

The Perception on Poverty Culture of Grade 12 Public High School Students of the City of Manila, Philippines

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ABSTRACT

The Culture of Poverty (CoP), as the culture behind the poor's deprivation, persists as a manifestation of deprivation of knowledge on the factors contributing to Philippine poverty. Previous literatures presented varying interpretations of the CoP, often faced with difficulties defining its amorphous concepts, thereby affected how the researchers interpreted the student informants' narratives. The study determined the causes of poverty perceived by the student-informants and identified their perceptions and attitudes towards the CoP. Facilitating a descriptive research design, ten Grade 12 public high school students in the City of Manila, who are natural-born in areas with high population saturation, of which five are considered poor under the Philippine poverty threshold, were interviewed. Thematic analysis was thereafter used to analyze the data and yield meaningful patterns from the themes. The underlying cause of poverty, as gathered from the student-informants, resulted from a lack of economic and cultural capital, among them being low income and having a lack of job opportunities and access to education. Though coinciding with characteristics as proposed by its proponents, the findings indicated that the concept of the CoP remains vague and distinct from individual narratives of those who are experiencing poverty. This supported that the student-informants' collective perception is possible to distinguish the poor and non-poor associated with generalization. Thus, further local studies on the CoP should not only be explored but be applied in different classes to determine its distinct culture as only those in poverty experience.

KEYWORDS

Culture of poverty, in-depth interview, othering, Philippines, sociology, thematic analysis, youth

INTRODUCTION

The arbitrariness of poverty as a phenomenon poses a difficulty in formulating universal frameworks and strategies towards its resolution (Hagenaars & de Vos, 1988; Pritchett, 2003). The poor individuals are transformed into "beings for another" through the process of othering,

which discriminates the poor from the non-poor (binary) and allows the non-poor to impose a negative identity to the poor (perspectival) (Chase & Walker, 2013; Dervin, 2015; Halsall et al., 2014; Krumer-Nevo, 2002; Lister, 2004; Nelson et al., 1988; Spivak, 1985). By understanding how othering operates in the field of poverty through the Bourdieusian lens (Demeterio III & Liwanag, 2014), a new definition of othering may be conceived as: (1) compatible with cultural and poverty studies; (2) capable of scrutinizing the manifestations of othering in previous literature; (3) relevant in examining the controversial CoP thesis; and (4) applicable in analyzing the youth's perceptions and attitudes on the poor and poverty itself.

Moreover, poverty and culture are two concepts that are deeply intertwined, especially when analyzing the poor's conditions and how poverty reproduces across societies. The contrasting foreign ideational and socio-structural conceptions of culture and local views on cultural studies were bridged by social constructivism (Allaire and Firsirotu, 1984; Keesing, 1974; Maria, 2003; Swartz, 1998). The Bourdieusian lens was adapted for interpreting possible traces of othering in the youth's narratives (Demeterio III & Liwanag, 2014). The study expounds on Sen's (1999) conception of poverty as "capability deprivation" by complementing it with Bourdieu's theory of capitals to explore the aspects of Philippine poverty embedded in the youth's narratives (Demeterio III & Liwanag, 2014). How culture and poverty are defined ultimately affects how researchers interpret the emerging *habitus* in impoverished communities.

Previous CoP studies, particularly the works of Lewis (1961) and Moynihan (1965), have been critically examined for its tendency to pathologize, stigmatize, and misrepresent the poor. The literature studies on CoP will serve as the basis on which previous conceptions may be rejected, reevaluated, or affirmed. The study aims to analyze whether Lewis (1961) and Moynihan's (1965) theses and Tuason's (2002; 2010; 2011) psychological insights on poverty and culture hold up through a multidisciplinary analysis on the youth's perceptions and attitudes towards the poor as a social group, poverty as a phenomenon, or if the thesis itself needs to be rejected or heavily revised.

