

## **CHAPTER 4**

### **Cultural Formation, Social Media and Cultural Capital**

#### **4.1 Introduction**

In this chapter, I will show how K-pop cover dance practices helped expand the range of identities which people can use to portray themselves, beyond the nation state. I believe that studying this form of youth culture will lead to a greater understanding of the practices of dance music cover groups, and the social meanings and relationships created among the groups, their fans and audiences. It will also help to examine the significance of cyberspace in the active consumption of dance cover groups, in relation to their fans and audiences. This will also help contribute to a greater level of understanding of space as a constructed and imagined entity, and the role K-pop cover acts can play in mediating this construction. K-pop cover music is used as a tool to re-define Asia as an urban, imagined space, one containing cosmopolitan consumers.

#### **4.2 Backgrounds of the K-pop Cover Groups**

In Vietnam, a number of groups perform K-pop dance music, mostly in the big cities such as Ha Noi, Ho Chi Minh City and Hai Phong. In total, there are about 20 such groups, but the number varies a lot, and there are many small and little known groups at local high schools and universities, and also fan club dance cover groups all over the country. In Ha Noi, the most famous groups are St.319, LYNT and YGLC, and they faced strong competition at the beginning in 2011. While those groups still remain, St.319 is an example of the most successful K-pop cover group in Vietnam, as its fan base outnumbers other groups' and it is known among the international K-pop fan community. The group is even ranked as one of the most influential and leading K-pop dance artists by social media, based on the number of views and subscribers on YouTube ([www.hellokpop.2013](http://www.hellokpop.2013)).

### *YG Lovers Crew*



*Figure 4.1 A Group of Vietnamese Youth (YG Lover Crew) in Hanoi, Vietnam.*

YG Lovers Crew is a dance group based in Hanoi, it was formed in 2011 by Doan Nhat Anh as part of the K-pop Global Contest in Vietnam, and now performs many different kinds of dance, such as Hip Hop, modern dance and K-pop cover dance. YG Lovers is one of the K-pop cover groups in Vietnam which has risen to fame, particularly among Vietnamese young people, and has gained a following through online media outlets such as YouTube. Currently, the group has 12 members, all of whom are fans of Big Bang and 2NE1 Both these groups are managed by YG Entertainment.

### *St.319*



*Figure 4.2 A Group of Young Vietnamese (St.319) in Hanoi, Vietnam.*

St. 319 was also formed in 2011, and at first had only two members, but now there are over 20 people in the band. This group has received two to three million

viewings on its own YouTube page. The group has won global cover contests, and has performed alongside with some renowned artists. In the future, St.319 plans to continue to develop its own brand of K-pop covers, and produce self-choreographed products, to assert its own brand. In particular, the group is moving away from its St.319 dance group core, to become the first entertainment group model in Vietnam, with members targeting different areas. In December 2014, for the first time, St.319 Entertainment released its own record, performed by MIN, with a debut digital single called 'Find'.

#### **4.3 K- pop with Social Media**

In this section, I will further describe and analyze the cover videos made by YG Lovers Crew and St.319; as examples of the ways in which popular culture, the media and internet technologies are creatures of marketization and governance, plus how they are affecting the progression and effects of neo-liberalism as well as how popular culture has effectively inspired contradictory and alternate forms of ideological, socio-political and cultural production and consumption in Vietnam. I situate my analysis based on the emergence and effects of Korean popular culture through the framework of neo-liberalism, as the foundation component. As indicated by Ross and Gibson (2007: 2), "Neoliberalism is the prevailing political economic paradigm in the world today and has been described as an ideological 'monoculture' in that when neoliberal policies are criticized a common response is that 'there is no alternative'". In the present stage of global capitalism in post-socialist Vietnam, the complexities of neo-liberalism are creating new intersections between transnational economics, politics and governances; social ideologies are also in constant tension and developing among the governing state, global corporations and the people. Therefore, in order to understand the effects of neo-liberalism and the new internet technologies that have prompted Vietnamese young people such as YG Lovers Crew and St.319 to create their cover videos, it is necessary to examine the global media, popular culture and the cultures integrated within these elements.

To be more specific, I will discuss how K-pop fans have become an important part of mediating the relationship between fans and Korean artists, and the relations among their groups. Similar to the K-pop idols, who can generate a large turnout based

on their projected appeal (such as concerts), for cover bands, they gain popularity by distributing content and information. Without corporate backing, Vietnamese young people have been able to inspire a certain emotion and a type of desire, to create a physical shift. A simple example of this is the emergence of the groups' Facebook fan pages, to which users/consumers can subscribe, giving power to the owners.

"Now we have *one* page on Facebook, to update activities about our group. When I want to inform the YG fan community about the group's activities, I can announce it on the site" (Interview with Nhat-Anh, male, born in 1991, the leader of YG Lovers Crew 2013).

"The reason my group created a Facebook page is to make it look more professional" (Interview with Tommy, male, born in 1991, a dance member of YG Lovers Crew 2014).

"I use the internet a lot; for FB or searching Google for information - about five or six hours per day. Facebook is very good, so now everyone communicate with each other using it" (Interview with Hoa, female, born in 1992, a dance member of YGLC 2013).

"I use the internet five or six hours a day; the maximum because I also have to go to school. I have tried to stop using Facebook but it is like a habit. Whenever I use my computer, I feel uneasy if I do not check Facebook; I can't stop. But the time I have for checking Facebook is limited, over five or six hours I actually prefer to use samcram and YT. I use YT to watch dance clips, because if I want to dance better, I have to watch more...Without social networks, there is nothing to share;, without social networks, dancers do not meet and could not form dance groups. We cannot share a lot of our knowledge to others. Actually, social networks are a good invention for everyone. If social networks didn't exist, all of the movements now would not exist. YT and Facebook have helped develop everything. You can share your opinions, what you have done and what you know. If you have clips, you can share them with others, and share your passion and what you are doing; what you have sweated for, made an effort to do. In this way everyone knows about that" (Interview with Minh, male, born in 1995, a member of YGLC 2013)

The cover K-pop dance videos are not means to an end, but can be seen as a stepping stone in the development of other, newer forms of emergence. To be specific, although YGLC and St.319 are not commercial and mainstream entertainment figures, they represent potential ways to manipulate the top-down structure of K-pop (such as through the cover contests - a hegemonic practice) by contributing to new online form of fan culture. The case of K-pop dance in Vietnam represents a new type of cultural



flow, one which uses an advanced mass media form – the internet, and has brought with it new ideas and perspectives on the nature of globalization and the attitudes towards Asianization. Instead of merely resisting Western influences and an emerging flow from Korea, young Vietnamese are now active participants in their regional cultural flows, by selecting what to receive and adopt.

Imagery of living in a same transnational space is the central to the understanding of regionalization and identity formation. Appadurai (1996) argues that media and technologies can create a common identity “for the construction of imagined selves and imagined worlds” (1996: 3). I argue that the practicing K-pop covers among young Vietnamese people is a symbolic form that can facilitate and mobilize the transnational imagination. Similar to newspapers and novels in Anderson’s work on nationalism in 1991, K-pop dance can also be considered a common experience for communities who never actually meet.

