

THE FILIPINO DANCER IN HAPPYLAND: ASSERTING 'FILIPINO-NESS' IN DANCE PERFORMANCE

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ABSTRACT

Movement is a repository of cultural knowledge and values and can be used to foster better understanding of identities. Using the symbolic-interactionist perspective, this study presents the insights and interpretations from Filipino dancers of their bodily actions and gestures during dance performance. Data were gathered through fieldwork in Hong Kong Disneyland from July 2010 to March 2011. The performances of Filipinos in dance performances in Hong Kong Disneyland were reviewed and analyzed as a means of representation and embodiment of a Filipino habitus. The Filipino dancers' performances illustrate that they are able to negotiate their Filipino-ness even within the context of highly-structured dance choreography and environment of Disneyland. Described in this paper are the unique characteristics of Filipino dancers in performance and as employees of a particular organization. The observed movement sequences show the nuances and differences between the performances of Filipino and Chinese dancers doing the same set choreography. These differences consequently lead to the construction of an identity of Filipino dancers in Hong Kong Disneyland in movement in dance.

Keywords: *Filipino identity, Filipino dancers, movement, dance.*

The mass hiring of Filipino dancers to work in theme parks stirred many issues regarding dance education and practice in the Philippines. Every year since 2004, human resource agencies have auditioned talents in Manila and have lured the most able artists and dancers with better income and the opportunities to perform abroad. At the time this research was conducted, there were 108 Filipino performers in Happyland, a theme park in China.

Dancing abroad is not necessarily a new thing. Many Filipino dancers have traveled abroad to work as professional dancers and entertainers in different parts of the world. The expedition of Filipino dancers to Happyland, however, has significantly affected the number of dance artists in the country. In one sweep, Happyland took more than a hundred of the best dancers of the Philippines when it opened in 2005.

Dancers and the service they provide through performance can be considered as *immaterial labor*. According to Hardt and Negri (2000), immaterial labor is simply labor as service and one that does not necessarily produce any tangible product.

Since the production of services results in no material and durable good, we define the labor involved in this production as *immaterial labor* — that is, labor that produces an immaterial good, such as a service, a cultural product, knowledge, or communication (p. 290).

The type of labor that dancers produce by using their bodies and learned skills fits specifically with the description of the affective face of immaterial labor. There are different dance companies in the Philippines that provide Filipino dancers with opportunities for earning through dance performance. There are classical ballet, jazz,

and hip-hop dance companies in the Philippines that compensate their dancers monetarily.

Table 1 presents the monthly salaries that dancers receive from the Philippine dance companies. Salaries, especially for classical ballet companies, are also based on the dancers' rank and length of stay in the dance company.

Table 1. Monthly Salaries of Filipino Dancers in the Philippines

Company	Salary per Month
Ballet Philippines	P10000-18000 P3000 (for apprentices)
Philippine Ballet Theatre	P8000-16000
Ballet Manila	P20000-32000
Hotlegs	P12000 (P4000 per show; 3 shows per month)
Powerdance	P15000 (P5000 per show; 3 shows per month)
Whiplash	P12000 (P4000 per show; 3 shows per month)
Airdance	P15000 (P5000 per show; 3 shows per month)
G-force	P16000 (P4000 per show; 4 shows per month)
Allstars	P15000 (P5000 per show; 3 shows per month)

The economic situation of Filipino dancers in the Philippines is among the factors that convince the dancers to pursue career opportunities abroad. With the opening of Happyland in 2005,

another option has been presented to Filipino dancers, one that brings them to a place not too far from home (the Philippines) but would allow them to earn better than they do by dancing here.

Filipino Dancers in Happyland

Happyland employs aesthetic labor (Warhurst, Nickson, Witz, & Cullen, 2000; Postrell, 2003) in that they hire employees who embody, possess attributes, and have the “right kind of look or sound” to represent the image of the company and the service that it seeks to project” (Bryman, 2004, p. 123). For Happyland, having the “right look” means having features such as body shape, facial features, skills and experience, and overall style and aura that would communicate their stories and values. It is this practice that allowed Happyland to hire talents from the Philippines.