FRAMEWORK OF THE STUDY

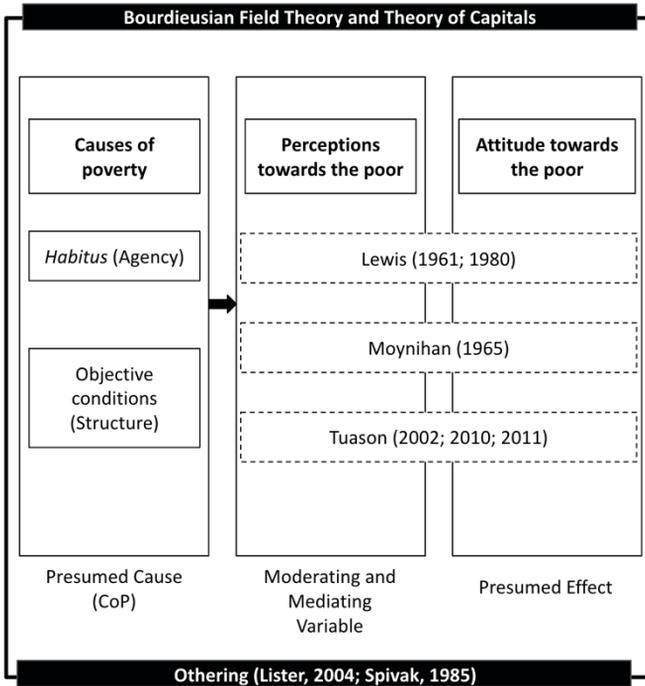


Figure 1. Conceptual and Theoretical Framework

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The main objective of this research is to assess the students' perception towards the culture of poverty.

Specifically,

- Determine the causes of poverty as perceived by the student-informant;
- Identify the perceptions of the student-informant on COP; and
- Pinpoint the attitudes of the student-informant towards the poor.

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

The study facilitated a descriptive research design. This design was tailor-fitted in providing a multi-faceted examination and explanation of the perception on the CoP through the narratives provided by the student-informant and interpreted by the researchers. An in-depth interview guide was utilized to gather data and prepare a case study for each of the student-informants.

Research Participants

Ten student-informants were selected based on the following criteria: Grade 12, currently enrolled in a public high school in the Division of City Schools – Manila; at least 18 years of age; and a natural-born resident of an area with one of the highest poverty incidences in the city. Five of the student-informants belong to families whose monthly income is below Php 10,481. The other five belong to families whose monthly income is equivalent to or above Php 10,481.

Instrumentation

An in-depth interview guide was used as the data collection instrument. It consisted of open-ended questions to gain insights from the student-informants' perspectives, predetermined questions to contextualize the theories to their responses, and probing questions to dig deeper into their narratives.

The following were the interview questions for the student-informants:

1. What is your name, biological gender, age, and track?
2. As a student, what do you currently think of the state/condition of the country at the present time?
3. How would you describe your own situation as of the moment?
4. Seeing as poverty has been a pressing issue even before the pandemic started, how do you think they are handling the current crises we are facing today?
5. To clarify, did you have a subject in Junior High School that tackled poverty as one of the social issues? How was it approached as an issue?

6. What are the current sectors that you perceive as marginalized in today's society?
7. Based on your personal opinion and experiences, how do you think the marginalized handle their own situation?
8. Before further delving into the topic of poverty, how do you generally view living conditions in the Philippines, especially in low-income areas?
9. What is your general view or impression with regards to poverty and its causes in the Philippines?
10. According to Bourdieu, there are certain fields in a society where actors, or his nuanced notion of people, partake in something similar to a class conflict. Is such a theory representative of the Philippines? Why or why not?
11. Is poverty intergenerational?
12. What are the common characteristics or qualities you know that are associated with the Filipino poor specifically?
13. Despite there being programs such as 4Ps, why do you think poverty is persistent?
14. If it's the government's fault, how do they influence the instances of poverty in the country?
15. If the poor's fault, what do you think are the characteristics or qualities that contribute to such persistence?
16. Where do such characteristics or qualities from the Filipino poor originate from, aside from poverty?
17. Based on the commonly presented stereotypes in various media, what is your idea with regards to the experiences and treatment of the poor among themselves and other classes?
18. Many stories across social media and mainstream have narrated people who were able to get out of poverty. Why do you think some of the poor become rich and the others stay poor?
19. Given the discussions earlier regarding the media and government, how do you think this influences the beliefs and values of the poor?
20. How prevalent is stereotyping in the Philippine setting, especially when directed to the poor?
21. Given their unfortunate circumstances, how do you think the poor cope with such a reality, if they do at all?
22. The wealthy often attribute poverty as a cultural and personality problem while others think of it as an institutional issue. How do you personally perceive this dichotomy of perspectives?