The use of technical media has provided individuals “a profound impact on the ways in which individuals experience the spatial and temporal dimensions of social life” (Thompson 1995: 22). The argument of Thompson is that traditions (or pre-modernities), instead of disappearing in the era of global modernity, will be “sustained over time only if they are continually re-embedded in new contexts and re-moored to new kinds of territorial units.” Thompson (1995: 257) further argues that “the localized appropriation of globalized media products is also a source of tension and potential conflict”, and in some contexts these conflicts may “help individuals to take a distance, to imagine alternatives, and thereby to question traditional practices.” Sarah Cohen adds that “transnational trends or styles are received, mediated and appropriated within a local context, and although popular music’s communication networks are not restricted to local or national boundaries, they increasingly enable cultural production within localities and the expression of local identity defined, or perhaps emphasized, in relation to the ‘non-local’” (1997: 133). The current phenomenon of K-pop cover music in Vietnam has been facilitated due to the globalization of digital technologies, as well as by economic developments and the increased cultural demands of young people in the country. My study of K-pop cover acts in Vietnam also represents an analysis of the role of popular music consumption in the construction of identity.

The development of technological innovations has made it much easier to produce and access art. The ability of a mechanical reproduction exists in an absence of “its presence in time and space, its unique existence at the place where it happens to be. This unique existence of the work of art determined the history to which it was subject throughout the time of its existence” (Benjamin 1970: 221). Thus, these art forms of replication instead of having a “location of its original use value”, leaves a room for its “mechanical reproduction” (Benjamin 1970: 221). Moreover, the use of camera technologies has further provides a context for the performance of “mechanical reproduction”. Benjamin concludes that “everybody who witnesses its accomplishments is somewhat of an expert” (Benjamin 1970: 221), and such expert viewers are subject to “The spectator’s process of association in view of these images indeed interrupted by their constant, sudden change” (Benjamin 1970: 221).

“Social networking sites such as YT have helped St.319, as well as many other dance groups, become more widely known. I think the common point of St.319’s fans and St.319, is that they all know about Korean music and are excited about it, so they know K-pop, and the audience knows St.319 and so everyone knows each other. The audience members also want to create a perfect image from listening to Korean music, so they watch to learn more, such as how to dress, how to perform, as well as how to film videos. For the perfect image, I think it is quite simple; dress beautifully to look better in the eyes of others, or wear make-up to identify each person. Becoming famous through social networking sites is no longer a rare occurrence, because Facebook, YT and many other sites have a lot of users. So, uploading groups’ clips and photos is easy; for other people to access, and leading these groups becoming more widely known. Actually, to become an idol of the young is the dream of many people, and to be a member of St.319 is one thing that everyone wants. It is interesting to be known or appreciated by everyone. Having friends who are famous makes you proud. Actually, the founders of St.319 did not expect the group would one day become famous like this. The group’s members are just doing their best. The group’s products (cover dance videos) are always of a high quality and are quite well known; now they have worldwide fame” (Interview with Kevin, male, born in 1996, the leader of St.319 fan club 2014).

#### **4.4 Vietnamese Generation Y**

The purpose of this section is to review and describe generation differences, as well as identify the differences that exist within the younger generation itself.

Generation Y	Generation X	Boomer	Silent
1 Technology use (24%)	Technology use (12%)	Work ethic (17%)	WWII/Depression (14%)
2 Music culture (11%)	Work ethic (11%)	Respectful (14%)	Smarter (13%)
3 Liberal/tolerant (7%)	Conservative (7%)	Values/moral (8%)	Honest (12%)
4 Smarter (6%)	Smarter (6%)	'Baby boom' (6%)	Work ethic (10%)
5 Clothes (5%)	Respectful (5%)	Smarter (5%)	Values/Morals (10%)

SOURCE: Pew Research Center, Jan 2010.

*Figure 4.3 Results of Pew Research Center, Jan 2010*

Today's young Vietnamese, especially Gen Y children who are a product of the cyber revolution, are trying to get the most out of their lives, and they recognize they are being raised in better conditions and have more choices than previous generations. For most of them, the question is not how to get something but rather what to choose. The rise of digital media has allowed them to create their own personalized world; they are able to live their lives through new online and mobile communities.

According to Pew Research Center in 2010, the term "Generation Y" includes people who born between 1980 and 1996 while other groups "Generation X"; "Baby Boomers"; "The Silent Generation" covers those who born from 1965 and 1979; 1946 and 1964 and 1928 to 1945 respectively. Moreover, conducted globally, in response to the question: What values make a generation unique? There were five key values identified by Generation Y respondents, namely: technology use, music culture, liberalism, smart and clothes, while two values were totally absent from the Generation X group: music culture and clothes (Pewinternet.org 2010).

In a post-socialist country like Vietnam, there is a contestation between ideologies from the past, those influenced by traditions and the Vietnamese Communist Party ideology, and those from the present and an imagined future based on modern

lifestyle trends (Caiger et al. 1996). This often leads to a unique construction of cultural practices and social outputs in Vietnam (Wulff 1995). In order to understand Vietnamese young people nowadays, it is necessary to understand their experiences through the existence of multiple identities, those which are the product of education, family and media (Miles et al. 1998: 94). In the context of Vietnamese media and education, while the Communist Party ideology still attempts to enter young people's minds, the important and collective role young people play in a socialist country is at odds with the individualism promoted by capitalism. Based on a respect for the nationalist hero Ho Chi Minh, all state-owned educational institutions focus on national unity and appropriate Communist Party values (Nilan 1999). However, the changes taking place in Vietnamese society have led to new influences on the children and families there, and especially the introduction of Western values in urban areas (Huyen 1998). Influences from Hong Kong and Japan were once very strong in Vietnamese society (Berry et al. 1996: 202); however, recently the trend has been recentered to include South Korea. Moreover, young Vietnamese who have studied in developed countries, have also brought back with them different ideologies and lifestyles (Nilan 1999). Therefore, in general, instead of accepting uncritically all values and moral standards of the older generation from their parents, the schools or media, young people also have their own, new and modern youth culture to follow (Nilan 1999).

In South Korea, due to improvements in household incomes, resulting from the economy's development in the 1980s, teenagers now receive more materialist benefits and have started to become the main consumers (Lee 2013). Moreover, because the teenagers there also endure a hard, intensive educational life, becoming K-pop idols is their dream, as an alternative career choice (Lee 2013). This situation is similar to that in Vietnam, as like Korean teenagers, Vietnamese teenagers are under a lot of pressure to enter higher educational institutions, and popular culture has become the most important means for them to escape the stress they experience due to frequent exams. However, the difference in Vietnam is that young people normally do not choose to become V-pop idols as their main careers, as with their South Korean counterparts, but do it as a second job; an alternative to academic life and a hobby. Academic achievements lead to stable, professional jobs with government agencies and in the business sector. It is for these reasons that the young people prefer to have a dual



career. On the one hand, they can follow their hobbies and dreams, and on the other they go through a negotiation with their parents. The young people respect their parents' desires and societal expectations.