The promise of providing employment opportunities for Chinese nationals was among the attractive pitches by the Happyland Company when it proposed the project to the Chinese government. In 1999, it was estimated that the theme park’s construction and operation would need more than 18,000 people and was hoped to alleviate the unemployment rate in Hong Kong.

Under the Supplementary Labor Scheme (SLS) of the HK SAR government, only employers with genuine difficulties in finding appropriate personnel are allowed to import workers into Hong Kong. This scheme was conceptualized by the Labor Department in order to ensure the priority of Hong Kong locals in employment and to safeguard that they receive proper compensation and benefits.

Happyland initially went to the Philippines to hire “exotic looking” talents for their musical production that required African-

looking bodies. The casting directors who auditioned Filipino dancers and singers were pleasantly surprised that Filipinos had a variety of looks that were appropriate for its other productions. This idea coincides with the idea of the malleability of the body as proposed by Deleuze and Guattari (2004).

Research Problem: Representation of the “Filipino” through Movement in Dance

There has been a growing interest on the body as a carrier of culture. Social and culture analyses of the body and physical practice have been pursued by many intellectuals. Pierre Bourdieu, a French sociologist, has offered conceptual tools that can be powerful means of investigating the social and cultural dimensions of the use of the body. His concept of habitus has been useful in understanding how corporeal engagement in daily routines and in the practice of institutionalized physical activities functions in embodying the dynamic interaction of class, gender, and culture. Bourdieu sees human action as deeply situated in social and cultural contexts. He regards actions by individuals as reproductions of social structure and the maintenance and reproduction of social relations.

Looking at the body and how it is manipulated by its owners is the main thrust of this research. The performances of Filipinos in dance performances in Hong Kong Happyland as means of representation and embodiment of culture will be explored further, reviewed, and analyzed. It is in this light that this study would like to describe the unique characteristics of Filipino dancers in performance and as employees of a particular organization. This

study would like to pose the following question: *How is the Filipino identity articulated in movement in dance?*

This exploratory study examined the Filipino dancers' (behavior in) performance as representation of cultural identity in dance movement. The learning of a foreign dance genre can be seen as acquiring a new culture, but this investigation focused on the process of adoption and adaptation of Filipino dancers of dance steps and how they are able to perform these in ways that are distinct from others.

The study focused on observations of actual dance performances and the behavior of Filipino dancers onstage and within the theme park premises during work hours. The main data analyzed is the practice of Filipino dancers that consist of their actions and physical gestures during performance.

The theories of Bourdieu regarding structure and agency having a dialectical relationship can be related to how Filipino dancers bring existing knowledge about performance based on their experiences prior to working in Happyland. This knowledge was built through the training and performance exposure they received in the Philippines. Their habitus is also influenced by their Filipino culture. The structures that guide their actions and behavior during performance include the organizational culture that they are taught when they are hired by Happyland, the set choreography that they have to learn, and the aesthetics of the dance genre the choreography was based on. The habitus and the structure guide the performance of dancers and contribute to the product, the actual performances of the dancers, and their perception of their performance.

Empirical Significance

This study will provide very important information and insights regarding dance education and the professional dance industry as participated in by Filipino dancers in the Philippines. It will also discuss the Filipino dancers' diaspora and the factors that push these bodies to seek employment abroad. Recommendations from this study may be used to address the "muscle drain" and allow those in authority to find ways to provide better career opportunities for Filipino dancers in the Philippines.

This research will focus on human movement as embodiment of culture. Recognition of the position and abilities of the body, movement, and dance in communicating our Filipino culture will help us to understand and appreciate our own Filipino values and thoughts better. The study also seeks to contribute to the available literature regarding Philippine dance studies and hopes to encourage interest in the academic and scholarly pursuit of Philippine dance.

