sets of tribes both existed earlier than that from the people in the barrios and they were both less influenced by the Spaniards. They implement a caste system, and thus, there is suppression not only of gender but also of class. Some were

bathing in jewelries and colorful malong, while others are enslaved. This mere fact make females who belong to the lower class end up being suppressed twice as much, that is, on the basis of gender and class, which was also the point of Butler (1990).

The dance promotes patriarchal domination and not peace and equality between the two genders.

Conclusion

Focusing on the standards of equality and partnership, body integrity, self-determination, and promotion of peace between genders, the feminist approach to the study of *Ngilin*, *Lancers de Tayabas*, *Tinikling*, and *Karasaguyon* has opened up claims that differentiated the treatment to females not only of the males but also of the various societies to which they belong.

Interestingly, both *Ngilin* and *Tinikling* demonstrate equality between genders. People in these areas, male or female, have respective tasks to perform, and these two dances show that the females' participation to the daily tasks is very important for them to accomplish the day's work and, eventually, to survive by providing the most basic needs.

The grace of the females is still highlighted in these dances, even though they are supposed to be equal. Although *Tinikling* had the same routines for both male and female, while *Ngilin* has different but complementing steps for the two opposite genders, the females are well represented in ways that are different but of the same degree. In *Ngilin*, the female's soft side and the discipline and control that come along are showcased, whereas *Tinikling* shows the combined strength and grace that only a woman can muster.

In the end, the two dances promote peace and unity between the female and the male, genders that could perform the same tasks and have the equal chances to express their capabilities.

On the other hand, *Lancers de Tayabas* and *Karasaguyon* are dances that promote the dominance of the male over the female. Women, in these dances, were very much objectified, with the male lanciers

having the male gaze evident as the women turn around for them and with the *T'boli* male scanning the beauty and curves of the females.

Body integrity was conveyed more in *Lanceros de Tayabas* and *Karasaguyon* than the other two dances. Their beauty as females were more emphasized and identified here, as noticed in their Maria Clara outfits and the steps of the *T'boli* girls imitating how females apply makeup. This is because women have to be as beautiful as they can be before they are subjected to any form of entertainment and objectification by the male. Thus, the body integrity in these dances, which should have uplifted the females, would only lead to their being objectified more by the males.

Recounting history in relation to these dances, it was interesting to find out that Ngilin and Tinikling were performed by natives who are not much influenced by invaders with regards to culture and traditions, showing traditions that are purely native Filipino; whereas, *Lanceros de Tayabas* is of Spanish influence and *Karasaguyon* obtained influence from the non-invaded Moro roots and from neighboring countries down south (for instance, the Moro dance movement *igal* of Sama tribes in Mindanao is very similar to *khon* movements in Thailand).

With the type of culture and suppression on class and gender presented by foreign influences, dances are also affected in the process that, no matter how much these dances are romanticized, they show the dominance of the male and the royalties, which is indeed a representation of our culture, passed to the present and future generations.

It goes to show that the treatment to women is honed by the culture that a society has and the fact that, we live in a patriarchal society. This study shows that this treatment of women, particularly in the Philippines only highlights a more male-centered society, brought about by the influences of invading countries. However, the dances when owned and performed by Filipinos who are now independent of these influences would highlight equality, partnership, and complementarity between males and females.

Thus, somehow, we can look into the notion that Filipino feminism can be fought for and promoted by rejecting foreign ideologies because these opened the bare hands and minds of the Filipinos into a world that is dominated by the males, the females submitting to the power that has been wrongly used against them.

Also, Filipino feminism as reflected by cultural dances shows how power and the lack of it can be subverted in the sense that, as mentioned earlier, power does not show itself through strength alone. A more fascinating kind of power can be discipline, control in movements, and grace under pressure. Warriors who are good at hunting animals and beheading warriors of the rival tribes are clear manifestations of a kind of power in tribes, but how maidens balance on their heads not only several pots of water but also *labba* (woven baskets) and even wood for cooking as they thread the hillsides is also something to be admired. While women cannot hunt as good as men, can men fetch water in the maidens' fashion? Thus, both having difficult tasks means both having different kinds of power.

Another take on Filipino feminism using dance as resource is how female dancers of Tinikling can do what the male dancers can do but with the grace that is still feminine. This shows the capability of women to adjust and do the male tasks while still not letting go of their female attributes.

This study reveals that women in the Philippine history, as translated and whose traits or attributes are passed on through dance, are depicted in various positive and negative ways depending upon the region that cradled these dances. Indeed, we can use what we learn from history not only to understand how things came to be at present but also to change the bad for the better, in hopes of emancipating from the chains of domination of only one and promoting an equality-observing community where the capabilities of people, despite gender differences, complement and help each other to build a better country for a grander cause.

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Research Article

“www.iamtrailingspouse.ph”: The Constructed Identity of a Trailing Spouse in Blogs

Joanna Cay S. Garcia

Abstract

This study looks into the constructed identity of a trailing spouse that is narratively presented through blogging. Three trailing spouse blogs were analyzed to see how each uses socially constructed concepts in their sense-making. In particular, the concept of gender is located within their blog posts, and how it contributes to the construction of their identity as trailing spouses, and how this is presented in their blogs' communication narrative. Through a Social Constructionist lens, a document analysis of the communication narratives was used. It showed three levels of identity presentation among the blogs that were studied. From a Fictional Mediation level of narrative, one that presents an identity that acts as its narrator and directly addresses her audience, in this instance, within an identity of what a trailing spouse is to her. At the other end of the spectrum is the Non-Fictional level, a narrative voice that addresses a generalized perspective, presenting a more introspective identity. In between the levels is a balanced narrative where both Fictional and Non-Fictional voices are used, where the blogger comfortably switches from one to another depending on the context using social constructs that presents an identity that shows many sides of a trailing spouse. Only one of the three bloggers, explored the issues involving gender roles and its effects on her identity as a trailing spouse.

Keywords: *trailing spouse, identity presentation, narrative communication, Social Construction, narrative analysis, blogging as a narrative*

Introduction

The Concept of the Trailing Spouse

A "trailing spouse" is what we today describe as a person who indeed follows or accompanies the respective partner, wife, or husband, moving to a different city or country mostly because of professional reasons (Knezevic, 2013). Also known as Expatriate or Accompanying Spouse/Partner, this is common among military, government, or diplomatic communities where members are assigned to a different location several times over in a career. Globalization and the rise of BPO's and companies reaching out to other countries gave this an entry. Even in the private sector, the phenomenon of the trailing spouse is not fading (Richardson & McKenna, 2002).

On known record, the first use of the idea of a trailing spouse was in a Wall Street Journal article, which discussed the beginning of companies providing job opportunities for the spouses of executives they relocate (Bralove, 1981). "The bank is designed to provide job leads for the trailing spouse of a newly hired or transferred executive" (p.29). This study took note of the decrease of migrating couples in the late 60's and 70's, due to the socio- economic freedom that was then being discovered by the wives. A slight shift was made in the gender role stereotypes and dual careers were now being considered before a move is made by the husband (Nivalainen, 2004).

In the early 21st century, this problem for companies persisted, with "family considerations" as the main cause of declines to transfers or relocations for employees (Adler, 1987). The said wives are now highly educated with either promising or established careers of their own. It became more difficult for the women to leave behind what they have built for themselves, a very different scenario in the past studies.

While this began, academics and corporate studies have noticed the plight and concept of the trailing spouse in the West. Meanwhile, in the South East Asian areas, there is a slightly different perspective. In The Philippines, a country where more than 1.8 M of its citizens have flown abroad as Overseas Filipino Workers (Gavilan, 2015), a

number of such migrant workers have indeed travelled with their wives and families. There have been several studies, from the effects of relocation (Bayes, 1989), organizational support (McNulty, 2010), to commuter partnership (Mulder and van der Klis, 2007) countless of articles (Wilcox, 2014) and features that try to encapsulate the idea of the trailing spouse. Both from short to extensive, the studies have discussed what it involves and most especially the problems and issues such individuals face in carrying the title.

Social Constructs and Identity

The life of a trailing spouse, particularly in the sectors of military and diplomacy status, is an example of a socially constructed concept. Aside from rank, gender is another nominal characteristic that gains a status value (Ridgeway, 1991); and a common point in studying trailing spouses. For instance, gender ideologies (Gupta et al, 2012), and the differences and similarities between the concerns of male and female trailing spouses (Braserby, 2010) have become popular topics.

As social constructs are being studied, to Cerulo (1997), studies on identity have evolved from the development of the “me” to a more collectivist view. Brought on by the movements of society and nationalists, identity studies have shifted to being part or the shared sense of being part of an ideal or a group. As with the earlier example, the concept of “gender/sexuality, race/ethnicity, class/status” became common angles that form political implication. Aside from this, the differences in how such collective concepts are made, kept, and revised in studying identity became points of interest, including how advancements in technology have changed the interaction from physical to cybernetic (p.386).

Like status and gender, identity is also a social construct; in fact, “Social constructionism informs much of the work on gender identity” (p. 387), and in the life of a trailing spouse with all three are factors that go hand-in-hand.

The Trailing Spouse and Blogging as a Narrative

Many of the literature about trailing spouses look into the many factors that affect their lives (Stimming, 2012; Purgat-Popiela, 2010). And almost all of them mentions the concept of identity, albeit peripherally, have discussed their sense of loss and concerns over their individuality and sense of purpose as a trailing spouse.

One way of dealing with this loss and identity dilemma is by finding solace in each other. In the earlier days, trailing spouses exchange letters that evolved into emails for families and today the advent of social media and more importantly trailing spouses who blog about their life.

Via these means they are able to construct through words, actions (such as writing blogs), and media products (Littlejohn & Foss, 2009). Aside from exploring how social constructs are created as identities (Guess, 2006), many researchers have studied the narratives of individuals and the language used to be able to understand how they create, manage, negotiate, and present their identities (Tidy, 2007). The ability to present themselves to others and how they create and manage their realities as trailing spouses giving others a glimpse of the lives of these individuals were also explored.

Through the "trailing spouse blogs" they are able to share their stories, their narratives, and their daily realities. Also seen as a therapeutic means to assess their identity, blogs that are more personal in nature, serve as modern evolutions of journals and diaries of their experiences and travels (Scott, 2013).

Through the blogs the aspect of subjectivity in constructionism can also be seen, as they are able to express different roles as an individual. By sharing the experience of trailing spouses, they are also able to showcase the variety of characters and how they see things differently due to their beliefs and cultural background. And through subjectivity they are able to interactively find out what society expects from the trailing spouse and learn it via the views of others.

Rationale

In reviewing related literature, one of the noticeable observations is that the trailing spouse as a research variable or concept is mostly dependent in nature. Not many try to first understand how the subjects create, or at the very least, present these characteristics that to them build their identity.

This study explores not the factors that affect trailing spouse and their identity presentation, but their perspectives on these effects. Another path this study hopes to explore is studying the constructed reality of a trailing wife, and how her identity is presented through her blogs. In analyzing these contemporary versions of journals, the unique voice of the trailing spouse may be heard and given notice, as well as the communicative aspect that comes with it.

The trailing spouse narratives are some of the best means to study such voices as these are not based on outside observations or interpretations, but are perspectives and *poietia* that directly come from the subjects themselves. This creates for a data source that is rich, credible, and novel to study.

Finding social constructs that specifically relate to the concept of gender helps the study see how a trailing spouse presents her identity in her narratives.

I, as the researcher of this study, am also a trailing spouse. While there might be an obvious bias to the perspectives given, I hope to get a better understanding of my and others like me, represent and make sense of our identity through our blogs. As a communication student, I believe that an academic look at how a trailing spouse portrays her identity will contribute to how women like me can be able to express herself; and how society can better listen to the plight of this unique perspective I and others like me have.

Research Problem and Objectives

This study aims to be able to contribute to the said discourse of the trailing spouse by trying to explore its makeshift and how a trailing spouse presents her identities via online blog. A narrative analysis using the Social Constructionist lens, seeks to explain the sense or meaning-making that creates the reality of the said subjects.

With this in mind the study hopes to answer this research problem:

How is the constructed identity of a trailing spouse narratively presented through blogging?

In answering this research question, the study aims to:

1. Explain the identities that a trailing spouse presents as her constructed reality in her blog posts;
2. Describe how a trailing spouse makes sense, how her reality is constructed as told in her blog posts of narratives and
3. Locate and interpret how a trailing spouse uses the concept and related concepts of gender in her narratives and identity presentation in her blog posts.

Study Framework

The Social Construction of Reality (SCR)

Drawn from the school of Constructionism, the social construction of reality is a theory (Berger & Luckmann, 1966) that posits that our social environment is not something we find or discover, but something we make. As we communicate, "persons-in-conversations co-construct their own social realities and are simultaneously shaped by the worlds they create." (Griffin, 2006, p. 69).

Going back to the assumptions of Constructionism, a society develops and creates the meanings of its behaviors and characteristics as well as how these are to be understood. Through habitualization, overtime traditions are made, sustained, and sometimes taken for granted and break and/or disappear via the interactions made together by people.

Examples are gender, the feminist perspective and how gender roles are expected to be performed.

Today, many women are more independent. The female partners today have almost, if not equal opportunities as their male counterparts (Braseby, 2010).

This ideal sadly creates one of the main problems and concerns a contemporary trailing spouse faces, which is the idea of sacrificing her own professional advancements in order to give way to her husband's career (Knezevic, 2013). In contrast, this is also a great time to point out that this concern seems more adverse when it is the husband who is playing the role of the trailing spouse. According to an article (Hendershott, 1995), this discussion seems to be given more weight brought by the unconventional role reversal, and the traditional ideals of the male ego as the known breadwinner.

The reversal of roles, on the matter of the male trailing spouse, is on the other hand, not a big issue in certain societies. This is due to another conceptualized creation of people-culture. In the Western perspective and even arguably in the Philippines where women are also considered economically independent, there are other countries whose "perceived gender role and ideology and marital obligations" (Gupta, Banerjee, & Gaur, 2012) are still at the core of their reality and greatly affect their way of thinking.

To construct is an important verb in the theory of Social Construction (Littlejohn & Foss, 2009). Following James Carey (1989), there are four stages in social construction.

First is finding a way to concretize a concept, for example the sense of worth as an individual. To be able to assert ourselves in our chosen niche, like in migration, assimilation and acculturation in the host country, may also be an example as it is often difficult to adjust to the cross-cultural factors (Stimming C., 2012).

Second is Maintenance, or the upkeep of a certain concept in order for it to remain relevant. In the cross-cultural adjustments, there is the

need to try and not get too engrossed in the host country, wherein one suddenly loses a sense of heritage. The range of the change we make can greatly affect our construct (Purgat-Popiela, 2011). While assimilating may be a means to conform and adjust to the culture of the host country, acculturation may create certain problems for example for how we are able to break away from this new way of life once our assignment ends and we return home or move to another location.

Third is that the process of construction ideally helps us to be able to decipher the difference between the physical and the social reality. It contributes to how we make meanings of things not just as something that is already there but also attach significant distinctions, again social meanings, to such physical or tangible concepts (Littlejohn & Foss, 2009).

Fourth is how we communicate our reality. In identity, there is of course the concern that trailing spouses become footnotes in the lives lead by their husbands. This relates to all the other issues wherein a trailing spouse will feel either the change or the loss of the identity that she has established before she married a traveler. Loss of independence, loss of profession, loss of connection—all these that construct who we are as a person are factors we have to contentd to. Through the trailing spouse blogs trailing spouses are able to share their stories, their narratives, and their daily realities. These also serve a means to assess identity, perhaps via blogs that are more personal in nature, modern evolutions of journals and diaries of our experiences and travels (Scott, 2013). The aspect of subjectivity in constructionism can also be seen via the blogs, as we are able to express different identities. Sharing the experience of trailing spouses through the blogs, we present or communicate the variety of our characters and how we see things differently due to our beliefs and cultural background. And trough subjectivity, we are able to interactively find out what society expects from the trailing spouse and learn it via the views of others.

These elements of SCR may be framed as a process in the construction of one's identity as seen in Figure 1.



Figure 1 Theoretical Framework of the Social Construction of Identity

Narrative Communication

The study of Narratology is looking at the narrative, or events, whether fiction or non-fiction, reported orally or in written form in a sequence or in an orderly manner (Felluga, 2002), as well as the narrative structure which is what the story is about or its plot and the way it was told, the dramatic action, descriptions, and literary tools used to tell the story (Poyntz, 2002).

It was in the 60's that Narratology was first considered as an academic approach (Herman, Jahn, & Ryan, 2005) and used in different fields of study (Lambert, 2015).

Despite blogs being the most used online platforms in telling stories (Page & Thomas, 2011), there is limited research that looks into narrative perspective, particularly on how blogs or bloggers present a unique kind of perspective, for example the Feminist Narratology (Nowson, Scott, & Oberlander, 2006); or as in this study's case, the perspective of a trailing spouse.

In connection to SCR, a narrative can be a way for sense-making, or a story that is told in a retrospective manner—thus constructed. The rationality of how a narrator deals with a situation is a way to show the audience how the characters experience the situation and helps persuade them into buying into it, seeing good reason in them, seeing its consistency and truthfulness, as well as creating a sense of credibility for the narrator. It is in this credible stance where power and identity is incorporated in the framework of narrative structure. The narrative voice (Jahn, 2017) of the trailing spouse is a means to communicate her identity, and this may be performed as an author

presents a novel. There are levels of communicating these identities through the story. According to Kellas (2008, p. 241), "People build and communicate their relationships, cultures, and identities, in part through the stories they tell".

A Narrative Communication is composed of several elements such as events, time, and listeners. A storyteller would then account or report an event, in a certain passage of time, to a certain group of listener/s. For a more scholarly definition of narrative communication, Labov (1972) writes that it is "a method of recapitulating past experience by matching a verbal sequence of clauses to the sequence of clauses which is (it is inferred) actually occurred' (pp. 359-360).

We learn about the world by communicating with one another, and we often do this through stories, which are more comfortable way of giving and receiving information (Kreuter, 2007). And in our stories we also present ourselves to our listeners and/or readers.

In the literary sense, narrative communication has three levels: nonfictional communication, fictional mediation and action.



Figure 2 The Narrative Communication Levels (Jahn, 2005)

Each level comes with its own set of addresser and addressee (sender and receiver). The Non-fictional level of communication is considered "real" between the author and the readers, where the actual identity of the source is presented to the actual readers who receive the message. In a story, the actual author as who he is, does not directly

communicate with the readers; thus, the interaction is called “extratextual”.

In the Fictional Mediation level, the narrator is the actual story teller or the narrative voice that is read in the text. It may be a first-person narrator or a third-person kind, but it is obvious it often holds an omniscient persona that addresses a known audience or the intended reader of the story.

The Level of Action is a communication process between characters, between the story, or the actual events or narrative that is taking place. In a fiction, this may be the protagonist interacting with another character or reacting to the events that are unfolding in the story. This framework is utilized in differentiating the levels of identity the narrator is using in conveying a story or a narrative as intended for its readers and/or audience.

Integrated Theoretical Framework

Using the Levels of Narrative Communication as shown in Fig. 3, the study begins from within the framework, or the Action Level, wherein the story or the narrative is anchored. The innermost level provides the tone of what theme or situation the author sets in, basically what is the context of the story. After this is determined, the Fictional Mediation Level will then be observed to see if the story will indeed have a more narratorial voice, and if the author will use a more direct tone towards an intended reader or a target audience. Social concepts will be tagged, and then see how the said narrator would try to account and rationalize the situation as results and interpret if the author will be able to come to terms with the kind of reality presented in the post. This level will hypothetically represent the identity of the author. The same process will be used in the third level of the Narrative Communication, but this time to see if the narrative voice used will be inclined to a more realistic or personal form of identity, one that is anchored to a wider perspective away from the identity presented (Refer to Figure 3).

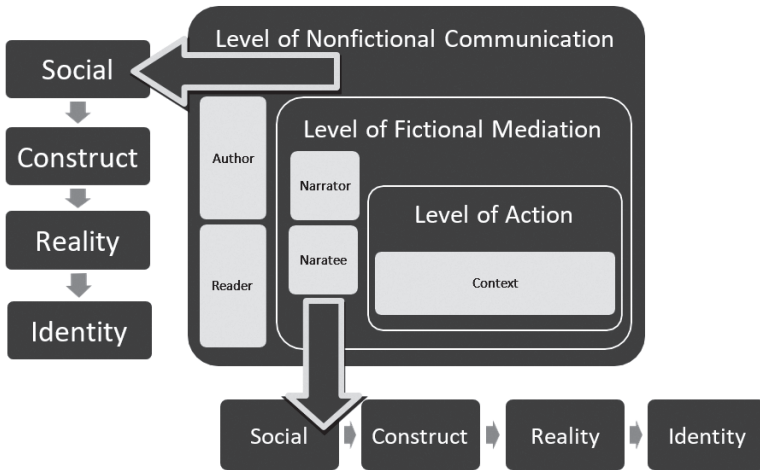


Figure 3. Integrated Theoretical Framework

Integrated Conceptual Framework

By analyzing the two levels based on the inner most level of action, finding the social concepts that are consistent in the blog post, and interpreting how the blogger would rationalize it via the Social Construction concepts, the study explored how the second level indeed constructs the identity of a trailing spouse and how the third level constructs a more concrete and broader identity that the blogger wishes to present (See Figure 4).

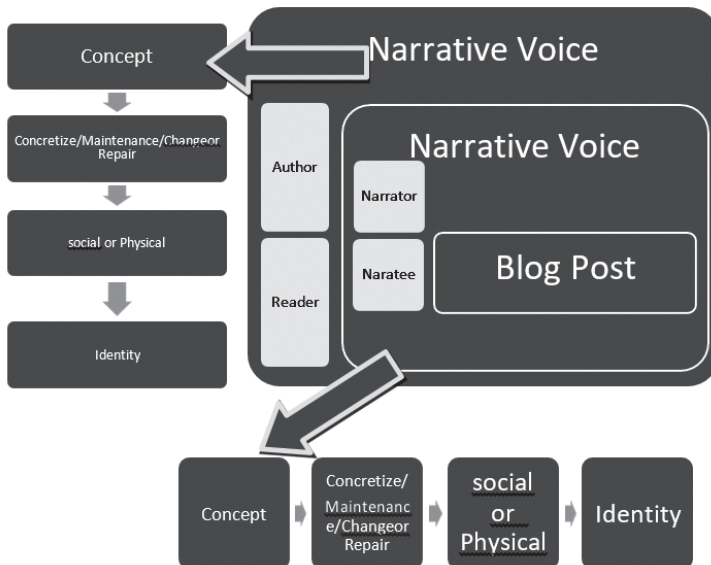


Figure 4 Integrated Conceptual Framework

Integrated Operational Framework

The example we will use to operationalize the theories is from one of the Diplomatic Baggage's posts on her visit to Rome with her husband JG (the pseudonym she uses on the blog). In the Action level (innermost box), which is identified as a travel blog, wherein the main characters are about The Diplowife (the blogger) and JG (her husband), who are touring Rome.

In the Fictional mediation level, the blogger presents her story as a wife, who is travelling with her husband, and both have different interests about the trip (JG, wanting to go for its historical spots, which is not enticing to his wife, the Diplowife). In this level, the main concept is their opposite personalities, but the construction process occurs when the blogger relates how their different interests is solved by her husband to a compromise of finding tour spots that she can relate to, and creating themed itineraries. In these stages of construction, the concept of "compromise in marriage" is emphasized and shows the identity of the blogger of a "happy wife".

In the Narrative Communication level, the blogger uses her writer voice to tell the story of how her trip with her husband became more interesting. By relating the story of how JG created an itinerary based on a what Diplowife enjoyed, the concept of a "themed travel" is discussed. The construction was discussed by showing how travelling is not just about going places. Concretizing how to make travel interesting; maintaining its relevance by associating tour sites to a movie to make it more meaningful; and therefore changing how travel can be done via a "themed travel." In this narrative voice, the blogger is able to present her skills in writing about a travel, using a personal angle in the narrative.

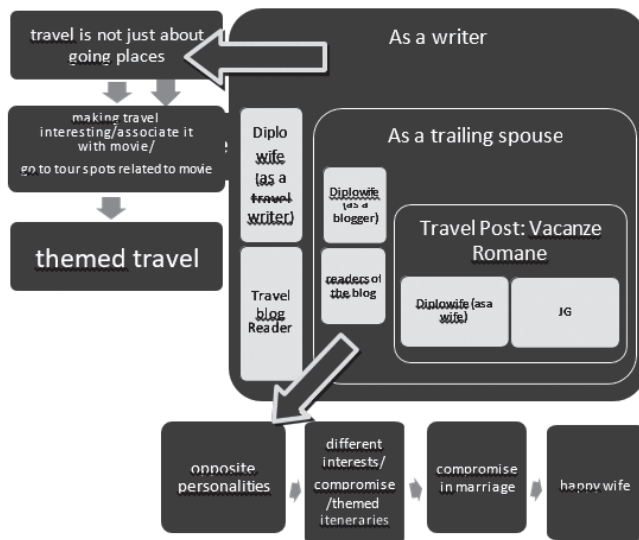


Figure 5 Integrated Operational Framework

Methods and Procedures

The main research design used was Document analysis, which in nature as it is, will mainly gather and analyze data from 24 Blog Posts of three participant trailing spouses, the third includes myself. For purposes of better understanding, the subjects will be referred to as Trailing Spouse Bloggers or TSB. The said Blogs that will be studied include:

Almost Diplomatic – www.carolific.com – “Musings of a 20-something journalist turned diplomat’s (undiplomatic) wife”. The blogger is currently posted and has been living in Kuala Lumpur Malaysia for three years with her husband (10 blog posts reviewed).

The Diplomatic Wife – www.diplomaticwife.com – “Living Life Diplo-style”. The blogger is also the wife of a Diplomat who was previously posted in Jakarta, Indonesia and in Berlin, Germany. The couple is currently back in the Philippines (4 blog posts reviewed).

Diplomatic Baggage – www.diplowife.wordpress.com – “Misadventures of a Diplomat’s young wife”. This is my personal

blog. My husband and I were posted and lived in Tripoli, Libya and in Muscat, Oman, and are currently in the Budapest, Hungary (13 blog posts reviewed).

In each TSB presented, one or two blog posts were used as an example. These were chosen based on the post that best describes the overall findings that were consistent in their narratives. Although the study focused on the text found in the given blogs, the analysis was based on the Narrative (Narrative Analysis) using the Narrative communicative levels (Jahn 2006). The said model distinguishes the different “narrative voices” that an author or the TSB uses in presenting communication in a story or the text that is written. This was done by collecting texts that present different kinds of concepts, and the data constructed were placed within the levels mentioned in the study framework.

After the concepts from the blog posts were generated and placed within the Narrative Communicative levels, the said concepts were then analyzed as to how the TSBs work around this idea as well as how they rationalize, construct, and present the concepts found in their posts through their writing.

This process of analysis hoped to address the third objective, particularly, how these trailing spouses would make sense of their gender.

For an in-depth understanding of the background of the TSBs, as well as some clarifications on the data analyzed, follow-up interviews were also conducted, both personally and via video chats (as Almost Diplomatic was posted abroad). Units of analysis are the texts taken from the three blogs, and data construction was based on the theory following the concepts from both the Theory of Social Construction of Reality and Narratology. As mentioned earlier this was done both via theme construction and code clustering, to see whether there are similarities and or differences in how the identities were presented.

The blogs were chosen based solely on the fact that they were the only three consistent trailing spouse bloggers with the Department of

Foreign Affairs. Each of the bloggers use "categories" in the blogs (e.g., "Travel", "Personal Thoughts", "Beauty and Wellness") and each blog post examined were taken from each of the said categories.