The economic and social context in Vietnam now presents conditions for young people to develop possibilities like those in South Korea. As argued by Fforde, the Vietnamese political economy has encouraged a “spreading of risk”, accepting the model of people who have a dual job life; with a job in the state sector and also another business outside (Fforde 1998: 3). This argument is maybe true in the case of the young people portrayed in this study. The families of the dance groups' members invest a lot of money in their children's education, and also give their children room to develop their talents in dance, social activities and business. Aiden Nguyen, the founder, leader and manager of St.319, is one example of this. In the past, he studied at one of the top high schools and universities in Ha Noi, at the same time he ran his dance group. After that was sent to study an MA in the U.K, and is now the business manager of St.319 entertainment, plus has his own hotel.

“Dancing is neither *an* entertainment *nor* a luxury. Dancing is just the same as many jobs for a lot of people. It also takes time, effort, love and passion *Dancing is* a job you *have* to work *on* from 8 a.m. to 7 p.m. It also gives you money, and gives you a good life...Dancing is *a* passion, a job that we were really put our lives into. My family absolutely wants me to study at college; whatever I want to do as long as I pass the test for university, it is ok for them” (Interview with Minh, male, born in 1995, a member of YGLC 2013).

“I *have* finished college but I haven't used that degree. I studied Banking and Finance at Thang Long University, *but there was too much* pressure at my university. In the past, when I was not ready to choose the art path, I used to think I *would* become a banker. I am quite dynamic and *good at* English, too” (Interview with Nhat-Anh, male, born in 1991, the leader of YG Lovers Crew 2013).

“In fact, when myself and Aiden met and formed St.319, had no purpose other than to satisfy our passion. Later, when the group began to grow and our dance videos became known by K-pop fans and K-pop dance cover fans, others joined our group. Later still, more and more people participated in our group, and our way of working became more professional. I found out that it was a way for us to show the good nature of the Vietnamese people. For example, we may be fans of K-pop; we are fans of their entertainment industry, but the videos we create, we do

purely ourselves; they are entirely the work of young Vietnamese people. Sometimes this is not just a hobby - what we like, what we dress in - it also shows our attitude, to work hard and take it seriously” (Interview with Zoie, female, born in 1992, a dance leader of St.319 2014).

St.319 has become famous and an icon among teenagers in Vietnam:

“St.319 also has a lot of fans; there is a fan club, which indicates that the group has almost become a youth phenomenon in Vietnam. We can maybe see youth from a wider picture, that a large proportion of young Vietnamese people in general nowadays have a lot of ambition and passion. They just need a source of inspiration, to live for that, and St.319 is an inspiration for them. Since St.319 has become well-known, lots of other cover groups have been formed and developed on a large and small scale, but all to the same St.319 model” (Interview with Thao, female, born in 1988, a fan of St.319 2014).

“Actually, to become a youth idol is a thing dreamt of by many people, and to be a member of St.319 is one thing that everyone wants. It is interesting to be known and appreciated by everyone. Having friends who are famous also makes you proud” (Interview with Kevin, male, born in 1996, the leader of St.319 fan club 2014).

#### **4.5 Social Media Turned into Cultural Capital, Styles and Competitiveness among Young People**

##### **Cultural capital among K-pop cover groups**

In this section, I will illustrate that there are several types of cultural capital the groups’ members possess, such as their education, dance skills, English language proficiency, family backgrounds and technological skills (the use of cameras, videos and internet resources). Their cultural capital is also shown in the way they work and organize their groups’ activities, including the marketing strategies and plans they have developed for the future.

First of all, I will investigate the common cultural capital possessed by both the study groups. At the group level, by practicing K-pop dance covers, the members of YGLC and St.319 do not only show their love for K-pop music and K-pop stars, but also to show their ambition to jump into the national music industry and entertainment sector. St.319 even produce new products (Vietnamese songs with inspired K-pop dance and Western Rap) on their own. As a consequence, practicing K-pop covers can be seen

as the first step for them towards becoming famous, both domestically and internationally. At the individual level, even though dancers have strengths in different areas and make use of the capital they possess in different ways, they all have a good educational background. While their education levels differ, members of both groups are studying or studied at leading universities in Ha Noi or overseas, or at least have entered university. Second, even though not all their families/parents are rich or in the 'elite', they have similar, dual approaches when it comes to their children. To be more specific, on the one hand they expect their children to perform well at school and university, but they would also like their children to do what they want, and are confident in their children's ability to negotiate for their futures and work hard. This family approach gives the children space to decide on their own path, and not only reflects common traits among the two groups, but represents Vietnamese society as a whole. Moreover, practicing dance gives the young people a chance to experience and cultivate their own cultural capital, such as building their confidence, working in groups and time management skills, among others. It also helps the children develop a sense of peer group emotional belonging and provides opportunities for their futures, including in business. Whether they will continue working in the entertainment sector as professional artists, dancers or producers, or will follow their educational/academic lives and train for a job, keeping their career lives and hobbies separate, they still keep those skills and forms of capital with them; to strengthen and nurture their daily lives. This also reflects the fact that there are more choices for Vietnamese young people nowadays. A successful career is not rigidly associated with an academic career or working for the Government, as it was the older generation. Success is now based on an individual's actual experience, competitive benefits, capacity and passion.

Table 4.1 Backgrounds of dance members

<b>Grou p</b>	<b>Name</b>	<b>Sex</b>	<b>Year of Birth</b>	<b>Dance Expier ence</b>	<b>Education (BA up)</b>	<b>Family Backgroun d</b>	<b>Future Plans</b>
YGL C	Tommy	Male	1991	2 yrs (started with K- pop cover dance)	BA in Banking at VNU, Ha Noi, Vietnam	Father works for Vietnam state-owned company	To become a singer and actor
YGL C	Duy Anh	Male	1993	7 yrs (started with Hip Hop dance)	BA in Architecture at Nguyen Trai University, Ha Noi, Vietnam	Father works for Vietnamese Army	To become an architect/ , dancer
YGL C	Pham Hong Hoa	Femal e	1991	4 yrs (stared with Hip Hop and K- Pop dance covers)	BA from Foreign Trade University, Ha Noi, Vietnam	Parents are business owners	Study abroad (MA in Australia )



Table 4.1 (continued)

<b>Group</b>	<b>Name</b>	<b>Sex</b>	<b>Year of Birth</b>	<b>Dance Experience</b>	<b>Educational Background (B.A up)</b>	<b>Family Background</b>	<b>Future Plans</b>
YGL C	Minh	Male	1995	5 yrs (started with Hip Hop dance)	BA from Opening University, Ha Noi, Vietnam	Father is a doctor/ mother is a teacher	To study abroad (MA course in Singapore)
YGL C	Doan Nhat Anh	Male	1991	8 yrs (started with Hip Hop dance)	BA in Banking from Thang Long University	Parents are traditional performance artists	To become an art manager
YGL C	Quan Lee	Male	1995	5 yrs (started with varied dance genres)	B.A at Ha Noi College of Dancing	Parents work for international organization	To become a dancer and study abroad (in France)
YGL C	Ziu	Female	1992	5 yrs (started with K-pop dance covers)	BA in Fashion from University of Industrial Fine Arts, Ha Noi, Vietnam	Mother works	To become a fashion designer/stylist