23. In your own opinion, what do you think constitutes a culture?
24. Do you think that the poor have their own culture that separates them from the middle and upper classes?

Data Gathering

With the permission of the Division of City Schools – Manila and with the approval of the school principal, the study was conducted in one public secondary school in the city. The researcher wrote communication letters to the said offices for their perusal. A consent form was given to the target informants to discuss the terms and conditions of the research. The consent forms were collected before the day of the interview, the informants were assured that all the information they had provided were taken with utmost respect, confidentiality, and anonymity. The data gathering, particularly the interview sessions, were conducted and recorded via the Google Meet platform, an online video communication platform. Photo narratives were secured by the researchers as evidence of the data gathering. All the materials such as communication letters, photo narratives, consent forms, interview guides, and questionnaires provided by the informants and other individuals involved in this research were kept for reference purposes.

Data Analysis

The study utilized the use of thematic analysis to extract themes from the responses of the informants and yield meaningful and precise outcomes in addressing the research questions.

These were the thematic analysis processes used in the study: (1) familiarizing data, the researchers collected the data and got an overview of the ones provided by the informants. This involves transcribing the interview recording, reading the transcriptions, writing important notes, and going back to the transcriptions for easy reference; (2) generating initial codes includes highlighting common, relevant, and seemed to be new codes mentioned or gathered from the interview transcripts; (3) searching for themes or looking for patterns; (4) reviewing the themes; (5) defining and creating themes; and (6) producing the report.

The patterns served an essential purpose in the categorization, description, and analysis of CoP.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The findings showed themes extracted from the interviews that were predominant among all informants.

Definitions of poverty

While most of the informants admittedly considered themselves poor, they defined poverty as a lack of necessities caused by low income and unemployment, as well as a lack of education and poor family planning. Others also indicated poverty as a cyclic burden of debts. Student-informant 2 explained that *“iba pa rin kapag may kaya, kasi ang may kaya kapag may pera sila nababayaran nila. Ang mahihirap naman kapag may utang, talagang pinipiga pa bago makabayad.”* (trans. It’s different when one is better off because if you are, it would mean that you are able to pay off loans. If the poor have loans, they would first have to be reprimanded by all means before they pay). The majority also saw poverty as an institutional and economic problem as a manifestation of poor efforts to help those impoverished. Though other informants failed to give a concrete definition of poverty, most of the informants agreed on poverty as a happenstance given from birth and an adapted way of life. As entailed by student-informant 8: *“Yung mahihirap siguro ano eh, sanay na sila sa buhay na to... na pinagdaanan na nila at sanay na sanay na sila sa mundo natin eh.”* (trans. The rich, I presume, are used to this way of life, they have gone through so much in this world already). Some even define poverty as an ongoing cycle of continuous work and deprivation. This is explained by student-informant 6: *“Sa tingin ko po... mahirap ka kapag sabi nga nila parang isang kahig isang tuka. Yung bawat pangangailangan mo kailangan mo pagbanatan ng buto. May mga makikita ka rin na kahit magsikap sila wala pa rin.”* (trans. One becomes poor when you have enough to get by. Like working double time to buy necessities. You will also see others who, even if they work hard, still end up with nothing). With such definitions of poverty, the majority of the informants also defined poverty as a set of characteristics that allow it to perpetuate.

Characteristics

The informants attributed the qualities of joyfulness, optimism, and social camaraderie, or kinship as manifested in times of need to the poor. They view those who got out of poverty as having the quality of hard work,

as well as perseverance and resilience. Student-informant 8 says that: “*Ang susi para makaangat sa kahirapan, is education at pagiging masipag at yung pag take ng risk,*” (trans. The key to move past poverty, is education and being hardworking.) This is supported by student-informant 1: “*Kapag mahirap ka, konting tiyaga at pursigi lang. Lyon lang,*” (trans. If you’re poor, you need just a bit of perseverance).