The scope of this study covered mostly identity construction and narrative analysis. Although all three TSBs are wives of diplomats, the aspect of being involved in Diplomatic relations like policy and national issues were not be covered in this study. This is to avoid involving the sensitive and often confidential nature of the TSBs' husband's work. It is also important to note that I was one of the bloggers included in the study.

RESULTS AND ANALYSIS

Following the integrated theory discussed in the study framework, the study analyzed the blogs by trailing spouses.

The Diplomatic Wife (TDW): The Lifestyle Blogger

The Diplomatic Wife (TDW) was launched in 2009 a few months after TDW was posted in Jakarta, Indonesia with her husband. Coming from a family of entrepreneurs, TDW was in marketing/advertising before marrying TD (The Diplomat, the pseudo name she uses to refer to her husband in the blog). Her blog shows the aesthetics that are put in every photo and the lay-out is noticeably something the blogger really puts effort in presenting, and is similar to a lifestyle magazine in theme.

Although there were some blog posts that discussed some of her personal musings and opinions, most of the blog posts featured involved fashion, home décor, and lifestyle tips. Almost all the blog posts that were used for the study were about a certain brand or an event. An example is her post in attending a symposium of products made by Filipino brands: Blog Post Title: The Best of Filipino Design and Décor at Manila Fame, October 25, 2016. URL: <http://thediomaticwife.com/blog/>. In this post, the level of action was obviously one wherein TDW presented herself as a guide to the symposium showing us through the designs that she found

interesting. She states in the post, "Last week, I had the pleasure of attending Manila FAME. I was excited because as a blogger, they let me in as media and I was able to take pictures of the beautiful things that caught my eye so that I can share them with you!"

TDW was clearly presenting a level of fictional mediation, not just as a trailing spouse, but as a representative of the "media" as "a blogger", which she took to herself as responsibility to become her reader's guide to the symposium. The narrative voice that she used was one where she took it upon herself to share her thoughts and inputs on designs.

Although there was a portion in the post, wherein she shared a level of personal identity, however it was used as a segue (seg-way) to introduce the theme she wanted to present which was highlighting the furniture category. In the post she shared,

I remember going with my aunt when I was younger where I would always stock up on super fabulous jewelry from Cebu. The jewelry was always so unique and eye-catching that I would be asked about it whenever I wore it. This time though – married, with my own home – I came back with another interest: Furniture and Decor. I was not disappointed!

This is just one of the many examples, but most of the blog posts are of this tone. Thus, in a narrative perspective this particular blog is one that presents an identity that is more in the fictional level. Most of the posts show the narrator's awareness of her audience. TDW would often address her readers directly, through her tips and advices, as with the post acting as a guide or an expert. In this sense she uses her perspective as a brand and marketing/advertising expert.

This persona as a marketing consultant and brand expert is often used, and can be identified in the concepts that she uses to construct this identity. Some of the concepts she would often use are, "biggest names in the industry", "envirosocial company", "Filipiniana take", "brings oomph to the table", "the perfect chic".

Such social concepts were constructed and first concretized by TDW as ideals that present a certain product or brand. She placed more

meanings into such items because as a Marketing expert, these are the concepts that establish the ideals of selling a product. The maintenance or the upkeep of these concepts is the idea that these are not only works of art and are designed by fellow Filipinos, but are also relevant because they are trendy and are known "in the industry". The level of change is seen in how, she used to prioritize accessories for dressing up when she was single, her interest shifted to furniture design and finding products that are now more suited to being a home maker and a mother. This was the only time that TDW seemed to explore gender as a concept. But as with the rest of her posts, she does not delve or critically assess this concept, once again only discussing being both a wife and mother through the products and lifestyle choices she presents in her posts.

It can then be interpreted that that the socially constructed concepts used in the blog post are of the physical reality. She was able to attach meanings to the furniture and products that she wrote about in her blog, showing how such things are relevant to her and therefore the identity she presents as a blogger and marketing/branding expert. There were times when TDW would present a more personal level of narrative voice. However, the example that was used as part of the analysis was dominant in many of the blogs. In the life of a trailing spouse, TDW still connects her experiences in conflict to branding (e.g., recommending certain furniture for people constantly moving locations). Even in more personal aspects of her life (posting on preferred "baby gear" for her son).

This presented an identity of TDW as related to the previous work she was doing prior to marrying someone into the Foreign Service. She relates that before she launched her blog she would often find it difficult to interact with people at social gatherings as a companion to her husband; stressing how the blog helped her build her individuality. She writes:

When you are out in a reception that you are forced to attend, and do well, it's a performance diba? And then someone asks me, so what do you do? Oh I'm the wife of so and so, and you see their eyes glaze over and their looking around for someone else to talk to because you're stuck with a housewife or whatever, it was the worst feeling in the world. That's why the blog really helped because after that I was no longer the wife of..., I'm a blogger...

This is why the social construct that were identified were very much connected to the lingo and concepts that are used in marketing/ branding and advertising. The blog also presents TDW as a persona who prefers a certain level of taste and way of life, although she did not make clear her specific socio-economic level. This may be taken back to what Cerulo (1997) explains about an identity that wants to have a shared sense of being part of a certain group. She explains this preference to “high-end” products and a certain “posh” presentation of lifestyle, “...because I have a vision of what life I want to have. I want to sustain the life that I see...”

To TDW, not to be perceived as well-off, instead she presents this kind of identity because she explains that she has an idea of what kind of life she wants to live and is simply showing it through her blog. That she wants her and has husband to fully experience a certain “way of life”, not dictated by the Department of Foreign Affairs (DFA) or any social classes, but one that she wants for herself. She explains:

That’s basically how I am trying to live. I am milking the experiences, the blog enabled me to see it in this way. Na so many people they saved all their lives namatay sila (they die), they never use the money. But you are actually earning that money to experience how you want to live.

She also explains that this sprung from her desire as a child to have control of the life and home that she lives in when she becomes older. She connects this to what she believes the standard a Diplomat and his family should live. TDW explains in an interview,

Because that is my perception, parang as a Diplomat he should have this life... I did everything that I could possibly do so that we could get that life that he wanted. It wasn’t about being ‘hoity-toity’ it was about what he is. I did not just want him to have a job, parang he if was going to be a diplomat... Like I would in whatever I do, he’s gonna do it properly. So when my husband said he did not want to entertain with paper cups, then I researched all the glasses! And I sold stuff so that I could afford to buy (the glasses)... I found the best deals, you don’t know how the effort that I do to be able to afford these things.

Connecting her stories of her family background and her identity presentation in the blog, we can see how TDW made sense of this lifestyle. Her upbringing as well as her beliefs and attitude in life,

coincides with the voice and persona that she portrays and shows in her blog.

The Diplomatic Baggage: The Personal Blogger

The study was able to categorize the three bloggers and their identity presentation in a spectrum. Each of the participating trailing spouse showed aspects of the narrative communicative voices that were used as indicators (Jahn, 2017).

In the first trailing spouse blogger, TDW was more inclined in the Fictional Mediation level, wherein the socially constructed concepts and the process of sense-making that she uses shows an identity that this is beyond her true self. On the other side of this spectrum is me, the second trailing spouse blogger, The Diplowife (who is also the researcher and author of this study).

The Diplowife is the pseudo name I use in my profile account towards the blog and the webpages. My blog, Diplomatic Baggage: Misadventures of a Diplomat's Young Wife was launched in 2008, immediately after I married my husband JG (the name I use to refer to my husband in my blog) who is also a Filipino Diplomat. As mentioned earlier, I leaned more towards the non-fictional level of narrative communication voice. Unlike TDW, I rarely wrote about any specific event, or discussed a product, although I also talked about travels and events of my life in Muscat, I was more internal in my narrative approach. The themes in my blog posts were more introspective, concentrating on my personal thoughts and opinions on my experiences and topics that I discussed were more observational towards people, places, and events that I encountered.

Diplowife writes and presents a more subjective expression of perspective, wherein my beliefs, convictions, interests, and values, ideological orientation, and attitude were expressed heavily in the blog.

As an example, one of the posts that was analyzed was an entry of my thoughts on what it means to be a Diplomatic trailing spouse.

Blog Post Title: The Unexceptional Amazing Life of a Diplomatic Spouse, August 4, 2016

URL: <https://diplowife.wordpress.com/2016/08/04/the-unexceptional-amazing-life-of-being-a-diplomatic-spouse/>

In this post, Diplowife discussed several aspects that I felt were often intertwined or perceived by diplomat's wife, such as myself. These included my thoughts on, being an extension of my husband's position in the embassy, balancing my roles as wife, and the "sacrifices" made in choosing to be a trailing spouse. In the post, Diplowife writes,

...it got me thinking about what I would tell her about this life that we lead.

...We talked about how some people might peg our lives as somewhat exceptional, balancing our many roles as wives, mothers, and maybe even share in the public service aspect of our husband's work.

There are also 'the sacrifices' we made when we married into the Foreign Service, things we left behind in order to fully support our Diplomat spouses abroad... So I decided that I wanted to share my thoughts on it."

I then proceeded to share my insights woven in between with personal anecdotes and my convictions regarding the matters at hand. This, as many of my blog posts, is text heavy, unlike TDW and even Carolific's posts who are more inclined to use multi-media tools like pictures and videos, emphasizing a deeper sense of sharing in her narratology. This reflects my blog as more of the traditional type of a personal journal rather than an interactive website.

In sharing my internal thoughts, my readers see more of the "real" persona of the author as supposed to a fictional representation I want to project. In this particular blog post, although I was tackling the topic of what for me, being a trailing spouse, means. I present this in a level wherein i seem to be thinking out loud rather than actually conveying a story.

Following the pattern used in the study framework, the Action level, or the setting of the scenario of the narrative does not take place in any physical setting and does not involve any character interaction. Except that the post feels more like a non-fiction essay, my internal

monologue wishes to express my perspective in my position as a Diplomat's wife.

Because of this pragmatic tone, I position my narrative voice, as earlier stated in the non-fictional level of narrative communication. This is further seen as what Jahn (2017) refers to as an extratextual interaction. The Diplowife, although addressing a certain audience or reader in the first-person, does not seem to show any direct or specific target of who I am talking to, again, showing a more introspective approach. For instance I state,

And if you think about it, all of it boils down to choices, and having them means that you choose one and not another. I wouldn't consider it a sacrifice or giving up something, when with eyes-wide-open you opted for this life, which isn't really a down grade, it's just... different.

With this narrative voice, I then present social constructs that although can be seen as broader topics of discourse, I discuss them via opinions and my stances revealing a more in-depth persona. Some of the social concepts that I tackle in this post, are "Status", wherein I write,

In being a de facto public servant, I personally don't think too much about the fact that my husband is someone who represents our government in another country, and by default that makes me one myself.

I also discuss "feminine roles" a woman takes on. The many roles we play, for me it's not very different from what many married women take on all over. It isn't unique for a woman to take on many hats at a time, wives at the same time mothers at the same time career women at the same time side-kicks or partners to whatever else our husbands needs help with.

I write as well "identity crisis", as in the sacrifices of losing oneself and the choices made to be a trailing spouse. I write,

I think it's a bit unfair on the part of our husbands to have to say that we made sacrifices on their behalf. I think saying that means you have regrets, and if you have them maybe you need to question your choices.

It's just a matter of making the most of what you've got, and if your husband doesn't support you... that's on him, not on his job title. And

if you find yourself feeling empty and stunted in the shadows of your better-half, that's just on you entirely.

In these social constructs, I show my sense-making by concretizing my convictions based on my opinions and attitudes that I developed in my life. I explain (refer to focus group discussion between participants) that I often struggle with the concepts I wrote about, which was why the blog became some sort of haven to process such thoughts, at the beginning just a venue to practice my writing skills, and eventually turned to a "tangible" companion that documents my growth from a young newly-wed shipped to another country, to a retrospective blogger of eight years, therefore undergoing a process of maintenance and change, Diplowife further explains that while reviewing the blog for the study, "I realized that, oh here is six years of my life. Suddenly the thing that I was running away from became the testament of my existence."

And because the textual data show very introspective concepts, we can see that the social construct of the Diplowife is more on the social reality. My blog posts presents a sense-making that is beyond an actual tangible representation like choice of a furniture. Consistent with the non-fictional level of narrative communication, the readers and followers of my blog are shown with my actual identity and the makeshifts of who I really am as a person. Beyond being the Diplowife, I present through my blog, my truest self.

This, among all the posts that were studied, was the only one that touches, not gender in particular, but a concept within gender studies that is very important – agency (Malmstrom, 2012). In this post I talked about how "choice" and adapting to this decision, making sense of certain topics that a diplomatic trailing spouse like me faces.

Carolific: The balanced blogger

Unlike the two other trailing spouse bloggers, Carol uses her real name, and shows her face in her blog, "Almost Diplomatic". Carol started blogging in 2014, a few months after she got married to her Diplomat husband Alvin, who is also his real name. According to her

first post, the blog and its theme used to be very different from its current appearance, but she decided to change it and write about being a trailing spouse.

She called the blog "Almost Diplomatic" as she explains that it was because she knew she could never be the kind of Diplomat's wife that has the same exceptional skills in diplomacy as her husband. Before getting married, Carol used to work as a journalist, whose beat covered the Foreign Affairs where she met her husband.

Because of her experience covering the Department of Foreign Affairs, Carol is not new to the life of Diplomats and their wives, although her perspective of this was more of an outsider looking in. This is why unlike the other two bloggers, Carol had a bit of an idea of what being a trailing spouse entails. According to Carol,

Di ako nagulat (I was not surprised), kasi I was dealing with all these people. Kasi they were in a bubble eh, and I was from the outside, I was looking at them and like, ha funny people, these people are so weird. And then I'm suddenly part of the weird crowd. And in a way I think it helps me understand others more kasi nga (since) I came from there.

Because of her background in the media, and perhaps her being a part of a younger generation that belongs more to digital natives, it was not hard for Carol to turn to blogging, and using her position and perspective to both practice her skill and write about her experience as a trailing spouse.

Compared to the two previous bloggers, TDW and Diplowife, Carol's blog and identity presentation falls between the two spectrums. Carol's blog is a mixture of both her non-fictional communication medium, as well as her fictional mediation means. Among the three, she is the most active in terms of putting up blog posts, and is more consistent with how she chooses to use the blog depending on what purpose she is using it for.

The posts in her blog is a collection of her many facets in personality, not only as a trailing spouse to her husband, but also, she uses the blog to write about press relation (PR) events and promotions of

events and places that she encounters in Kuala Lumpur where she was posted when she started the blog. In addition, Carol also posts a more creative and different side, as she also reviews cosmetic products, and gives tips as a make-up and beauty expert. As proof of her being a digital native, and very comfortable with the technology of blogging, Carol is the only one of the bloggers who uses videos, multi-media tools, and advertisements, that make her blog seem more interactive and “hip”. This also means that Carol, uses the blog as a means to earn money, and receives compensation often from sponsors or is commissioned to cover a certain event using her blog as a media tool. In this light, Carol is what present digital and multi-media technology industry refer to as “content creator”, wherein she uses herself and the blog as resource known as user-generated content, that is today marketed as a product brought on by the social media revolution (Schivinski & Dabrowski, 2014).

Concentrating on her identity presentation and social construct, again Carol is a good balance between the fictional persona of her being a trailing spouse/event/beauty content writer; as well as a non-fictional “real” identity wherein like Diplowife she also shares more intrapersonal communication approaches, giving her thoughts and insights on some matters.

Many of her blog posts show these two sides interwoven in one entry. Unlike TDW and Diplowife where one blog post was used as an example, two posts will show how Carol is able to balance two levels of narrative identities in her blog.

Blog Post Title: Beauty + Review: Let’s Talk Hair Removal – Sumuzu Treatment, April 21, 2016.

URL: <https://carolific.com/2016/04/21/beauty-review-lets-talk-hair-removal-sumuzu-treatment/#more-5848>

In this entry, Carol reviews and discusses what to most Filipino women a faux-pas or taboo—having body hair removed. As a narrative perspective, we can see how she approaches it as both a reporter—reporting on an experience of women’s hygienic and vanity rituals—as well as any other woman concerned about her body hair.

In the fictional level, she addresses her readers straight-forwardly, stating facts and information regarding the treatment, what to expect, the mood of the area where the procedure takes place, even a systematic table of the variety of services provided and how long it will take. This can be compared to what seems like a feature article in a beauty or lifestyle magazine.

However as earlier stated, it is combined with a non-fictional narrative voice, where Carol shares some insights about herself such as the anecdotes below:

And while I'm happy with the close to bionic hair growth rate I have for my head, I would have to admit that body hair wise, it's the same. And it's not as fun.

My grandmother often said that if I didn't start shaving and plucking when I was younger, all my body hair would have fallen off by now or they would be so thin, they wouldn't be noticeable. I guess for some, it may work. But alas, it's pretty obvious how that side story ended.

And to drive a point, Carol uses a close-up picture of her armpits after she underwent the treatment herself. As with most of her beauty and wellness blog posts, Carol tackles social constructs and concepts that deal with aesthetics and at times, the social demands and requirements that encapsulates physical appearance, that this specific entry includes. She states,

Of course, I don't judge people who choose not to remove hair down there or in any part of their body. Your body, your decisions. I'm just talking about my choices and saying how tired I am of people who give unwanted hair removal so much sexual connotation.

Another example of how Carol presents two sides of her identity in her blog posts is how she uses her professional experience to help her husband with his job in the embassy.

Blog Post Title: Travel: Cebu and Bohol for the 2nd Ambassador's Tour. June 19, 2015 URL: <https://carolific.com/category/travel/asia/philippines/cebu/>

In this blog post, Carol writes about going back to the Philippines as part of an event organized by the Philippine Embassy in Malaysia, bringing in other diplomats to the country for a cultural tour.

Although in most cases, Carol would not be invited, but because of her connections to the press and her means to produce a PR article on the event, she was asked to come along, and she shares this in her blog. The non-fictional part is her basically relating what transpired in the said event, but as with the previous example, her real identity is also narratively present in the post as she relates her thoughts in the event.

As far as social construction is concerned, she makes sense of this as part of her makeshift being both a journalist and unofficially part of the embassy through her husband. In the post she explains,

I was lucky enough to be invited to join as a.) part of the embassy and b.) part of the media delegation... It's a running joke nowadays that I'm the embassy's publicist. But that's cool since I do enjoy helping out by using my media experience. Better to get so busy than end up being rusty.

During the discussion among the participants, she further explains that, this is a part that she likes about the blog because it allows her to be of help to her husband's work, as she is able to use her skills and know-how in the media industry to assist in Alvin's career.

The process of her identity construct is found with each of these blog posts wherein her narrative as former reporter turned trailing spouse, while moonlighting as a beauty expert builds her presentation. Like TDW, she is also able to construct and concretize concepts that are tangible, for instance in the cosmetic products she reviews and relates them to being presentable as well as sharing something that she enjoys doing which is using make-up. At the same time, she is also able to present an identity tied to a contemporary millennial that is able to find a means to earn a living within a creative project built around her blog and her personality. The maintenance in this social construct is seen as she allows her situation to be used as something that makes more of herself, both beside and outside the reach of her husband's identity as a diplomat and main breadwinner of their family. She does admit that, connected with the success of the blog, she also

encounters conflict, wherein her presented identity is often only seen at face value, again both as a trailing spouse and a makeup expert. This is because some readers only see her as both, when in reality, she is of course more than what she presents in the blog, to which she says, as a form of social construct,

And the thing is medyo it opens you too much to people. I've learned to reel it back in. I mean, I was careful before, but there were times like people think like they know you, like they can judge you and stuff. This is just a part of who I am, not all of me. But yun nga it opens you up to criticism. And it's fine if its constructive but then if it opens you up to judgment... It made me more careful.

Again she balances this by presenting more in-depth and intrapersonal blog posts similar to what Diplowife does on her blog.

Blog Post Title: Random Thoughts and Happenings 2. April 15, 2015

URL: <https://carolific.com/2015/04/15/random-thoughts-and-happenings-2/#more-1226>

This is one of Carol's longer posts where she summarizes a lot of the things that she thinks about that is connected to what she juggles as a trailing spouse and all the other things happening in her personal life. The blog post is a collection of sub-heads that gives us a glimpse of the aspects of Carol's life, and in effect, her presented identity, which again is a balance of all the hats she wears.

In the post she talks about "being home alone", "side-trips", "diplomatic functions", "allergic reactions", "life-simple pleasures", and "making new friends".

In analyzing the particular posts, you can see how Carol constructs and makes sense of all these concepts. She concretizes these social concepts by first narrating them in the blog, relating them as events that happen in her life. She recognizes the importance of these; therefore, cementing their relevance in her life. She attaches meanings to these concepts as a form of maintenance. For example, considering skypping with her Danish father, who she only recently reconnected with after years of being estranged, is a source of positivity. Of another

example is learning to change to experience, dealing with an allergic reaction in using cosmetic products for her eyebrows. Her repair and change mechanisms in dealing with these concepts are evident in her stories and the posts she shares, such as this. It gives us a glimpse into her balancing of these identities, however many they may be.

Through the blog, you may sense that Carol, like the TDW, only tackles gender and concepts that are connected to it in a more surface level. Through her posts in beauty and wellness, she advocates the importance of feeling good and looking good as well. The only time she laments being in a power struggle was when she discussed making the decision to leave her career when she married Alvin in her earlier blog posts. What is interesting to note is that, Carol's empowered stance as a woman, may not be presented in her blog but is clear when in person. Carol continues to work as a freelance writer, and as discussed earlier, uses her blog, and her persona as trailing spouse/blogger to find stories she can use to continue her writing skills.

All Three Trailing Spouses

There are also social constructs that each of the TSBs correspondingly discuss. Some of these concepts are common among trailing spouse blogs like "migration adjustment", "Filipino culture" and "hosting parties". What is interesting is that, despite the similar topics, the aspect of Social Construction that deals with subjectivity is present in these overlaps. The interesting part is how each participant present such similar concepts differently depending on the identity and dominant narrative voice they use in their blogs.

More than looking at specific blog posts, the bloggers sense-making and social construct can also be seen by looking at their blogs in a broader perspective. This is evident in the obvious changes in the way they think and write about topics from when they started as compared to their more recent entries. The participants all agreed that this was mostly due to ageing, maturing, and learning along the way, making the blog proof of this change as it documents their evolution and the constant construction of their identities.

The dominant narrative voice that they present in their identities shows how they are also conscious in wanting to be accepted and remain in line to what they feel is expected of them as trailing spouse. Each of the bloggers relate how they have many other aspects and discourse to write about in their blogs, however are met with certain restrictions. These are not just imposed by the Foreign Service in order to protect the nature of their husband's work, but are also imposed by the participants themselves, all set within the identity they wish to present. However, it is important to note that there is not much introspection in terms of gender within the three bloggers. While their perspectives as women is clearly seen, there was not much critical or in-depth discussions that relates to their being a woman trailing spouse, or how the concept of gender as a social construct is being used in their chosen topics.

Conclusion and Recommendations

Each of the Trailing Spouse Bloggers have their own dominant identity that they present in their blogs. Using the different narrative communication levels, we are able to see these identities. If lined as spectrum, the participants show different versions of these said levels, with the *The Diplomatic Wife*, in one end, as more fictional in her identity, *The Diplowife* in another end, showing a very "real" non-fictional presentation, and *Almost Diplomatic*, in the middle, balancing both levels of presentation.

These identities are presented via the social construct and sense-making process that the participants assess in their blog posts. Social concepts and practices are described and identified within their blog entries. There are concepts that are similarly discussed by the bloggers, but are still inclined to look at them differently.

All three bloggers showed some changes in the progression of their blogs in terms of what a trailing spouse means to them and how they present in their blogs. Although their husbands were mentioned several time in the posts, they were all very careful to mention anything about their work, but rarely do they discuss social concepts that deal with marriage and married life.

Some common social concept like gender are also rarely discussed in the blog posts. Subjectivity is indeed present in the blog posts as the bloggers express their thoughts and opinions on concepts, consistent with the personality they wish to project.

Changes are again apparent, as they often mention learning from their experiences and adjusting according to what they learned. The TSBs posts shows how their presentation of their identities by writing and telling their audience about their acts and stances (Ochs, 1993). The dominant narrative voice, or the identity that comes through in their posts also suggests how they all want to be part of a certain ideal group.

This study only concentrated on the dominant identities and the social constructs that the participants discussed within their blogs. As such, while it also aims to contribute to the discourse of the trailing spouse and their communicative approaches, this study focused only on their identity construction and sense-making within their presentation. However, there are still many aspects that can be tackled that involves the topic of the trailing spouse, including looking at their perspective through a feminist lens.

The social constructs that were mentioned and constructed within this study also deserve a closer look. As migration, gender, and status are commonly studied in line with the lives of a trailing spouse, other concepts may also be given light, especially in the field of communication. This includes cross-cultural communication encounters and techniques trailing spouses use to navigate their way through the travels. In the constructionist lens, these spouses have found ways to communicate not just amongst each other, but have developed a world-view, that is both unique and global at the same time, connecting with each other as they cross paths during their postings.

This study looked into Filipina bloggers, but suggests that, as a continuation of the study, perhaps a look at other trailing spouses from other countries using the framework, would yield the same kinds of social constructs and narrative perspectives.

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About the Author

Joanna Cay S. Garcia is a trailing spouse and has been married for nine years. Since then she and her husband have been posted to Tripoli, Muscat, and currently in Budapest. She has recently started to earn Ph.D. in Communication units from the University in Philippines in Diliman. While living in Muscat, she earned her Master's Degree in Development Communication through the Open University program of U.P. Los Banos. Before getting married and briefly in Tripoli, Joanna

worked as a freelance writer on feature stories and events. Since then she has been a homemaker, while being involved in several volunteer activities and programs for Diplomatic spouses.

Research Article

The Concept of Forever as Perceived by Women in Long-Distance Relationships (LDR) with Seafarers

Thea Pamela A. Javier

Abstract

There has been a number of researches that investigated the intricacies of long-distance relationships (LDR). This study has then been conducted to put context, and provide a unique perspective, to a rather overly-researched subject. A thriving marine industry in the Philippines sparked the interest of the researcher to further delve into the way women in LDR with seafarers perceive permanence.

The Interaction Adaptation Theory, integrated with the Social Construction of Reality Theory, serves as the framework for the study. The framework, when operationalized shows that partners renegotiate their interaction positions to adapt to a communication mismatch, which is distance.

To construct the necessary data, the researcher utilized the in-depth interview method. The selected (researcher included) women from the Philippines – in a relationship (2), engaged (2) and married (3) – as informants through purposive sampling procedure. The researcher then used the Qualitative Approach and Descriptive Design in constructing the data.

The study has revealed that a permanent relationship is possible despite the long-distance factor. It has revealed that futurity is one way to communicate permanence. The study concludes that women in LDR with seafarers view permanence based on their decision to live together.

Keywords: *Social Constructions, Contextual Research, Long Distance Relationship, Filipino Communicative Behavior*

Introduction

“Walang forever!”(There is no forever!)

But what does forever really mean? When used in the context of relationships, it means a lasting or permanent union between two consenting individuals. Relationship permanence goes all the way from the New Testament teaching that what God has joined together, man shall not separate (Mark 10:9).

Given this premise, no one would like to start a romantic relationship that would be miserable in the end. However, we could not deny the fact that there are numerous relationship dissolutions because of a variety of reasons. After the romantic obsession wears off, partners see the flaws and shortcomings of the other and eventually decide if they will push through or not with the relationship.

Truly, couples face a reality that teaches them that the only permanent thing in this world is change. Books, television, radio, the internet and other forms of media together with our parents and friends bombard them with content that relationships are ideal and easy. When this reality turns out to be a fiction rather than a fact, the partners are disappointed and sadly face an unavoidable dissolution.

Nevertheless, despite these numerous narratives on breakups and relationship termination, there are still some stories of couples who withstood the tests of time. When asked how they did it, they all have one answer: intentional commitment (Chapman, 2013).