Table 4.1 (continued)

<b>Grou p</b>	<b>Name</b>	<b>Sex</b>	<b>Year of Birth</b>	<b>Dance Experie -nce</b>	<b>Educational Backgroun d (B.A up)</b>	<b>Family Backgroun d</b>	<b>Futre Plans</b>
YGL C	USGer	Male	1987	5 years (started with break dance)	BA from Ha Noi University of Technology	Father is a policeman/ mother is a teacher	To become an engineer
YGL C	Do Bao Anh	Femal e	1991	4 years (started with K- pop dance covers)	BA from Faculty of Psychology, VNU/MA from Singapore	Parents are business owners	To work in the business sector
YGL C	Pham Nhat Phuong	Femal e	1991	4 years (started with K- pop dance covers)	BA from Faculty of Sociology, VNU/MA from Australia	Parents are business owners	To work in the business sector
St.319	Zoie (Le Viet Ha)	Femal e	1991	4 years (started with K- pop dance covers)	BA from Ha Noi Art College	Parents are government officials	To become a make-up artist

Table 4.1 (continued)

<b>Grou p</b>	<b>Name</b>	<b>Sex</b>	<b>Year of Birth</b>	<b>Dance Experie -nce</b>	<b>Educational Backgroun d (B.A up)</b>	<b>Family Backgroun d</b>	<b>Futre Plans</b>
St.319	Ethan	Male	1993	2 years (started with K- pop dance covers)	BA in Foreign languages (Ha Noi University)		
St.319	Jamie	Femal e	1992	2 years (stared with K- pop dance covers)	BA from University of Business and Technology		
St.319	Dung	Male	1992	2 years (started with K- pop dance covers)	BA from Ha Noi University of Technology		To work in the engineeri ng sector (for a foreign company )
St.319	Nicky Nicko (Trần Phong Hào)	Male		4 years (started with K- pop dance covers)	BA from National University of Economics		

Table 4.1 (continued)

<b>Grou p</b>	<b>Name</b>	<b>Sex</b>	<b>Year of Birth</b>	<b>Dance Experie -nce</b>	<b>Educational Backgroun d (B.A up)</b>	<b>Family Backgroun d</b>	<b>Futre Plans</b>
St.319	Stefan AT (Kyung so)	Male		4 years (started with K- pop dance covers)	BA from Hanoi University of Science and Technology		
St.319	Duong Jenny	Femal e		4 years (started with K- pop dance covers)	BA from Hanoi University		
St.319	Liz Li (Nguy Thùy Trang)	Femal e		3 years (started with K- pop dance covers)	BA in Foreign Languages from Vietnam National University		
St.319	Aiden Nguyen	Male	1991	4 years (started with K- pop dance covers)	BA from Vietnam Academy of Diplomacy/ MA from London South Bank University	Parents work at the Ministry of Diplomacy/ as business owners	Work in the entertain ment sector



Table 4.1 (continued)

<b>Group</b>	<b>Name</b>	<b>Sex</b>	<b>Year of Birth</b>	<b>Dance Experience</b>	<b>Educational Background (B.A up)</b>	<b>Family Background</b>	<b>Future Plans</b>
St.319	Mi Nhô Nguyen (Min)	Female	1988	4 years (started with K-pop dance covers)	BA from Free University of Berlin		
St.319	Châỵ Xi Trang (Tracy Trang)	Female		4 years (started with K-pop dance covers)	BA from the USA		Now a business owner
St.319	Zac Nguyen	Male		4 years (started with K-pop dance covers)	Global Advanced Bachelor of Business Administration from Griggs University in the UK		

Next, I will investigate the differences in cultural capital possessed by members of these two groups by telling their individual stories in more detail

#### **Tommy Do: Dance as a temporal and alternative career**

Tommy Do is an example of a person who makes use of his cultural capital (knowledge of K-pop as a fan, and a K-pop dance cover artist) to grow his economic

capital. He graduated from the Banking Academy of Vietnam however, had difficulty finding a job in a state owned bank, and so chose to dance for YGLC as a temporary full-time job and maybe as a second job in the future once becoming a white-collar worker. Tommy started listening to Korean music when he was very young, during 7<sup>th</sup> grade (about ten years ago) and set up a self-funded, spontaneous and self-initiated fan club for a band called Beast – a Korean band fronted by Vietnam young people. They interacted intensively on their fan's websites, then held meetings and events also. Tommy was once a dance member (dance covers) for the fan club. Even though he likes both K-pop and US/UK-pop, he feels closer to K-pop. He was a fanatical K-pop fan at secondary school and high school, and practiced dancing at home. Since he became a member of YGLC, after a friend's introduction, he has to practice more Hip Hop dancing, for singing and choreography, which is based on US/UK music. In an average month he can earn more than four million VND (around US\$200). Another thing he has gained from this dance work is links with many professional people in the Vietnamese entertainment industry, such as V-pop singers, and can work professionally like them. Therefore, it can be seen that in the case of Tommy, besides gaining some money (economic capital) from his K-pop cover dance skills (at the beginning, cultural capital), he has also been able to accumulate further cultural capital (Hip Hop dance/other dance skills, experience working in the entertainment sector and a good network).

Cultural capital is also used to leverage dancers' social status, as one of the reasons for dancing is to prove that they also have the ability to assert themselves as young Vietnamese, as very confident, dynamic and creative young people. Their dance skills (cultural capital) also makes them stand out from their peers and/or non-K-pop fans. Tommy himself wants to have both careers; an academic life and an art performance career, as the latter makes him feel special.