The attribute of resilience was even extended to aspects of health, where student-informant 2 explains that: “*Malakas immune system ng mga tao dito. Syempre malapit sa dagat dito eh. Squatter diba. So, sanay na mga sikmura namin ganun. Sa hirap.*” (trans. The immune system of people around here is strong since we are near the ocean. “Squatters,” right? We can stomach poverty.)

Negative qualities of the poor prominent among most informants were laziness and crab mentality. Student-informant 10, when asked about the negative qualities of the poor, indicated: “*Siguro is, dalawa lang, Magastos or tamad,*” (trans. Maybe just two. Either spending too much or lazy.) Student-informant 2 directly implied that “*magkakainggitan kapag may umaangat. Halimbawa parehas kayo mahirap tapos ikaw umangat, hindi matatanggap nung isa. Magiging talangka sila.*” (trans. Jealousy happens if someone is lifted from poverty. For example, both of you are poor and you get out of poverty, the other can’t accept this. They become crabs). Few of the informants also reported vices. Here, student-informant 5 reports that: “*May mga palaasa kasi talaga. Marami din maraming bisyo - alak, sugal, sigarilyo. Yung mga tamad wala na ngang magawa tsismosa pa.*” (trans. Others just hope. Also with vices, alcohol, gambling, and smoking. There are some who are not only lazy, but also gossip around).

Coping Mechanisms

Despite the informants’ detailed hardships in life, they enumerated qualities that they claimed were coping mechanisms, among them being optimism, resiliency, and perseverance. Student-informant 10, when asked on how one gets out of poverty, expressed that: “*Siguro, nasa pagsisikap, sikap at tiyaga.*” (trans. I think it’s in hardwork and perseverance.)

Other informants also report to partake in sideline jobs to fund necessities and material spending. Student-informant 1 claimed that though she has a part-time job to be able to fund her material spending, they still grant a portion of their share when it comes to necessities such as food and

tuition: “*Habang nag-aaral ako, nagtratabaho ako. Parang raket raket lang, para may kita pambili ng para sa sarili ko,*” (trans. I work while I’m studying, just for a part-time job so I can buy things for myself.) in addition to this, they add: “*Minsan, bibili lang ng ulam ganun. May makain lang.*” (trans. Sometimes I buy meals, just so to have something to eat.)

The participants also found inspiration from kinship and unity in social camaraderie, as well as accepting harsh realities. As student-informant 2 expressed.: “*Sa hirap ng buhay, talagang, wala ka talaga magagawa kundi kayanin nalang. Kasi wala ka naman talagang choice eh,*” (trans. When it comes to hardships in life, you really have no choice but to get by). Student-informant 6 adds that “*Wala naman tayong magagawa. Kailangan talagang kumayod. Hanap ng mapagkakakitaan kaysa naman nakatengga lang.*” (trans. We really can’t do anything. We have to work hard and find jobs rather than just sitting around).

Value in Education

Informants displayed a high regard for education, seeing it as a means of alleviating poverty and a way to find job opportunities. Here, student-informant 1 said: “*Oo para sakin napakahalaga ng edukasyon, kapag nakapagtapos ka, madami ka makukuhang work na maganda, matutulungan mo sila (pamilya) mo magkaroon ng magandang buhay.*” (trans. I find education very important. If you finish studying, you are given a lot of job opportunities, you can help (your family) and have a good life). Student-informant 8 says that: “*Isa sa sanhi ng kahirapan ay pagkakaroon ng mababang antas ng edukasyon.*” (trans. One of the causes of poverty is having a low level of education). However, this becomes an expressed struggle in terms of quality and maintenance where student-informant 8 adds that: “*Marami rin ang hindi nakapag-aral dahil nagkakaroon ng kakulangan sa pera na ipangbabayad sa paaralan ng papasukan...*” (trans. Many are not able to go to school since there is a lack of money to pay for tuition fees). In addition, student-informant 7 expounds on the struggle of having to go to school: “*Hindi po kasi madali magpaaral. Kahit ako po mismo kami ng mga kapatid ko. Pero hangga’t kaya po sinusubukan naman po.*” (trans. Sending someone to school is not an easy task, I can say the same for me and my siblings. But if given the chance at studying, we’d still try). Here, others argue that education becomes merely a requirement than it is learned, where student-informant 2 expresses that: “*Dahil sinasabi nila, nag-aaral ba tayo para matuto*

o nag-aaral para makapasa?” (trans. They question if we are still studying to learn or to just pass).

