

The Multidimensional *Realms of*
Parasocial Relationships:
Korean Cosmology and Fan Identities

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Cheon
(Heaven)

Ji
(Earth)

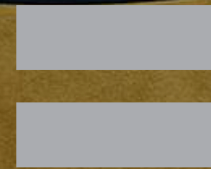
Jiok
(Underworld)

Introduction

- PhD project in Korean Studies (1st year)



- Focus: Parasocial relationships (PSRs) in South Korean entertainment



- Methodology: Interdisciplinary – Korean Studies & Cognitive Science

Research Focus



Cognitive, emotional & spiritual
dimensions of **PSRs**

How **fans experience idols** as spiritual
beings

Influence & identification of **fan
perception**



Korean Cosmology

Traditional belief
structures
influencing
modern affect

Cheon
(Heaven)

Ji
(Earth)

Jiok
(Underworld)

Spiritual Practice

- Idol-fan connection as symbolic transcendence
- Emotional intensity similar to devotional or sacred experiences
- Fusion of spiritual and additional social interaction

Methodological Framework

Parasocial
theory



Jungian
archetypes



- Cognitive science models of symbolic processing



Cultural-
historical
analysis

INTRODUCTION

Definition of Parasocial Interactions (PSI):

- A psychological phenomenon where individuals form one-sided emotional connections with media personalities or public figures.
- These relationships appear intimate from the fan's perspective but lack actual reciprocity from the celebrity.

Definition of Parasocial Relationships (PSR):

- Long-term emotional attachments that persist despite the celebrity's unawareness of the fan's existence.
- Fans may develop feelings of loyalty, care, and emotional dependence on these figures.

Why is this topic important?

- The rise of digital media has amplified PSI/PSR, making them more immersive and engaging.
- Understanding these interactions can provide insights into media influence, emotional well-being, and ethical considerations in authorship of idols.

A conceptual image illustrating a parasocial relationship. On the left, a man in silhouette sits on a dark bench, his right leg and ankle chained to a glowing, pixelated figure on the right. The scene is set in a dark space filled with stars and light trails, suggesting a digital or virtual environment. The overall mood is one of longing and connection.

The one-and-a-half sided parasocial relationship

SOUTH KOREA'S ENTERTAINMENT INDUSTRY & DIGITAL MEDIA

The Role of Korean Music & the Hallyu Wave:



- Korean Music Industry has become a global phenomenon, with millions of fans actively engaging through digital platforms.
- Entertainment agencies utilize digital media to maintain and enhance fan relationships.

weverse
Official for All Fans

Digital Platforms for Fan Engagement:



Weverse & Bubble for JYPnation:

- Interactive platforms allowing direct messaging and exclusive idol content.
- Fans receive personalized messages that simulate real interactions.
- Idols host live streams, respond to comments, and provide a sense of accessibility.

Influence of South Korean Cultural Norms:



- South Korean society values collectivism and emotional restraint.
- Digital fan engagement serves as a crucial emotional outlet for self-expression and connection.

bubble
JYP

EVOLUTION FROM PSI TO PSR ON DIGITAL PLATFORMS

Stage 1: Initial Interaction

- Fans follow idols on social media and participate in live streams.
- Emotional responses to idols' messages and content create a sense of connection.

Stage 2: Emotional Investment

- Repeated exposure and personal engagement increase feelings of familiarity.
- Fans begin to perceive idols as emotionally significant figures.

Stage 3: Formation of PSR

- A strong psychological bond forms where fans feel emotionally supported by idols.
- Some fans may develop a sense of exclusivity and deep personal attachment.



OBSERVATIONS & FINDINGS

Comparison with Other Entertainment Industries:

- Similar patterns observed in Western media with influencers, YouTubers, and streamers.

Impact on Fans Emotional Well-Being:

- In South Korea, where emotional expression is often limited, PSR offer psychological relief.
- Internationally, fans use these interactions to cope with loneliness and stress.

- These platforms create a continuous engagement loop that fosters intimacy.
- Fans feel personally valued through exclusive content and messages.

Weverse & Bubble Enhance Emotional Connectivity:

IMPACT



Strengthens global reach of Korean cultural values.



Shapes perception of Korean identity among international audiences.

Significance in Korean Music:

- Fan Engagement
- Content Intermediation

Example Dynamics:

Fans create fictional or idealized versions of idols.

Artists influence fans' views on social issues, mental health, and cultural appreciation.

Fan Engagement:

Content Intermediation:

Deep Emotional Ties:

Identification with Idols' Narratives:

Real-Time Connections:

Social Media & Apps:

Your favorite star sends you sweet messages
Messages in 11 different languages
Customized messages every different time and star!



Stories of perseverance and success resonate deeply with fans.