### **Thị Ziu: a creative, dynamic and eccentric personality/artist**

Also making use of cultural capital from dancing, Thi Ziu, like Tommy, has been able to develop both economic and cultural capital for herself. Ziu holds a lot of cultural capital anyway, for as well as being a dancer and the female leader of YGLC, Ziu is a student of Fashion Design at the Vietnamese University of Industrial Fine Arts

in Ha Noi, and works as a concept builder for weddings at a photography studio. She has earned her own money since studying at high school. At only ten years-old, Ziu already was a very active pupil in her classes and got used to performing as a dancer, then was trained at a local sports school named 'Ten per Ten'. Her family situation, compared to other members of YGLC, is quite difficult. Her father passed away when she was very young, and her mother is a retired shoe worker who had to raise two children on her own (Ziu and her older sister). Now Ziu can earn money from both her dance performances with YGLC and her job at the studio. Ziu joined YGLC in 2012 via an audition contest held by the group where Nhat-Anh chose her together with other 8 people. She also was a big fan of YG and Big Bang. Different from what she showed off from her dynamic activities, Ziu actually hides herself in her own sadness, loneliness and emotional deep thinking. I can guess that she is maybe more mature than her own age. She is articulately speaking confidently in front of somebody she just met. She also likes something abnormal. She is the only one girl in the group changed hair color most frequently with most strong tones. This week her hair can be in strong pink color, the other week, could be in green color which makes she feel life is happier for her. Sometimes, she wears her own designed clothes or a tattoo on her body which distinguishes herself from other female students from other universities. Holding different kind of cultural capitals, being a female dance leader for YGLC required her dance and management skills, Ziu doesn't decide to continue to be a dancer for long, she prefer to become a fashion designer (to be her main cultural capital) and want to change her position in her group from dancer into a stylist and/or marketing planner. She is one who clearly separates her hobby from her main career

### **Doan Nhat Anh: A passionate dancer**

Nhat Anh is an example of someone generating cultural capital to attain more economic capital. Nhat-Anh plays a very important role, as he helps to manage YGLC's activities. He is the founder and the leader of YGLC, and graduated in Finance and Banking from Thang Long University. As well as dancing skills, he is also good at speaking English and an effective events organizer. Nhat Anh's case is also similar to Tommy's in the sense that he wants to develop his career from both sides (the academic and entertainment sides). His family; though, is closely related to the arts, with both his

parents and grandparents having worked as artists for Vietnamese traditional arts theaters such as ‘Tuong’ and ‘Cheo’ in Ha Noi. This encouraged him to study higher education in another field (banking). When he was at secondary school, he attended a Hip Hop training class, and after that became a dance member for Big Toe (one of the most famous Hip Hop crews in the country). Later he found out that it was his fate; sooner or later he would dance, and sooner or later he would fall in love with it, so he just followed his passion. Anything he works on tends to be related to physical activities, because he can’t stand sitting all the time. Currently, he is also working as a trainer for California Fitness Center in Ha Noi. His salary for this job is around 10 000 VND a month (\$500 USD) which is high when compared to the average salary earned by a new graduate working as a white collar worker. When N.A. (Nhat Anh) was at high school, he was also a fanatical K-pop fan (a fan of YGLC). He constantly updated information about his idols, even their everyday information, every hour, and every minute, so that he would always have up-to-date information about them. He officially established YGLC in 2011 (before, in 2010 he ran a self-funded fan club of YG and Big Bang, and formed a dance cover band for the club). He had become quite professional by 2012, because he had had the opportunity to work with mature, reputable and experienced people. They were quite demanding, but he worked with them very seriously and with discipline. Since then he has gradually built a professional style for his group YGLC. When they have programs to perform on, they work non-stop; if there is free time, everyone has to work together until they are finished. In the future, he wants to turn his group into a professional dance agency, mostly working on dance performances of all genres. It can be seen that in the case of N.A., cultural capital in the form of dance and management has brought benefits in terms of economic capital, a future career and even success.

#### **Duy Anh: A true Hip Hop choreographer (from YGLC)**

Chu Duy Anh is an example of a dancer who has strong cultural capital, for as a key choreographer for YGLC, his group’s dance style is based on his capital. Duy-Anh is now a student at the Department of Architecture, Nguyen Trai University. He has danced for about six years and is a fan of Big Bang also. His choreography is based on hip hop a lot but there are still many based on YG's music. His family is not very rich,



as with other group members, and his dream is to become both a dancer and work in architecture both because of his passion and his family's expectations, who want him to have a stable job. From both dancing and learning activities, he has been doing his best to gradually receive his parents' trust more. As well as the previously mentioned groups, he is also a fan of chit brow, Luso, tipen, rapper and some foreign dancers in general. The group YGLC has a close relationship with Big Toe (a famous hip hop group in Ha Noi), so they share technical dance skills, techniques, dance genres as well as advanced techniques.

### **Quan Lee: To become a famous dancer is his dream**

Quan is an example of one who has determination, but has never really invested time and effort to accumulate cultural capital (his dancing). However, he has chosen dancing as his main career choice. Having quite a good physical body and a handsome face and having participated in many dance activities, Quan is quite famous at his college. Quan is a member of YGLC, and now is studying at Ha Noi Dance College. Both of his parents work, one for an international organization and another as an officer at a foreign embassy. His sister is studying in France. In the future, he also wants to study abroad, about dancing. Dancing brings him health and comfort; as he can make friends with people who share his interests and share experiences. Because he is studying at Viet Nam Dance College, he is exposed to the art environment. His passion is dancing, so he dances the whole day. His day starts at 7a.m. at school, then at 11 a.m. he goes home for lunch and does housework. In the afternoons, from 1 p.m. to 5.30 p.m., he goes back to his school for his dance classes and then goes home to eat before going to dance with YGLC. At 10 p.m. he goes home. At college he studies two subjects: classical ballet and Vietnamese ethnic folk dancing. The ethnic folk dancing takes place at festivals and reflects the daily lives of people living in the mountains. In the future he wants to become a professional and famous dancer.

### **US Ger: An engineer with a passion for racing motorbikes; dancing as a part-time job**

US Ger- Duc has chosen dance only as a hobby. He is a member of YGLC, and graduated from Ha Noi University of Technology, and wants to become a mechanical

engineer in the future. He is now studying for a second degree in Economics, because he thinks that as an engineer, to become rich he has to know more about how the economy works. His father works for the police and his mother is a teacher. His family's income is in the upper-average range. As well as dancing he enjoys racing motorbikes and is a professional mechanic. He has joined a bike racing club in Ha Noi, and the club often travels to remote in northern Vietnam. He is not really a K-pop fan, but heard about YGLC about four years ago, because a friend invited him to cover K-pop with him. He thought it would be funny so he went with him. After two weeks his friend left, but he stayed and continued training. At that time, the group was also preparing for a show in August, the group's first offline show. The group he likes the most is Linkinpark - a US rock band. He also enjoys listening to Hip Hop, R & B and rock. He did not intend to cover K-pop dance music, but when he joined the group he made a lot of friends, and so was happy to continue. However, he does not want to become a professional dancer. When he started dancing, his father did not agree with him, and tried to ban him; and still does not support him, though he also does not prohibit him from doing it. Generally, he can dance different styles, from hip hop style to NY style. Before doing dance covers, he used to practice popping and breakdancing. In the end, dancing is also the way he can leverage his cultural status and make his friendship net work effectively.