Poverty as Portrayed in Media and Discrimination

The informants showed varied perceptions when it comes to media and poverty. Some deny the stereotypes that proliferate because of poverty that is portrayed in media. Instead, they openly admit that they do not show shame and admittedly express that they are impoverished. As student-informant 2 expressed: *“Para saakin hindi nakakahiya. Kasi mas maganda na sabihin mo na mahirap ka. Hindi ba? Yung iba kasi pa-rich kid lang eh...”* (trans. It is not a shame for me. It is better to admit you are poor than be boastful of being rich.) Some even say that poverty as portrayed in the media can be helpful in terms of allowing the public eye to see the hardships and realities of those impoverished. Student-informant 8 says that: *“Nakakatulong ang media maabot ang mahihirap ... dahil dito naabot ng media ang impormasyon na maaring tumulong o mag-inspire sa mga mahihirap.”* (trans. Media helps by extending their platform to the poor, through media, one can be given information on how to help the poor and for the impoverished to draw inspiration from.) Where majority of the informants doubt the truth behind “rags to riches” stories as portrayed in media, as well as the authenticity of the narratives portrayed.

Student-informant 4 commented that: *“Yung iba po hindi sir kasi hindi po natin alam kung totoo po bang nakaahon sila sa kahirapan, yung iba totoo naman yung pinapakita sa media.* (trans. With others, we don’t know if they really did or did not get out poverty as portrayed in the media). Whereas student-informant 10 questioned the authenticity of the news portrayed in media: *“Kasi ngayon sobrang bias na kumabaga because of media ... makakainfluence na parang ano, kahit mayaman ka sasabihin mo ganyanganyan dahil may fake news kang nakita.”* (trans. Nowadays, media can be biased, since it has the power to influence others. That though you are rich, you can still proliferate fake news as seen in media).

The informants agree on poverty being portrayed in media with regards to its spatial recognition. Student-informant 4 described stereotypes on social media that is evident towards the poor being: *“Sira na bahay at sa skwater nakatira at kakulangan sa pagkain at financial,”* (trans. Broken house and residing in “squatters” as well as lack of food and money.) Informants also expressed felt discriminations as caused by the recognition of their

environment. Student-informant 10, when asked about discrimination, agrees that it was evident among the rich: *“Lalo na kapag nag-aaral sa private school. Tapos ikaw medyo galing ka sa, gamitin na natin tong term, ‘squatters area,’ parang ang baba ng tingin sayo ng mga anak-mayaman na may kotse.”* (trans. Especially if they are from a private school, and you’re the one from, let’s say, “squatters area,” where people really look down on you. Those who are born from a rich family and with cars). Other expressed felt discrimination among others that were self-implicating. Student-informant 1 articulated *“oo naman, minsan, madalas. Masakit. Pero hindi ko na lang iniintindi at iniisip yun. Para hindi nakakadepress ... Halimbawa, sinabihan nila ako na ganun, na porket mahirap hindi na ko makakapagtapos. Pero gusto ko ipamukha sa kanila na kahit mahirap, kaya ko. Na may maipagmamalaki ako.”*