Heart throb message from a star
MYDOL

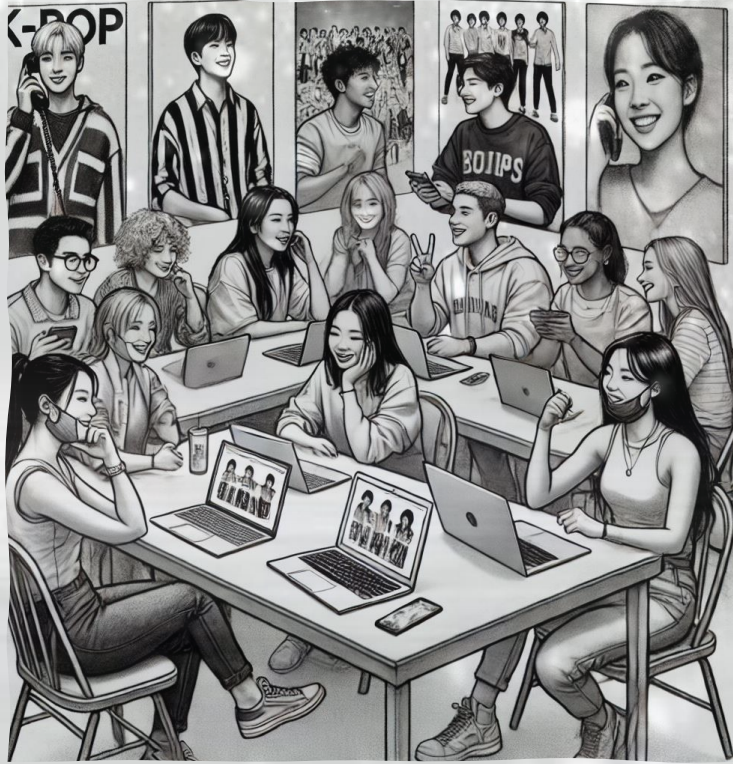
Miss u baby♥

Platforms like **Weverse** and allow idols to interact directly with fans through live streams and personal updates.

Tools like **Bubble For JYPNation** or deliver personalized messages to fans- exclusivity.

Fans can “talk” to their idols through pre-programmed chat systems, mimicking personal relationships.

I miss you too♥



FROM Admirers to Participants

Negotiating Authority

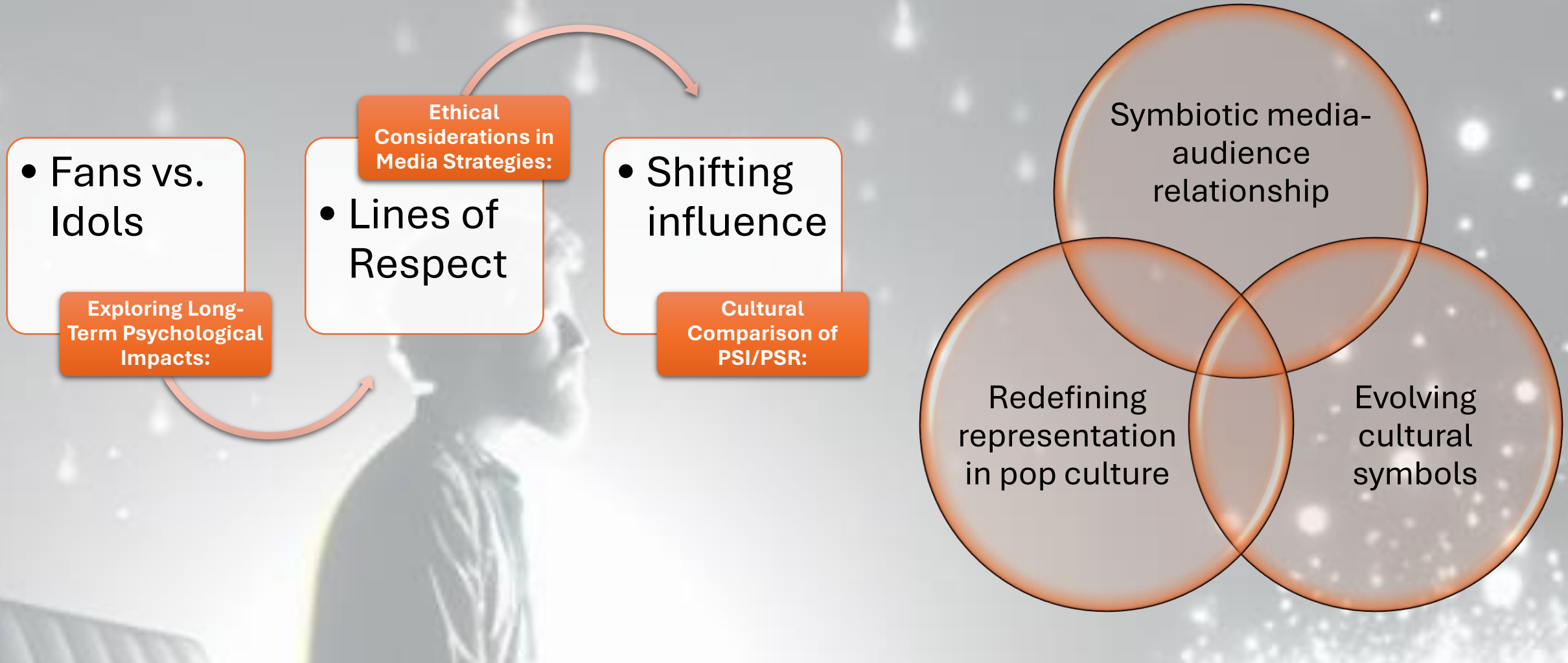
Visual authorship
by fans

Shifting power
dynamics

Cultural narratives
and emotional
investment



Conclusion & Future Research Directions



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Thank you for your attention!



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**Any
Questions?**