#### **Nguyen Quoc Minh: A Hip Hop dancer and not a K--pop fan**

Minh is a typical example of a member who is not into K-pop and K-pop dance but still joined a K-pop band. His capital is really based on Hip Hop dance, not K-pop dance. He is proud of the cultural capital he has and, more importantly, always tries to learn and practice more to accumulate further capital. Minh finds happiness and showcases his abilities through the activities he participates in. Accumulating cultural capital in this case makes him feel more useful in society. Minh is a member of YGLC, and was born in 1995. He is also in his second year at Ha Noi Opening University. He plans to study an MA in Hotel Management in Singapore after his BA. Both his parents work for the Vietnamese government. The reason he joined the group was because he knew YGLC would attend a big hip hop contest named "Move It" in Ha Noi. At the same time he joined the group, he also had important academic examinations. his

college entrance examination. His family want him to study at college; as long as he passes the university test, that is ok for them. His parents' view is that he can do whatever he wants, as long as he is a good citizen, enjoys himself, is not dependent on anyone, and can make money on his own. As for himself, in the future, he wants to study hotel management. About his intention in the future, he is sure that after finishing college he will have more time to study abroad and will take the time to learn more, then he will be able to spend more time to join in with dance contests and go back to his hip hop career. In future he wants to work in tourism management, but also still wants to be a dancer. He loves to dance, as he can express what he is really feeling. After finishing his studies at school, he takes extra classes. In the past, he also learned about editing YT by himself, and he was also taught photography by his brother. He also plays basketball and goes swimming; he is a very active person. He wants to do many things, wants to try many things, wants to do them all, never have a feeling to stop. In the very beginning, his parents also did not allow him to dance as other members. It was such a long struggle. He was just saying his thoughts, frankly speaking that his future would not be totally determined by his academic study. Studing well is only one of factor to become successful, so it is better for him if his parents allow him to do what he likes. He said: "I am a man; I want to live a useful life. I promised my parents I would not be harned; I asked them to let me do what I love and try to become somebody, because everyone must have a passion, a purpose in life, otherwise life has no meaning at all". This is why his parents agreed.

### **Pham Hong Hoa: Dancing makes her life more youthful**

Hoa is also a case of a person who chooses to dance K-pop as a hobby, to stay young, for the social activities and friendship networks. Hoa is studying at the Foreign Trade University and also plans to study an MA in Business abroad after finishing her BA in Vietnam. She comes from Hai Duong, and joined YGLC in 2011. Her initial reason for participating in the group is because she was a student in a K-pop dance class run by Mr. N.A, the current leader of the group. Then those who had danced together, and alike artists such as 2NE1 and Big Bang, formed a group called YGLC. YGLC began with a show on August 1<sup>st</sup> 2011. At first, she knew about K-pop music through Big Bang; her sister showed her a documentary film of Big Bang, for her to learn more

about K-pop, then she started to like K-pop more. She participated in two of Big Bang's fan clubs: BBFC and BBVN, and when attending an offline meeting of the fan club, she met Mr NA and other dancers who were covering Big Bang's dances. At that time, she really liked and admired them, and also wanted to dance and to shine on stage. That is the reason she wanted to join the K-pop cover dance group of N.A. Two months after joining the group, YGLC was formed and has now been in existence for three3 years. The members now know each other very well, but have faced many difficulties, as well as joy and arduous training sessions, so everyone sticks together. Because she is still studying at school, she is under a lot of stress. She goes to school every day in the morning, or in the afternoon depending on her class schedule, then goes to study English before heading to her evening evening dance classes. In the evening, she does homework and watches dance clips.

Some members of YGLC are currently studying their MAs abroad, including Pham Nhat Phuong who is in Australia, and Bao Anh who is in Singapore. As a result, the academic profile of St.319 is also very competitive; with members studying in top universities both domestically and internationally.

Among the 25 members of St.319, there are only three who have chosen to follow careers in the entertainment sector.

### **Dung: A dancer concerned about social issues**

Dung is one of the members who has chosen to join the group as a hobby. Despite accumulating different kinds of cultural capital, such as dance skills, group working skills and a good education background, he has chosen to become an engineer, not a dancer or an entertainer. Dung, a dancer from St.319, is studying at Ha Noi University of Technology. He dances just to satisfy his passion, not to make money. The money he gets from shows he invests in other dance cover clips. He is also interested in national politics; he often reads online newspapers and is interested in geo-political issues like the South China Sea in Vietnam, and also current domestic issues like youth issues and education...In the future he does not want to become a professional dancer; he does it now for fun. After graduating, he wants to work at an international electronics company such as Siemens. His parents never wanted him to

dance, and even now his parents worry about him having a stable career. To study at his current university was one of his parents' wishes, and so he feels it is suitable for his future career. He now studies, dances and works for a company, as the money he earns from dancing is just enough to satisfy his passion. He has never had any formal dance training, but trained himself by following K-pop dance covers. He likes to listen to many different music genres, and before K-pop became popular in Viet Nam, he really liked US/UK music. Working part-time in the entertainment field, he listens to a lot of music genres: K-pop, US/UK-pop, V-pop music and even red music (Vietnamese propaganda music). Before, when he started practicing K-pop covers, K-pop music was his main love, but now the group has moved on to choreographing its own dance, so he has to listen to a lot more music, because US/UK music is set as the background for their dances.

**Zoei, 22; One of the leaders of St.319 who believes working hard is the key to success**

Zoei is studying at Ha Noi College of Arts, as a student of cinema and theater. Currently she is managing a few key activities for St.319. She was born into a family with a tradition of entering politics; her grandfather was a revolutionary, and her parents also have jobs related to politics. In general, in her family no one has worked in artistic jobs, and she is the first to enter a career related to art. When she started the team, her parents did not fully support her because the general notion among the majority of older people in Vietnam is that working in the entertainment industry is hard and stressful, so her parents objected to her working in that sector. However, instead of lying to her parents, or running away to dance, she chose to tell them the truth; that this was her passion and that is what she is good at. However, it still took one to two years to convince her parents, and even now her family is not fully behind her. However, she has decided to follow this path as her main career.

**Ethan Vuong: Dancing is a part-time job**

Ethan Vuong is studying at Hanoi University. He was born in 1993, is a member of the group St.319, having joined the group in April, 2012. Doing dance covers is his passion. But having joined the group he has gradually developed a different direction



and extended his ambitions. He himself had never practiced other dance genres before K-pop dance, because he was not formally trained at school. He watched clips and practiced the dance moves himself. He joined the group after attending an audition, then was admitted into the group. Since then he has gradually learned more about the other genres, such as cheography, breakdance and popping. Dancing, studying and doing his own work occupies most of his time. He might choose dancing as an extra career only.