Research Methodology

This research used ethnographic approaches in collecting the empirical evidence needed for the study. The primary data gathering used was participant-observation supplemented by key informant and individual interviews. The primary sources of data were the performances of the Filipino and Chinese dancers as part of the stage shows and parade as attractions in Happyland. The researcher observed and notated some of their movement sequences using Labanotation, a system of movement notation used in studying movement.

This can also be considered as an auto-ethnography and the researcher's active participation in the dance community as a student of dance, dance instructor, and performer had been instrumental in gathering information regarding the histories of individual dancers, dance companies, and other information that would contribute to the better understanding of the situation of dance here in the country. Secondary data analysis included information regarding the geography, history, and demographics (population, data on number of foreign workers and guest statistics) of Happyland.

The research and writing of this thesis was conducted over a period of eleven months, from July 2010 to June 2011. It included four trips to Happyland with each trip not shorter than two weeks.

The Happyland Entertainment Team is composed of singers, dancers, face characters, character mascot handlers, special skills and stunts talents, and production crews that attend to the technical requirements of the shows. This study is focused on the performances of dancers within the shows of the theme park. The dancers are of different descent; there are Filipino dancers, Chinese (Mainland Chinese and Hong Kongese), Australian, American dancers, and one Japanese dancer. The Australian and American dancers were hired for their features that greatly resemble the characters from animated movies.

For this study, ten Filipino dancers and ten Chinese chorus dancers were interviewed. The Filipino and Chinese dancers make up the chorus lines for the productions. The Chinese and Filipino dancers have the same contract and receive the same salary while other foreigners (Australians, Canadians, and Samoans) have expatriate status and receive higher income with daily allowances.

All the dance captains of the different shows were interviewed as well. During the time the research was conducted, all the dance captains were Filipinos. There were a total of fifteen respondents aged 23 to 45 years old. The dancers had different dance backgrounds but eighty percent (80%) claimed that they had Classical ballet and jazz training. Fifty-two percent (52%) of the respondents are male while forty-eight (48%) percent are female. All interviewed Filipinos had experiences of dancing with performing companies prior to working in the theme park.

Table 2. The Happyland entertainment team by nationality

SHOW	FILIPINOS	CHINESE	EXPATS	TOTAL
GOLDEN MICKEYS	33	27	14	74
THE FESTIVAL OF THE LION KING	21	28	19	68
PARADE TEAM	54	110	12	176
TOTAL	108	165	45	318

Table 2 presents the breakdown of the Entertainment Team according to the shows and their ethnic identities.

Filipino dancers interviewed for this study are employees of the theme park. They were born in the Philippines and received dance training in the Philippines. They only moved to China to work in Happyland. To answer the main research problem, the following questions were asked: (1) what are the hallmarks of the Filipino manner of dancing choreographed sequences? How do these

compare with the manner of dancing of their foreign peers within the same performance?; (2) Are the dancers collectively aware that their manner of dancing and performing is different? Can they distinguish the characteristics distinct to dancers trained in the Philippines? Why do they recognize these movement and performance qualities as “Filipino”?; (3) Why do Filipinos behave the way they do during performance? How do they explain their bodily actions?

The Filipino in Performance: Malaki, Malakas, Magaling, Makulit at Malaro

According to Bourdieu, people’s behavior and actions are guided by structures, by rules and norms prescribed by the society, but it does not take away the fact that each person has the ability to improvise or deviate from these structures. Bourdieu’s theory of field and habitus emphasizes individual subjectivity and valuations of what is believed to be in keeping with the structure, of what is acceptable.

The actual performances of Filipino dancers reflect the dancers’ compliance with the structure in that they still do the choreography that was taught to them. The slight nuances in execution and the Filipino dancers’ excellent performances are means through which these dancers negotiate their position within the field. By performing well, by doing “big” movements and being able to relate to the audience, Filipinos are able to assert their place in Happyland as legitimate performers.

Filipino dancers in Happyland recognize their “performance” as having a huge difference from that of their Chinese counterparts. Although they do the same steps and are part of the same shows,

there are dancers who feel that they do not exert the same effort during performance and that Filipinos are “more generous” in how they are “all-out” in their dancing. The Chinese, based on the Filipinos’ observations, are a bit more reserved both in performance and in their everyday life’s dealings. This section will present the Filipinos’ valuation and description of their performances in Happyland.