Therefore, in a world where people often yell the catchphrase “walang forever;” there are still couples who, through an act of will, discipline and personal growth (Chapman, 2013), choose to love their partner, and eventually see the reality of forever in each other.

Background of the Study

Once more, no person in his or her right mind would want to waste his or her time, effort and resources to just terminate a relationship

in the long run. Most couples, if not all, will want to have a lasting relationship. It is a kind of relationship that demands commitment, not just to the partner, but to oneself (Institute for the Study of Man, 2017). It is more than a promise but rather an action that is altogether physical, emotional, mental and spiritual.

Once the rules are established, couples are expected to work things out despite the challenges that are anticipated to be experienced within the course of the relationship. However, there are still some gaps that are needed to be addressed in romantic relationships—distance.

In an imperfect world where it is hard to survive a geographically close relationship, what more are the chances if we add the distance variable? This study would like to look on how women, being tagged as the weaker and more emotional sex, would construct their reality of relationship permanence if theirs were subjected to long distance. I would like to operationally define the term forever as a metaphor of relationship permanence, as it was used in this study.

Researches on long distance relationships (LDR) in the past have inquired about comparison to geographically close counterparts, the advantages and disadvantages of being in LDR, relationship quality (Cameron and Ross, 2008), satisfaction (Burgoon and Kelley, 1991; Mietzner and Lin, 2005) and commitment (Pistole et. al., 2010; Johnson, 2009) in this kind of relationship and how this was theorized in both interpersonal and computer-mediated communication (Carter and Renshaw, 2016).

It is evident that self-negotiating permanence in a long distance relationship was not problematized in detail by former scholars with the same interest. Self-negotiation was defined by Huffingtonpost.com (2013) as the familiar feeling of an internal wrestling match between two choices. In this case, it is about the women's self-negotiation on the permanence of their relationship with their seafarer partners given the setback of distance (not to mention time difference).

This study focuses on how women in LDR with seafarers socially construct relationship permanence in their context. In a country where marine industry has been continuously thriving, it is not unusual to get acquainted with a woman who is currently having a romantic relationship with a seaman. No matter how prevalent the saying that “a mariner has a girl in every port” among Filipinos, still, LDR with these men has been accepted in the Philippines.

Statement of the Problem

Given the background of the study, the researcher asks:
How do women in LDR with seafarers construct the concept of permanence in their relationships?

Objectives

1. To describe factors women consider as essential in a permanent relationship;
2. To explore the current activities and future plans of the couple that contribute to the permanence of the relationship, and
3. To find out how the couple communicate the concept of forever to each other even in a long distance relationship.

Significance of the Study

The study is worth pursuing because individuals, groups, and institutions, in one way or another, will benefit from this study. It will be a significant endeavor to seafarers, for they will find security in discovering that partners of their kind seek permanence in their relationship.

This research is also beneficial to women who are currently in a relationship with seafarers, for they can also learn to adapt and adjust their communicative culture to the needs of their partners, not overlooking their limitations and shortcomings.

As a communication management professional, the researcher would like to establish awareness of the emerging subculture of women who are all in a relationship with seafarers. Knowing them more will give

the society a glimpse of how partners in LDR negotiate relationship permanence despite their physical separation.

Study Framework

This research adopted two significant theoretical frameworks, i.e., Interaction Adaptation Theory (IAT) and Social Construction of Reality (SCR).

IAT is a systematic analysis of how people adjust their approach when another's behavior does not mesh with what is needed, anticipated or preferred. Burgoon (1998) and her associates noticed that communicators have a kind of interactional synchrony or coordinated back-and-forth pattern. In interpersonal communication, interactional synchrony is the way in which conversations are unconsciously coordinated to maintain a flow and to minimize noise, just like the mother-new-born bond (www.oxfordreference.com/viewbydoi/10.1093/acref/9780199568758.013.1376).

Burgoon (1998) has reassessed Expectancy Violation Theory and now favors a dyadic model of adaptation. She said that interpersonal interactions involve synchronized actions rather than individual moves. These actions are more often than not, predisposed to adapt to each communicator. According to her, adaptation is necessary for another person's actions may not agree with the thoughts and feelings of the other. Thus, they need to adjust their interaction position.

She defined interaction position (IP) as a person's initial stance toward an interaction as determined by a blend of three factors namely, requirements, expectations and desires. IP is your rough idea of what will happen when you begin communicating with the other person. This is the place where you will begin, your expectations about the communication.

To repeat, there are three main factors that contribute to our IP. First of which are the requirements. Simply put, these are what we really need in an interaction.

Next factor that contributes to IP are our expectations. As opposed to requirements that present what we need to happen, expectations are what we think will really happen. These can either be (1) societal norms of appropriateness or (2) opinions developed from previous interactions with the specific person.

Lastly, IP is shaped also by our desires. These are what we personally would like to see happen in our communication. These are what one hopes to get out of an interaction. These are usually based on personality and personal wants and needs.

These three factors merge or combine into our interaction position of what is needed (Requirements), anticipated (Expectations) and preferred (Desires). Sometimes these factors get in the way and do not match up with (1) the person we are communicating with or (2) the communication situation we are in. This can cause confusion and disappointment for both parties.

A visual representation of the Interaction Adaptation Theory is shown below.

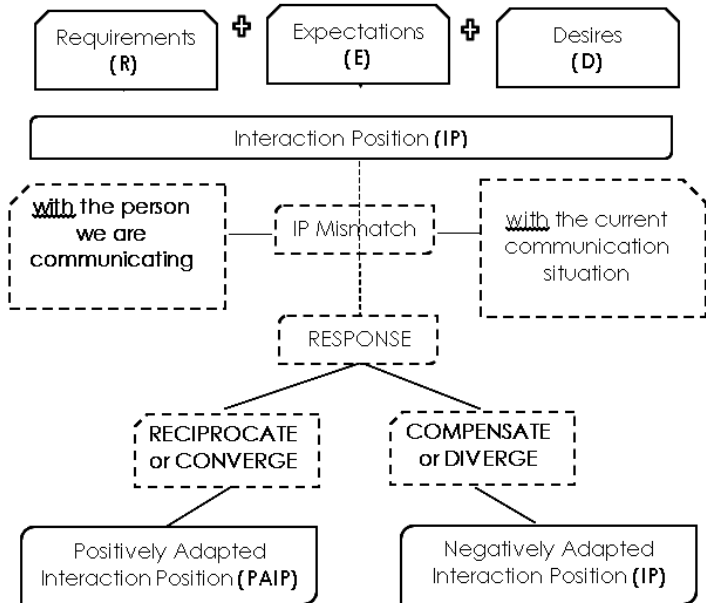


Fig. 1. Theoretical Framework of Interaction Adaptation Theory as visualized by the Researcher

Meanwhile, Social Constructionism or the Social Construction of Reality by Berger and Luckman is a communication theory that examines the development of jointly constructed understandings of the world that form the basis for shared assumptions about reality. By jointly we mean that the constructions involve two or more people working together to make sense of this world, and not by individual processes only.

Shared assumptions, on one hand are, most often than not, regarded as culture. This culture can be about the correct way to talk, act, feel, perceive and think in certain situations. Given the constructions that we jointly share, we make sense of how we respond to our situation as dictated by these assumptions.

The theory of Social Constructionism centers on the notions that human beings rationalize their experience by creating models of the social world and share and regard these models as concrete through language (Leeds-Hurwitz, 2009). When we say rationalize, we find ways to think about or describe something in a way that explains it the most reasonable way possible. Models of the social world help us picture our surroundings in an organized way, depending on our past experiences and knowledge of this world.

As depicted in Fig. 2, language plays a big part in the institutionalization of realities. Through language, we express who we are as individuals living in communities which form the nations. It is through language that we share patterns of behavior, beliefs, knowledge, attitudes and values that are necessary in a culture. Through language, we Filipinos share the commonalities that are rather different from other Asian countries.

A social construct or construction concerns the meaning, notion, or connotation placed on an object or event by a society, and adopted by the inhabitants of that society with respect to how they view or deal with the object or event. In that respect, a social construct as an idea would be widely accepted as natural by the society, but may or may not represent a reality shared by those outside the society, and would be an "invention" or artifice of that society (Encyclopedia.com).

A major focus of social constructionism is to uncover the ways in which individuals and groups participate in the construction of their perceived social reality. It involves looking at the ways social phenomena are created, known, institutionalized and made into tradition by humans.

In social constructionist terms, “taken-for-granted realities” are cultivated from “interactions between and among social agents;” furthermore, reality is not some objective truth “waiting to be uncovered through positivist scientific inquiry.” Rather, there can be “multiple realities that compete for truth and legitimacy (Fairhurst & Grant, 2010). Social constructionism understands the “fundamental role of language and communication” and this understanding has “contributed to the linguistic turn” and more recently the turn to discourse theory. The majority of social constructionists abide by the belief that “language does not mirror reality; rather, it constitutes and creates it” (Fairhurst & Grant, 2010 p. 171)

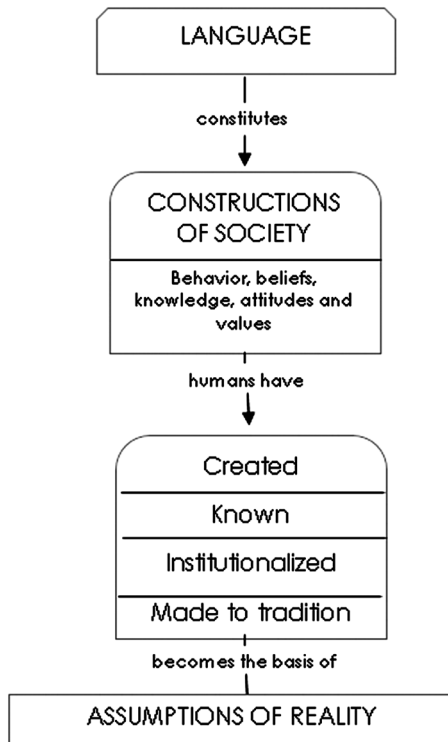


Fig. 2. Model of Social Constructionism as Visualized by the Researcher

The Fig. 3 shows that two theories were used to make sense of how people in certain relationships create their own perceived realities. The Requirements, Expectations and Desires (RED) that make up the Interaction Position of a person are informed by the behaviors, beliefs, knowledge, attitudes and values that have been embedded to a person's well-being ever since these societal constructions have been created, made known, institutionalized and made to tradition. The Interaction Position of a person is informed by the current reality that he or she holds into.

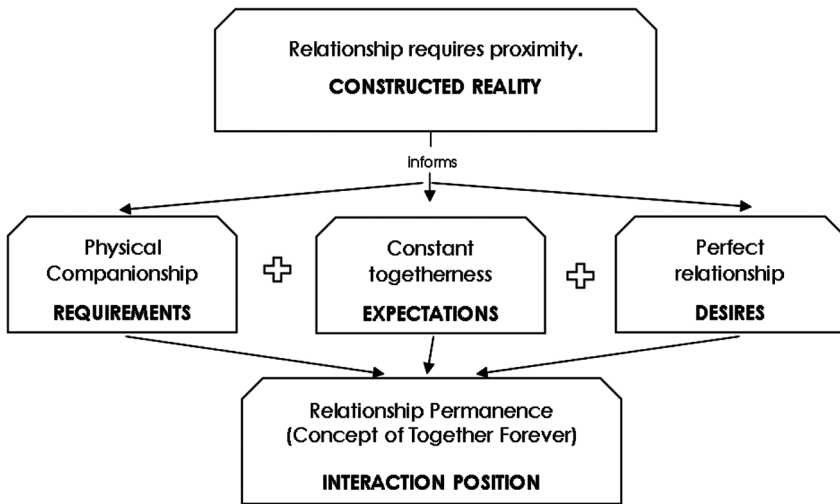


Fig. 3. Integrated Theoretical Model of Interaction Adaptation Theory and Social Constructionism Theory as contextualized in Geographically Close Relationships

For the purposes of discussion, I shall use the concept of romantic relationships, holding an age-old Biblical principle that “what therefore God has joined together, let not man separate.” Couples in romantic relationships see geographical closeness as an essential part of a permanent relationship instituted by the creator. The constructions that were created, known, institutionalized and made into tradition via language tell us that in a perfect world, partners shall not separate to make the relationship work. This is supported by Stafford (2005), when he said that physical proximity is essential to relational quality.

For the RED components of the framework, we can assume that a requirement for a permanent relationship is physical companionship. Given this, the partner expects constant togetherness. And of course, both partners desire for a perfect romantic relationship as a result of the interaction. Bringing together the RED, results in Interaction Position of having a permanent relationship, when all these three are fulfilled in the process.

However, as we all know, it is not a perfect world after all. Part of the Interaction Adaptation Theory is the mismatch of our IP either with a person we are talking to or with the communication situation that we are in. In my conceptual framework, I would like to illustrate how a partner's interaction position is adapted when some or all of the factors that constitute it is violated because of a communication setting mismatch.

In this study, the mismatch is a communication setting; wherein distance hinders the concept of forever held by the partners. Because of distance, physical companionship (R), constant togetherness (E) and perfect romantic relationship (D) are violated or are virtually impossible. Now, the partners should re-negotiate their RED to come up with an Interaction Position that will adapt to their current communication situation.

Since distance as a communication mismatch is involved, the partners' requirements are now turned into emotional intimacy, expectations to constant communication and desires to normal, if not perfect, relationship.

The re-negotiation of REDs will not be possible if the partners do not operate in a different reality. Here, partners hold a different reality from the old-age principle of physicality in relationships. Partners now construct their own reality of a permanent relationship: Love is a conscious decision. Love conquers all—even distance. The above are predicted on Fig. 4 below.

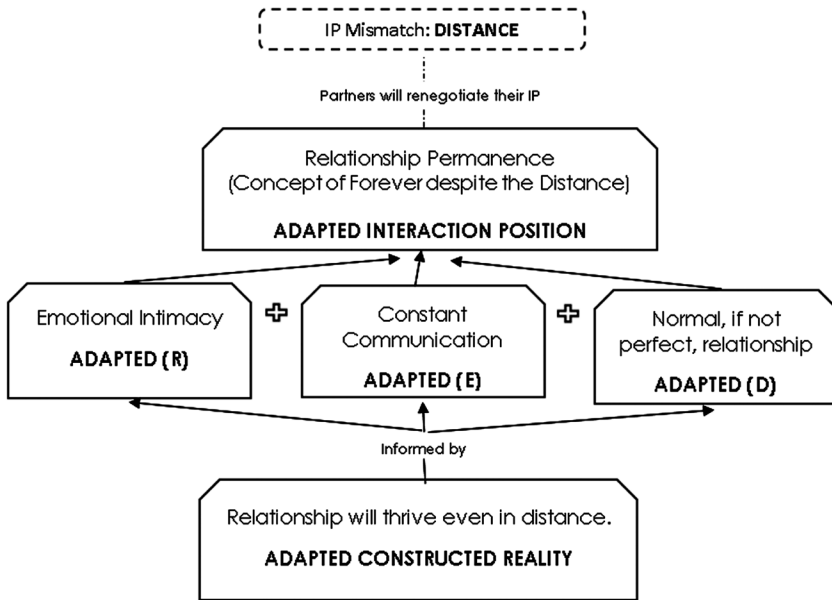


Fig. 4. Integrated Conceptual Model of AIT and SC as contextualized in LDR

Research Methods and Procedures

The researcher used the qualitative approach and descriptive research as the design of this study in order to describe how the women in long distance relationships construct the concept of permanence.

Case studies of women currently involved in long distance relationships with seafarers were conducted upon gathering information and facts about how these women construct relationship permanence in their context. This will allow me to present a detailed information about the women in a relationship with seafarers and will help me draw conclusions including the accounts of the subjects themselves.

The in-depth interview was utilized in order to obtain rich information for this study. An interview guide and an audio recorder were used in constructing the views and thoughts of the participants. Each

statement, comment, or point of view given by every participant was noted and used in this research.

Since the focus of the research is concerned with how the women construct relationship permanence via distance, the researcher used purposive sampling procedure.

The informants consisted of women who were in a relationship with seafarers for a period of more than one year. For clearer understanding of the study, the informants were classified according to their current relationship status with their partners. Two informants were married with one child, one was married but with no child, two were engaged, two were in boyfriend-girlfriend status for a year or more, and one was just new in the long distance relationship.

For a qualitative research like this, results were validated through intersubjectivity, wherein constructs were shared and were found common and acceptable among LDR scholars.

Scope and Limitations of the Study

Although the study is worth pursuing like any other endeavor, it will only be limited to the viewpoints of the women in long-distance relationships with seafarers. Despite the fact that there were seven (7) cases, as in an ideographic study, these would only provide a picture of how they construct relationship permanence via distance but is not enough to be used for generalization.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

A. Factors Women Consider as Essential in a Permanent Relationship

A.1. Forever as a Standpoint of Reality

Many years ago, linguistics Sapir and Whorf (1929) hypothesized that the structure of language shapes what people think and do. This is what we know now as the social construction of reality. According to them, the 'real world' is to a large extent unconsciously built upon

the language habits of the group. To put it simply, language actually structures our perception of reality.

Here, we will see how the women's language construct their perception of permanence as they view their relationship with their seafarer partners. Two themes have emerged concerning how they look at forever as a construct:

a. Forever as a Definitive Actuality

When asked if they truly believe in forever, some of the women have given their non-arguable, final and settled 'yes.' The idea of forever is something that is real in their lives. Blumer (1969), a student of Mead, started with a premise of the theory Symbolic Interactionism and stated that humans act toward people or things on the basis of the meaning they assign to those people or things. In this case, it is the women's interpretation of forever that counts.

Grace articulated that she believes in forever with Genno because someone in a relationship will not stay there for a long time just for nothing. She said that she is "not in there for play" or "just to waste time." She wants the real thing. Pau agreed when she put it in the context of "growing old together." This coincides with Krista's reflection when she said that she believes a person can love one person only until the end of his or her life.

Van shared that she believes in forever because that is God's purpose for every romantic relationship, i.e., to end up in marriage. Roxy agreed when she expressed that dating is created for relationship, not for the other way around. The end goal for her is marriage, and that marital road leads to forever.

I myself also have some thoughts on this. For me, once God has a word for you to fight for your relationship, you have to stay amidst all hardships and trials. Saying "yes" to a lifetime with the person through marriage is final and irrevocable. With the decision to accept comes the feeling to love the person unconditionally despite his flaws and failed circumstances.

Going back to Symbolic Interactionism, Mussolf (2003) posits that once people define a situation as real, it is very real in its consequences. For the women in a relationship with seafarers, their answer is a definitive yes to the social construction of forever.

b. Forever as a Provisional Notion

Although many of the women have a final answer on how they perceive forever, some also have a temporary view of it. For this group of women, forever exists and is accepted by them at the present time, but it may likely change if certain circumstances would arise. Mead saw society as consisting of individuals who make their own choices; and here, women got to choose the “provisions” that go along with their concept of “forever.”

For Net, “unless there’s mutual respect and understanding,” she might have second thoughts about forever. For her, those two are her “requisites” to believe in forever. “I demand exclusivity.” She argued that if Yves will be the one to cause their relationship to stumble, her “decisions are final and executory.” She will call for a breakup and end forever.

“Forever is just a word,” according to Mia. She believes that a couple’s love for each other must be worked out every day for it to flourish. For her, there is no permanent thing in this world – including marriage. However, life is a matter of choice and according to her, staying with a person is always a decision both partners have to make.

To give it a proper context, Net is a legal management student who became proficient at the study of rewards and costs. For her, love should be give-and-take. She operates on the idea of absolutism, and if Yves will not deliver his end of the bargain, forever would be trailing behind.

Mia, on the other hand, is a near-problematic wife who has a paranoid husband who would not let her handle his finances. Mia is a PhD student while Joff is a waiter, and there are times that they do not really understand each other. This is may be the reason why Mia said that every day is a decision people have to make if they really want to have forever with their partners.

However, I have a point of view that is slightly in disagreement with Net's and Mia's. Net's inkling on the philosophy of "you-do-this-for-me-I-will-do-this-for-you" does not coincide with how our Savior Jesus Christ modelled what we all know as "unconditional love." Jesus said that we should love the unlovable (Matthew 22:39) and forgive always (Ephesians 4:32). If this is the case, Net's sense of entitlement is somehow deficient.

Mia's argument about marriage not being equal to forever is another thing. She believes that when two people agreed to stay together, they are making a vow not only to themselves, but also to God. God makes their covenant permanent, giving them the forever that they promised to each other.

To give credit to Mia's rationale, we can consider that "ironing out the kinks" in a relationship should start way before marriage. Differences should be considered, expectations adjusted and imperfections accepted before couples say yes to a lifetime of continuous discovery and at times, disappointments.

A.2. Picture of Forever from the Lens of the Women in a Relationship with Seafarers

Following Blumer's premise that humans act toward people or things on the basis of the meaning they assign to those people or things, the women were also asked to describe a relationship that is for forever. A truism among communication scholars is that words don't mean things, people mean things. Forever does not mean anything unless the women assign a particular meaning into it. The women however, have subjected the word to multiple interpretations.

a. *Forever as the long and winding road*

A famous song of the Beatles is the inspiration for the first theme that has emerged from the transcripts. Forever was compared to a road that needs to be travelled together by the partners, with lots of twists and turns, yet they still have one destination – home.

Grace described a relationship that has 'forever' as a union that shows support, trust and respect; while Grace and Mia described it as full of understanding; Mia with acceptance; Mia and Van with commitment, and Krista, in agreement, took note of her and Arjay's wedding vow.

Roxy, being a Protestant, defined a permanent relationship as a bond that brings the couple closer to God. Pau likewise sees it as something that both partners should enjoy. Roxy, Net, Pau and Van all understand that permanent relationship is the kind of a relationship that looks into the future, a relationship where you will grow old together, not just for fun, but also, will definitely make it work despite life's difficulties.

I agree with Mia that a relationship that is for forever is a decision. It does not start and end with just feelings alone. Whether right or wrong, when one makes a decision, feelings will follow. You just have to decide, have faith that God is in the midst of your relationship and all else will fall into its rightful place when You let him do the work.

The long and winding road of forever has one destination and that is the home. Home is where our Creator is. By choosing a "travel buddy" that will stay with us on a trip that is full of humps and bumps, we will find home. And as we go home, we will find rest.

b. *Forever as the Road less Travelled*

We have heard of this metaphor many times in the past. It means making own choices that is contrary to what is popularly held. We have encountered disposable relationships in our course of life, and we have seen marriages fail, lovers breakup and bridges burn—all because, to others, it is the easiest thing to do. It is the easiest way out of the relationship that gives you pain and has changed you for the worse. Instead of staying to fix it, you throw it away.

People who cannot seem to bear the undesirable things that come along with a permanent relationship tend to go for the expressway of recreational sex, friends with benefits or even chance hook-ups. People want easy choices, but; forever is never easy. It is not a smooth ride. It is always bumpy.

Pau mentioned that partners have to “compromise” to reach an agreement in a permanent relationship. She reiterated that both men and women should be “open-minded” because the road is not always smooth and rocks are all over. These rocks could be quarrels according to Van, and sometimes each other’s flaws according to Grace.

These rocks need not be the cause of the flat tire, or the reason why the relationship got stuck. As long as the problems are resolved (Net) and partners work these out (Mia and Van), the couples have a bigger chance to ‘forever’. Krista expressed her opinion by saying that it is not easy. “Both have to sacrifice,” she said. Net further offers, “It’s a give-and-take (relationship). But if he cannot give, why not fill it up for him?”

A.3. The One, the Absolute, The Anchor of my Soul

It is interesting to note, that even if the women have varying descriptions of forever, the way they view their seafarer partners as their ‘forever’ is surprisingly unanimous. “No one can ever replace him,” said Grace. She supposed that if Genno and she would not end up together, it is okay if she will just remain single. Meanwhile, Roxy said, “There is no uncertainty on my part. I am hundred percent sure, (on him)”.

For the married women, they too have the same answers, but with a deeper conviction. “When I decided [to marry him, I stood by my decision,” Mia said. She said that even after what happened to them in the past (Joff had another girl), she still managed to marry him. She will stick by her decision even if others are saying that when the time comes, feelings will change. “You have to decide [if today you will still love your husband].” As for Krista, she said that it was her choice to marry Arjay, and she will continue to choose him to be her companion for all her life.

B. Current Activities and Future Plans of the Couple Contribute to the Permanence of the Relationship

B.1. Futurity as Concretization of Forever

When asked about the women's certainty on their decisions to keep their current relationships with their seafarer partners, they recalled that this is because they are basically not living "in the now," but rather anticipates a future together. Because of this, it is interesting to delve into the plans that they have initially prepared with their partners. Plans could be individual plans or plans worked out as a couple.

According to Baxter and Montgomery's Theory on Relational Dialectics, too much connection paradoxically destroys the relationship because the individual identities become lost (as cited in Griffin, 2013). That is why couples also have their individual plans to accomplish while they grow also in their relationships.

Being a student, Net remembered that she and Yves planned to make their parents proud while they do their best in their studies—she as a Legal Management student, and he, as a Marine Engineering student. Independently, they were to accomplish this plan. For Grace, she said that Genno already had built a house for his mother. Whatever Genno wants to do to his money, it is his call, and Grace is just there to support him.

For Roxy and Grace, they are busy with their individual careers being a Bank Officer and Data Analyst respectively. These kinds of jobs require not only physical but also mental concentration that cannot be achieved if their attention is divided because of the time they need to spend time with their partners. According to Van, Ace needs to finish his ranks first as a Marine Engineer before he settles in the Philippines.

Banking on Relational Dialectics' assumption, we can invoke what Baxter and Montgomery said that no relationship can exist by definition unless the parties sacrifice some individual autonomy. Even if the partners have been granted with the power of making one's own choices or decisions, they should be reminded that they are already "couples," meaning, two people who are together, even in making

plans for the future. For this particular section, four thematic plans for the future have emerged.

a. Buy Properties

To prepare for the future, couples would want to buy properties that they will either use for their families, or will be used as an investment. Grace recalled that Genno wanted to build an apartment in Manila so that they can have a passive income in the future. Roxy also remembered that Reiner plans to buy a condominium unit in Makati if they still have savings. This is in accordance with their plan of having a baby right after marriage. Reiner is thinking that it will be hard for his would-be-wife to climb a five-story building without an elevator.

Pau, Grace, Roxy and Krista all mentioned about having a house for their own families. Pau said that they have a timeline of three to four years to build that house. Grace said that Genno thinks of buying an additional house for her aside from the one that he bought for his mother. Roxy and Reiner already have a house in the province, while Krista is certain that having a house is a requisite for starting a family.

Krista was different and the only one among them who mentioned purchasing a car, instead of a house, as one of their plans for the future as a couple.

b. Build Own Family

Roxy thought of Reiner wanting to have children immediately. She even hoped that it would be a honeymoon baby for them. She was proud to tell in the interview that she had installed a mobile application that tracks fertility. Ronnel and Pau have talked about how many kids they will have in the future. Krista said that she and Arjay are both excited to start their own family.

Pau and Van both mentioned about considering to work together with their partners abroad. Pau and Ronnel's current occupations in the Philippines will be their stepping stone to find a better job abroad where they can migrate. Van longs to transfer to either Australia, New Zealand or Canada with Ace and their would-be-children. She commented that in those countries, either education or the health system is free, if not both.

c. Bank their Resources

Roxy and Mia have similar plans of getting an insurance, which is a “must” for seafarers. They are not enrolled under the Social Security System (SSS) Program, PhilHealth, or pension plans from their respective agencies. Roxy, meanwhile, also mentioned having a joint bank account with her partner. Grace, Krista and Mia pointed out the importance of thinking and planning about the future business that they can engage in.

d. Bless other People

Krista declared that she and Arjay are planning not just for their future but also for other people’ needs. They plan to support missionaries on a long-term basis and be active in the ministry of their church.