**Aiden Nguyen, 22: Founder and leader of St.319. Management and marketing skills are his strengths**

Aiden is an example of one who has made use of his cultural capital participating in the group to gain other cultural capital. Having accumulated a certain level of cultural capital (attaining better video production skills) and social status (being more famous, having a high social status among teenage entertainers), he and his group have also been able to gain economic capital. However, his target is not really to make money but to use the money he earns to develop more skills, those which allows him to plan future projects. Currently, Aiden is an MA student in London; however, he is also still the leader and manager of St.319, and oftens returns to Ha Noi in help with the group's projects. Moreover, in London he has also opened a K-Pop dance class for international students, meaning K-Pop, which is originated from South Korea in East Asia, is being taught by a Vietnamese student from Southeast Asia to international students in the UK. Aiden has a lot of determination and works hard; in an example of someone who can make use of his cultural capital very effectively. From not dancing to becoming a K-pop dancer, and then even developing beyond that to make his group well-known among the Vietnamese entertainment industry, he now wishes to professionalize the group. Dancers in the group are not dancers of K-pop alone anymore, they also work as back-up dancers for other artists and singers, though they also wish to become the main actors and actresses on the stage, to make the group a professional agency and maintain their own fan base. He and his group are also a good example of how young middle-class Vietnamese today are experiencing modernity for themselves, having as they do access to both material products as well as specific skills. They are living in a society that is becoming more open and competitive, and this requires them to acquire more skills and to learn by doing, experiencing and becoming

professionals. They are also an example of those who can make use of both their cultural and economic capital to become more competitive in wider society. For example, Aiden once mentioned that if one has money but no brain and skills, one cannot make a good quality (visual) product, let alone grow it over the longer term. In return, if one has no money, one cannot invest in developing a product, so nobody will know about it. By developing his group St.319 from a K-pop dance cover group into an entertainment agency, he has been able to assert himself in the entertainment world in many different ways (by dancing, singing and acting)..Based on the capital he has access to, such as dancers, producers and a close relationship with the Vietnamese showbusiness industry, he has been able to maximize the group's market and capital to meet the different needs of the audience.

The members of St.319 who studied or are studying abroad include the leader and founder, Aiden Nguyen – who is at London South Bank University, Mi Nhô Nguyen (Min) who studied at Free University of Berlin, Châu Xi Trang (Tracy Trang) who studied in the USA, and Zac Nguyen who studied Global Advanced Bachelor of Business Administration at Giggs University in the UK. Therefore, both groups have members who can speak English very well and have high standards in terms of keeping-up with the latest trends and clothes. For example, on her first album, singer Min from St.319 speaks English during her album introduction, for she studied in Germany for four years and has travelled to several European countries. For this, she is admired by her young Vietnamese fans.

Those dance members of those groups are good students, even though in Vietnamese society “sophisticated students” and “students who love social activities” are generally labeled as “bad students”, for not focusing on their studies and not spending their free time on extra classes.

“We can study well due to our time management skills. For example, some members of my group *will graduate from university* this year; *they* have very good academic achievements. *In* high school, some received awards for being good students in city contests. Personally, I am also now the best in my class; being in the group does not affect my academic studies at all” (Interview with Ziu, female, born in 1992, a dance leader of YGLC 2013).

Moreover, both of the groups do not call themselves K-pop dance cover groups anymore; each has its own development strategy. In St.319's case, they call themselves an entertainment company since they have released their own musical products since late 2013. They have created a new identity by learning from Korean music and Western music; to make music and dance “cool” and “modern”. St.319 members have already produced two digital singles by themselves. The first one was released, called ‘Tim’ (Lost) (featuring Mr. A) M/V, published on December 18, 2013 and the second one is ‘Nhớ’ (Stuck)<sup>1</sup>, published on 22<sup>nd</sup> June, 2014 respectively by Min from St.319. The lyrics are in Vietnamese but the dance choreography was inspired by K-pop. This realized their ambition; to become a more professional entertainment group, not only a K-pop dance cover group.



*Figure 4.4 Singer Min from St.319, Hanoi, Vietnam.*

“We are not really a cover group anymore...At the beginning we probably learned from them a lot, but since then we have changed into a local entertainment group” (Interview with Zoie, female, born in 1992, a dance leader of St.319 2014).

“When the group reaches a certain status, maintaining it is quite important; it will help them progress within the entertainment industry in Vietnam” (Interview with Kevin, male, born in 1996, the leader of St.319 fan club 2014).

The song “Tim” by Min from St.319 was a hot topic in the tabloid newspapers (Accessed June 10 nguoinoitieng.info 2014). When this article gave its opinion about a

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-Dqt3Wtgka4> (Accessed 14 March 2014)

new song named “eyes, nose, lips”<sup>2</sup>, published in June 2014 by Tae Yang (the main member of Big Bang, one of the most famous K-pop bands in South Korea) it noted how it had a chorus quite similar to that of the song “Tim/Found”<sup>3</sup>, published in December 2013 by Min from St.319. This opinion went against general opinions about Vietnamese music groups, who are thought to copy the styles, songs and melodies from South Korea. Therefore, this opinion was shocking and difficult to accept among many Vietnamese, though there was some agreement with the article. However, after receiving questions about her point of view on the article from the fans (Vietnamese fans of Tae Yang and Big Bang), Min released an official response on her Facebook page, on 7/6/2014, stating: “I have listened to the new song by Taeyang and I found it is totally different from my own song”. In my opinion, this event showed that with the development of the internet, wherever songs come from, the audience can easily track back and find the original music, meaning the covers can be easily found also. Second, the news also shows the new confidence felt towards V-pop among the Vietnamese media, which hopes V-pop can attain success on a global scale. For me, whether or not the news is true or not, it is a good sign for V-pop in the future, because a V-pop song now can match global and Asian music tastes. It also shows that Asianization and Koreanization was once a K-pop cover dance band phenomena, but now V-pop is developing in its own right. K-pop cover dance, or Koreanization, doesn’t mean copying uncritically, but also learning to catch-up with the trends in world music.

Vietnamese young people’s active acceptance of new, digitalized music will have a great influence on the Vietnamese music industry in the future. The same pattern was witnessed through the American baby boomers’ embrace of rock music, which changed the American music industry in the 1960s (McRobbie 1994). Like rock music in the 1960s, K-pop music produced by digital technologies is new, trendy and cool, and features many cultural products which appeal to young people.

“I think in the future, the impacts of the *Korean* music scene in Viet Nam will not last *very* long, not like before. We will receive more other styles and even the domestic music industry in Vietnam *was* developed, to become more like Korea’s, so maybe young people will like this music

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2 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UwuAPyOImoI> (Accessed 14 March 2014)

3 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AdfSLq7XNoI> (Accessed 14 March 2014)



more” (Interview with Ziu, female, born in 1992, a dance leader of YGLC 2013).

“St.319 is trying to take the group into a general entertainment category, including singers, models, dancers and choreography; the group has debuted singer Min, along with songs and choreography. When the group is at a certain level of fame, then maintaining this will be quite important for the members; as it will help them progress within the Vietnamese entertainment industry. For me, the main reason St.319 do covers and invest in their video clips is that their passion has driven them to spend a lot of time and effort to achieve what they want. I think their wish is not only to become popular, but to devote themselves to the entertainment industry in Vietnam” (Interview with Kevin, male, born in 1996, the leader of St.319 fan club 2014).

“So-called followers of the famous Korean artists would not be true to their cause if they did not spend much time and energy practicing. If we do not invest time and energy in our output (MV's), then nobody will care about us and we will not become famous. The so-called goal of ours is not to become famous, but to express what we like and have the appreciation of the audience. This means that when the audiences think the MV's are beautiful, they will support us and we will be successful” (Interview with Zoie, female, born in 1992, a dance leader of St.319 2014).