Malaki at Malakas. Filipinos have described their movements as “*malaki*” (big) as they try to widen their chests and backs and lengthen their reach. To an extent, this idea of growing bigger, of extension, is illusory, for their physical bodies can only go as far. But the Filipino dancers revealed that during performance, they seem “larger than life”. The strength (*lakas*) of Filipinos can also be witnessed visually when they perform. Not strong in terms of audible volume through stomping or clapping but by giving out, or rather throwing out, energy and expanding their bodies through their creative manipulation of space. Law-law, a Hong Kong local, describes Filipinos as having “greater impact” as compared to the quiet mainland Chinese (personal communication, 2011).

The qualities *malaki and malakas* are very apparent in the photo of a Filipino dancer (Figure 1) shot during the finale scene of one of the shows. There is a hyperextension of the right arm as well a motion of pulling away from the right shoulder. The left arm is kept with tension in a slightly bent position instead of dropping the arm relaxed at the sides like the others. The gaze is also directed at a farther distance facilitated by the lifting of the chin. The overall effect is a bigger mass and consumption of space compared to others.

Figure 1. Filipino dancer (center) with other dancers in a scene from the concert show.



Magaling. Dancers are assigned to roles and tracks. *Tracks* pertain to the specific blocking and choreographies for the different shows. There are instances when assigned tracks are too difficult for dancers and dance captains have to teach them simpler tracks. There are also cases when there are very fast learners who can pick up the steps and the blocking very quickly, and so dance captains have to take advantage of those moments and teach them many tracks despite being new to the company. There is no codified way of teaching the sequences to the dancers. The manner of instruction of the dances is a case-to-case basis dependent on the dancers' skills movement memory retention.

There are dancers who know more tracks compared to other dancers. The Filipino dancers take pride in the fact that they are

assigned more difficult tracks. They always compare themselves to their Chinese co-dancers and complain about injustice in how they actually do more work and yet get the same pay.

“Ang daya kasi kami alam namin lahat ng tracks and mas mahirap yung mga tracks na pinapagawa sa amin. May mga iba nga dito na ang tagal nang part ng show pero dalawang tracks pa lang ang alam. Kami kasi kahit ano ipagawa sa amin, kaya namin. Sila medyo mabagal ang pick-up. At saka natataranta. Kahit ganun, kahit mas marami kaming ginagawa, tapos kahit mas madalas na kami yung nagco-cover para sa may sakit, pareho pa rin ang sweldo. Wala namang bonus pag marami kang alam na tracks eh.” (Lisondra, personal communication, 2010)

(It’s unfair because we know more tracks and we are assigned to perform the harder tracks. There are some dancers here who have been part of the show for a long time already, and yet they only know two tracks. We can do anything that is asked of us. They have slower pick-up, and they get rattled easily. Even if we know more tracks, and even if we are asked to perform more in case someone is absent because we know their track, we still receive the same salary. You don’t get a bonus for knowing a lot of tracks.)

Aside from the dance steps and blockings, the performers also have to learn how to wear the costumes properly and how to put on make-up appropriate for their roles. Each performer does his or her

own make-up for the shows. A make-up artist teaches the performers how to do their make-up, and they are provided with cosmetic products that are numbered to guide them in doing their own make-up. Each role has specifications for make-up and costumes, and dancers have to follow these accordingly.

In performance, the Filipino can and is able to take on anything and everything. Their fellow employees wonder where their energy comes from (Law, personal communication, 2011). There were even stories shared that there were times when the Chinese members of the shows would ask the Filipinos to “tone down” their energy so that they (the Chinese) would not have to work so hard at keeping up.

An amusing story told was that by a Filipino dancer who played a prank on a fellow dancer. A Filipino dancer told two of his Chinese co-dancers that the directors of Happyland were coming to watch their show. After the show, the two dancers came up to him, panting. They said they did not see any of the bosses and that they got tired over nothing. The two dancers got mad at him for lying to them and did not talk to him for weeks.