Poverty in the Philippines

While most of the informants determine causes of poverty as a material deprivation, they also indicate government corruption and lack of action to address poverty. More so, the informants easily attached poverty as a happenstance inherent in the Philippines, which therefore makes it susceptible to naturalization. Student-informant 3 expressed: *“alam naman natin na ang ating gobyerno ay puro kurakot. Kaya ang mga biyaya at karapatan nating mga Pilipino ay nawawala dahil ito ay ipinagkakait sa atin ng mga opisyal ng gobyerno...”* (trans. We know that the government is full of corrupt authorities, and they deprive us of our blessings and rights as Filipinos). While others naturalize poverty in the Philippines, there are also some who compares it to neighboring countries. Such would include a high regard towards their system of response to alleviating poverty, and for some, praising them for their perceived progress. Student-informant 2 says that: *“Ang pinagkaiba lang ng homeless sa America at sa Pilipinas, ay dito, walang wala talaga,”* adding that *“Sa America kasi, madalas magbigay ang mga tao.”* (trans. The difference between the homeless in here in the Philippines and in America, is that here, the homeless are really scarce. People are more giving in America). In addition, student-informant ten also agrees that: *“Napakagaling mag-isip yung mga Chinese. Kaya ahead sila sa’tin pati sa trabaho.”* (trans. The Chinese are exemplary. Which is why they are ahead of us in terms of work).

The summarized themes found apparent among most informants were perceptions on causes to poverty that were described as institutional and systematic. They also defined poverty in such a way of embracing it

as an adapted way of life combated with coping mechanisms. With this predominant perception on poverty, the informants indicate common characteristics shared among the poor that are a set of positive and negative attributes that explain why some stay poor, and others become rich. Nonetheless, all informants come at a common ground when it came to their value on education. Informants see this as a way out of poverty as it would render job opportunities and possibly higher income. However, the informants shared varied perceptions on poverty as represented in the media. Where some indicated self-implied discrimination, there are some who question the motivations of expressing the poor on social media and even regarded environmental and ecological aspects surrounding the poor as discriminating. Last but not the least, the informants showed patterns on naturalization of poverty in the Philippine setting, mainly comparing it to other countries in terms of their values and progress in addressing poverty.

The CoPhad been heavily criticized as a form of stereotyping that exocitizes the lower class into a single set of fatalistic attitudes that reject nuances emerging from varied historical backgrounds and socioeconomic conditions that may play a more significant role in the phenomenon of poverty (Lister, 2004). The CoP was first introduced in Lewis (1961) as the intergenerational transmission of poverty with the most manifested characteristics of “the poor.” However, a Filipino perspective in understanding the culture of poverty remains untouched. Some causes to poverty as indicated by student-informants of the study corroborate with Tuason’s (2010) such as *low income, unemployment, lack of education, and poor family planning*. Common coping mechanisms included *the acceptance of poverty as a reality and partaking in sideline jobs to fund necessities*. Supplemental to that, *being in debt, poor family planning and spending knowledge, and speculations on government corruption* were suggested as causes of poverty. Contrary to popular belief, student-informants did not believe in “poverty mindset” as a cause of poverty, but rather as characteristics that allow it to perpetuate. Majority of the student-informants also contradicted Lewis’s (1961) notion of poverty being intergenerational, but rather defines this as a circumstantial experience and way of life. In this view, student-informant 1 narrated “*hindi siya namamana... nasa sa tao yun, kung mamamatay kang mahirap. Pwede ka naman magsikap habang buhay ka eh.*” (trans. Poverty is not passed on, it would have to depend on the person, if they agree on dying poor. There’s still work hard while you’re still alive).

Previous studies on CoP were also rooted in perspectives utilizing intercultural differences interpreted in the lens of the colonial past. Characteristics that correspond with the student-informant's perceptions as according to Tuason (2010), include *utang na loob, resilience, hard work, optimism, social camaraderie and the value of kinship and family, as well as the high value towards education*. The study found additional perceptions on the characteristics as expressed by the student-informants. These included *crab mentality* and *jealousy* over others doing better-off in life, as well as dependency on government programs. Student-informant 3 added "*isa rin sa nakikita kong dahilan ay umaasa lamang ang iba sa ibibigay ng programang ito (4Ps) hindi sila nagbabanat ng buto upang may kitain sa pang-araw-araw.*"

Lister (2004) established the CoP as othering predatory to defining the boundary between non-poor and the poor as supported by Chase and Walker's (2013) conception of poverty as a "meta-arena for the emergence of shame." Perceptions from the student-informants indicated patterns of discrimination brought by the stereotypes dividing the rich and poor and, for some, self-implicating. Additionally, student-informant ten asserted, "*lalo na kapag nag-aaral sa private school... Tapos ikaw medyo galing ka sa, gamitin natin tong term, 'squatters area' parang ang baba ng tingin sayo ng mga anak-mayaman na may kotse. Na nandon yung stereotyping tsaka discrimination...*"