B.2. Recognizable Embodiment of Future Plans

Plans are just plans, just an abstract idea or thought unless accomplished via equally well-thought-of actions. The women were asked whether or not they see their partners as active participants in making their plans become a reality. They have mentioned several indicators that will show how their partners follow through with their plans as a couple:

a. Existence of a Timeframe

Roxy, Pau and Van all mentioned about having a time line for ending their LDR and start having a geographically close one. Pau said that in five years their house shall be finished so that Ronnel can just focus on his business in the Philippines. Van also mentioned that in five years, Ace should have finished his ranks. For Roxy, ten years is enough for Reiner to finish paying all the bills.

b. Clear blueprint of action

Net said that, “Everything has been laid out, and I’m part of his every plan”]. For Roxy, she sees Reiner as someone who saves up enormously for their future. “He doesn’t buy anything for himself,” she says. Van sees Ace saving up for the trainings for his promotion so that he can finish his ranks on time and get a higher salary.

c. *Initial startup*

Grace recalled that Genno already had his house built, and just recently, had already bought his brand new car. Pau and Ronnel already paid all the down payments for all the suppliers of their wedding. Krista provided details on how Arjay follows through with their plans of building a house. Van mentioned that Ace allows her to handle their finances by giving her his ATM card and salary allotment.

C. How Couples Communicate the Idea of Forever to Each Other Even in LDR

C.1. Communicating Forever in LDR

The women were asked on how they communicate the concept of forever or permanence in their relationship towards each other. It is interesting to note that all of them referred to three themes: words, actions and material things.

a. *Words*

Yves always assures Net that everything he does is for the two of them. Grace jokingly said that she and Genno use subtle bolahan or flatteries. Mia lovingly tells Joff that she will continue to care for him until they were old. Ace and Van shares their hopes and dreams for the kids as a way of communicating forever to each other. Assurances include affirming talk about the future of the relationship (Griffin, 2013). These words especially promote commitment from partners.

b. *Actions*

John Stewart, a humanist communication writer once said that a relationship requires continual care and nurture for sustained growth. If partners are to communicate forever via words, they too, shall supply it with actions. Krista said that she and Arjay are not that vocal when it comes to their feelings but they do not fail to express it via non-verbals. "I make him feel that he will be the only one that I will love in this lifetime by being a loyal wife even if he's here or not, she said.

c. *Gifts*

The last theme that sprung up in the ways the partners communicate forever is through giving of gifts or material things. The women were

able to see the love, thoughtfulness and effort behind the giver of the gift (5lovelanguages.com). For them, gifts are visual representation of love and they treasure these greatly. Roxy recalled that Reiner often surprises her with flowers and real size panda stuff toy. She, on the other hand, gives him a collage of their pictures in a slideshow presentation and a self-made poem.

Mia also mentioned that Joff gives her gifts on special occasions with the aid of his parents or siblings, but later on she told him to stop disturbing people just to send gifts after they got married. Van remembered that Ace also sends flowers and gifts, and she feels that these are tokens of appreciation for her and not simply being materialistic. Krista said that she still receives gifts and flowers from Arjay on special occasions.

Women in a relationship with seafarers do not have the luxury of continuous communication with their partners. This is due to the challenges posed by the latter's nature of work. Since calls and texts are expensive, the women only mentioned Facebook and Messenger as their main means of communication with their partners. However, we can see that communication has a big role in defining and perceiving the concept of forever or relationship permanence in the study. Without communication, it is hard for the partners to give assurance of permanence to each other, may it be through words, actions or gifts.

C.2. Forever as a Journey of a Ship Being Tossed by the Waves at Sea

Challenges are often part of any endeavor in life, and this is true even in romantic relationships. Generally speaking, long distance relationships pose more challenges than in geographically close ones. The women were asked what forms of challenges do they find unique in their current setup and how they view these challenges in their current relationships.

a. *Forms of Challenges*

Basically, there are only three forms of challenges that are unique in LDR. The first of which is the difference in time zones. "Waiting time

is longer if you are in different time zones,"]said Pau. Second is the limited use of internet for communication. This can be characterized by having an unstable internet connection (Krista), no connection at all (Roxy) or limited connection (Van) because of the very minimal availability of computers to be used. Last is of course, the absence of physical interaction.

b. *Loneliness Dynamics*

Firmin et al. (2014) conducted a qualitative analysis involved in college LDR. One of their findings revealed the feeling of being awfully lonely among those involved in LDR during holidays or special occasions. Net's realization about getting envious of the environment that every girl on campus had a bouquet and had her boyfriend with her confirms the above findings. Another finding of Firmin et al. described how seeing happy couples makes loneliness a little heavier to bear. Net described it as "feeling of being so alone," while Roxy and Pau described their feelings of loneliness when they wanted to go places and there was no one to accompany them. Van further reiterated that she feels alone on the happiest and loneliest events of her life when Ace is on aboard his ship.

Loneliness dynamics is not the only challenge that the women and their partners face because of the distance. Net fears of total detachment from Yves, thinking that he would eventually forget his feelings for her. Roxy fears that their future child will be aloof with Reiner because the former would not be able to see the latter often. Same with Krista when she said that,"he can't be a father to our child because he is away."

Other negative repercussions of the challenges in an LDR include quarrels when one is not able to update each other (Roxy) and when there is lack of constant communication (Krista) between the partners. Van also would worry about not being able to take care of Ace during when he would get sick because of the health risk factors that are inherent in his job.

For the other women-informants however, they do not regard the challenges as negative repercussions, but helpful feature for strengthening their relationship. Grace said that distance is okay

because she is still busy with her career. Mia argued that there are numerous ways to communicate now compared to the past when there was no internet connection. "It is hard but not impossible," said Krista when asked about the adjustment that she has to do for her and Arjay.

In line with Krista's adjustment, Pau said that it is not hard for her and Ronnel to adjust because of the established trust between them. She claims, "Love is bigger than the problems." Mia, on the other hand, constantly talks about love being a decision of the partners, who should stand by it no matter how difficult the situation is.

C.3. Coping Strategies in LDR

Because challenges somehow threaten the stability of the relationship between couples, coping strategies were employed to somehow minimize the negative impact that distance may bring. The women-informants were able to practice self-management and constant communication in maintaining their relationship with their partner.

a. *Self-management*

Self-management pertains to the taking of responsibility for one's own behavior and well-being. It involves setting one's goals and managing one's time to be able to motivate oneself to overcome the loneliness that comes with distance. Net has this advice for women in LDR that they should not be consumed in self-pity that might soon turn into pride. She said that she would just remind herself that they are going through this challenges for their own future. Grace recommended that one should keep herself busy. And Pau suggested that one should reminisce the things that made them fall in love with each other when things turn sour.

b. *Constant communication*

Net frequently talks about sending letters or emails to Yves. Krista on the other hand banks on her and Arjay's everyday chats and calls. Roxy articulated, "it seems like he is just there."

Permanence in LDR: Which? The Distance or the Relationship?

This study explored how the women socially construct permanence in their long distance relationship with their seafarer partners. In the course of the interview, two themes emerged:

A. Distance is a temporary thing

Timeline is important for the partners. They see their profession, plans and future as time-dependent, and as a way of organizing what lies ahead. In this study, the women treat distance in their relationship as a temporary thing.

Grace described Genno's profession at sea as "with interval and not continuous anymore." She said that Genno has a plan to alternate sea service with teaching when on land. Roxy said that Reiner's work in the cruise ship is not forever because he also plans on having a business when not aboard a ship. Mia declared that it would be only a matter of two to three years before Joff stops in his work. However, she recognizes that savings would be needed for this plan.

For Van, she would only allow Ace to work at sea for about five years more. Beyond this, like being on board for ten years, she has doubts on whether she would be able to handle such situation or delay. "It's not okay that all our lives, we are in LDR. In our 12 years of relationship, we had very limited time together. We know the sacrifice ever since we have started."

Krista declared that as much as possible, she and Arjay do not want him to work at sea anymore. They are praying for a stable business so that they can be together here in the Philippines.

B. *The relationship is the one thing that is permanent*

Net summarized her contention about relationship permanency by saying that she was brought here, in this situation. She even posed a rhetorical question asking that why would she even start it if she is not fully committed to it? She used to say to Yves, "You will come and go, you will come and go. I will stay, you will go, but when you're here, the feelings are still there. It remains the same, if not, it levels up."

Pau views LDR as something that makes a relationship stronger. She said that she and her partner have now found out that two people can be away from each other yet their love still remains. "We realized that we can overcome it, that nothing has changed. We were just physically apart, but our love remains."

CONCLUSIONS

Based on the interviews with the women-informants, the study concludes how the women socially construct the concept of forever. According to them:

1. A permanent relationship is a bond of two individuals who decide to have mutuality and reciprocity in areas such as trust, commitment and respect. Without the give-and-take characteristic of the relationship, partners might feel that they are being treated unjustly.
2. Planning for the future is an essential contribution to the permanence of the relationship. Futurity is viewed by the women as the assurance of a relationship that is not built on the "now" but on the coming days of being together.
3. Relationship permanence can still be communicated in LDR by employing certain means such as technology and other tangible materials such as gifts and tokens.
4. What is deemed permanent in LDR is not the distance but, rather, the relationship that the partners are currently in. Partners have a certain timeline that would determine the end of their physical parting. Their relationship however, is not anchored on their physical closeness but rather their decision to stay together no matter the limitations.

Recommendations:

Further studies suggested by the researcher are the following:

1. Research endeavors might look into the idea of how partners in LDR who have separated construct the idea of permanence despite the relationship dissolution.
2. Other contextualized forms of LDR may be scrutinized, too,

including those who are not mobile (OFWs) but having different time zones.

3. Future researchers may look into how couples manage their expectations in the permanence of the relationship without the aid of certain technologies.

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Another paper entitled “Social Construction of Forever as Perceived by Women in LDR with Seafarers” was awarded Best Paper when presented at the International Conference on Business Management and Social Sciences held at Phitsanulok, Thailand last November 9, 2017.

Research Article

Iconic Performance and the Media: The Case of Kris Aquino

Mae U. Caralde

Abstract

Through a document analysis of archive videos and still images of the popular Aquino political family, this study particularly looks into the iconic performances of Kris Aquino, known as the 'queen of all media' in Philippine pop culture, alongside her father, the late Senator Benigno 'Ninoy' Aquino Jr. The study inquired into the crystallization and persistence of the 'Aquino Magic' political narrative through different historical periods.

This author argues that Kris's popularity in media is attributed to how she skillfully transgressed kinship and social norms, and asserted herself as a woman in control of herself, in spite of her entanglement in different controversial relationships. The study aims to provide a historical approach on the role of media as an instrument in the construction of a personality cult or icon that obliquely advances a political economic agenda at specific moments in history.

Keywords: *Ninoy Aquino, Kris, iconic performance*

Introduction

In an old video archive posted in Youtube (Pinoy Insider, 2015), seven year old Kristina Bernadette C. Aquino, hitherto referred to as 'Kris,' is seen with her mother greeting a crowd of people in a campaign sortie for his detained father, Senator Benigno 'Ninoy' Aquino Jr. As a campaign stand-in for her father, Kris then speaks on the microphone, appealing for the people's support to vote for her father so that she and her family can finally see him and so that Ninoy can serve the Filipino people. Her soft, innocent voice pierced the emotions of the crowd and provided a resounding counterpoint to the dark silence of martial law.

Ninoy was then running for a position in the infamous 1978 Interim Batasang Pambansa (IBP) or parliamentary elections under the Lakas ng Bayan party (LABAN), opposing the administration's Kilusang Bagong Lipunan (KBL) party led by Imelda Marcos. In spite of the presence of the other Aquino daughters and only son, Benigno 'Noy' Simeon Aquino III, who would later become President, it was the appearance of the young Kris that was picked up by foreign media, such as *The New York Times* and *Time* magazine that year. Being featured in the front page of these newspapers was a big deal for the Aquinos and the LABAN campaign as they were deprived exposure by local media, mostly controlled by the dictator.

Surprisingly, on March 10, 1978, a month before the elections, Ninoy was granted by Marcos one television interview through Channel 9's talk show, *Face the Nation* (Ninoy Aquino TV, 2009). This television interview was supposed to expose Ninoy's possible removal from the Lakas ng Bayan's (LABAN) party because of thwarting a decision to boycott the Batasan elections and foreshadow his defeat. Instead of being grilled by pro-Marcos host Ronnie Nathanielsz and three other panelists, Ninoy seized the media opportunity to pitch for the elections. He explained that in spite of being one of the early proponents of the boycott decision of the party, the dire need to vent out the injustices of the dictator made him change his mind. He recalled telling his mother, "Ina, kating-kati na akong makipag-usap sa masa" (Mother, I'm very excited to talk to the masses) (Reyes, 2014, para. 40 ; Ninoy Aquino TV, 2009). Ninoy, who was already imprisoned for more than six (6) years, thought that running for the elections is the only way to connect with the broader masses rather than sticking with the boycott decision. A good orator and a fiery speaker as he was, Ninoy's eloquence and rousing words proved that the dehumanizing six years of prison life did not stifle his resolve in fighting the dictator. Reyes (2014), recalled that after watching the show on 10 March 1978, those who were with him "looked at each other and agreed that we had just watched a virtuoso performance, one that will be talked about ages and ages hence" (para. 45)

On the night of April 6, 1978, the eve of the Batasan elections, by way of showing their support to LABAN party's defiance against the

dictatorship, the people went out and lined up the streets bringing whatever they can hold to make noise and joined the historic noise barrage that lasted until midnight. For some observers, the 1978 noise barrage, notwithstanding that the country was still under Martial Law, was an early muscle-flexing rehearsal for succeeding massive mobilizations that would happen in 1983 and 1986 (Cojuangco, 2004; Esposito, 2011; Santos, 2016).

I have particularly chosen these historical markers to stress the moments wherein father and daughter, Ninoy and Kris, through their charismatic media appearances, or 'performance' so to speak, became 'icons' in the sense that they transformed into "sensation provoking art objects [images] that ever enfolds the subject into its form" (Ghosh, 2011, p. 8, emphasis mine) and have acquired "material force and symbolic power" (Bartmanski and Alexander, 2012, p.1). Ninoy's and Kris's projections in media became an 'image encounter' and 'iconic ritual' for the Filipino people as they articulate dissent against the Marcos dictatorship (Sonnevend, 2012, p. 220).

Filipinos who cannot explicitly critique the dictatorship found a voice in Ninoy's speeches. Conversely, the wives and children of those who were imprisoned or went missing during martial law, found solace and hope in the innocent voice of the young Kris. In this case, Ninoy and Kris, in these historical moments that I purposely chose, have the potential or tendency of fulfilling the fundamental functions of an icon, which are, "to allow members of societies (1) to experience a sense of participation in something fundamental whose fuller meaning eludes their comprehension and (2) to enjoy the possibility for control despite being unable to access directly the script that lies beneath (Bartmanski and Alexander, 2012, p. 2). It is along these lines that this study argues that the 1978 media appearances and historical circumstances surrounding them were the pivotal moments in the iconic beginnings and tendencies of Ninoy and Kris, the germ of what would later become the "Aquino Magic" phenomenon in the EDSA 1986 uprising.

Research Problem and Objective

This study problematizes how media play a vital role in the formation and circulation of icons, and in how these processes, when approached historically, factor in on the political, economic, and cultural configurations in Philippine society, specifically looking at gender. This study perceives that media and their articulations always exist in the context of mediation, by their producers, audiences, by the changing technologies of the time, and even by their subjects.

It is along this line that this study also questions the ways by which the subject, in this case, Kris Aquino, 'performed' counter-hegemonic acts that are potent enough to become 'iconic encounters' and 'icon rituals'. These events, projected and circulated through different media technologies and platforms, are shared by the mass audience who are not only active encoders but also producers of meanings from media texts.

The objective of the study is to demonstrate how the emergence and 'iconic performances' of the Aquinos in the visual landscape of the anti-dictatorship struggle, triggered an affective and emancipatory dimension among women. This aims to show the dynamic activity of encoding and decoding meanings by different actors that gain access to media icons, without losing sight of their political, economic and cultural positions in society. The Lopezes who run ABS-CBN for example, cinematically covered Cory Aquino's funeral for purposes other than simply subscribing to the legacy of defending democracy. On the other hand, grieving mothers, wives, and children of martial law victims identified with, and were inspired by Kris and Cory's resolve as much as they identified with the martyred Ninoy. The iconicity of Ninoy, Kris and Cory, I initially surmise, tapped a very potent social force—women and the youth—that contributed to the build-up of the anti-dictatorship forces in the late 1970s until 1986. This study, however, will primarily explore Kris Aquino's historical function in either perpetuating or debasing the political currency of the "Aquino Magic."

This study used textual analysis of 'image encounters' and 'icon rituals' through archival and document analysis as research methods. The units of analysis are the images and words. Images include still photographs and moving images (film and video), while words include utterances that go alongside these visuals. These images and words highlight the icon's physical attributes, rhetorical skills, and sagacity or the lack of it.

As a media research, this study is primarily concerned with the mediated process of icon formation, focusing on their mode of presentation and re-presentation, and the meanings media produce. These units of analysis were then examined by observing how they contribute to the shifting dominant and counter-hegemonic discourses in politics and gender that the icon subscribes to.

This study is organized into three distinct periods or historical turning points.

First is the late 1970s until the 1986 EDSA uprising that signaled the rise of Cory Aquino to the presidency as well as Kris's popularity. This period is characterized by the significant shift of media practice in terms of freedom of expression, from a suppressed media landscape to one that was variably free upon the so-called restoration of democracy in 1986. This was the period of the public's first 'image encounter' of the 7-year old Kris as a stand-in for Ninoy Aquino in the Batasan elections until she became a popular teen-age role model who occasionally appears on TV shows and commercials.

Second is the post-EDSA period covering the administrations of Ramos, Estrada and Gloria Macapagal Arroyo. In this period, Cory Aquino remains in the background of Philippine politics while Kris is making it in the movie industry and further expanding her popularity in hosting daily TV talk shows and games. However, Kris's popularity was coupled with several controversial relationships with men that transgressed societal norms expected from a highly respected, religious, and influential political clan such as the Aquinos. A striking event in this period's transition to the next was Cory Aquino's death in 2009.

And lastly, the period from 2010 until the present time, characterized by the return of an Aquino in the presidency through Noynoy “Pnoy” Aquino and Kris Aquino further establishing her influence in popular culture and media through her TV shows, film production company, magazine, commercial endorsements and online presence.

Theorizing the Materiality of Icons

Several theoretical frameworks guide this study in teasing out and in drawing its arguments and analysis.

First is Bishnupriya Ghosh’s (2011) theorizing on mass media icons in the formation of the popular and in the possible articulation of “a people” (p. 336). Ghosh opposes the idea that mass media, through its production of icons often understood as luring people to commodity fetishism, simply stupefies its audiences. She argues that the ubiquity of media images in our everyday viewing, in fact, “provide(s) a ready pallet of signifiers for contemporary struggles against global oppression” and as such, icons activate a distinctive semiotic economy that harness social bonds (p. 337). Further on she puts forward a conceptualization of the materiality of media icons as an incorporative “technology” that pulls together a multi-disciplinary dialogue. The materiality of media icons converges on three aspects, namely: a) Technological infrastructure or the raw tangible materials that comprise or construct the icon; b) Physiological materiality or the icon’s appeal to sensorial experience, and c) The icon’s geophysical materiality or the icon’s ability to draw space, distance and movement.

Second is Antonio Gramsci’s theory on hegemony that puts forward the argument that domination is brought about not only by physical threat and coercion, but also a configuration of cultural, political and economic factors. These factors mutually exchange with one another to achieve a degree of social consent so that the dominant status quo can exercise ideological control (Gramsci, 1999). In building up social consent, it is imperative for the ruling class to wield the power of media. This explains why during martial law, Marcos subjected all media networks under his control. However, because hegemony is also a process of negotiation and the media is a battlefield for competing

ideologies, at a certain point, a crisis of hegemony will arise and pave the way for the emergence of a counter-hegemonic mass. This is a stage characterized by the weakening of the state's economic, political and moral ascendancy, exemplified by the Marcos regime's widespread pauperization of the population, human rights violation, corruption and bankruptcy that finally imploded in the EDSA 1986 uprising.

This counter-hegemonic mass that incarnated during this period was not mainly brought about by economic and political forces alone. This study surmises that media, through their idealistic and iconic depictions of the Aquinos, was in a way, progressively instrumental in forging a unifying image of signification against the dictator and for the restoration of democracy, specifically 'elite democracy'. However, after the EDSA 1986 uprising until the present, this iconic image constructed by the media, have been exhaustively used, manipulated, and abused. While there is 'iconomania' over the "Aquino Magic," it also spawned an 'iconocrisis,' a state wherein an icon loses its magical aura and what replaces is an alternative signification of how these icons can be deployed to arrive at a future yet to be worked out by the people (Ghosh, 2011).

Extending the idea of hegemony is Stuart Hall's (1993) notion of encoding and decoding. Hall (1993) argues that messages are entangled and subjected to complex 'structures of discourses in dominance' as they traverse the four stages of communication, which are production, circulation, consumption, and reproduction. These four stages of communication are interrelated but independent from each other, and retains their distinct modalities and modes of existence. The production stage is characterized by the construction of messages "in the form of symbolic vehicles constituted within the rules of 'language'", made possible by the means and relations of production within media apparatuses (Hall, 1993, p. 508). As Hall put it succinctly, "the event must become a 'story' before it can become a communicative event" (p. 508).

The messages are discursive in form because these do not only follow certain rules and conventions in communication to become a sensible narrative, but are also framed based on wider socio-

political structures that may even include experiences and feedback drawn from audiences. Thus, Hall (1993) implies in his discussion that the audiences can be both the source and receiver of messages. These messages, which are always already discursively formed, will then be circulated and distributed to audiences, whose role now becomes a decoder of the messages. But this practice of decoding is not automatic, and not always identical or symmetrical to what the intended meaning of the message is. For a message to have an 'effect', Hall (1993) argues that it must first be "appropriated as a meaningful discourse and be meaningfully decoded" (p. 509).

The creation and construction of messages in the encoding stage as well as the extraction of meaning in the decoding stage by audiences, operates under conditions of dominance. But this is not to say that there may no longer be cracks or crevices by which oppositional and negotiated decoding can take place. This can be gleaned by how relations of production, ownership of communication infrastructures, and frameworks of knowledge are embedded, and in turn, dictate the form and content of the message in each of the communication stages.

As will be discussed in the next section, the March 10, 1978 broadcast of Face the Nation program, as an example, was a tightly orchestrated event to put forward Marcos's allegations against Ninoy Aquino and boost the dominant narrative that the latter was a losing candidate. A close examination behind the program's structure reveals that Face the Nation program and its hosts were under strict media control and were in fact cronies of Marcos. No wonder that the questions hurled at Aquino during the interview were intended to derogatorily frame him. But because each stage is not in itself a closed system, disruptions to the dominant discourse may be possible, such as Ninoy's overall 'performance' in the Face the Nation interview where he successfully destabilized Marcos's attempt to intimidate him in the Batasan election campaigns.

Hall explains that while communicators and programmers have a preferred meaning for their messages, which are often the dominant and 'naturalized' or normalized, meaning carried on by the status quo,

audiences may decode and reproduce the messages differently, as in the case of how the people reacted and took action after Ninoy's Face the Nation interview in 1978 (discussed in the succeeding section). In this sense, Hall is implying that it is not only the programmers and broadcasters who produce messages, but considers the audience as producers and consumers of content as well. The people therefore are not passive consumers of media but are actively appropriating meanings on media texts and at times even destabilizing long-standing cultural significations constructed by media such as, in our case, political icons.

Media as Battleground (late 1970s-1986)

Diverse forms of wielding power characterized Marcos' martial law. Aside from the obvious use of military force, political disenfranchisement of rival oligarchs, economic embargo, and tight media control were vital. In Marcos's earlier close alliance with the Lopezes, who spent money and media machineries to make him president in 1969, Marcos must have learned the importance of the power of media in molding populist sentiments. However, when the oligarchic characteristic of this clan became a threat to his political survival, he unremorsefully lashed the first whips of martial law on the Lopezes making them the first targets of Marcos's "revolution from above" (McCoy, 1994). Upon the declaration of martial law, Marcos ordered the seizure of Lopez-owned broadcast station ABS-CBN. In the same vein, Ninoy Aquino, who was acclaimed "Man of the Year" in 1971 by the Philippine Free Press and bannered prominently in media because of his fiery criticisms against the dictator especially after the Plaza Miranda bombing, was also detained and spent seven years in prison.

Marcos cronies, close relatives and friends, then handled sequestered broadcast stations and media corporations. These handful individuals were Roberto Benedicto who headed the Philippine Daily Express, Weekend and the three largest broadcasting systems that operated at least 16 television and 26 radio stations (Lent, p. 36); Benjamin "Kokoy" Romualdez, Imelda's brother who controlled Philippine Journalists Inc. that published dailies such as Times Journal, People's Journal, People's

Tonite and Taliba (Lent, p. 36); Presidential aide General Hans Menzi owned Bulletin and Liwayway publishing corporations and other close friends like Eduardo Cojuangco Jr. owned the Philippine Long Distance Telephone (PLDT) and Juan Tuvera and wife Kerima Polotan who owned Oriental Media Inc. (Lent, p.37).

With this setup, there was no way for the political opposition to effectively assert themselves through media because journalists themselves embarrassingly admitted that they censored themselves to avoid libel suits and harassments (Lent, 1987). But Ninoy was media-savvy. Perhaps with his experience as the youngest media correspondent in the Korean War, he knew the value of 'performance' and on how to tease the popular sentiments of the people through media. As Francisco Tatad (1983) wrote, "He knows the meaning of good media coverage. The noise rally he led in Manila in 1978 and the hunger strike he staged...were both media events" (para. 5).

That is why when Marcos unexpectedly allowed Ninoy to be interviewed in national TV through the program, "Face the Nation", Ninoy wasted not a single second in the 90-minute program. This was his first and only television appearance as candidate in the Batasang Pambansa elections under the banner of Lakas ng Bayan or LABAN, a coalition of oppositionists with some candidate closely aligned with the national democrats (ND) and social democrats (SocDem). It must be noted that the Partido Liberal, the party to which Ninoy officially belonged decided to boycott the elections. While maintaining respect to the party's decision, Ninoy later thought that running for the elections would be an opportunity for him to 'speak to the people', even if he would be subject to rigid regulations because he was still in jail. In a statement quoted in Mr. & Ms. Magazine, Ninoy said that he was willing to go through the rigors just so he could personally campaign and immerse with the people to know their real sentiments and figure out what they wanted him to do (Cuartero, 1978).

The television interview was intended by Marcos to be a media blitz to grill Ninoy on his affiliation with the CIA and his role as spy in what was known as the 'Indonesian affair,' a government-funded operation to track CIA-backed mercenaries planning to topple Indonesian president

Sukarno (Drake, 1978). What happened instead was that the television interview became a chance for Ninoy to criticize the government and pitch for the April 7, 1978 elections. In a Newsweek article, Ninoy was quoted as saying, "I decided to run because I wanted to give our people a vehicle for their frustrations" (Drake, 1978, p. 8).