The Filipino dancer commented that it was not his fault that the Chinese got tired because they exerted extra effort thinking that the directors were indeed watching. He said that he did not get tired that day because that was what he normally does, that his energy expenditure for every show is the same regardless of the presence of bosses. He continued that he and his Filipino friends do not get tired easily because they have developed a stamina that allows them to do several shows full-out. These statements are examples of the recognition of the operation of a certain habitus among these

dancers. It is the same as saying that strong and excellent performances are not products of conscious effort, that such is “natural” to them (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992, p.127).

Makulit at Malaro. More than the differences in the execution of the set movements, what sets the Filipino dancers apart are the improvised gestures that they insert between the steps. In many of the shows observed for this research, there were many times during the shows that Filipinos were seen throwing occasional “flying kisses” to the audience or making silly faces while dancing. No two performances are alike, literally, with these dancers as they come up with crazier antics and funnier faces for their next performances. Minute movement inserts such as the snapping of fingers, winking of the eyes, fluttering of eye lashes, raising of eye brows, and pouting of the lips, show the playfulness of Filipinos.

This playfulness is also the Filipinos’ way of countering boredom during the show. By doing other steps and whacky facial expressions, the performers are able to excite themselves anew with their shows and their steps. All of these steps, however, should be done within the context of the story. Otherwise, dancers “playing” during the show are considered by other performers as bothersome and irritable (Vega, personal communication, 2010).

“Laro” or “playfulness” is very much appreciated by the dance captains and company directors. These expressions are not taught to the dancers in the same way that they are taught the steps. Through these expressions, dancers are able to improvise and show their interpretation of the narratives. Performing varied facial expressions, however, is not a requirement. It is okay with dance captains if dancers choose to “just smile”.

Performance Philosophies of Filipino Dancers: Puso at Libog

The behavior of Filipino dancers in Happyland is in contrast to Bourdieu's theory that "conduct relies less in habitus in situations that are highly codified and regulated" (1990, p. 82). Despite operating within the context of a highly structured performance of a Western dance genre, Filipino dancers are able to find opportunities for strategy and innovation, regardless of how little those chances for improvisations are. Whether it is a slight nod of the head, a sudden jerk of the head, or even an extra leg kick just before exiting, they eagerly take that in order to bring attention to themselves.

Filipino dancers offered performance philosophies that guide them in their shows. The interviewed dancers related that *puso*, *libog*, and *laro* are exhibited in all their performances.

Puso. The Filipino dancers, when asked why they perform in the way that they do, would always find themselves going back to the "heart" of the matter—the "*puso*" or passion. The dancers assert that their love for dance, their "heart", permits them to go beyond the steps of the dances and their daily routines and to inject emotions into their movements. Although the choreography is already set, they are able to perform the steps differently because they associate certain emotions and themes to certain steps or sections of the choreography. The set routine has minor allowances for improvisation. Those parts of the show when they have to interact with the audience are not choreographed, and they have to individually come up with their own tricks and gimmicks, but all their actions must still be within the context of the show that they are in. Filipinos say they try to connect with the audience aside from just doing the steps.

Puso (passion) translates to movement that is not hastily executed (Labian, personal communication, 2010), adherence to choreography

and technique (Abejero, personal communication, 2010), and understanding one's role in the performance and expressing the emotions embedded in the dances (Guico, personal communication, 2010).