Lister's (2004) notion of othering is animated by the "non-poor" that draws the line between "us" and "them" and consolidating the differential positions of the poor and the non-poor. The perceptions of student-informants of the poor as portrayed in the media indicated that poverty is expressed as "squatters" and "dirty" due to its ecology. Whereas, Davis (2006) specified slum ecology as more of a *habitus* than it is a reflection of behaviors. Other manifestations of the othering were evident among the student-informants' high regard towards foreign and progressive countries, thereby naturalizing poverty in the Philippine setting.

A multidimensional approach to poverty by Bourdieu, as cited in Demeterio III and Liwanag (2014), recognized it as a lack of economic, cultural, social, and symbolic capital. The perceptions of student-informants on the culture of poverty indicated a lack of economic capital as poverty is perceived to be caused by *unemployment, low income, and a deprivation of necessities*. The lack of cultural capital was also expressed by most of the student-informants wherein they expounded on the *importance of education and the lack of social awareness* of their condition of othering. The lack of

symbolic and social capital was also manifested in their *political participation* of their opinions *expressing government incompetence* to alleviate the poor's situations, as well as their *value of kinship and social camaraderie*.

Hence, poverty in the perception of the student-informants was caused by a lack of economic and cultural capital. CoP, when viewed in the lens of perceptions, can likely be expressed as prominent among others who are impoverished. Yet, the question of whether the said characteristics are only limited among the poor remains unanswered. Enriquez (1994) and Spivak (1985) expressed a common goal of establishing a postcolonial body of knowledge by not simply dismissing colonial past but distinguishing its neocolonial traces in the hope of creating knowledge that is free from Western influences. Perceptions gathered from student-informants suggested not only an addition to the perceptions toward the poor, but also indicated an existing gap in the study of CoP in the context of the Philippines which is supposedly detached from a colonial perspective and rather towards understanding narratives than generalizations of characteristics.

CONCLUSIONS

Presented with various perspectives and narratives on the poverty culture, the underlying cause of poverty as gathered from the student-informants resulted from a lack of economic and cultural capital, among them being low income and lack of job opportunities and education.

Shared perceptions on the poverty culture include a set of positive and negative characteristics. Resilience and optimism empowered by social camaraderie and kinship as well as laziness, crab mentality or jealousy of others doing better off in life, and poor family planning and spending knowledge. The student-informants' attitudes towards the poor were presented by indicating worse and extreme scenarios of poverty, seeing the poor as pitiful and a bad example, and neglected and different from the rich. Given the discussion of prior studies on the culture of poverty, this study concludes that though gathered characteristics are generalized and, to some extent, coincide with CoP as proposed by Lewis (1961) followed by Tuason (2002) in the local literature, the persistent western influence and the perspective of colonial roots limits the study of the poverty culture as merely intergenerational, with generalized assumptions on characteristics to spatial recognitions such as "slums." Such criticism invites the CoP as a threat and movement of othering against the poor.

Unlike prior studies on perceptions of the poor, this study details the narratives of student-informants with the same socioeconomic description with individual and micro perspectives. This concludes that the concept of the CoP remains vague and distinct from individual narratives of those in poverty. Meaning that the collective causes, perceptions, and dispositions toward the poor are possible to further “othering,” distinguishing the poor and non-poor associated with generalization. While the study focused on the students’ perception of the poverty culture, further local studies on CoP should be conducted. Aside from Lewis’ CoP being adapted in local studies, Filipino perspectives and theories should be integrated when addressing the concept of CoP for a further understanding of poverty in the nation. Micro-scale studies focusing on solving socioeconomic issues will yield a significant effect on the bigger picture. The presence of CoP should be examined in different classes to determine whether it is a distinct culture that only people under poverty experience.

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Gunning Fog Index:	12.98
Flesch Reading Ease:	39.53
Grammar Checking:	95/100
Plagiarism:	1%