Even these days, a video of the said interview in Face the Nation is still circulating through Youtube (Ninoy Aquino TV, 2009). By watching the video, one can say that the body language and gestures of the grilling panel were at the defensive in the face of a very eloquent and well-prepared Aquino. Ninoy sarcastically made allusions to the administration's move for "block voting" as "bulok voting" (spoiled voting), a thing that was spewed by the *lumang lipunan* (old society) and insisted by the *bagong lipunan* or New Society. What was prominently laid bare in the oral exchange was how Ninoy exposed the blind obedience of appointed generals and even media people to Marcos. When one of the hosts, Ronnie Nathanielz, tried to corner Ninoy by insinuating that he was trying to question the integrity of the administration and its men, Ninoy quickly retaliated by frankly asking Nathanielz, at his face, if he could defy the dictator given that he was working under the auspices of Marcos himself. Towards the end of the interview and afterwards, it was clear to the vast TV audiences who tuned in for Ninoy's television appearance, that he was successful in seizing the media opportunity, ironically provided by his enemy, in rallying for the demands of the opposition. Instead of depriving Ninoy the means to campaign, the 90-minute media mileage bolstered his popularity more than if he could have been allowed to campaign freely, and put Marcos in an embarrassing state (Drake, 1978).

To complement this media exposure by Ninoy was the young Kris's appearances at the campaign rallies of the LABAN party. In the March 1978 issue of Mr. & Ms. Magazine, a close-up picture of the seven-year-old Kris accompanies an article about Ninoy's declaration to run for the Batasan elections. The caption indicated that it was in the first rally of the LABAN ticket in the University of the Philippines Theater that the young Kris Aquino spoke in behalf of his dad and convincingly got the approval and sympathy of the crowd (Cuartero, 1978).

Ghosh's (2011) study on icons as contested and mediated images, heavily intensified by its multiplicity of meanings and articulating towards a representation of global aspirations, can be helpful in examining the potency of the Aquinos as political icons. Ghosh (2011) took her perspective by examining how the 'popular' or the people understood and constructed meanings out of icons apart from the hegemonic forces that have control over these images through media. The Ninoy and Kris Aquino's cases I have discussed above show that it is not enough that 'the people' conspire in the processes of 'iconic ritual' and meaning construction. First and foremost, the personalities themselves must be willing and effective 'performers'. Ninoy and Kris in the 1978 Batasan election campaigns have overturned the media machineries, the technological machineries of the dictator, to their advantage.

Through broadcast television, the admiration to a smart senator which was almost obliterated in the memory of the people because of his imprisonment, was revived in the battleground of media. Ninoy did this by capitalizing on his powerful arguments while, on the other hand, Kris did this by simply activating the emotions of the people, by being herself a young girl and a child of a political detainee speaking against a tyrant. Ninoy's much awaited and limited TV appearance also surmounted geographical barriers and allowed the people from far-flung provinces to witness his 'performance.' It is also important to note the context of the people's 1978 'image encounter' of Ninoy and Kris in print and television. It was a time of strict censorship where nobody could openly and explicitly criticize Marcos; yet, Ninoy and Kris overcame this barrier. The very narrow television appearance provided to him by Marcos, as a token gesture of accommodating opposition views, was magnified and overturned by Ninoy into a very tensed space and time in attacking Marcos in a nationwide television broadcast while appealing emotionally to the people to be one with his aspiration for freedom.

Aside from the literal meanings of their utterances quoted and captured in these media appearances, Ninoy and Kris's images offered the people an interpretation of their collective historical and personal circumstances, opening up the possibility of identification

and connection. Through their media projections, Ninoy and Kris's images allowed the audiences to say and do something that otherwise could not be said and done under the conditions of martial law. For example, at the outset of the election campaign, very few people attended the campaign sorties of LABAN because of fear of harassment by the police and the military (Santos, 2016). Mothers, widows, children and relatives of the victims of martial law and even ordinary Filipinos unscathed by the dictator chose to remain silent in the looming possible retaliation and red-tagging. But the slippage of Ninoy and Kris in a strictly censored media, their appearances on TV and in print media, provided impetus for the LABAN campaign and the anti-dictator protests that would eventually build up in the late 1970s. An important manifestation of awakening, dissent, and loss of confidence to the Marcos dictatorship was the April 6, 1978 noise barrage staged by LABAN supporters.

On Mourning and 'Death Performance' (1983)

By a twist of fate, Ninoy's heart ailment paved the way for his exile in the United States to seek medication and later pursue fellowship grants in U.S. universities. The time when they were in the US away from the noisy politics in the Philippines, was the happiest years of the family, according to Kris Aquino. Not until Ninoy decided to return to the Philippines and was gunned down as he was escorted in the airport tarmac on August 21, 1983.

Contrary to contemporary depictions, especially in biographical films about Ninoy, that his flight back home was top secret, media write-ups and discussions reveal that it was in fact an open secret. Everyone knew about Ninoy's homecoming. Perhaps the only thing that remained confidential was his exact time of arrival and flight number. From Boston, Taipei to Manila, Ninoy was accompanied by a group of international journalists and even entertained interviews in his hotel room. In these interviews, the possibility of an assassination upon his arrival was something far-fetched, and viewed as desperately fatal for the crumbling Marcos regime, at least for the imagination of most media delegates and Aquino's companions during the trip. As Sandra Burton (1989) observed, what was supposed to be

a clandestine interview, became a press conference sans the video cameras. Therefore, the journey back home was a big media event that Ninoy consciously played along or even intentionally utilized to diffuse whatever dangerous plot awaited for him in the Philippines as international media were all eyes on his homecoming. Unfortunately, Ninoy was assassinated on August 21, 1983 at the airport tarmac.

The Aquino family's subsequent decision to retain Ninoy's physical state during the funeral, intentionally to make a statement of Marcos' brutality, did more than that in the Filipino imaginary. In spite of government downplaying the whole situation by blocking newspapers, television and radio stations about Ninoy's death, the originally planned simple funeral became a nationwide mourning.

In Filipino culture, the act of grieving also entails the act of looking at the dead body. Particularly in Ninoy's death, this gazing of the body by the people who came to pay their last respect was crystallized into a level of identification, especially for those who were victims of Martial Law. Proof to this is a passage that states:

Gazing at his blood-soaked chest and his wounded face still bearing its bullet-marks,... a grief stricken people were actually gazing not only at Ninoy Aquino but at themselves, bloodied and wounded by a long history of colonial domination, still suffering from foreign and native oppression (Panaligan as cited by Ileto, 1985, p. 14).

Inserted in political theology, Ninoy and Cory were conveniently elevated as the modern day Christ and Virgin Mary in Philippine politics, ready to redeem the people from the bondage of oppression. Conversely, as the people gazed at Ninoy, the identification was not that they wanted to be like Ninoy, but the other way around—that Ninoy was very much like them. As Ileto (1979) explained, the deeply rooted influence of the *pasyon* in our culture, "in its narration of Christ's suffering, death, and resurrection, and of the Day of Judgment, provides powerful images of transition from one state or era to another, e.g., darkness to light, despair to hope, misery to salvation, death to life, ignorance to knowledge, dishonor to purity, and so forth" (p.14). In this parallel reading, the *pasyon* and the death of Ninoy were events that provoked people to reflect on the injustices of society and

of their own poverty.

Cannell's (1995) findings in her study of Bicolano lowland practices of imitating the dead Christ tangentially asserts that Filipinos, specifically Bicolanos, identify with Christ by performing rituals and practices of intimacy as a way of acquiring and negotiating power with the supernatural. The dead Christ is not only seen as Christ, in the strictly western Catholic sense, but was also seen thru the non-Catholic lens by associating the dead Christ as the best shaman or magical hero, with whom they could derive power to heal the sick or acquire magical objects such as the anting-anting that can shield the person wearing it from bullets.

Ninoy's death and the massive outpouring of people in his burial and funeral march, when viewed in this light, explains the exuberance and an unfathomable energy from the people, rather than simply conveying misery and hopelessness. This powerful force 'acquired' from the association of Ninoy with the supernatural powers of the dead Christ will later be put to use during the 1986 EDSA uprising.

As the 'death performance' or the rituals of identification and intimacy unfolded, not only was Ninoy's image congealed into an icon, but also of his direct family members like his wife, Cory and youngest daughter, Kris. The 'image encounter' of the people with Ninoy's bloodstained body and his grieving family, coupled with an emotionally laden 'iconic ritual', which was the experience of intimacy with Ninoy-as-dead Christ, completed the prerequisites of the construction of an icon. The people's memory of the seven-year old Kris campaigning for his father four years ago and the 12 year-old Kris who wiped her tears behind huge eyeglasses, mourning along with her siblings and mother in 1983, were two vivid images that stirred the people's sympathy and admiration.

It is also important to note that two important factors convinced the reluctant Cory to finally run as president in the 1986 Snap elections. First was after receiving a petition signed by a million signatures in support of her presidency, and second was after Cory conferred her to decision to her children, with Kris instantly signifying her support

while the rest of her siblings registered their vehement reservations. Nevertheless, the Aquino children were convinced and supported their mother in the campaign that later brought her to the presidency.

From Disco-hopping to TV-guesting (1986-1992)

Kris Aquino was in her teens, around 14 to 15 years old and a high school student at the Colegio de San Agustin-Makati, when her mother, Cory Aquino, ran for the presidency. She was a constant companion of her mother during campaign sorties. As early as that time, she was considered a hot media material in television talk shows like Inday Badiday's *See True*. Her first appearance was in a taped interview for *See True* on February 4, 1986 (and aired on February 8, the day after the scheduled Snap elections) that would feature Kris Aquino and also Imee Marcos-Manotoc in the 'spirit of equal time' (Japitana, 2010). We have to bear in mind that at this time, Marcos was still in power and media still operated under great restraint, tolerating showbiz stuff rather than discussions on political issues.

It was in this interview that Kris revealed she was the only one who wanted her mother to run in the election, explaining perhaps because she was too young to see what her father had gone through so she thought she would "like to try it" (politics). "But now with all these intrigues and what people are saying, *ayaw ko na*. No, I don't like to be in politics myself," Kris elaborated (Japitana, 2010). The question whether she ate *galunggong*, a kind of fish commonly consumed by the masses and often used as reference by Cory when critiquing how prices had rapidly gone up under a Marcos-led economic policy, interestingly caught the young Kris admitting that she had never eaten that fish. When asked if she would enter showbiz, her answer was a yes. "Perhaps just one movie. That's all my mom will allow me..." Kris explained (Japitana, 2010). Given the possibility of becoming a presidential daughter, Kris modestly responded media people's speculation of her role in politics if her mother would win the election by simply saying that she will remain Cory's daughter and will not meddle at all with politics.

Events quickly unfolded thereafter. The Snap Elections in 1986 was ridden with fraud that led to the mass walkout of NAMFREL (National

Movement for Free Elections) officials during the counting of ballots. This incident triggered Cory's faction to declare civil disobedience and call to boycott products manufactured by Marcos-crony companies that later snowballed into the massive mobilizations in EDSA in the days of February 22 to 25, 1986. Ironically though, Cory Aquino was not in EDSA during the height of the tension, but was in fact in Cebu with Kris Aquino, kept safely by nuns in a convent to thwart the possibility of an arrest. Accounts on the chronology of the EDSA uprising by the *Inquirer* revealed that Kris Aquino was disco-hopping in Cebu, oblivious of a historic event that would eventually topple the man who caused so much misery to the Filipino people including her very own family. Her disco-hopping in bars must have been part of her 15th birthday celebration, which fell on February 14, only days between the Snap Election and the EDSA people power uprising.

On 1 March 1986, a week after 'people power' that ousted Marcos, Kris, then a presidential daughter, had her first live TV interview on Channel 7 for Inday Badiday's *See True*. As Japitana (2010) recalled, Kris appeared sophisticated, had her hair done in the latest hairstyle, and conveyed in her statements Cory Aquinos' call for reconciliation after long years of martial law. Consequently she also appeared as a guest in IBC's *The Sharon Cuneta Show* (1986), co-hosted in variety shows like *GMA Supershow* between 1986-1992 and *Eat Bulaga* in 1988-89; and appeared in sitcoms and TV specials. In 1989, ABS-CBN aired Kris at 18, a TV special that featured Kris Aquino's 18th birthday celebration. Inday Badiday's show *Eye to Eye*, also made Kris' debut special by inviting the presidential daughter's biggest showbiz crush, the Purefoods star basketball player, Alvin Patrimonio. Aside from Patrimonio's popularity, the thought that the presidential daughter publicly admitted her attraction to the basketball player, was enough for the public to get intrigued, hence they followed Kris' budding and colorful showbiz career.

One of Kris Aquino's earliest talk show stints was when she hosted RPN's *Actually, Yun Na!* in 1992-1995 with actor-comedian Arnel Ignacio. Interestingly, in one of the show's episodes in 1995, the staff invited Ferdinand "Bongbong" Marcos Jr., who was then the congressman of the 2nd District of Ilocos Norte. Whether to show a

gesture of reconciliation or merely pump up the ratings of the show, the appearance of Bongbong and Kris on television was indeed much talked about even until now, with the fact that the said episode was uploaded in Youtube. In the show, the two presidential heirs talked casually about their parents who were staunch political rivals, about their personal take on martial law, and about politics, as if everything else had all been ironed out after a court ruling convicted 16 defendants for the assassination of Ninoy in September 1990. While viewers lauded the civility and politeness of Kris and Bongbong in the midst of an issue, which was far from having a clear closure, this episode also cued the audience on the shallowness and superficiality of Kris' historical grasp. She may have the eloquence of her father, but not the fervor and political acuity of Ninoy. By accommodating Bongbong Marcos a share in the limelight, Kris thought that she had done her mother a favor of exuding the aura of reconciliation and of pacifying the discontent of critics regarding her mother's failure to bring a convincing verdict on the mastermind of Ninoy's assassination.

By lacking depth and context, what Kris had actually done with this episode was to gloss over the crimes, human rights violations, massive economic pauperization, and injustices that the Marcos regime had brought to the Filipino people. She has reduced an issue that had a historical and national implication into something that was otherwise trivial, personal and spectacular showbiz performance. Kris Aquino seemed to be so insensitive or was not astute to miss the point of all these. Cory Aquino, upon knowing about this controversial interview, got angry, especially when her daughter kissed Bongbong Marcos on the cheek after the said interview. As Lourdes Sytangco, Cory's spokesperson, exclaimed in a news article, "How could she do that to her mom?" (Deseret News, 1995). Or to put it in another way, how could Kris do that to the Filipino people?

The Massacre Queen: Kris in the Movies

With her popularity on TV and political vestige as the presidential daughter, Kris Aquino did not find it difficult to enter the film industry in the 1990s. Her first film was a comedy flick with blockbuster comedy actor Rene Requiestas in the film *Pido Dida: Sabay Tayo*

(1990), a spin-off from the 7-up cartoon commercial featuring Fido Dido, produced by Regal films and directed by Tony Cruz. Even if film critics griped about her acting as rigid and stiff, *Pido Dida* quickly became a box-office hit prompting the making of two more sequel films in 1992 and 1993. Cory Aquino did not particularly like her daughter's exposure in the film industry, considering that Kris' image in these comedy films would run inconsistently with the image of the respectable, prim and proper Aquinos in politics, not to mention that Cory was still the president during that time. But then again, nothing could dissuade Kris from realizing her dream of becoming a star.

After her mother's term as president, Kris Aquino was also quick to change her image as comedy box-office queen to more controversial and challenging roles by appearing in massacre films, a particular psycho-thriller film genre trend that became popular in the mid-1990s mainstream film industry. These massacre films were mostly real-life stories that bannered the news, with court investigations that were controversial and dramatic because of known personalities implicated in the gruesome criminal cases. Notable among these massacre films were the following: *Visconde Massacre: God Help Us!* (1993); *Myrna Diones Story: Lord Have Mercy!* (1993); *Humanda Ka Mayor: Bahala na ang Diyos* (1993) all directed by Carlo J. Caparas, *Elsa Castillo Story: Ang Katotohanan* (1994) directed by Laurice Guillen, and *The Fatima Buen Story* (1994) directed by Mario O'hara, which made Kris a nominee for the Gawad Urian Award for Best Actress.

Visconde Massacre was all about the multiple homicide case of members of the Visconde family against the suspect, Hubert Webb, the son of basketball player, actor, former congressman and senator Freddie Webb. Kris Aquino played the role of 18-year-old Carmela Visconde, who was raped before she was killed. *Myrna Diones Story* was a survival story of a woman who was raped and executed in Benguet, and *Humanda Ka Mayor* was all about the rape and slay case of UPLB student Eileen Sarmenta by Calauan Mayor Antonio Sanchez. *Elsa Castillo Story* by Guillen, was no different as this film tackled the plight of a "chop-chop lady", a woman who was literally severed by her lover, and *The Fatima Buen story* was all about a convicted woman whose entanglements with different men impeded her struggle for

redemption. In all these films, Kris played the leading role, earning her the title “massacre queen” of the Philippine movies.

Kris also appeared in films of different genres. In some romantic films, she even paired with popular leading men of the decade, such as, Alvin Patrimonio in *Tasya Pantasya* (1994), Richard Gomez in *Ang Siga at ang Sosyal* (1992) and Aga Muhlach in *Bakit Pa Kita Minahal* (1994). However, these romantic flicks did not register with the audience as prominently as her massacre films.

One might say that, for one with significant cultural and political clout, Kris Aquino could choose more pleasant and less controversial films and actually turn down the gruesome massacre and rape films. But why didn't she? If it were only to get attention, then Kris succeeded admirably by providing the audience the novel entertainment of the then presidential daughter being violently raped by brutal men in true-to-life crime films.

Repeatedly portrayed as a victim in massacre and rape films, Kris' image remains pitied every time she gets into trouble with men. Has she carried on this 'performance as a victim' in media on to her real-life relationships and to her mass following?

The coincidence of branding the younger Aquino as the 'massacre queen' while Cory Aquino's presidency was actually marred by real-life massacres, such as, the Mendiola Massacre and Lupao Massacre in 1987 that claimed the lives of poor peasants, is but unsolicited historical circumstance that may work in favor or against both Kris and Cory Aquino's reputation.

At the turn of the century, Kris finally had her biggest break in the film industry when she won the FAMAS Award for Best Supporting Actress for the film *Mano Po* (2002), wherein she co-starred with Maricel Soriano and Richard Gomez. The film was a big hit not only in the box-office but also among award giving bodies as evidenced by the 12 awards including Best Picture given by MMFF (Metro Manila Film Festival). After this success, Kris was quick to follow the Asian-horror trend and turned into making horror films such as *Feng Shui* (2004)

and Sukob (2006). The achievements of these two films both directed by Chito Roño and produced by Star Cinema, which raked millions in the box-office locally and from international screenings, signaled Kris Aquino's shift from being a "Massacre Queen" to "Philippines' Box-office Horror Queen."

At this peak of Kris Aquino's success and after more than two decades in show business, appearing in both film and television, she then ventured into film producing. She started out co-producing films with Star Cinema, Viva Films and MJM to name a few. Then later on she established her own production firm named, Kris Aquino Productions or K Productions in 2013, which produced the films *Instant Mommy* (2013) directed by Leo Abaya for Cinemalaya, *My Little Bossings* (2013), that launched the showbiz career of her son James "Bimby" Aquino Yap, and a sequel film of her blockbuster film *Feng Shui* (2014).

Everyday Kris

Unlike her parents or even her brother, President Benigno "Noynoy" Aquino III, Kris had become an indispensable image, consistently appearing in our popular culture and almost like a staple product in every Filipino household ever since her first appearance on television in 1986. If the other Aquinos were only seen in the news, in biographical documentaries or in press conferences like President Noynoy Aquino, Kris, on the other hand, was everywhere, every day in billboards along the highway of EDSA hawking milk, appliances and clothes. At eight in the morning, she gossiped with friends on her morning show *Kris TV* and entertained housewives in the latest vacation and food trips she had with her sons. In the evening, she capped the night with another dose of gossip and showbiz news with co-host Boy Abunda in *SNN: Showbiz News Ngayon* aired at ABS-CBN, which later became *Aquino and Abunda Tonight*.

At one point in her career, especially from the year 2001 until 2011, she thrilled audiences with her gameshows such as *Game KNB?*, *Kapamilya Deal or No Deal*, *Wheel of Fortune*, *Pinoy Bingo Tonight* and the Philippine version of *The Price is Right*. Beyond her exposure in television, Kris also launched her own lifestyle magazine, *K! The*

Kris Aquino Magazine, and in 2009 she launched K Everyday, a lifestyle brand that features an array of kitchen and home products in partnership with ABS-CBN Licensing. Adding up to all these media omnipresence, Kris Aquino made sure she is updated in the world wide web by creating her own video blogs through her website, withlovekrisaquino.com.

Her media reach and influence had widely expanded, elevating her image from “Queen of Massacre and Horror Films” to being the “Queen of All Media” in the 21st century. Kris Aquino practically filled the gap of more than two lull decades, after Cory Aquino finished her term as president in 1992, up until 2010, when another Aquino became president. This gap in the country’s political history, with an Aquino only in the sidelights during the administration of presidents Fidel Ramos, Joseph ‘Erap’ Estrada and Gloria Macapagal Arroyo, was also the period when Kris was intermittently involved in scandalous relationships with married men such as actors Joey Marquez, Vic Sotto and Philip Salvador, to name a few. These affairs were all feasted upon by media and almost threatened the ascribed patriotic legacy and saintly image of the Aquinos. In spite of all these, Kris remained the number one product endorser in the Philippines (Mananquil, 2011) and among the top taxpayers in the country, registering more than P40 million of income tax paid in 2013 (Rappler, 2015).

Performing an Icon

While Cory Aquino continued Ninoy’s projections in politics, Kris made her own name as a showbiz icon, bringing with her the frankness, rhetorical vestige, and bloodline of her father. One can easily conclude that Kris Aquino only borrowed the cultural capital of her parents to boost her showbiz career. However, this could only be true in the early 1990s but did not hold strong towards the turn of the century. Kris, in the year 2000 onwards, had already gained not only popularity, but had evolved into an icon of her own right with powerful economic disposition. She might be an extension of the Ninoy and Cory Aquino iconicity, but definitely a decisive and powerful one that could stir the country’s political and economic narrative.

Alexander (2012), in his discussion of the performativity of icons, states that “icons can perform without the aid of other powers because, once launched, they have power independent of the processes that performatively produced them” (p. 34). But iconicity, he further argues, is a process, that is therefore always dynamic and evolving, “and subject to powerful social mediations” (p.34). This characteristic flexibility of icons somehow explains the constant engagement of different actors in using the ‘Aquino magic’ for their political and economic ends.

One example is the US government who, after the 1986 EDSA uprising, immediately wanted access to the Aquino administration because of its strategic military and economic interests in the region (Aquino, 1990). By taming ‘people power’ and tacitly supporting an Aquino in the late 1980s and in the recent 2010 elections, the US was able to ensure that neoliberal policies are pursued. The Lopezes, who, right after 1986 EDSA Revolution, explicitly pronounced that they fully support Cory’s administration, have easily recuperated loses and recovered sequestered companies, like ABS-CBN and Meralco, to name a few.

During the administration of Benigno Simeon “Noy” Aquino, Kris was provided by ABS-CBN with generous and favorable media mileage and positioning as explicitly demonstrated by the network’s rendition of the national anthem and Christmas station IDs . This only goes to show that the making, as well as the persistence, of a political icon is invested with an overriding calculation of strategic cost-benefit analysis on the part of other actors benefiting from the ascribed iconic power of images. These actors find it necessary to become not merely decoders or consumers of iconic images, but also actively played the part of producers or encoders, who made possible the icon’s discursive reproduction.

Unlike Ninoy and Cory, Kris’ iconic performance became even more interesting because of the tension and dilemma in keeping the balance between politics and the commercially-motivated, privacy-intrusive environment of show business. In politics, she is expected to live up with the legacy of her parents who were perceived as restorers

and fighters of democracy, demonstrating herself as the female counterpart of the articulate Ninoy Aquino. In show business, she is expected to behave according to the religious and saintly conventions painted by media of the Aquinos, specifically her mother, Cory Aquino.

But Kris has performed the iconic role in a rather inconsistent, rebellious and candid manner. She demonstrated this when she had Bongbong Marcos as guest in her TV show a year after the historic 1986 EDSA uprising, when she partnered with comedian, Rene Requiestas, in comedy films and repeatedly portrayed a woman-victim in several true-to-life massacre films in the 1990s, which bravely deglamorized herself as a presidential daughter, and when she surprised a conservative audience in the 1990s in candidly admitting her admiration to basketball hotshot, Alvin Patrimonio. She had drawn the flak of critics because of her scandalous love affairs that were all hot media items, such as her having a lovechild with Philip Salvador in 1994, her revelation that she once became the 'other woman' of Alvin Patrimonio in 2000, her admission that she acquired a sexually transmitted disease from lover Joey Marquez, whom she lived with briefly in 2002, her tumultuous married life with James Yap in 2005 that ended in an annulment in 2012 (www.spot.ph, 2013), and her flirtations with Quezon City Mayor Herbert Bautista.

Every time she committed an act that tarnished the iconic image of the Aquinos, Kris consistently 'performed' emotional interviews with matching wiping of tears in front of the camera. She did this when she publicly apologized to her mother because of her interview with Bongbong Marcos, and in all of her sorrowful moments in her love life (www.spot.ph, 2013). Kris has mastered the art of knowing when to make the people cry and how to win their sympathy, no matter how sensible the reasons of Kris' former lovers in breaking up with her.

In these narratives, Kris was always painted as the victim of men who were described as abusive, unfaithful, and violent, and therefore unworthy in living up with a strong-willed woman like her. These heavily affective events in Kris' life, circulated and magnified in media, facilitated another 'image encounter' and 'iconic ritual' that further enhanced her iconic characteristics. Perhaps, in spite of all these, one

may wonder how Kris has maintained her popularity and approval of her fans. Her manager, Deo Edrinal, described this unwavering appeal of Kris to the masses by saying, “Kris has never been afraid to share her interior life. She has always been transparent... there is no deliberate re-engineering of her image. But there is always an attempt at authenticity” (Mananquil, 2011, para. 7-8). By her frankness and openness in revealing her sexual life, she had disrupted and bravely challenged religious and social norms imposed on women. In this sense, Kris successfully fulfilled an iconic function of saying something that otherwise could not be said by anyone given the same circumstances. In doing so, her iconic image became instrumental in opening up discourses on gender roles, marriage, women’s role in politics, and women empowerment.

Another factor is the intertextual link of Kris in the massacre movies and Kris in real life. The sorrowful moments of her life may not be as graphically morbid as the chop-chop lady she portrayed in the *Elsa Castillo Story: Ang Katotohanan* (1994), or the rape victim in *Visconde Massacre: God Help Us!* (1993) and *Humanda Ka Mayor: Bahala na ang Diyos* (1993). But it can be said that they were equally tragic and traumatic for any woman to experience, much so by an Aquino heir. These interwoven narrative threads of her massacre movies and her tragically forbidden and traumatic relationships with men combined into a representation of Kris as a credible victim. As opposed to debasing her image, these massacre films may have actually contributed in saving her face and in helping her recuperate from an otherwise shameful and irresponsible conduct of private life.

Aside from being literally a performer and producer for TV, film, print, and new media, Kris has gained so much cultural capital that enabled her to orchestrate and encode embedded messages and circulate these significations to the population. This is very far from how she started out in show business. Her more than two decades in show business provided her the opportunity to lay down a network of media connections closely interwoven with political and business entities. Proof of this was her pivotal role in the drama of Cory Aquino’s death in 2009.

Her emotional speech during the funeral tribute of Cory and excessively prolonged media mileage of her interview as she recounted her grief over her mother's death, was an event highly feasted by the media. A whole technology of media network was mobilized to cinematically project this event. ABS-CBN alone boasted that it harnessed some two hundred people: 21 cameraman, 13 desk editors, 30 reporters, 13 photojournalists and dozens of engineers. In less than 24 hours after the formal announcement of Cory's death, ABS-CBN managed to setup 70 moving lights and 17 cameras in the Manila Cathedral, and deployed hundreds more doing home-based operations for traditional broadcasting and online streaming (ABS-CBN, 2009). Because the Aquino family authorized only ABS-CBN as the official communication network to cover the whole funeral tribute, there was no denying that the giant network dominated the ratings and raked advertising profit from this funeral event.