The oldest Filipino dancer in Happyland relates that the "puso" manifested through movement relates to life in general when he said that:

'Yung pagmamahal mo sa ginagawa mo (sayaw), katulad din yan ng pagmamahal mo sa buhay mo. Parang pinapakita mo sa kanila na iba ang atake 'pag sa puso mo galing ang ginagawa mo sa pagsayaw. Tayo, makikita mo sa galaw kung pano mo ine-express ang ginagawa mo sa trabaho mo. Hindi blanko o barabara lang. 'Yung iba makikita mo trabaho lang nila ang ginagawa nila. 'Yung iba pinapakita nila na gusto nila ang trabaho nila at hindi labag sa loob nila ang ginagawa nila, 'yung pinili nilang trabaho. Makikita mo iba ang hagod...' (Mabacquiao, personal communication, 2010)

(Your love for what you do, it's like your love for your life. There is really a difference when what you do in dance comes from your heart. In our case, you can see that in how we do our work. We do not perform with blank faces or half-hearted performances. The others, you can see how they just treat their work as a regular job while with others, they show that they like their job and that they're not being forced to work. You can see in the way that they move. It's different.)

The heart of the Filipino dancer is a generous one that does not hold back during performance. The Filipinos' passion for dance and performance has been rewarded by recognition among their peers and in the company that they serve through promotions from chorus dancer to dance captains to eventually positions with tenure such as stage managing or stage directing. They are also rewarded through contract renewals and salary increases.

When the directors announce that they will be watching the shows, all the performers make it a point to do their best. According to the dance captains, these shows bring out the best in all the performers, but it is when there are no bosses watching that the cast members are able to get to know the type of performers that they really are, their discipline, and their integrity as persons.

Figure 2. A Filipino dancer and a Chinese dancer performing the same straddle jump.



Figure 2 shows two dancers doing the same aerial pose called the straddle jump. The dancer on the left is a Filipino dancer with a greater degree of flexibility compared to the Chinese on the right side of the photo.

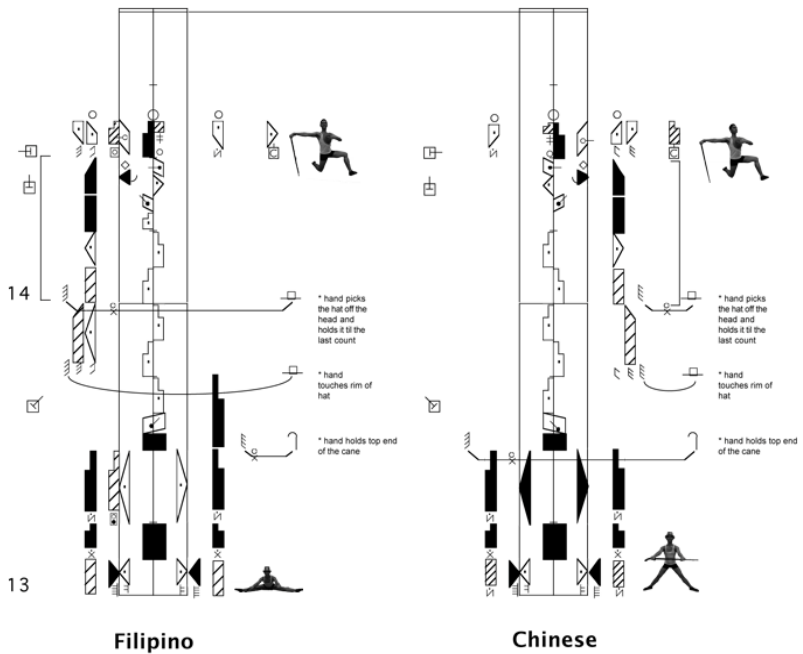
Libog. Filipinos talk of a certain “*libog*” (sensuality) in movement that is not meant to pertain to racy, sexy, and inappropriate movements but rather movements that are done with a certain physical resistance or stickiness—“*lagkit*” (Villadelgado, personal communication, 2010). When dancers do a certain movement with the limbs, they do not just kick or throw the limbs out. They pass through a certain path that usually begins closer to the core of the body before stretching out.

Libog in movement also manifests in steps woven together and transitory minute details that are performed to make for a more coherent visualization of the images of the dance. The connected steps evoke a sense of ease among the performers compared to disengaged movement sequences with staggered execution of individual steps that make dances look syncopated and panicky. These connecting movements can also be compared to the Southeast Asian manner of singing called “*mellisma*” where singers transition from one tone to another by making audible the sounds of going through the semi-tones and quarter tones. The quality of being able to connect steps and poses to one another could be considered a *mellisma in movement*.