Aiden Nguyen, the leader of St.319, also shared his opinion on Facebook (15 April 2014), saying he really respects Lee Soo Man (the leader of SM Entertainment) because of the way he has led SM Entertainment and does business. He wants to learn as much as possible from him; so as to run his own business, and also commented that YG is a collective of outstanding artists, but that SM is always the leader in the market. He has also opened a K-pop class in the UK, where he is studying. Aiden also confirmed on his Facebook page on 15 July 2014 that:

“I want to work for St.319 Ent (his own group), I do not like working for anyone else; I want to work by my own hands and create my own career, however hard it is: D!!!”

One proof for their development to move out of the shadow of K-pop dance group to become a “general entertainment” company, is that they (St.319) signed a contract with Pocari Sweat CF (a drinking water company) to make an advertisement named “St.319 in new CF. HAPPY IN HANOI”, which was published on YouTube on July 11 2014. On 17 July 2014, Aiden wrote the following on Facebook:



“We don’t say we are excellent dancers, but when others come to find us (from famous artists/singers, to normal students at our K pop classes, to donors and big companies) of course, we must have something that they like. When you do entertainment, you can make other people like you, if you are already successful. If we do not dance well but still have many fans (at least 304 thousand on FB and 400 thousand on YT, we have something that they want to see.”

Within the specific context of several non-Western countries, popular music is distinguished, not in terms of whether it is low or high culture, but if it is domestic or Western (US/UK) music (Mori 2009:219-223). In this context, highbrow culture is seen as something from the West, representing middle class young people, because the consumption of authentic and fashionable hip-hop culture is as important as the music itself. Such cultural items are expensive and difficult to find for audiences, unless they live in the big cities (Lee 2013); therefore, for audiences who can easily access global (American) hip-hop culture, the newest trends are among the middle- and upper-class youths, those who live in the big cities.

In the case of Vietnam, even living in big cities, it is still difficult for young people, especially young high school/university boys and girls, to consume expensive CDs, subscribe to satellite music channels, and purchase international hip-hop fashion brands. As a result, they are more likely to consume fake international products, and/or products “made in Vietnam” for international brands but at local shops. However, the conspicuous consumption of pop/Hip hop cultural products in Vietnam still is one of the symbols of the middle class young people, as highbrow and Westernized culture.

“St.319 members are very young; they are very young people and have opened a way of thinking and living, and have been willing to change in terms of their fashion sense, dress and hairstyles, to fit the songs, match outfits and the backgrounds to their music videos. I can see that if they had come from normal families and were only students, it would be difficult for them to change their clothes and styles like that” (Interview with Thao, female, born in 1988, a fan of St.319 2014).

In the case of YGLC, the group doesn’t consider itself a K-pop dance cover group anymore, but to be a professional dance crew. After observing them closely, it can be seen that they stick very much to Hip Hop dance techniques; however, their

dance style might be a hybridization of Hip Hop dance and sexy dance, with Korean style and fashion.

“I think our style is more American than K-pop. When we perform we think we are more American. I started with Hip hop first, but YG Lovers started with K-pop, as K-pop is Asian. Actually, YG artists normally try to do something different; they write music based on R&B and jazz, but to be like Americans I think. Maybe because they are Asian groups who love Hip Hop and the American style, such as Bigbang and 2NE1, so they are role model dance groups for us. They are also Asians, but they love the American style” (Interview with Nhat-Anh, male, born in 1991, the leader of YG Lovers Crew 2014).

“I don’t think of my group is a K-pop dance cover group anymore. I think we are more like a professional dance group in our performances. Actually, I started with Hip Hop then, because I loved YG, I started taking different directions, into K-pop, so I listened to K-pop and have now liked K-pop for a while” (Interview with Nhat-Anh, male, born in 1991, the leader of YG Lovers Crew 2014).

Based on different cultural capital (background in dance and perseverance), the leaders of YGLC and St.319 are using different strategies to move their groups out of the K-Pop cover field. While YGLC only focuses on dance genres, St.319 can claim to be a brand name in the entertainment sector, having extended its cultural capital into many entertainment industry areas. Even within the K-pop dance cover field, the style and marketing of YGLC is based on one form of cultural capital (Hip Hop dance), so only K-pop fans of YG and Big Bang know about them. St.319; however, use varying pop styles in their dancing, and make video clips, covering K-pop hits in MVs to cultivate their fan base and run a business in line with the SM Entertainment model. Moreover, they have strong connections with the entertainment sector, which is an advantage and may be considered a key form of cultural capitals. In some cover dance clips, they mix K-pop songs with V-pop songs sung by Vietnamese pop singers. For example, at the beginning of two cover videos, namely “Lovey Dovey”<sup>4</sup> (published on 02/04/2012) and “Ice Cream” (uploaded on 25/12/2012), there are two V-pop songs named “Yeu Nu”<sup>5</sup> by singer Vu Hanh Nguyen and “Tan Di” by singer Anna Truong, which are mixed together. Surprisingly, St.319’s dancers all appear in these official and

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4 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9EuaAlkYmvs> (Accessed 14 March 2014)

5 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EPPYvm1NZ1A> (Accessed 14 March 2014)

original MVs of V-pop music posted on YT on 31/5/2012 and 23/12/2012 respectively, as dancers and actors. Moreover, recently Min (from St.319) and singer Anna Truong co-operated on a Vietnamese music track sung in English named “Valentine” (posted on YouTube on 12/2/2014).

Another example of cultural capital among St.319 members is that they are from a small amateur group but have connections with local business owners. Having these connections, with local business owners in Ha Noi such as fashion and coffee shops, and bars for teenagers, such as Amon Avis Shop, Charlotte shop, 21<sup>st</sup> urban store, Boombox, Oppa Coffee Store, Bistro S Coffee, X factory, Cocoon Union and Verdette Bar, means these businesses names always appear at the end of St.319 videos. These businesses are quite effective sponsors, supporters and donors for St.319, providing clothes or locations when they need to shoot new videos. Recently, some St.319 members have also become owners of online shops, such as Zoie who owns a make-up and cosmetics store. Tracy is also the owner of a cosmetics store. Jemie is the owner of an accessories store. In the case of Aiden Nguyen, who was born in 1992 and is the leader of St.319, after graduating from the UK, Aiden and his family plan to start their own hotel business. Moreover, St.319 even has a small clothes shop in a shopping mall, focused on Hip Hop styles, with the St.319 logo printed on each item.



*Figure 4.5 Aiden's family's hotel (left) and St.319 fashion shop (right) in Hanoi, Vietnam.*

#### 4.6. Concluding Remarks

In conclusion, cultural capital, such as education, language and experience doing K-pop covers within the Vietnamese entertainment sector, plus their relationships and networks, are important foundations for these groups' development, helping them to pursue fame and increase their social status, as well as become more competitive and increase the profile of the nation's pop music. Therefore, the implication is that the young people portrayed here have ambitions beyond being just fans of K-pop.