This wholesale mobilization of the network's TV, radio, print and online publication teams was not only the Lopezes' way of showing reciprocity or *utang na loob* (debt of gratitude) to the person who enabled their economic comeback after martial law, nor was it just about commemorating and immortalizing Cory's legacy. Beneath all these was an underlying political strategy necessary for the neo-liberalist vision to survive, or more precisely, to fortify economic interests of the Lopez clan in the light of an upcoming elections in 2010. It should also be noted that at this point in Kris Aquino's career, she was already a co-producer of many Star Cinema productions and her talk shows had remained top raters among several programs that sustained ABS-CBN. No wonder that the entourage of stars who performed during Cory's tribute were also the talents that Star Cinema and ABS-CBN groomed.

In terms of political insinuations and implications, perhaps the most significant part of Kris' eulogy speech for Cory was when she said,

Kagaya ng pangako na iniwan ng dad at mom sa ating bayan...Noy, ikaw at ako ang nasa pusisyon para ipagpatuloy ang lahat ng kanilang nasimulan... You know that during our last conversation with mom, nangako ako sa kanya... whatever support you needed, we would be there for you (Tahimika2, Aug. 7, 2009).

[Just like dad and mom's promise to our people...Noy, you and me are in the position of carrying on their legacy...You know that during our last conversation with mom, I promised her...whatever support you needed, we would be there for you].

This part of her speech was then followed by applause from the audience. With this utterance in a densely emotional atmosphere, almost a perfect 'icon ritual' event, Kris effectively put forward a claim of bearing the continuity of their parent's iconic status, along with Noynoy Aquino. But if one would think of it, should there really be a monopoly of who will take on Cory and Ninoy's supposed roles in reforming this country? Does this burden of continuity solely belong to an Aquino, thereby discounting the important role of "the people" in the whole political discourse? As the turn of events unfolded, we saw thereafter that this statement by Kris was a prelude to Noynoy's presidential candidacy, forcing Mar Roxas, the official presidential candidate of Liberal Party for 2010 to give way in favor of an Aquino.

These were only some of the myriad ways of performing the icon, by re-articulating, re-molding and reconfiguring the Aquino Magic according to the vested interest of those who wielded power over politics, economy, and culture.

Conclusion

The case of Kris Aquino discussed in this paper provided us a brief survey of the role of media in the construction of the "Aquino Magic" through a historical perspective. While this study initially assumes that media has a deliberate role in the formation of icons, we saw that the emergence of the "Aquino Magic" phenomenon was ironically an upshot of a suppressed media. Coupled with state coercion, this fueled the people's clamor to look up for images or models to which they can signify their aspirations. Thus, the supposed grilling of Ninoy in national TV and the subtle insertion of the photo of Kris Aquino in the magazines, instead of alienating them from the masses, actually resulted to the opposite.

However, it must be pointed out that this peculiar formation of an icon in the midst of totalitarian rule would not have been effective without

the willful cooperation and exemplary skills of the iconic subject. If Ninoy and Kris were not that articulate, keen, and convincing in their rhetoric, then they would not figure out as icons that can cement a broad anti-dictatorship alliance during martial law. At this point, we can even consider that Ninoy, Cory, and Kris, before and during the EDSA 1986, served a significant counter-hegemonic function compounded by the growing support of an alternative media (Lent, 1987).

But when power relations shifted after EDSA 1986 and Cory Aquino came to power, this also changed the media situation considerably because of government-instigated reforms, such as, the restoration of the writ of habeas corpus, the release of political detainees, some of which were media practitioners, and sequestration of media companies previously controlled by Marcos cronies (Lent, 1987). As a way of reciprocating the Aquino administration, some media practitioners and owners of broadcast stations have also openly signified their support to the transition government.

While the image of a patriotic Ninoy sits comfortably in history, media opened up a new trajectory for Kris Aquino in show business. During the period after Cory's term in 1992 until another Aquino made a comeback in Malacanang in 2010, Kris' showbiz career, served as filler and a link of the Aquino icons to the masses. Despite her successive scandals and involvement in controversies, Kris Aquino's flaws and defects were turned into 'effects', characteristic of the entertainment industry, therefore tolerated, absolved and forgiven by the public.

Events in history have shown how powerful social entities wielded the iconic images of the Aquinos to advance their economic and political interests. Simultaneously, there was also a prevalent emergence of distortions and manipulations especially in social media. The consequence of this was the possible decimation of the premise of the Aquino Magic's emergence and in the obliteration of the role of a unified "people" imbued with "power" in the processes of imagining and realizing the Filipino nation. Kris Aquino, by her growing influence and control on media and politics, became instrumental in fueling and sometimes tempering the progressive potentials of the Aquino Magic.

As a celebrity icon, she became instrumental in opening up discourses on women empowerment. However, Kris' over-utility and reliance on the iconic magic of the Aquino legacy, have also contributed to the reduction of these icons into token symbols. Kris' iconic performance can reinforce, and at the same time, endanger the credibility and efficacy of the 'Aquino magic', and its corollary association with the idea of 'people power' and anti-dictatorship struggles.

Therefore, there is a dire need, not only to demystify the Aquino Magic and the Kris Aquino personality cult, but also for the people to encode and decode alternative significations. A higher level of media literacy, historical appreciation, and political engagement is needed from the broad mass of media consumers to activate a progressive semiotic economy that will forge new social bonds that can deploy or put pressure on political icons to serve a more empowering and emancipatory function rather than remaining narrow, petty and exploitative in their disposition. With the rise of another authoritarian regime in the image of President Duterte, the pressure is even greater, not only to the Aquinos but to the people as well.

End Notes

¹ These biographical films are *Salamat, President Corazon Aquino* (2009) produced by ABS-CBN and the Benigno Aquino Foundation, *The Last Journey of Ninoy* (2009) produced by Unitel and ABS-CBN, and *Ninoy Aquino & the Rise of People Power* (2010) produced by Tom Coffman.

² For examples see ABS-CBN's 2011 *Lupang Hinirang* video (ABS-CBN Star Cinema, 2011), ABS-CBN Christmas station IDs from 2009 until 2015 available in Youtube, published by ABS-CBN Entertainment.

³ See *Kris Aquino on Mom Cory Aquino* (OPM MTV Video, 2016), a Youtube video covering Kris' apology to her mom on his interview with Bongbong Marcos and affair with actor Phillip Salvador. Included in this video was Cory's benevolent and motherly reply to her beloved Kris.

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Research Article

Look Who's Watching: An Audience Reception of ABS-CBN's 'The Legal Wife'

John Evan P. Orias, Jezreel S. Lopez, Rachele T. Pascual, Janice DG. Roman, and Regina U. Mariano

Abstract

Television (TV) soap operas play an important role in the lives of Filipinos since certain TV images represent and or affect reality. The creative storylines, casting, and production in TV programs altogether appear to be narrating a person's story.

In recent years, the adultery genre has become a staple in Philippine soap operas. This popular TV genre has implicated women, particularly housewives, as it depicts family matters and relationships. One TV series that has become a hit among audiences is the "The Legal Wife."

This study explores the TV viewers' concept of marriage as portrayed in soap operas. Using the survey method, it examines the demographic profile of 1,000 TV viewers in Manila. It also analyzes how the abovenamed TV program has shaped the perception of married Filipinos toward marriage.

Results reveal that emotional attachment is high for viewers who never went to college. After watching many episodes, women imitate the behavior of the TV program's female protagonist. After watching many episodes. Men usually remember the lines of the female character more than those of the male protagonist's.

Keywords: *soap opera, marriage, television, gender, viewership, emotional attachment, behavior*

Introduction

A. Background of the Study

Marriage is a commitment between two individuals who promise to care for each other despite their differences. For some, security, understanding, and affection characterize a good marital relationship. However, most people still tend to question what really comprise a successful marriage.

In recent years, several articles on the growing rate of annulment cases in the Philippines have been published in newspapers and online media. Calonzo and Cayabyab (2013), cited that, in the Philippines, marriage annulment and nullity cases have continuously rises for the past eight years. In 2012 alone, an average of 28 couples per day sought to have their marriages annulled or declared null and void. After a year, Sen. Loren Legarda cited a record at the Office of the Solicitor General, that showed an increase in the number of annulment cases from 9,133 cases in 2011 to 10,528 cases in 2012 (Ager, 2014).

There are several marriage concerns that contribute to marital problems. Medina (as cited in Gonzales, 2003) stressed infidelity as the most common issue among families in the Philippines. She also mentioned communication problems, financial stresses, and betrayals of trust as reasons for marriage break-up.

Several soap operas regarding marriage annulment in the Philippines have emerged, adding to the typical "rags-to-riches" storyline. In fact, various publications have cited the loyalty of Filipino viewers to soap operas. For Filipinos, soap operas offer a standard by which viewers can critically compare their own lives.

In 2014, ABS-CBN's "The Legal Wife" soap opera became the talk of the town after captivating more viewers than the rival network's TV programs. It also became the most watched weekday show on primetime during the same year. It ran from January 27 to June 13, 2014. Razon (2014) said "The Legal Wife,"

in its last five episodes earned the highest rating in the history of Philippine soap opera.

The story revolves around Adrian (Jericho Rosales) and Monica (Angel Locsin) who started their relationship as friends and eventually as husband and wife. Monica thought that she already had an ideal family with her husband, but Adrian later fell in love with Nicole (Maja Salvador). Monica later discovered Adrian's affair with Nicole, who happened to be Monica's best friend.

Since then (the discovery), Nicole made a lot of cunning ways to persuade Adrian stay with her it became complicated when Nicole told Monica that she was carrying Adrian's child. Toward the end of the series, Adrian tried to fix his broken family, but Monica rejected him. In the final episode, the two separated ways, but hinted at a reconciliation in the future.

The popularity gained by "The Legal Wife" stirred the interest of the researchers to examine this soap opera in relation with the viewers' perception. Coulter (2010) explained that TV images are not only interesting because they work as mirrors, representations, or counterparts of the "real" world, but also, because they affect reality.

While several researchers have explored audience reception on many subjects, there are limited studies about soap operas and viewership in the Philippines.

B. Research Problem

Since watching TV is considered a hobby among Filipinos, the researchers studied "The Legal Wife" to determine how a TV program shaped the perception and behavior of 1,000 married Filipinos toward marriage. In line with this, they formulated the following questions:

1. What is the demographic profile of married Filipinos in Manila who have watched "The Legal Wife"?

2. What ideas have TV viewers obtained from this particular soap opera that features adultery?

C. Objectives of the Study

In line with the problems stated above, this study aims to:

1. Determine the demographic profile of married Filipinos in Manila who have watched "The Legal Wife" in terms of:
 - a. age,
 - b. sex,
 - c. highest educational attainment, and
 - d. monthly income.
2. Identify and analyze the ideas that viewers have taken from this particular soap opera featuring adultery.

D. Significance of the Study

ABS-CBN's "The Legal Wife" is ranked first in 2014 in terms of primetime ratings, beating its rival, GMA 7's "Rhodora X" and later, "Ang Dalawang Mrs. Real." Before the airing of the pilot episode, ABS-CBN launched a teaser of the soap opera where Monica (Angel Locsin) slapped Nicole (Maja Salvador) in a confrontation scene. Dumauual (2014) said the trailer was well received and it even went viral on social media. Thus, this study is a significant endeavor in presenting the ideas of marriage in the Philippines in terms of the roles of the family members. This research also adds to the pool of limited literature on modern Philippine soap opera.

E. Scope and Limitation

This research focuses on the viewers' reception of the content of the soap opera. It does not cover the determination of medium usage as well as the explanation and interpretation of the whole production of the television series.

Review of Related Literature

A. Soap Operas in the Philippines

In the Philippines, the most popular TV genre is the soap opera (Quirante and Sugbo, 2010). Often referred to as “teleserye,” the term has been derived from “tele” (television) and “serye” (series).

In 1998, the Kapisanan ng Brodkaster ng Pilipinas (KBP) said that almost 89% of Filipinos have TV sets at home, with roughly 57% of the Philippine household watching television programs from six to seven days a week. Most of the programs were aired by TV giants, such as the ABS-CBN Broadcasting Corporation, Radio Philippines Network (RPN), and GMA 7 Network.

According to the National Statistics Office (2001):

The popularity of television continued to rise in the 90s, as evidenced by the impressive 8.7 percentage point expansion in viewers (the highest among the eight mass media forms) – from 48.0 percent in 1989 to 56.7 percent in 1996. The increasing trend was reflected in both the urban (1.7 percentage points) and rural areas (5.8 percentage points).

Fong and Au (2009) said 60% of the TV programs are soap operas, 20% are news, and 10 percent are variety shows, including sports and basketball. With these, the authors said that the participants in the first Soap Opera Summit in the Philippines held in 2001, dubbed the Philippines as the “soap opera capital of the world.”

The history of soap operas in the Philippines started with “Gulong ng Palad” on radio in 1949. The drama was adapted into a TV program during the 1960s. The first soap opera on TV was the “*Hiwaga sa Bahay na Bato*” of ABS-CBN in 1963. Other soap operas such as “*Larangan ng Pag-ibig*” and “*Prinsipe Amante*,” emerged due to the success of the genre.

Before 1986, Coronel (1999) said that GMA 7 was the most popular network in the country. The network caught the interest of the viewers for its daring move to speak out during the Marcos dictatorship. It was not too long before Corazon Aquino took the helm in 1986, signaling

the comeback of the GMA 7's rival network, ABS-CBN. The latter then dethroned GMA 7 in popularity especially after some personnel were pirated by the growing empire.

Coronel (1999) said that, ABS-CBN dominated TV rating surveys when it reached as the peak of 65 percent, while GMA 7 only had one-third of the rival network's rating. She said GMA 7's daily soap opera, "Villa Quintana," which was aired from 6:30 p.m. to 7 p.m., caused trouble to ABS-CBN's ratings. The soap, derived from Shakespeare's "Romeo and Juliet," was about a typical story of lovers from different social classes. Although the ratings of ABS-CBN were around 60 to 70% at that time, people changed channels since they were bored of the usual news lineup. There was even a time when "TV Patrol's" rating went down to 25%, while "Villa Quintana" was at 21 percent. At the same time, Mexican telenovela "Marimar" was aired on Channel 9 (Peralta, 1999) in the same year and crippled ABS-CBN's "TV Patrol." Coronel (1999) described "TV Patrol" as "a tabloid news show." Aired from 6 p.m. to 7 p.m., the news program served as the "appetizer" before the primetime. It was in the 1990s when foreign soap operas, particularly Mexican "telenovelas," invaded Philippine television and made Latin American actors like Thalia, popular in the country. "Marimar," which shared the same timeslot with "Villa Quintana," shook the newscast off balance. Although the soap opera was about a usual love story between a rich man and a poor girl played by Thalia, it grabbed the attention of the public because the plot was fast-paced (Gabunada, 2012).

Fong and Au (2009), described "Marimar" as "engaging" because it used television to "satisfy the social and economic needs of the audience." A survey conducted by the Television Research Council People Meter in 1996, it indicated that those who watched "Marimar" in the Philippines were from the middle and lower social strata. "Marimar," who is a mestiza, hooked Filipinos, especially women who would like to have the "Marimar features" like sculpted nose, luscious lips, and brown eyes (Fong and Au, 2009). Azarcon-de la Cruz (1988), in her book "From Virgin to Vamp: Image of Women in Philippine Media," asserted that television programs, like telenovelas, are still about the looks of the women, the way they act, and their position next to men. Fong and Au (2009) said the poor and the oppressed, including victims of assault

and battery at the Women's Crises Center, could relate to "Marimar" (who was always being blamed for crimes she did not commit) since she fought back those who oppressed her even though she was a poor woman. They added that "Marimar" was close to the hearts of the Filipino audience, particularly to women, due to "cultural proximity factor" since the Philippines was colonized by Spain for more than 300 years.

In 1992, ABS-CBN managed to be at par with RPN 9 when it pitted "Mara Clara" against "Marimar." The story revolved around two girls who were switched at birth. Gabunada (2012), who was the former head of ABS-CBN's Research and Business Analysis Department, said they pitched in "Mara Clara" to attract housewives "who were not about to give up the television to anybody specially if they were watching their favorite shows." ABS-CBN lost its standing for some time, but not for long after it cut "TV Patrol" into 30 minutes and bought the other Thalia telenovelas like "Rosalinda." Fortunately, for ABS-CBN, the counter-attack worked. The network also produced primetime soap operas like "Mula sa Puso" and "Esperanza" to maintain its rank (Gabunada, 2012).

Fong and Au (2009) said the rationale behind the overkill of soap operas in the Philippines is that, they sell. Hence, they described television as "highly commercialized" in nature since networks create attention-grabbing television programs. The authors also said the screening of Mexican telenovelas boomed in the country since networks do not need to pay much but they earn a lot from these. Since then, several drama series have dominated the household viewing time and transformed into what we call today as "teleserye," "fantaserye," "action-serye," "dance-serye," "sineserye," and "Asianovela."

In 2008, ABS-CBN adapted the South Korean drama series "My Girl," which ran for 75 episodes. The soap opera was about a young female tour guide named Jasmine (Kim Chiu) who was asked by Julian (Gerald Anderson) to pretend as his cousin to grant his grandfather's dying wish to meet his long lost granddaughter named Hannah. Enriquez's (2011) analysis of ABS-CBN's soap opera "My Girl," revealed that the series failed to present societal issues such as oppression and class division due to its romantic storyline. Aired in 2010, the series showed

“a love that can cross boundaries and divisions;” a concept that one rarely finds in a world where classes are at constant hostility with each other (p.1).

In a study of *Afable* (2013) on the “Princess and I,” the author revealed that though there was an attempt to present the female characters in a post-feminist way, the producers of the soap were not able to sustain it. She cited that the “teleserye” still embodied traditional representations of women as the “weaker sex.” In the case of its female protagonist named Mikay, the producers of the show initially wanted to make her character a role model to female teenagers, but the respondents of the study still received her as indecisive and ignorant.

Commentaries of Villanueva (2013) and Argos (2007) reasoned that soap operas continue to attract Philippine viewers despite the clichés in their storylines because of their dramatic content. The latter mentions that:

Soap operas capitalize on the melodrama that Filipinos are known to live in and love. The fairy tale ending, the viscous plot, and the 'love-to-hate' villain are all elements that Filipinos look for in the preferred form of entertainment.

Having all of these elements intact, Argos (2007) said a soap opera is able to grab the attention of Filipinos to sympathize not only with the lead characters of the show, but also with its storyline. Linao's (2013) online news article for the *Gulf Times* titled “Romantic TV Series Captures Filipino Hearts” stated that “[S]oap operas or telenovelas have become a big part of the Filipino culture as television evolves into one of the strongest forms of media in the Philippines.” However, a point of concern among these soap operas is that it was reported to enforce dominant ideologies and a notion of false reality among its viewers.

B. Gender and Soap Opera

Most of the studies on soap operas have focused on the audience. Many of the researchers have associated these television programs with women since these usually tackle the lives of female characters. Men, meanwhile, have been linked with shows that feature strength and boldness.

Azalanshah's and Syed's (2011) study defined soap opera as a pervasive feature of everyday culture and a node for consumption of popular culture for women whose lives revolve around the private space of the household. This supports the description of Nochimson (1992) who connected soap opera with women and desire, specifically about passion for personal and domestic concerns.

Many scholars like Hobson (1982), Ang (1985), Buckingham (1987) and Geraghty (1991) also agreed with these characterizations, adding that soap opera is a long running, episodic television programs with fictional stories of romance, family, and relationships that cater to women.

In 1993, O'Connor and Boyle said two of the most popular television genres such as soap opera and sports have been very much associated with gender in terms of their audience. The authors regarded soap opera as "gynocentric" in nature because of its female viewers, while sports shows cater to males. They said that differences in gender between the genres had implications for the popular image of the two. The researchers also said, the soap opera has been regarded as inferior, a "mere fantasy and escapism" for women, while sports has been perceived as a "legitimate, even edifying experience for men."

In their study, O'Connor and Boyle (1993) found similarities in the two genres and even regarded sports shows as "male soap opera," since their way of viewing is related to domestic life and leisure, same with the housewives watching drama series.

Chandler (1994) studied episodes of British drama series such as "Coronation Street," "Rooms," "Emmerdale Farm," "General Hospital," "Crossroads," and "The Waltons" and found that soap operas take part of women's lives for the whole. With his findings, Chandler (1994) then separated the television programs and classified them for the interest of the viewers: masculine and feminine. Programs for men involve action and adventure, while programs for women include comedies and soap operas.

For Chandler (1994), masculine programs relate men to power, action, and technology. Feminine shows, on the other hand, include soap

opera because they depict family matters and relationships. Chandler (1994) also found that most soap opera viewers were “working class housewives” and they usually devote a lot of time to watch television alongside with their chores.

Feasey (2008), however, said soap operas also cater to males, but the storylines are focused on kidnappings, car chases, and violence. She said that in order to show male protagonists working through marital concerns, challenges to family loyalties and the pressures of male friendship, active and aggressive narratives may be used. Glendhill (as cited in Feasey, 2008) said masculine action tends to depict the “unexpressed and often unexpressible” male emotion that needs a melodramatic climax to break out. She also said that the most dramatic transformation in the soap opera is not the addition of the masculine storylines, but the challenges to males in viewing other men to express their emotions and feelings in the TV programs. Bowles (as cited in Azalanshah and Syed, 2011) also said the bulk of content that is portrayed in soap operas – family issues, neighborhood and romance – are societal issues that are appealing to women.

From 2000 to 2010, Genota (2012) said most soap operas showed gender inequality in Philippine society. Using textual analysis, she examined 17 soap operas of ABS-CBN with dramatic themes and looked at how working Filipinas undergo social construction in soap operas and how they were represented in terms of their professions and occupations. The researcher arrived at 18 professions, proving that there was bias since most of the characters were presented as housewives. Genota (2012) said this image has become a disadvantage for Filipina women in soap operas to pursue their desired professions and attain financial success, since they are bound to work for their families or stay inside their homes.

In the same manner, Dela Cruz (2012) discussed the alleged oppression of women as represented by three media – television shows, motion pictures, and songs – from 1960 to 1980 and used textual analysis to examine their “demeaning roles.”

With regard to the themes commonly presented in soap operas, a study conducted in Malaysia in 2011 mentioned that themes dealing

with family relationships and issues, and marital love are commonly presented in soaps. According to Azalanshah and Syed (2011):

Themes like family issues, parent-child relationships and marital love pervade non-Western soaps, whether they are from Asia or Latin America, with lesser emphases on individualism or sexual intrigue as in most Western soaps.

Arnett (2006) said themes such as marital love and relationship conflicts are common in soap operas. As such, conflict is part of marriage and family life. However, it may differ in terms of its sources and the nature and extent of expression.

C. Memory, Sex and Violence on Television

The mass media are “very powerful spaces” for the preservation of memory and for memory-making and exchange (Blandford and McElroy, 2013). In fact, one of their components, the television, contains a rich site for history and memory. Television is undeniably one of the storytellers in a household. Most people watch television to be entertained based on their preferred genres such as sports, drama, comedy, horror, crime and suspense, or action.

Quirante and Sugbo (2010) said that prolonged exposure to a similar fare of programs on television fosters social learning, creating meanings, values, and beliefs in the minds of the audience. These, in turn, become part of a cognitive frame that they used in viewing and interpreting the world and physical reality.

In this study, “The Legal Wife” falls under the category of drama. Although it tackled marital conflicts, sexual desires were also presented in the TV series. In an episode aired on March 28, 2014, Adrian (Jericho Rosales) made love with Nicole (Maja Salvador) while on a trip, betraying his wife, Monica (Angel Locsin). While the episode depicted infidelity, the love scene trended worldwide on micro-blogging site Twitter after several viewers vented their exasperations. Reichert and Lambiase (2014) said many studies have suggested that the presence of arousing content in print, radio, and television compels attention. Lang et al. (2000) said “arousing messages” of the television are remembered rather than “calm messages.” Lang et

al. (2000) said the presence of arousing content in media not only allocates to attention, but also to memory.

Memory, as defined by the Encyclopedia and Dictionary of Medicine, Nursing and Allied Health in 2003, is the “mental faculty that enables one to retain and recall previously experienced sensations, impressions, information, and ideas. The ability of the brain to retain and use knowledge gained from past experience is essential to the process of learning.”

According to Atkinson and Shiffrin (1968), human memory has three stages. These are sensory memory or the one that holds sensory, short-term memory (STM) or the one that holds perception for analysis, and long-term memory (LTM) or the permanent storage. The LTM is divided into two namely: the explicit or declarative memory and the implicit or non-declarative memory. Explicit memory refers to the conscious attempts to retrieve memories of past events while the implicit memory is the non-conscious effort to retrieve memories like reading a book that an individual has read before. In this study, the researchers will rely on the explicit memory of the respondents in discussing and answering the questions related to the television series, which depicted marital conflicts, sexual desires, and violence.

Bushman (1998) conducted three experiments where the participants were asked to watch violent and non-violent film clips. He concluded that violent films infuriated the viewers and changed their mood after viewing the film clip.

Bushman and Bonacci (2002) also conducted a study using the same methods, but this time, the researchers used television. They asked the participants to watch a violent, sexually explicit, or neutral TV program that contained nine advertisements. He found out that those who watched the advertisements during a neutral program proved better memory than those who saw the advertisements during a violent or sexually explicit program. He says:

Violence and sex impaired memory for males and females of all ages, regardless of whether they liked programs containing violence and sex. These results suggest that sponsoring violent and sexually explicit TV programs might not be a profitable venture for advertisers.

Meanwhile, when “The Legal Wife” series presented violence, particularly during its episode aired on May 20, 2014, it became the most unforgettable episode and was well-received by the audience (Choa, 2014). In that episode, Monica found out that Nicole and Adrian saw each other again after forgiving him for having an affair. An enraged Monica confronted Nicole, pulled her hair, and hit her several times. She only stopped after Nicole confessed that she is carrying Adrian’s child.

D. Synthesis and Critique of the Literature

The literature review was organized in a topical manner to stress the importance of history and memory. In this corpus, it is evident that studies and resources linking Filipinos with soap operas are limited.

Almost 70 percent of the authors in this review said soap operas reassure and validate the problems people are facing in real life. Most of the authors also cited soap opera as a medium for conveying the images of women and their jobs since the 1970s. The authors also put emphasis on the content, citing that soap opera is for a particular group of women who belong to the working class.

Moreover, 90 percent of the researchers in this review, including Dyer et al. (1977), have associated soap operas with women and regarded the genre as a kind of “social drama,” which is commercial in nature. It is also implied that the devotion of women to this genre has not changed until today, especially in the Philippine household.

Aside from the division of programs for men and women, the authors also said that soap operas tell us how women relate to men. With regard to family and work, almost all scholars pointed out that women in soap operas face many challenges. They are always oppressed by their partners and other people around them. However, in the end, women always emerge as victors.

Framework of the Study

A. Social Learning Theory

In this theory, Bandura (1997) explained that people learn through

observation, modeling, and imitation. It explains that human behavior has a reciprocal interaction with the cognitive, behavioral, and environmental influences. As cited by Liebert and Sprafkin (1988), this theory proved that an audience can acquire the attitudes, emotional responses, and new styles of conduct of the characters through film and television programs.

Bandura (1986) also stated that people learn from unforeseen observations. He also said that a person could learn new manners without practicing it and without any direct support because the action is dormant. He also stressed the significance of observational learning, citing that it gives new responses from other's behavior. Most of the behaviors that people show are learned through role models. According to Bandura (1971), these models and their influences are prominent and powerful, especially if the person is someone the viewer idolizes.