Libog and *landi* have negative connotations in Filipino culture for bearing close relations to sexual acts. Done in performance, *libog* and *landi* become powerful means through which dancers are able to connect with the audience.

For the purposes of analysis, some parts of the dances were notated using Labanotation. The notation score cannot be shown in full because of copyright clauses. Figure 3 is part of the notation score that shows a Filipino dancer and a Chinese dancer in a straddle jump, with the legs wide apart in the air.

Figure 3. Notated movement differences between a Filipino dancer and a Chinese dancer doing the same routine but on opposite sides.



Conclusion

The Filipino Identity is an Imagined Identity

Filipino performance values and qualities exemplified by Filipino dancers in Happyland contribute to a construction of performance *doxa*, of unspoken rules and deeply rooted ideas, and of unquestioned truths of how a performance should go and how performers should conduct themselves within it. The experience and visualization of a collective habitus of Filipino dancers have led to an enhanced praxis of dance. It is practice in keeping with rules enriched with inflections of Filipino playfulness.

Although the shows have been performed since 2005, the dancers treat their shows with a fresh approach in every single performance, confirming Brian Turner's argument that dance is "resistant to mechanical reproducibility" (2005, p.6). Even with a set choreography, the dancers have their own interpretation of the dance and its contexts. These interpretations are based largely on their culture, on their values, how they were trained, and what they were exposed to and how they were exposed to these. This reference to culture is emphasized in interviews when performers would say that their performance in Happyland is affected by how they were trained in the Philippines and what they know is proper and correct according to their Philippine companies' standards.

According to some of the Filipino dancers, their having professional experience prior to Happyland is that factor which gives them an edge in performance compared to the Chinese who were just dance students when they were accepted into the company. They say that it is this professional background that allows them to approach their show performance with such energy.

There is an economic factor that contributes to the construction of an identity that Filipinos have as performers in Happyland. Financial struggle is a collective experience among Filipino dancers. For many of them, the work in Happyland is so much easier compared to what they had to do in the Philippines to earn money. Because they are well-compensated for the work that they do, the Filipino dancers feel that they do not have any excuse not to deliver.

Proper compensation packages are among the more influential causes that lead to a collective identity in movement. The Happyland dancers earn an average of HK\$14,000 monthly that when converted to Philippine peso is equivalent to almost P80, 000. The said amount is a far cry from the measly P10, 000 that these dancers used to earn dancing with Philippine dance companies.

Being able to fend for their needs and wants, the Filipino dancers have gained freedom from their financial hang-ups and are able to focus their energies on performing better, on doing what their jobs require of them. Back in the Philippines, the dancers' bodies are beat from dancing ("*Ginugulpi sa trabahong pagsasayaw*"), and yet they earn so little (Parilla, personal communication, 2010). Financial freedom, having access to money and material things, allows the Filipino dancers to become better performers and gives them no reason to complain about their situation.

Having more money has also given these artists the means to fund their other interests and hone their talents in other fields such as photography, oil painting, baking, yoga, singing, and other activities. Earning more than necessary to keep themselves alive, some dancers are able to pursue old passions and newfound talents such as painting, baking, and photography.

The daily performances of Filipino dancers in Happyland allow them to embody their values and principles with regards to performance. Aside from their own individual practice, Filipino dancers are also the means through which Filipino performance and aesthetic values are constantly being produced and reproduced when they are assigned as dance captains of the shows.

Tasked with teaching those newly hired their dances according to their roles and tracks, dance captains play a very important role in molding both bodies and minds of the dancers assigned to their shows. Filipino sensibilities regarding performance and experience guide these dance captains in fulfilling their responsibilities as dance captains.

The individual performances of dancers reveal that they perform their duties according to how they know things should be done as well as do actions that are not specifically prescribed by the practice. Despite the highly controlled environment that Happyland is for its employees, its structure allows for the performance of the individual dancers' habitus.

