

CHAPTER 6

Conclusion

6.1 Major Findings of the Study

Recent economic and internet growth in Vietnam ,as well as new cultural policies, have enabled people, and particularly the young, to consume more cultural products, as young Vietnamese people from Generation Y see themselves as different from those of previous generations. These policies have been gradually adjusted to satisfy the country's people, and have given young people more social space to express themselves and form their own cultural identities. As a consequence, young Vietnamese people are more confident, because they have the capital available to pursue what they want, which is to be competitive and famous; not only in Vietnam but internationally; that is, they want to be friends with and open to the world.

The post-modern reordering of space and time among the lives of the urban youth in Vietnam has given rise to interesting and hybrid cultural forms, so that the past increasingly touches the technological present at key points, helping to construct new identities. However, it must be asked whether, in the case of Vietnam, the old-world is being lost entirely in favour of the self-serving individualism present in the late modernity period. In this study, I have shown how individualism in Vietnam has become a brand among young people, who label themselves proudly as individuals, saying things like, "I am a dancer" and/or "I am a producer". This shows that young people who practice K-pop dance live in the political center of Vietnam, and so do seem to feel more and more that they must take responsibility for their own lives and the choices they make. In Vietnam there is now a much greater number and variety of jobs, lifestyles and consumption choices available for many young people, more than was the case before Doi Moi. Therefore the matter of choice necessarily comes down to the

individual, rather than the family or the state. However, these family and state connections still remain strong due to family traditions, national pride and loyalty.

Cultural capital also plays a crucial role in the formation of K-pop fan culture. To form groups, initially cultural capital is needed in the form of K-pop dance skills, the use of cameras and how to make videos. However, to assert the brands and activities, and develop further, other cultural capital is required, such as experience (to improve MVs in terms of their quality, and the number made), group management activities (to run projects and performances), public relations (through offline fan clubs and online pages on FB and YouTube, the aim being to increase the fanbase, the number of supporters and also donors) and business management (to make a profit and return funds to help develop the groups)

By forming their own fan culture, these K-pop fans and dance cover groups in Hanoi have produced transnational dialogues, share cultural meaning, and form affective ties with each other. Within this visual space, those groups also help K-pop fan communities in Vietnam to further take part in K-pop consumption, disseminating their cultural capital in the form of K-pop. Through the process of consuming and reproducing those cultural products, their identities are shaped as they clarify their desire to perform pop music, dance and enjoy a lifestyle they consider to be cool and modern. Using K-pop covers and new media as a platform to cultivate more cultural capital, it comes as no surprise that the young people practicing K-pop dance routines also make friends, leveraging their social status and even become idols (with fan clubs both online and offline) in their own right and take a step forward in the entertainment industry.

K-pop culture and its consumption related to cultural flows are most visible among Vietnamese young people, because they are the active recipients of cultural content across national borders. The nationalities of the cultural products they favor most are US/UK music and K-pop, because they regard themselves as global citizens and consumers. However, young people in particular feel closer to K-pop because they share with K-pop performers the same experiences and emotions, and because K-pop represents a new hybrid modernity which mixes Asian and Western culture. What is

behind the K-pop cover dance scene among young people is not necessarily that the young want to fight against the current regime, but what they actually want is to contribute to their fans' community and/or their country, and also let other foreign communities know that young Vietnamese have global and regional tastes and live in a new urban landscape. There are many groups of young Vietnamese who want to do things differently from the older generation; by it online or offline. The case studies of K-pop cover acts St319 and YGLC here are just two of many young Vietnamese groups that have sprung-up since Doi Moi.

The findings of this research study will contribute to the evidence available in support of Asianization being, not a counter to Western hegemony as argued by Iwabuchi in 2002, nor part of a modern Asian metropolis as argued by Siriuvusak in 2008, but in the Vietnamese context representing a build-up and strengthening of pop culture through the borrowing, re-appropriation and remaking other Asian cultures (in this case, K-pop dance), as well as the construction of new Vietnamese youth identities which challenge the bonds that exist between old and new values. Moreover, Asianization within K-pop dance, as shown in this study, is not like Koreanization, in the sense that young Vietnamese people do not uncritically copy K-pop styles to become K-pop idols, but have their own agency, which is used to reveal what they want and can do. Their agency includes cultural capital in the form of music taste, dancing skills, networking within with Vietnamese V-pop singer, entertainment and media sector, or a good education. Some also have very good English language skills, others good family backgrounds, while some are very adept at using technology, in the form of using cameras, making videos or making use of internet resources. Their agency is also shown in the way they work, and how they organize their groups' activities, marketing strategies and future plans. Even though there are not so many people who want to, or have the capital to commit to a dance/entertainment job as their main career choice, there are some who have become quite successful K-pop cover artists, and who want to continue these jobs and develop their careers as professional singers, artist managers, professional dancers, and make-up or design artists. It could be argued that because contemporary V-pop cannot compete with K-pop, there is no space for its young artists (in this case Vietnamese dance groups) to gain a foothold on their own, but simply continue to copy Korean styles and following K-pop through the use of

covers. However, this is not strictly true, because during their performances, the Vietnamese also consciously and unconsciously show Vietnamese elements and collect cultural knowledge from other areas, and this makes them stronger.

The implications of Asianization through the practice of K-pop, and in the everyday consumption activities of young people, middle-class Vietnamese within a new, modern country, show that nowadays, there are many young Vietnamese who are closely connected to cultural flows. Copying K-pop dance and culture is also a way of learning and developing for them; copying is the first step towards learning and accumulating cultural capital. To strengthen and develop that cultural capital is more difficult; it takes more time, practice, experimentation, economic capital and effort.

Moreover, the history of Vietnam in general is one of wars, from more than 1000 years of Chinese domination in Vietnam (from 111 BC to 938 AD), to the modern time of French colonization (1858 to 1958) and the Vietnam War (1968 to 1975), all involving outside influences. Therefore, the music scene in Vietnam is also divided, as well as influenced by different foreign music flows. The indigenized form of K-pop music created does not signal an end to the development of V-pop music in particular, nor the end of Vietnamese youth culture as a whole.

6.2 Limitations

Due to time and financial constraints, it was difficult for me to collect all the data I required. I used many methods to collect data in the field, but like most ethnographic research, only focused on a small sample group for this study. My research study was conducted in a specific area, and because of that the findings and recommendations may not apply generally and to other places, as they may depend on the context. Contextual information should be gathered and further, relevant findings made in order to replicate or understand the results of this work across a different area. The conclusion reiterates the essential findings of this research, and also notes some of the thesis's limitations, and addresses the significance of this thesis within the current academic environment.

This research should be considered a beginning; one that will provide a good foundation for further, related studies, those able to obtain more specific data and a more in-depth picture of the realities and complexities of this phenomenon. Therefore, while the generalization of this study might be open to question, I have tried to demonstrate interpretive subtlety and nuanced cultural understanding, which are the key strengths of effective ethnography. However, more studies are needed - based on empirical data collected from participation, interaction and involvement with different groups and in different places - for a greater understanding of this phenomenon to be developed.