Bandura's theory suggests that there are reciprocal interactions between the person, the model, and the environment. He said that a "modeled behavior" is created when the viewers see what the characters are doing in television programs while the learning environment is the situation happening in a certain program. He also said that the television has a strong impact because its viewers are likely to imitate the action they have witnessed.

B. Cultivation Theory

This theory explains how television affects its audience based on the frequency of exposure regardless of its contents. Nevertheless, the contents that are shown in the television are mostly gathered from primary sources and transmitted to the audience. It only denotes that television rearranges the landscape of data gathering wherein experiences and information are previously obtained from a primary source, or others may experience them first-hand.

Gerbner, Gross, Morgan, and Signorielli (1986) posit that, from infancy, television cultivates the very predispositions and preferences one acquires from other primary sources. Thus, there is more focus on the frequency or the exposure to a certain television show rather than the

messages. The theory covers the effects of television to its audience members and their susceptibility of being influenced after being exposed to a television program for a long period. The said influence to the viewers is attributed to the total impact of the show. The change in their behavior is not specific, patterned, and recurring.

In a nutshell, this theory implies that heavy exposure to television affects the perception of the audience, and eventually, their behavior. These changes mirror the images and messages that are featured on television.

In this study, the Social Learning Theory explains how the characters in the “The Legal Wife” portray their roles as models in the eyes of the viewers through television. These portrayals become unforeseen observation from the audience’s viewpoint, which may shape one’s attitude and eventually becomes a part of his or her behavior.

This is depicted in the model below.

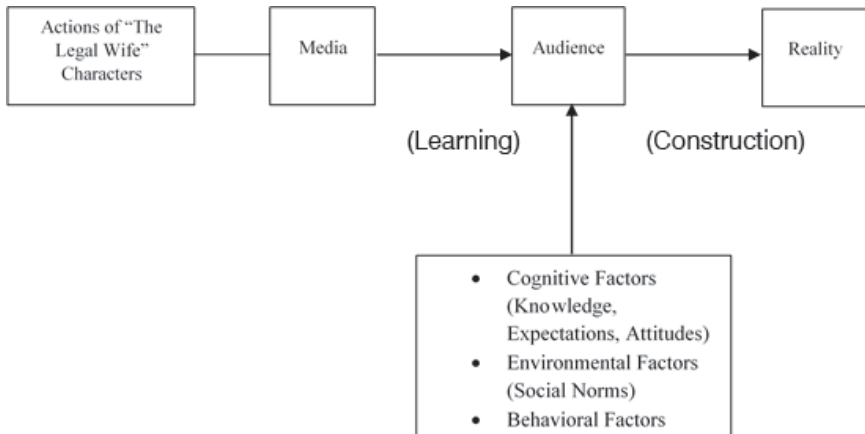


Figure 1. Conceptual Framework

The models or actors in this sense may be considered powerful since they are popular and prominent in the society. The Cultivation Theory details how an individual, who is an avid fan of “The Legal Wife” series, will change his or her perception after being exposed to the program for a long period.

Research Methods

A. Research Design

This research, which is descriptive in nature, obtained information from the explicit memory of the respondents through a two-page structured survey. The number of respondents was equally divided into 500 male and 500 female respondents. The researchers used survey to determine the thoughts and views of the respondents about marriage in connection with the television series.

B. Sampling and Study Site

The researchers used purposive sampling to find out whether there are differences in the perception of male and female respondents toward marriage. This kind of non-probability sampling allowed the researchers to select people based on particular purpose. Aside from the willingness to participate in the discussion, the researchers asked only married people who have watched "The Legal Wife."

C. Instrumentation

The researchers designed a questionnaire, which was divided into five parts. The respondents were required to rate each factor using a scale of 1 to 5 where 1 corresponds to "Strongly Disagree" and 5 to "Strongly Agree." In the first part, the researcher asked the respondents about their demographic profile such as their age, highest educational attainment, and monthly income. The second part of the survey asked the respondents about the number of times they watch "The Legal Wife" and their preferred medium in watching the television series. The succeeding parts of the survey included the viewer involvement scale and learning scale on the ideas of the respondents on marriage. Each component has five questions. The questionnaire has 27 queries, which can be answered for about 10 minutes.

D. Data Gathering Procedure

Each of the five researchers was assigned to ask 200 respondents from Manila to answer the survey. Before giving the questionnaire,

the researchers asked a screening question the respondents—if they have watched “The Legal Wife” and if they are married. The respondents were given letter of informed consent, which states that their participation in the survey was voluntary and that their answers would be treated with confidentiality. Those who agreed to participate were then asked to answer the two-page structured survey. The researchers checked each questionnaire to ensure that the respondents answered all the questions. After collecting the data, the researchers encoded the responses.

E. Data Analysis

In analyzing the data, the researchers employed descriptive statistics to summarize the demographic profile of the respondents. The survey results were interpreted to get an inclusive finding. Data were presented in tables to show the distribution of the answers. Standard deviation was used to measure how the data was clustered about the mean. This was applied to present the age, sex, and the average monthly family income of the respondents. Meanwhile, frequency and percentage distribution were employed to present the demographic profile of the respondents.

Results

A. Demographic Profile

Most of the respondents belong to the 21 to 30 age bracket group, which corresponds to 43%; followed by 31 to 40 age bracket group at 28%, 41 to 50 age bracket group at 12%, 51 and above age bracket group at 12%, and below 20 age bracket group at 5%. The respondents were divided into two groups – 500 males and 500 females – to determine the viewing habits and perception of the audience toward marriage.

Table 1. Summary of Demographic Data

Profile	Group	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)	
Age	Below 20	51	5	
	21 to 30	429	43	
	31 to 40	282	28	
	41 to 50	116	12	
	51 and Above	122	12	
Sex	Male	500	500	
	Female	500	500	
Educational Attainment	Elementary	57	6	
	High school	442	44	
	Vocational	15	1	
	College	410	41	
	Post-graduate	76	8	
Monthly Income	10,000 and Below	76	8	
	11,000 to 20,000	586	59	
	21,000 to 30,000	223	22	
	31,000 to 40,000	41	4	
	41,000 to 50,000	32	6	
	51,000 and Above	42	4	

Most of the respondents in this study were high school graduates (44%), followed by college graduates (41%), post-graduates (8%), elementary graduates (6%), and vocational (1%). Majority of the respondents (59%) earn a monthly salary of P11,000 to P20,000, followed by those earning P21,000 to P30,000, P10,000 and below, P41,000 to P50,000, and P31,000 to P40,000.

B. Viewership

In terms of gender and viewership, majority of the male and female respondents watch the soap opera more than four times a week.

Table 2. Gender and Viewership

Male			Female			Total
Once a Week	16	3%	Once a Week	14	3%	30
Twice a Week	6	1%	Twice a Week	28	6%	34
Thrice a Week	127	26%	Thrice a Week	22	4%	149
Four Times a Week	86	17%	Four Times a Week	110	22%	196
More Than 4x a Week	265	53%	More Than 4x a Week	326	65%	591

C. Medium

According to the respondents and as shown on Table 3, television is the dominant medium used in watching the soap opera, followed by mobile phones and personal computer. Gender-wise, majority of the female respondents (84%) viewed the soap opera using television. The same is true in the case of the male respondents with 79%. While women tend to watch the series on television, men used their personal computers and mobile phones in viewing the show.

Table 3. Gender and Medium

Male			Female			Total
Television	392	79%	Television	423	84%	815
Personal Computer	12	2%	Personal Computer	28	6%	40
Mobile phone	96	19%	Mobile phone	49	10%	145

D. Viewer Involvement Scale

Majority of male respondents or 70% answered “neutral” when it comes to expressing their participation to the series; but for women, 86% answered “strongly agree” when it comes to “Talking back to television when I watch ‘The Legal Wife.’” For women, around 75% said they try to put themselves into the situation of the lead character.

Meanwhile, majority of the male respondents or 82% answered “neutral” when asked about putting their selves in the situation of the lead character. Both male and female respondents agreed that they memorized some lines of the protagonist that caught their attention such as, “Akin lang ang asawa ko!” and “Ako pa rin ang legal wife!”

In the same manner, 78 percent of female respondents said they talk about the soap opera with other people and post related things on social media. Male respondents are not keen to using social networking sites as avenue for expressing their thoughts.

E. Ideas on Marriage

Majority of the male (65%) and female (82%) respondents strongly agreed that monogamy, respect, understanding, and forgiveness are the key to a good marital relationship. In addition, the respondents also agreed that love is the foundation of marriage, and not financial stability. Most of the male (80%) and female (89%) respondents agreed to leave their partner if they discover his or her involvement in illicit affairs. Male respondents (56%) agreed not to tolerate physical violence, whereas female respondents (64%) strongly agreed about the issue. However, both genders, agreed to forgive their partner in case of marital conflicts.

F. Learning Scale

Majority of male (73%) and female respondents (81%) answered "strongly agree" when asked if "The Legal Wife" gave them a real picture of how it is to be married. Meanwhile, while male respondents agreed (54%) that the series helped them learn how to act in different situations in marriage, the females answered "neutral" (52%). Both sexes were also neutral when asked if they think that the conflicts shown in the series could also happen to them in real life. In addition to that, male (32%) and female (43%) respondents answered "agree" on the series being able to help them learn more about marriage. They also agreed that the series has helped them learn from the mistakes committed by the characters in "The Legal Wife".

G. Gender Roles

Male respondents (74%) disagreed that cheating should be considered normal, while majority of the female respondents (84%) answered "strongly disagree". Both respondents also said they agree that the series served as an eye opener for them to change their ways and to avoid marital conflicts. When it comes to man's dominance at home, both genders answered "neutral". However, the respondents have opposing judgments with regard to sharing of household chores—

males (54%) agreed while females (43%) disagreed that wife should be solely responsible in doing the household tasks. Male respondents (52%) answered "neutral", whereas female respondents (67%) agreed that the wife should not work if the husband is financially stable.

Conclusions

Results showed that respondents who did not attain college and higher degrees of education were more attached to the show. They also belong to the minimum wage group. The adoption and acceptance of viewers to the characters of the TV series only showed that the concept of Social Learning Theory is valid in this case.

Data revealed that most women-respondents have somehow adopted the behavior of the lead character after watching many episodes as they memorized some lines in the soap opera. Bandura (1971) said the protagonists usually influence the actions of the viewers especially if the actor is famous. While most of the male respondents in the study answered "neutral" when it comes to showing their emotions while watching the series, most of them said they sympathize with the female protagonist. Male and female viewers remembered more lines delivered by the female lead than the male lead. The audience also said they learned more about marital relationship from the perspective of the female protagonist and not from the male protagonist who cheated his wife but later changed his life to be with his family.

In this study, the respondents said "The Legal Wife" provided the lens of what marriage is and how couples should act when there is a marital conflict. The respondents also said the series also gave them a clear picture of a complex marital relationship. Thus, this research affirms Bandura's theory that the audience acquires the attitude of the characters portrayed through television programs, particularly, the female protagonist. At the same time, Gerbner's theory supports the study, as it resonates with the findings that, viewers who have watched the series daily changed their attitude toward their partners to prevent marital conflicts. The series serves as a "wake-up call" for those who find themselves in a similar situation with the characters in the series.

Recommendations

Future studies can look into the involvement of female viewers in other television shows like basketball and other sports to see if women have evolved to like shows that are mostly attributed to men by early scholars. Researchers can also attempt to have the subjects undergo a test should they want to find out if there is a significant effect on them if they watch the soap opera compared to watching sports. This, however, would take a lot of time and effort.

During the experiment, the researchers can expose the subjects to an intervention or treatment where the respondents would be asked to watch clips of the show or if they have a time and the resources, watch the whole show. However, they should also consider the time and capacity of the subjects in handling the thought they have absorbed. Their availability, since most have work, should also be taken into account. Before the exposure of the subjects to the show (intervention or treatment), the researchers can ask the subjects to answer a simple survey in connection with what they remember prior to the treatment. The treatment will act as a refresher for the subjects for them to remember some parts of the television series. To further support their study, they might opt to use agenda-setting and framing as their theories since they have selected the shows for the viewers.

Researchers might also consider studying specific topics such as the participation or mediation of the family members of the married couple in relation with the television series or marital conflicts alone like illicit affairs.

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Appendix 1. Survey instrument

UNIVERSITY OF SANTO TOMAS GRADUATE SCHOOL

Dear Sir or Madam,

Greetings in the name of St. Thomas Aquinas! You are invited to participate in our research titled **“Look Who’s Watching: An Audience Reception of ABS-CBN’s ‘The Legal Wife’”**. The answers in this survey will be used to determine the demographic profile of married Filipinos who have watched the soap opera and to identify the ideas viewers take from a soap opera that features adultery. Your participation in this study is voluntary and there are no correct or wrong answers in this two-page survey. Rest assured that your personal information will be confidential and names will not be divulged. In this research, you may refuse or withdraw anytime. The researcher may also ask you to stop from answering the questionnaire if he or she thinks that you are experiencing difficulties in completing the forms. Thank you very much.

Respectfully yours,

John Evan Orias

Jezreel Lopez

Rachelle Pascual

Janice Roman

Regina Mariano

I. RESPONDENT’S PROFILE (INSTRUCTION: Please read carefully and check the corresponding boxes for your answers.)

Age	Sex	Highest Educational Attainment	Monthly Income
<input type="checkbox"/> Below 20	<input type="checkbox"/> Male	<input type="checkbox"/> Elementary	<input type="checkbox"/> 10,000 and Below
<input type="checkbox"/> 21 to 30	<input type="checkbox"/> Female	<input type="checkbox"/> High school	<input type="checkbox"/> 11,000 to 20,000
<input type="checkbox"/> 31 to 40		<input type="checkbox"/> Vocational	<input type="checkbox"/> 21,000 to 30,000
<input type="checkbox"/> 41 to 50		<input type="checkbox"/> College	<input type="checkbox"/> 31,000 to 40,000
<input type="checkbox"/> 51 and Above		<input type="checkbox"/> Post-graduate	<input type="checkbox"/> 41,000 to 50,000
			<input type="checkbox"/> 51,000 and Above

II. VIEWERSHIP (INSTRUCTION: Please read carefully and check the corresponding boxes for your answers.)

How often do you watch “The Legal Wife”?
<input type="checkbox"/> Once a Week <input type="checkbox"/> Twice a Week <input type="checkbox"/> Thrice a Week <input type="checkbox"/> Four Times a Week <input type="checkbox"/> More Than 4x a Week

III. MEDIUM USED FOR WATCHING THE SOAP OPERA (INSTRUCTION: Please read carefully and check the corresponding boxes for your answers.)

Where do you prefer to watch “The Legal Wife”? (You may choose more than one answer)
<input type="checkbox"/> Television <input type="checkbox"/> Desktop computer <input type="checkbox"/> Mobile phone <input type="checkbox"/> Tablet

IV. VIEWER INVOLVEMENT SCALE
(INSTRUCTION: Please encircle the number that best corresponds to your answer.)

LEGEND: 5- Strongly Agree , 4-Agree, 3-Neutral, 2-Disagree, and 1-Strongly Disagree

Statement	SA	A	N	D	SD
1. I talk back to the television when I watch "The Legal Wife."	5	4	3	2	1
2. I imagine myself being in the situation of the lead character when I watch the soap opera.	5	4	3	2	1
3. I try to memorize lines in the series, which caught my attention.	5	4	3	2	1
4. I talk about "The Legal Wife" in my conversations with other people.	5	4	3	2	1
5. I post sentiments on social media after watching an episode of the soap opera.	5	4	3	2	1

What are the memorable lines that you remember?

V. IDEAS ON MARRIAGE
(INSTRUCTION: Please encircle the number that best corresponds to your answer.)

Statement	SA	A	N	D	SD
1. Marriage in the Philippines must be monogamous.	5	4	3	2	1
2. Love, and not financial stability, is the foundation marriage.	5	4	3	2	1
3. The existence of illicit affairs may result in separation of the couple.	5	4	3	2	1
4. Physical abuse should not be tolerated.	5	4	3	2	1
5. Forgiveness is the key to start a new beginning from past mistakes.	5	4	3	2	1

VI. LEARNING SCALE (INSTRUCTION: Please encircle the number that best corresponds to your answer.)

Statement	SA	A	N	D	SD
1. "The Legal Wife" gives a real picture of marriage.	5	4	3	2	1
2. After watching "The Legal Wife," I have learned how to act in different situations involving marital relationship.	5	4	3	2	1
3. I think that the marital conflicts shown in the series can also happen to me.	5	4	3	2	1
4. I learned more about marriage after watching "The Legal Wife".	5	4	3	2	1
5. "The Legal Wife" helped me learn from mistakes committed by the characters in the series.	5	4	3	2	1

VII. GENDER ROLES (INSTRUCTION: Please encircle the number that best corresponds to your answer.)

Statement	SA	A	N	D	SD
1. Cheating should be regarded as normal.	5	4	3	2	1
2. Every man's wish should be realized at home.	5	4	3	2	1
3. Domestic work should be shared equally between spouses.	5	4	3	2	1
4. A woman should not work if her husband has a well-paying job.	5	4	3	2	1
5. The soap opera served as an eye opener to avoid marital conflicts.	5	4	3	2	1

THANK YOU VERY MUCH!

Essay

Si Mocha at ang Kanyang High-Tech na Pluma

Anna Lorraine D. Galura

Hindi maitatangi na may mga taong naniniwalang si Mocha Uson na nga ang makabagong mukha ng Peministang Nasyonalismo. Gamit lamang ang kanyang high-tech na sandata, hindi maikakatwang malaki ang sakop at bigat ng kanyang impluwensya lalong lalo na sa mga Pilipinong nasa laylayan ng lipunan.

Ayon kay Lois A. West (1997, p. 226), "Feminist nationalism consists of social movements, cultural ideologies and links struggles for group identity rights and/or national sovereignty in their goals of self-determination." Ang Pilipinas ay isang Third World Country. Nabanggit ni Mary Janet Arnado (2011) sa kanyang pag-aaral, *Theorizing Filipina Feminism: A Survey of the Theoretical and Political Streams of Feminism in the Philippines*, na nakatuon ang pansin ng Filipina Feminism sa kahirapan, foreign intervention, trade liberalization at globalisasyon—na siya ring pundasyon ng Peministang Nasyonalismo na nagsimula noong rehimeng Marcos.

Bagama't marami ang kontra sa ideyang siya na nga ang bagong mukha ng Peministang Nasyonalismo, hindi maikakatwang malaki ang impak o inpluwensya niya sa kasalukuyang daloy ng impormasyon sa web space. Simula nang maging matunog ang pangalan ni Pangulong Duterte, nagsimula rin ang pag-angat at pagiging trending ni Mocha sa social media. Kabi-kabila ang balita tungkol sa mga binibitawang salita ni Mocha gamit ang kanyang blog—dahil marahil ito ay puno ng kontrobersiya. Nito lamang, matatandaang nagkaroon sila ng sagutan ni Bise Presidente Robredo matapos pasaringan ni Mocha si Robredo patungkol sa pagbibitiw nito bilang miyembro ng gabinete. Ang sagot naman ni Robredo (Inquirer, 2016), "I have not read Mocha's blog, don't intend to read it."

Sa pamamagitan ng Internet at blogging, naipapahatid ni Mocha ang kanyang mga saloobin at opinyon sa mga napapanahong isyu

ng lipunan, partikular sa usapang politika. Sa pamamatian ng mga channels na ito ay nahuhulma ni Mocha ang kanyang identidad online.

Maituturing na ang Facebook ang isa sa pinakatinatangkilik na midyum ng komunikasyon sa milenyal na panahon kaya naman ito sa tingin ko ang piniling gamitin ni Mocha bilang kanyang instrumento sa pagpapalaganap ng kanyang mga kuro-kuro. Mayroong 4,572,901 likes ang Mocha Uson Blog—ang Facebook Page ni Mocha, sa kasalukuyan. Isa ito sa mga implikasyon na kahit marami pa rin ang hindi sumasang-ayon sa kanyang paniniwala, marami pa rin ang kanyang tagasunod o followers o mga nagbabasa ng blog niya.

Isa sa mga laging ibinabatong batikos kay Mocha at sa mga tagasunod ni Pangulong Duterte ang kakulangan sa tamang datos at kaalaman sa “tunay” na nangyayari sa lipunan. Kaya sila binabansagang mga “Dutertards” o blind followers ng Pangulo. Nakapagtataka kung bakit sa dinami-rami ng maaaring pagkuhaan ng balita at impormasyon, ito pa rin ang kanilang pinaniniwalaan. Marahil ito ay sa kadahilanang, ang midya, na hawak ng mga oligarchs, naiisip ng taumbayan na sila ay nililinlang ng mga dilawang pro-neoliberalism. Ang resulta, isang pagkilos na kung saan ang mga tao ay tinatangkilik ang alternatibong hatid ni Mocha. Ito kalaunan ay makakabuo ng isang “komunidad” – ang Bayan sa pangunguna ni Mocha.

Kapansin pansin din na kahit na maituturing na may-kaya si Mocha, na ang kanyang adbokasya ay nakatuon ang pansin sa karapatan ng mga mahihirap. Sa kanyang Facebook Page Cover Photo, ginamit nya ang Proverbs 31:8:9: “Speak up for those who cannot speak for themselves, for the rights of all who are destitute. Speak up and judge fairly; defend the rights of the poor and needy.”

Pati mismo sa paggamit ni Mocha ng social media ay naipapakita niya na siya ang mukha ng online feminist nationalism. Sa tulong na inihahandog ng information technology, na dulot ng Globalisasyon, tinutunggali mula sa ibaba, mula sa mga mamamayang nasa diaspora (OFW), ng mga manggagawang wala mang yaman ay mayroon namang access sa social media ay naipararating sa marami na hindi mo kailangang maging elitista para masabing ikaw ay makabayan.

Ano nga ba ang dahilan kung bakit marami ang hindi sumasang-ayon at hindi bilib sa mga binibitawang paniniwala ni Mocha? Ito marahil ay dahil nakasanayan na nating mga Pilipino na mas nirerespeto at pinaniniwalaan ang mga taong edukado at nakatataas sa lipunan. Ngunit ano at sino nga ba ang makapagdidikta kung ano ang pamantayan ng isang ideyal na mamamayan, ng ideyal na Filipina, o ng isang ideyal na Feminista?

Ayon nga kay Tolentino (2015) at sa kanyang sulating pinamagatang: *Subjects, Subjectivation and Subjectification*, “Citizenship in the Philippines is a highly classed, sexualized, genderized, and politicized issue.” (p.). Ang ideyang ito ay hegemonic at idinidikta ng mga elitista, isa sa mga paniniwala ng Kanluraning Peminismo na siya ring tinutulan ni Sister Mary John Mananzan, isa sa mga nagpasimula ng *Feminist Nationalism*. Aniya, ang GABRIELA, isa sa pinakamalawak na organisasyon para sa mga kababaihan ay binubuo ng mga miyembrong sadlak sa kahirapan. Kaya lang naman umano tayo nasanay na ang mga lider sa lipunan ay yaong mga nasa middle class ay dahil sila ang may kakayahang mamuno at magpaumpisa ng mga ganitong kilusan dahil hindi na nila kailanganin pang alalahanin ang mga pangunahing pangangailangan sa kanilang tahanan (Guerrero, 1997). Hindi ibig sabihin nito na kung ikaw ay mahirap, ay wala ka nang karapatang isiwalat ang iyong mga saloobin at ideolohiya.

Isa rin sa maaari nating pagtuunan ng pansin ay ang pagkukumpara o paghahambing kay Mocha at sa mga kasalukuyang lider sa pamahalaan at ang kanilang imahe sa lipunan. Kakabit na ng pangalan ni Mocha ang kanyang masidhi at walang humpay na pagsuporta kay Pangulong Duterte, na siya namang di umano’y “katunggali” ni Bise Presidente Leni Robredo. Bilang tagasuporta ni Duterte, kapansin-pansin ang mga patama at tila pagkalaban ni Mocha kay Robredo, na sa totoo lang ay isa pang maituring na mukha ng peministang nasyonalismo sa bansa.

Dito natin makikita ang tunggalian ng dalawang babae na mayroong magkaibang karakter at kung paano sila tinatanggap sa lipunan. Ano nga ba ang laban at puhunan ni Mocha kung ikukumpara kay Leni? Si Leni – isang abogada, edukada at naluklok bilang ikalawang Pangulo

ng bansa. Tila taglay niya ang halos kaparehong imahen ni Cory na isang byuda at dalisay ang imahen.

Si Mocha? Marahil ang tingin sa kanya ng lipunan ay isang masamang babae. Sa proseso ng ideyal na citizenship sa bansa ay hindi na kabilang o nasa margins na ang isang tulad niya, na minaliit dahil isang sexy star at dancer at ginagamit lang ang katawan. Sa madaling sabi, walang utak. Ngunit, mayroon nga bang karapatan at dapat nga bang pakinggan sa larangan ng pulitika at sa citizenship na usapin ang hindi intelektwal at “puta” na tulad ni Mocha?

Oo, mayroon. Tignan natin ito sa konteksto ng sosyalismo. Pinaniniwalaang ang socialism ay isa sa pinakamalapit na konsepto ng pagkilos sa peminismo, dahil pinangangalagaan nito ang pantay na karapatan ng working class sa lahat ng aspeto bukod sa mga elitista. Taliwas ito sa liberal-feminism, na kinabibilangan ni Robredo. Itong mga dilawang-middle class-educated Feminists at iba pang mapagmataas at hindi masa ay binabatikos at kinukutsa si Mocha. Sa pagdedeklara nila kay Mocha bilang “iba” sa nararapat na ideyal ng citizen at Filipina, hindi ba tila ipinapakita nila kung ano ang kanilang pagkatao? Na kailangan ay mayroon silang sabihan na “tanga” o “bobo” para masabing sila ay matatalino at nag-iisip.

Sabi nga ng manunulat na si Edward Bulwer-Lytton (1839), “the pen is mightier than the sword.” Tulad ni Mocha, ginagamit niya ang kanyang high-tech na pluma upang ipaalam sa madla ang kanyang mga saloobin at suportahan ang kanyang mga paniniwala sa pamamagitan ng pagsusulat sa tulong ng teknolohiya. Ang kulturang kanyang nabubuo mula sa kanyang pagsusulat ay nakatuon sa paglaban sa kahirapan at pagsang-ayon sa globalisasyon na syang pundasyon ng Peministang Nasyonalismo.

Marahil ay tila mahirap tanggapin at paniwalaan na si Mocha na nga ang makabagong mukha ng Peministang Nasyonalismo. Ito ay dulot ng biglaang transpormasyon ng imahe ni Mocha mula “puta” at ngayon ay isa na siya sa pinipiling tagapaghandog at alternatibong pinagkukuhaan ng impormasyon ng masang Pilipino. Kung noon ay penis, dildo o mga vibrator ang kanyang mga hawak

sa kanyang mga Youtube tutorials, ngayon ay pen o panulat na ang kanyang pangunahing kasangkapan sa pagpapalaganap ng kanyang pagprotekta sa Inang Bayan.

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Si Mocha at ang kanyang high-tech na Pluma

Essay

Tiis Ganda: Beauty As a Tool for Consumerism within the Context of the Filipino Media

Ma. Daniella Louise Flores Borrero

The Beauty of the Philippines

The Philippines is a naturally rich country. As an archipelago, the country has numerous access points to various bodies of water that provide a steady supply of seafood. Our country, also blessed with very fertile land that can produce a wide range of crops, also contain a great amount of mineral deposits. ("About the Philippines" n.d.) Sadly, its own natural beauty and wealth has turned into a curse in itself because it attracted too much attention, which led to its colonization.

The foreign invaders wanted to get their own share of the natural wealth and beauty of the country, and they did. They took what they wanted and they did not care for the native people who lived within it. The locals, the real owners of the land, were reduced to slavery. They were used as tools to tend the land that they own, while their overlords get all the profit. Why is the Philippines considered poor despite all its innate riches? I personally think it has do with the fact that the country has been a colony of various countries for the past hundred years, and the culture that has evolved because of the said colonization has greatly crippled the Filipino people until the present time in various ways.

