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Editorial Remarks for the First Issue (Vol. 1, No. 1-4)

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Culture and Empathy: International Journal of Sociology, Psychology, and Cultural Studies is a new breed of interdisciplinary journal in social sciences and humanities. It is a new kind as we clamorously defy “hybridity” as a progressive and organic concept of understanding our human culture and society. As Terry Eagleton (2016: 37) clairvoyantly pointed out cultural studies is “in danger of taking pain out of hybridity and plurality.” We’re living in a world where some overly globalized female citizens desire hybridized infants because they are simply pretty or good looking more than their own pure breeds. In the process of over-globalization, these mothers neglect the pain their hybridized children have to go through in each local community. Eagleton (2016: 36) was correct to see that “the concepts of difference and hybridity [...] tend to diffuse conflict.” The champion of hybridity is capitalism through convergence or the maximized commercial hybridization of all things local and global. Hybridity is not beauty, but a gargantuan destructive force found in every corner of the world. Destruction is carefully veiled in the name of harmony to dilute its apparent nature of conflict found among all affected citizens of the earth.

In hyper-globalized societies, the unforeseen growth of international and transnational communication between cultures (or the transnational capitalist attempts to diffuse conflicts) requires empathetic skills in understanding each other not to forget such conflicts inherent in the local society or cyber space where global citizens interact. Social empathy has been a subject of social and cultural studies within the discipline of psychology for many decades. It has, however, rarely been studied in a multidisciplinary fashion among sociologists, psychologists, and cultural studies specialists. This journal is dedicated to the study of the transnational cultural phenomenon using the perspective of social empathy and social scientific methodologies. *C & E* defines social empathy as “the ability to understand people by perceiving or experiencing their life situations and as a result gain insight into structural inequalities and disparities” (Segal 2007). We therefore ask how transnational cultural phenomena that are widely taking place throughout the world are shaping the structure of social empathy and how these two change our 21st century world. Constructing global social emphasis thus is an act of diluting capitalist hybridity to begin with.

C & E is a quarterly journal that is intended for both academics and interested observers, contains the contributions of recognized experts, and is essential to anyone seeking the latest research on social empathy and cultural studies in a readily available, approachable form. We welcome articles which deal with all forms of transnational cultural phenomena that are relevant to the issue of social empathy. We welcome submissions from sociology, psychology, and cultural studies broadly defined. Multidisciplinary works are highly recommended. Unlike other Anglophile journals, we also accept articles written in local languages, as long as such works are accepted by double blind reviews and translatable into English.

In this first issue (Vol. 1, No. 1-4), we present five original research papers and two book reviews. These articles have no cross-cutting common theme although they all take a critical look at how global consumption of Hallyu (the Korean Wave) has evolved over the years in different fields and countries. For example, Howard and Lekakul find that migratory groups of the Thai Youth in London find Hallyu as a “means to an end,” as K-pop is a tool with which the youth groups can express their cultural identity with a garb of non-Western or non-Thai traditions. In doing so, the new South Korean national branding mysteriously convinced them to buy Korean goods and services, although K-pop in and of itself failed to encourage them to pay for music. Alex Taek-Gwang Lee concurs that the national building process or modernization in South Korea has successfully converted the image of the country into a capitalist democracy that sells its goods and services to the global K-pop fans in the name of “cool” instead of quality, innovation, or high brand power. This worked in some sense, as the global capitalist culture industry created sufficient niches as it participated in the economic globalization boom hurriedly without understanding new markets. Likewise, Porteux and Choi find that the South Korean government has successfully transformed Taekwondo, Korean national martial arts, into a modernized Olympic game simultaneously promoting the national brand of the country. In a case study of post-Psy Sweden, Hübinette finds K-pop is chronicling an enormous success among female fans in a remote Northern European country. In the 21st century cultural industry, these female fans find it attractive to consume non-Western, non-male dominant form of entertainment and maintain proactive social-media ties with its idols who portend malleable gender identities.

We have embarked on a long way without clear stellar constellations or magnetic compasses. The world is getting a more obscure and precarious place to live in than the previous century. People are divided not along their rigid ideological tenets of the 19th century but by their malleable cultural identity they adhere to without particular reasons other than their immediate cultural and physical desires. If future will be written by certain collective movements made up of these desires (or unsatisfied contemporariness), it is time to criticize and dismantle some of these unnecessary desires (such as an assured mutual destruction of human beings of all kinds and their earth) and stop them from achieving any significant economic, political, and cultural outcomes. We anticipate continuous discussions of these matters in an intellectual and informed way.

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