Habitus, according to Bourdieu, are "dispositions and generative classificatory schemes embodied in human beings" (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992, p. 76). Every culture, every group of people who consider themselves as a collective, has their own sets of ideas about the world. The dancers in Happyland recognize nuances in their performances such as additional arm or hand gesture, variations in facial expressions, and specific characteristics of how they execute steps as a manifestation of how they were trained when they were still in the Philippines. These are habitus made visible and may also be referred to as *hexis*.

Aside from being venues through which a collective habitus is performed, shows and performances also become means through which structure and agency meet. During shows, the cast members are not able to differentiate their personal lives from the tracks that they do or the roles that they play. They do not think that they are Filipinos performing certain roles within a plot. They only think of being able to portray the roles given to them to the best of their abilities. There is also an overlapping of structures with habitus because Filipinos working in Happyland recognize that the values espoused by the company are similar to values promoted by the Filipino culture. The “naturally” happy Filipino has found a home in the “happiest place on earth” that Happyland is.

In an earlier discussion, it was presented how financial freedom has paved the way for Filipinos to perform better in the shows that they were part of, but this experience of economic repression is not only limited to Filipinos. The desire to perform well, to be big, loud, and noticeable becomes a cultural experience for Filipinos because they have neither the financial stability nor the ethnicity of the Chinese and other expatriates to afford them a sense of security in their post as employees of Happyland. They want to be considered the best dancers because this all that they can hold on to. By performing their best and giving it their all, the dance captains will have no reason to fire these Filipino dancers, and they will be assured of another ten-month contract or may be rewarded with a promotion by also becoming a dance captain.

When they are being compared to dancers of other ethnicities, Filipino dancers like to be referred to as collectively Filipino. That identity is relational and can be observed in how Filipinos are able to differentiate their performance from that of the Chinese and in how

they always look at the individual dancers' backgrounds when they are comparing themselves to other Filipinos. Filipino dancers in Happyland refer to their company affiliations when discussing performance qualities among themselves. There were even narratives of how dancers who belonged to the same dance companies organized exclusive events and dance classes. Ballet Philippines would have ballet and modern dance classes that are open only to former members and scholars of the said company. Other companies organized similar events and made sure to invite only their friends from their own companies. Events like these, however, have become less frequent. There are Filipino dancers who exclaimed that the barriers and the boundaries between the different Philippine dance companies have been broken down and blurred.

At the end of the day though, despite the many reflections of Filipinos regarding their collective cultural identity (Smith, 1991) as performers in Happyland, the fact that the theme park promotes its own set of values and beliefs still cannot be discounted. It is to be emphasized here that theme park is a land of make-believe. The efforts of the company are geared towards the expression, reproduction, and distribution of the ideals of the company (Baudrillard, 1982). Performers who are recognized by Filipino guests during the parades and shows can do as much as exclaim 'Mabuhay' or nod in agreement when asked if they are Pinoys. In the theme park reality, the outright display of Philippine culture or identity is not the main priority.

Performers, regardless of how talented and animated they and their performances are, are not be known by the park guests as their own individual persons. They remain anonymous artists at best and fictional in the perception of the park guests who visit Happyland in

order to escape from the troubles of their everyday lives. There is no opportunity for these talents to be known for their “own” personalities and real life identities, for all these should be hidden under full costume and make-up. The audience will go home thinking about how pretty a princess was or how cute the flowers and bees were, but many of them will not come to know the names of these performers let alone recognize that behind these costumes are “real” people.

The Filipino culture of excellence observed in this study becomes but a perpetuator, a medium, through which an organizational culture is communicated, not one that is to be consciously reproduced and promoted in Happyland. The Filipino identity in dance performance is an identity that remains to be “imagined” by the Filipinos and other performers; an identity that is “real” only among them, their dance captains who regularly check their work, and their bosses who offer them new contracts.

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Editor's note

This lecture was delivered on September 28, 2012 at the Ateneo de Manila University Social Sciences conference rooms 1 and 2.