Gandang Pinay

Before the Spaniards came to conquer the Philippines, the native Filipinos have respected, and to some extent, even revered the beauty and power of the feminine. It was the Spanish that brought about the western thinking of men being greater than the woman, because according to P.G. Mallari (2013), " The pre-Hispanic Filipinos put equal importance on warriorship and spirituality; hence, there was greater

symmetry between the warrior or mandirigma and the babaylan—the female ritualist.”

It was the Spanish conquerors who brought about a change in the Filipino mentality. The women were confined with the western concept of beauty within the literal and cultural aspect. They were ingrained with the notion that only the Spaniards were superior in every way, including how they looked and dressed up. The Spanish culture integrated the idea that women should wear layers upon layers of constricting clothing and adhere to the belief that women should remain proper and patiently obey their male patriarch, be it their father or their husband. This was a complete opposite of the pre-colonial Babaylan woman who had the power and respect of her fellowmen and wore clothing that gave them the opportunity to move freely.

The current Filipino Culture, brought about by hundreds of years of oppression, is still very much obsessed on becoming white and western-looking. Beauty comes with respect and pride, and most Filipinos have been conditioned to believe that the only ones who are deemed “beautiful” and “well-respected” are our former foreign overlords. As the saying goes “Imitation is the best form of flattery”. So, many Filipinos want to look like those who they think are in power to get respect. I personally find this fact very sad because it goes against the root of the true identity of the Filipino.

According to E. San Juan Jr. (1999) there are two main unifying features of the Philippines formation: the racial type (Mongoloid) and the Austronesian or Malayo-Polynesian type. Thus, the majority of Filipinos have the physical traits such as having tan skin, a flat nose with wide nostrils and curly hair. These traits are completely different from their own perspective of beauty.

The Quest for Beauty: Pinoy-Style Consumerism

According to GMA News Online (2016), Rhian Ramos was deemed as the “Most Beautiful Filipina” for 2016. I was not surprised, because Rhian Ramos has all the physical traits of what the Filipino culture

deems as “beautiful”. She has a petite physique, a nose with a prominent bridge and small nostrils, smooth white skin and straight hair. Rhian Ramos has these traits because her father is British. She did not work hard to get what she physically possessed; she was born with it. But she is physically not like the majority of Filipinas who want to look as “beautiful” as her, so the others have to do whatever it takes to achieve it.

Filipinas who are determined to attain their ideal sense of beauty, go through extreme lengths and sacrifices in order to achieve it. This need has brought about a niche market that generates a lot of money for corporations every year in beauty products and procedures.

Cosmetic surgery is one of the procedures Filipina women undergo in order to attain their desired look. Cosmetic surgery is defined by cosmeticsurgery.org as “A unique discipline of medicine focused on enhancing appearance through surgical and medical techniques.” Like any other surgery procedures, it comes with its own set of medical risks. The recovery process is long and tedious, not to mention that it is very painful. But a lot of women (and even men) go through with it because they want to look their best.

Another beauty-related product out in the market is Glutathione. Various soaps, creams, pills and even injections claim to contain Glutathione. According to M. Hayman, MD of Huffington Post (2010 n.p.):

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Glutathione is a mother antioxidant... it's the secret to prevent aging, cancer, heart, disease, dementia and more. Glutathione is a very simple molecule that is produced naturally all the time in your body. It is a combination of three simple building blocks of amino acids—cysteine, glycine and glutamine. The body produces its own glutathione... but poor diet, pollution, toxins, medications and stress deplete your glutathione.”

Glutathione is marketed with the notion that that the consumer becomes whiter after a few weeks of use or ingestion. Jessica Soho, in her show *Kapuso Mo*, Jessica Soho (2007) made a documentary about Glutathione and why women use the said product. "Pagdating sa pagpapaputi, marami sa atin ang hindi magpapahuli, (When it comes to whitening the skin, a lot of us (Filipinos) would not want to miss the opportunity)" J. Soho stated. "Kaya nga ba mabenta ang mga produkto na nangangako ng mala-porselanang kutis. (That is why skin-whitening products are hot sellers.)" Products that contain glutathione have a certain price point, which some Filipinas might not be able to afford. But Filipina women adjust their budget and make certain financial sacrifices in order to afford the said luxury. The Glutathione documentary featured a woman named Joy Maganon, a woman who manages a small eatery, struggles to save up in order to get Glutathione injections three times a week. Aside from the financial pain, there is also physical pain involved in the procedure because it involves needles. But for her, the price of pain and money is worth it all, to be able to try and attain her dream of having a whiter skin.

Billboards along major roads and television commercials all push to sell the various products containing glutathione. Sharing with them are the advertisements that sell shampoos and conditioner that claim to make your hair look "straight, shiny, strong and long". Of course, you have to read the label properly to know that the product will not promise anything and will not be liable if the product will not be effective to the said consumer under the notion that "every body is different and would have different reactions from the said product."

The Piracy of Beauty Products

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Our Own True Beauty

Soho (2007) also asks in her *Kapuso Mo, Jessica Soho Glutathione* documentary: “Ang tanong, ligtas ba ito? Lalo na’t nakakabili ng mga peke na ito. (Is it safe? Especially when there are fake ones being sold in the free market.)” Anything that is in demand, but is usually very expensive for most, has a fake version of it. There are fake high-end bags, software, and even makeup and glutathione pills are being pirated or faked. These pirated products are cheaper, but the consumption of these products come with a certain degree of risk.

According to C. Greenwood of *Dailymail.uk* (2015) “Counterfeit makeup such as MAC, Benefit and Urban Decay have been found with dangerous levels of lead, mercury and cyanide.” These products caused severe allergic reactions to the consumer’s bodies and can also lead to organ damage, nerve problems and even death. Fake glutathione pills, injections, creams and soaps can also cause the same effect to the consumer.

Our Own True Beauty

I believe that Filipina women are naturally beautiful, inside and out. The only problem is that a majority of us Filipinas are not confident to be who we really are. Hundreds of years of oppression has brought about a low sense of ownership and belief in oneself, the main ingredients to become a successful person. We should learn to accept ourselves as who we really are, and not as how others would want us to be. By doing so, we will be free to move forward in life and reach for the goals and dreams we have set for ourselves.

I also believe that the media can play an important role in the projection of a positive self-image of the Filipino woman. Media should slowly integrate in their talent pool people who genuinely look like Filipinos, not just those who are mestizos and mestizas. They should create shows that portray the everyday Filipina as someone to look up to and admire.

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About the Author

Ma. Daniella Louise Borrero is an artist and a licensed educator, currently residing in Quezon City, Philippines. She believes that art is an effective tool in the transferring knowledge that can improve a person's quality of life and decision-making skills. As a visual artist, Daniella has exhibited paintings and installations around the Metro. Her works deal with subjects concerning the welfare of children and women. She is passionate about research because she believes it helps bring order and meaning to the chaos of life.

She holds an undergraduate degree in Elementary Education, focusing on Teaching in the Early grades from the University of the Philippines, College of Education. Daniella is currently taking up a Master of Arts Degree in Communication from the College of Mass Communication at the University of the Philippines.

Interview

Interviewing Kara Patria Constantino-David

Julienne Thesa Y. Baldo-Cubelo, PhD



Ms. Kara David is a multi-awarded broadcast journalist who specializes in writing and producing TV documentaries. Her work spans twenty years of doing news reporting and fieldwork in some of the remotest and most impoverished places in the Philippines.

She currently anchors a noontime news program at GMA News TV, "News to

Go." Her other regular TV programs are "I-Witness" and "Pinas Sarap."

She has under her name several medals and trophies from the New York Festivals and the PMPC Star Awards. She has also been named as one of the Outstanding Women in the Nation's Service (TOWNS). She is an Assistant Professor at the Department of Journalism of the College of Mass Communication of the University of the Philippines Diliman.

I sat down with Asst. Prof. David to talk about her generation of women broadcast journalists in Philippine media.

Q: My first question is about the so-called post Martial law media optimism that was supposedly enjoyed by your generation of broadcast journalists. Did you feel that? And how was it for women entering the industry?

A: Yes, definitely I felt this optimism, and at the same time, the big expectation. Kasi ang boss ko ay babae. Malaking difference kasi na ang boss ko ay babae. When your boss is a woman, 'yung confidence level mo as a woman tumataas kaagad. At noong pumasok ako sa GMA, ang boss noong time na 'yun, at least for the public affairs, 'yung boss pa rin namin ngayon, si Maria Flores. Siya 'yung nag interview sa akin. At noong time na 'yon, 'yong talagang idol ng lahat ay si Jessica Soho. And parang 'pag sinabi mong GMA 7 reporter and iisipin mo kaagad, Jessica Soho. Parang tapos na 'yong era noong time ng tatay ko, [Randy David], na ang mga journalists na mga sikat noon ay sina Louie Beltran, Dong Puno, Randy David, Jose Maraveles, 'yung mga ganyan, na 'yon yung mga parang "journalists". Then comes Jessica Soho, and then suddenly puwede (ang babae).

Ang gusto kong pasukan noon ay "Brigada Siyete" because I knew that Jessica Soho was gonna be there at ang nag interview sa akin ay babae rin, si Ms. Marissa Flores. So it really made a difference. I remember when I was in college I had the impression na nagbabasa lang ng balita ang babae. Magaganda sila, Palmolive commercial model sila. I remember the names of Christina Pecson... pretty face, good diction, magaling mag-Ingles. There was also Patricia Evangelista (not the Patricia Evangelista we see today ha?), Georgette Tengco, Marga Ortigas, Vicky Morales. Ang hindi kasali doon sa typical face ay si Tina Monson Palma na parang very authoritative, credible, no non-sense. Pero 'yong nasa field talaga ay si Jessica Soho. Kaya I thought kung kaya ni Jessica Soho na pumunata sa giyera, nag-cocover ng coup d'etat, hindi lang pala kailangang newscaster, puwede ka rin palang maging field reporter. It gave us a lot of inspiration.

With Jessica Soho, there was this sense of being a cow girl, na okay ka naman pala makita in front of the camera kahit hindi ka naka full make-up, may element of rawness, of not rehearsed. So, Jessica Soho did not have the certain air that others had. At that time kasi ganun talaga ang stereotype: Cathy Santillan, Loren Legarda, at iba pa.

When I was a student I knew na hindi naman ako gan'un. But I wanted to be in the news. I didn't want to be in the news pero gusto ko magbalita. In fact when I applied sa GMA hindi ako nag-asam na mag

on-cam, gusto ko nagfi-field. Kasi maganda ang promise at that time of these new happening in the news room. Parang the likes of Jessica Soho who were ahead of me proved that so many things were possible for women in media. Hindi pala kailangang typical na maganda, hindi kailangang artistahin, hindi kailangang naka postura, na meron palang ibang avenues for women.

Q: Do you have mentors who held you back, who told you that it is not an industry for the faint-hearted, na may sigawan sa media, dapat makapal ang mukha mo?

A: Yeah, alam ko 'yan. Nasabihan ako, at napag-aralan ko na ang media ay no- nonsense, ang mga tao ay nagmumura, 'yong deadlines nagpapatong-patong, sasabak sa balita, delikado, mga ganun. But that's what pulled me in. Somehow I have been warned, yes. My parents were very much aware of the trade kumabaga, and as parents they reminded me, cautioned me about many things but it is their nature to be risk-takers kasi. Never was I hindered na huwag 'yan Kara, kasi babae ka. Hindi mo 'yan kaya. Walang gan'on.

Q: With your twenty years in the media industry, paano mo naranasan, kung meron man, na ang pagkababae ng isang mamahayag is something that worked to your disadvantage?

A: Well, meron somehow. Meron naman talaga. I am sure na iis-stereotype pa rin ang mga babae when it comes to the kinds of program given to them. Halimbawa, ay, Kara dito ka sa programang ito, tungkol sa food, sa travel, or 'yong dati about OFWs. Tapos 'yong mga lalaki naman, sa crime, police beat, 'yong maaksyon. 'Yong babae, sa lifestyle, or talk shows na family oriented, magazine type, ganun.

And right now, kasi I host News to Go with Howie Severino. Nakakaloka lang na 'yong mga audience. Ramdam ko na may expectation talaga na you have to look a certain way: nakaayos, naka kilay ng maganda. 'Yong suot mo, hindi masagwa, hindi rin naman baduy, fit for your age, okay ang kulay sa camera. Samantalang kay Howie, sige kahit ano okay lang. Pareho naman kaming tagapagbalita. So sabi ko, sige bigyan n'yo ako ng stylist. So ayon, hindi ko na s'ya masyadong iniisip. May nag-aayos na sa akin.

Pero in many others aspects, women are really making it in the broadcast industry. Sa meetings, karamihan babae. Magkakaibigan, magkakatrabaho.

Q: Wala bang competition? Media is notorious for this.

A: You know, the thing with competition is, it is subtle. It is not really mentioned outrightly. Pero meron. Sa posisyon ko, I really do not worry much about it siguro kasi matagal na rin ako sa media. So halimbawa, isang program, kung may hosts na babae at lalaki, konti lang naman ang puwede pumalit sa'yo, at least in my level, kumbaga, in my generation. Hindi ko na iisipin 'yong mga lalaki. Sa babae, yes, the competition is there. Iisipin mo rin kung sino ang puwede pumalit sa'yo, but it's not really something that's nakakatakot for me. Ang iniisip ko lang na nakarating naman ako dito kasi go lang ako nang go. Hindi naman ako nagmakaawa or something for anything, for any program that was assigned to me. I just kept this attitude na I just have to be one step ahead of the game with no particular competitor in mind. Basta, kailangan lang galingan all the way.

Q: So what you are saying is that there is an open negotiation process in the media that is, shall we say, consultative and that women can work around with?

A: Sa GMA, yes, I cannot speak for other companies. Kasi nga karamihan babae sa amin. The big bosses are women, at least those directly working with us.

Q: Therefore, masasabi mo bang wala nang glass ceiling for women sa broadcast industry at present?

A: Hhhmmmm, I'd like to say, it is looking bright for women. Siguro ten years ago, puwede kong nasabi, baka hanggang dito lang ang mga bababe. But with my boss, for instance, she just kept going up and up. She filled positions that used to be men's. So ngayon, siguro wala na. Walang nang glass ceiling.

Q: Some say ang ganitong kultura, itong mabilis na pace, competitive, long hours in the media industry, some say that this is a masculinist culture, patriarchal, anong masasabi mo dito?

A: Yeah, in many ways, I agree with that but I am not keen on naming it as patriarchal or masculine. That is the culture. It's hectic and ngarag. Because it is business. At the end of the day, tulad ko, one should realize kung kelan ka makikipagsabayan, at kung kelan ka mas magiging careful—careful in a sense na mas magdadahan-dahan. Hindi na puwede y'ong go lang nang go.

Q: Should women be okay with this? What about if women become mothers or when they need to take care of parents and the same long hours are expected of them?

A: Hati ako d'yan in a way because I know what you mean. Everything changes when one becomes a mother, or a parent, for that matter.

It's just that mas mahirap kung nanay ka and you work in the media industry. Ako, I got the usual two months leave, medyo nag extend ng konti pero without pay na 'yon. Siyempre, gusto ko i-enjoy ang anak ko, gusto ko magpahinga, maalagaan ang daughter ko, pero I had to get back also kasi may pinapakain na ako this time. Should women be okay with this? How I wish mas mahaba pa ang pahinga ng mga nanay. It's not just for them, but for their children too. I hope in the future, women journalists, or all parents, should be given more paid days.

Q: Speaking of which, was this your frame of mind when you became a mom? I am very interested in how you have done it, or doing it—the balancing between work and personal life?

A: Well, as a single mom, I know that my circumstance is very different from the usual arrangement of people having families. Kailangang kong maging very conscious with the fact that I couldn't in any way fail this because my daughter has only me to back her up. Of course, my parents are there always but I am her Mom and difficult as it may seem, ako talagang trabaho lang talaga ako. The balancing is not easy. Kailangan kong magtrabaho. Kailangan kong siguraduhin na ang programa ko ay panonoorin ng tao para naman tuloy-tuloy. Pero, hindi na katulad ng dati na wala pang anak na sige, anytime, anywhere, let's go get that story, cover that news. This time, I have to take care of myself, my health. Kailangang tamang kayod lang.

In a way, klaro sa akin ang priorities ko. Klaro sa akin na ang mawawalang oras sa trabaho ay hindi sayang na oras. Oras s'ya para sa sarili ko, para sa pamilya ko.

Q: As a journalist what are your dilemmas when it comes to elevating the discourse on gender, or any discourse, in Philippine media?

A: For me, there is a right time for specific content. Kung kritikal, siges i-tackle mo s'ya pero gawin mo s'yang maiintindihan ng mas marami. I-present mo s'ya na panoorin s'ya kahit ng ordinaryong tao. On the other hand, your story can be mababaw but you can present it na mas malalim. Or kung ang story ay malalim, you can present it na mas light, mas madaling panoorin, i-laymanize. And slowly and hopefully kung nasanay na ang audience na manood ng makabuluhan at mga seryosong mga topic na ikwenento in layman, baka later on, kaya na nilang manood ng malalim na kwento sa paraan na malalim pa ang pagkakakwento. So babalansihen lang s'ya.

Q: Tama ba kung sabihin ko na you are still optimistic about the Filipino audience?

A: Of course! Of course! The fact na buhay pa yung show naming I-Witness, is a testament na hindi bobo ang Filipino audience. Kasi ilang years na ba kami, 18 years na ba kami? Nakalimutan ko na kung ilang years na kami. The fact na nagsu-survive pa rin ang isang documentary program na one topic, one dokyu, one show, na dati ay unheard of, na dati ay hindi panoorin kasi ang karaniwang panoorin ay 'yong mabilis, madaling mainitindihan, 'yong mabilis ang editing, 'yong chopsuey. Tapos biglang magpapalabas ng mahaba, mabagal na mga narratives at nagsu-survive pa s'ya hangang ngayon at hindi na lang kami, ang dami nang docu programs—Reel Time, Frontrow, even sa ABS-CBN, merong Mukha, so ah okay, may hope. Ibig sabihin, we can continue doing this.

Q: And the fact that there is one whole channel na mas current affairs ang orientation, GMA News TV, says a lot.

A: Yes, at also there's the fact na ang katapat namin ay entertainment

program. We're still surviving. The fact na nasa ere pa kami, hindi naman kami masyadong nilalampaso ng kalaban, ay okay, may nanonood pa. Ibig sabihin, may hope pa. I'd like to think na 'yong mga topics na tina-tackle namin sa I-Witness ay hindi naman mababaw, malalim naman ang pagkakakwento pero nanonood pa rin ang mga tao, is a source of optimism, di ba, na tuloy 'yong laban? Pero hindi ako masyadong naniniwala doon sa masyadong radikal, 'yong rebolusyon na laban na alternative kaagad 'yong ipapalabas. Kasi naniniwala ako na it's how you work with it, with the system. Ang reyalidad ay negosyo ang media and we cannot survive if we don't rate, if people don't watch us and advertisers don't put their ads on us. Meron talaga kaming ganung klaseng obligation. Pero hindi ibig sabihin n'on na kailangang maging alipin ka na ng revenues, ng advertisers. Kaya pa ring gawin mo 'yong trabaho mo na tagapagdala ng balita, ng kwento, ng totoong kwento, and at the same time, ng re-rate.

Q: So you have achieved so much in your career. What else is in your bucket list? Any wild plans for the future?

A: Shocks! Siguro madi-disappoint sa akin 'yong mga tao pero nasa slowing down mode na ako ngayon (laughs).

Q: Slowing down can be wild kasi against the flow sya...

A: Napagod na ako sa competitive life. It will come to a point when you don't want to be in the rat race anymore. And'on na ako sa point na, hindi naman retirement, pero sa level na I choose really carefully the stories that I do. Parang pakiramdam ko ang buhay ko as a journalist, hindi s'ya dapat magtapos on-cam. And if I remain in the competitive state, in the rat race, magiging hanggang doon na lang ang buhay ko and legacy ko as a journalist na alam ko meron pa akong ibang maiaambag as a journalist kahit hindi ako on-cam. So like teaching, ganyan...

Q: Kumusta naman, so far (ang teaching)?

A: Okay naman, so far, iba s'yang mundo (laughs). I love teaching. Iba ring level of work s'ya. And 'yong foundation work. Ito talaga 'yong

ibang mukha ng pagiging mamamahayag ko. Naniniwala kasi ako na hindi dapat sa on-cam nagtatapos ang buhay ng isang journalist. E, 'pag reporter ka, 'pag sinabi sa'yo na tapos ka na, extra ka na, tapos na 'yong trabaho mo. Pero ako gusto ko may extension pa s'ya. Kaya I have my foundation or the people that I interviewed, the people I visited, whose stories I featured, this time I can do something for them. Ang IP (indigenous people) communities of the Philippines ang aking passion, so I am doing something for their communities. So 'pag pinutol ko ang aking on-cam ties with them, hindi ibig sabihin na pinutol ko na rin ang off-cam ties ko with them.

So we have scholarship for them, infrastructure projects for their communities. Ang IPs ang aking soft spot kasi. Kaya nasa slowdown mode na ako. I just retained just a few programs at GMA. Hindi na ako reporter. Gan'on. Slowing down mode na talaga ako. Hindi naman ako mawawala sa media kasi kailangan ko pa rin kumita ng pera. But I have realized na being a journalist is really about telling stories. It's just that you don't just have to be on-cam to be able to tell the stories of people. There is a full life outside it.

Julienne Baldo-Cubelo: Maraming maraming salamat!

About the Interviewer

Asst. Prof. Julienne Thesa Y. Baldo-Cubelo, PhD is a communication and media scholar and a development worker, teaching at the Communication Research Department of the College of Mass Communication of the University of the Philippines Diliman. She has an M.A. degree in Women and Development Studies and a Ph.D. in Communication. Her regular teaching load in the undergraduate and graduate classes includes the following courses: Qualitative Research, Communication and Socio-cultural change, and Gender and Communication. Her research interests include gender, women, family communication, participatory communication, and ritual communication. She is also a breastfeeding counselor and a natural birthing coach.

Guidelines for Contributors

The PCS Review is an annual refereed official publication of the Philippines Communication Society (PCS). The PCS is a regular member of the Philippine Social Science Council (PSSC). PCS represents the communication discipline in the Council. PSSC is a non-stock non-profit governmental organization that promotes the social science.

Objectives

The PCS Review aims to achieve the following:

To present highlights of major communication research studies that will contribute to the development and enrichment of the communication discipline particularly in the Philippines;

To contribute to the growth of discourse and scholarship in the communication discipline and professionalism in the practice;

To keep track of, document and analyze communication media studies; and

To recognize contributions of outstanding communication scholars, educators, and practitioners particularly to the growth of the discipline.

Contents

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Articles. These are research-based write-ups that present updated or new information and knowledge on the various areas of communication including journalism, films, advertising and public relations, digital and multimedia, traditional and folk media, and communication education and research. The PCS Review article must follow the scientific paper format, and thus, will contain the following sections: Introduction and Rationale, Statement of the Problem and Objectives, Study Framework, Research Design, Results and Discussion, and Conclusions and Recommendations. Manuscripts for articles must not exceed 10,000 words inclusive of references tables and graphics. Articles submitted to PCS Review are double blind peer reviewed.

Essays. These are expository works on current and emerging communication media issues that are expected to contribute to the development and/or enrichment of communication framework, model, and theory especially in the Philippine context. Manuscripts for essays must not exceed 5,000 words inclusive of references tables and graphics.

Reviews. Objective critique of media and communication outputs such as books, modules, films, video documentaries, websites, and multimedia materials. The review must include a complete citation of the media output and the name and institutional affiliation of the reviewer at the end of the article. Manuscripts for essays must not exceed 3,000 words inclusive of references tables and graphics.

Commentaries. In-depth analysis of global, national, or local development issues and the role of communication media in addressing these issues. These may also be in-depth analysis of current and emerging communication media issues. Manuscripts for essays must not exceed 4,000 words inclusive of references tables and graphics, interviews.

Interviews. Interactions with media personalities and communication professionals or practitioners on relevant communication-related issues and insights.

Submission Procedure

Authors should submit an electronic copy of the manuscript in MSWord format to the Editor in Chief or Issue Editor to the following email addresses:

Jose Reuben Q. Alagaran II: jralagaran@yahoo.com Joyce L. Arriola: joycearriola@yahoo.com Lourdes M. Portus: Importus@up.edu.ph Madeline B. Quiamco: madzbaguio@yahoo.com, Arminda Santiago: armisan2009@yahoo.com.

The papers/articles may also be sent to the PCS editorial office at the following address:

The Editor-in-Chief

PCS Review c/o Asian Institute of Journalism and Communication 2244 España Avenue, Manila Tel: 740-0396/743-4321

Papers submitted must be original, unpublished work and not under consideration for publication elsewhere. Upon their publication in the PCS Review, the PCS has exclusive right to reproduce and distribute the article. Manuscripts must follow the number of words requirement set above. They should be in English, typed double-space on 8.5 x 11-inch paper.

Each manuscript submitted should be accompanied by an abstract of the paper (not exceeding 300 words) and a list of up to five keywords that are suitable and useful for indexing, abstracting, and online searching. The keywords should not be words already included in the title of the article.

The PCS Review uses the APA Style for citation. Please refer to the Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association, 5th edition (2001) for specific guidelines on reference style format. The Manual is also available online at www.bedfordsmartins.com/online/cite6.html

A brief biographical note about the author of about 150 words should also be submitted on a separate sheet.

Manuscript Review Procedure

Manuscripts submitted from January to June of a particular year will be reviewed and considered for inclusion in the annual issue for release in December of that year. The months of July to November are reserved for manuscript review, refereeing, editing, revision, layout, and printing.

Each manuscript submitted is double blind reviewed by distinguished media and communication experts appointed by the Issue Editor and Editor-in-Chief. The criteria for review and selection include the following: (a) conformity with the editorial requirements of the journal/publication, (b) contribution to the attainment of the objectives of the publication; and (c) conformity with legal, ethical and moral standards, e.g., the article is not libelous, and d) scholarly rigour.



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Please put a check mark (✓) on the box corresponding to your rating using the scale below:

1 = Weak 2 = Fair 3 = Good 4 = Very Good 5 = Excellent

CRITERIA	1	2	3	4	5
TITLE: Does the wording in the title describe the ideas presented in the paper? Does it capture the essence of the study? Is the title accurately succinct or too lengthy? Does the title succeed in arousing the reader's interest?					
RATIONALE / JUSTIFICATION and HYPOTHESIS (if applicable) Is the rationale or justification / hypothesis for the importance of the descriptive work explicitly stated in the paper? Does the paper propose an idea that is novel or of value to the field? What new knowledge will the study contribute to the discipline?					
FRAMEWORK <u>Is there a theoretical or conceptual framework to guide the study. Were the concepts under study interrelate and were operationalized?</u>					
METHODS: Are the methods of research appropriate and correctly executed? If replication is mentioned, are the sample sizes large enough to be convincing? Does the paper explicitly articulate a strong connection to existing research?					
RESULTS: Is the focus on results specifically relevant to the assumptions and hypothesis and/or results suggesting something equally important?					

CRITERIA	1	2	3	4	5
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CONCLUSION: Does the paper strongly present the purpose of the study and articulate the findings or the implications that are likely to arise from the researcher's anticipated findings? This should be some sort of context for the results as well as the relationship of the information to other facts. Are the important points stated in a clear manner?					
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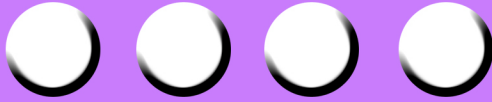
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