

**Living in a hamster wheel: Identity construction through hopes and terrors in
Bong Joon-Ho's *Parasite***

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Abstract

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Bong Joon-Ho's *Parasite* (2019) has successfully depicted universal issues regarding class identity and social mobility. It tells us a story about a lower-class family, the Kims who aspired and struggled in their journey of climbing the social ladder. This research aims to explore the process of identity construction of the Kims. Close textual analysis is employed as a tool for investigation and Althusser's ideological interpellation is used to explain the process. The research also focuses on the socio-cultural factors that influence the Kims' social mobility which contribute to the permanence of their class identity. The findings found out that many symbolic markers such as differences in property, neighborhood, education, diet and behavior distinguish the lower- and upper-class families. Thus, interpellation occurs when the family is lured into believing the 'American dream': by working hard enough and taking more risks, it is possible to climb up the social hierarchy. It constructs their identity as a lower-class with aspirations to move upward. This study also concludes that the persistence of social immobility is highly influenced by the level of education, perceptual discrimination, the impossibility of cross-class marriage and the economic inequality. Therefore, it proves that class identity can be unfavorable inheritance.

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INTRODUCTION

The formation of social identity is influenced by many factors, primarily social groups such as sex, race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, social class and so forth. Social class, especially, has been the subject of interest of social theorists for centuries since it permeates the society from macro to micro level (Kraus et al., 2011). It suffuses our daily life and differentiates one to another in various elements of our lives: our schools, neighborhood, property, diets, forms of recreation, even fashion and music preferences. Generally speaking, the concept of 'social class' is signaled by economic and material resources,

income, education and occupation (Domhoff, 1967 as cited in Aries & Seider, 2007; Eidlin, 2014; Kraus et al., 2011). Nonetheless, further research illustrates that the operation of social class as an identity is more than about one's socioeconomic status, educational or occupational background. It is also related to individual's feelings about themselves and others. The fact that class identity has become a powerful predictor of important life outcomes is undeniable (Webb, 2014). Hence, for some it may be a privilege, whereas for others it may be a burden. For instance, whilst lower-class societies still struggle to meet their basic needs, the upper-class do not have to worry about their

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everyday commodities as they even have better access to education and healthcare.

Through his Oscar-winning movie, *Parasite* (2019), director Bong Joon-Ho has successfully drawn a large amount of attention by bringing up the issues of social mobility and identities construction that are also happening in this real world of growing inequalities. The contrasting representation of different identities based on social classes of the families in South Korea is brilliantly demonstrated in this engaging comedy-thriller movie. *Parasite* tells a story about the lower-class Kim family, an unemployed bunch who aspires to have more comfortable life by penetrating into the upper-class Park family as workers. Kim Ki-Woo, the eldest son of Kim family is the first to enter the house through a friend's recommendation. Ki-Woo has to fake his educational background and create an English name (Kevin) so that he can work as an English tutor for the daughter of Park family. The Kim family recommends one another as unrelated and highly qualified workers: Ki-Jung, fakes her identity as Jessica and works as an Art Therapist of the Park's young son, Mr. Kim replaces Mr. Park's driver who is previously framed by Jessica and Mrs. Kim takes over the long-time housekeeper, Moon-Gwang, who is also framed by them. A rainstorm is the symbol that marks the peak of the conflicts. When the Kims are enjoying their moment in the huge modern house of the Parks' who are away for camping, the Kims figure out a shocking truth that the previous housekeeper, Moon-Gwang, secretly hides his husband, Geun-Se, in the basement of the big house for years. The tragic intra-class conflict becomes undeniable. They threaten each other to maintain their positions. Then, the most thrilling moment occurs when the Parks cancel their plan due to the rainstorm and come home. Hiding under the table, Mr. Kim accidentally hears a discriminated comment from Mr. Park about his smell (the smell of those who ride the subway) that seeps to the back of the Mercedes Benz. It leaves a deep mark and a burning feeling of resentment which later drives Mr. Kim to commit a gruesome act. In the end, greed and class discrimination end their

mutualistic relationship for good and they become parasites to each other. It is clear that Bong Joon-Ho has intelligently combined two conflicting elements, such as the ambition of the Kims to have a better quality of life as a hint of hope and their struggles in the social mobility which are the terrors related to the construction of class identity.

The major reason Bong Joon-Ho's *Parasite* is worth to be analyzed that is because this movie is not merely a source of entertainment, but it also serves as social commentary on the class divisions and inequalities in South Korea (Lee, 2021). Although the setting is in South Korea, the issue presented is universal. At first, it seemed that the filmmakers aim to address the typical American dream, suggesting that even those from the lowest class with low socio-economic status are capable of being successful if they try hard enough. Nonetheless, the ending of the movie shows the audience otherwise. The journey of the lower-class family in climbing the social ladder in *Parasite* has been depicted in the mixture of hopes and terrors. While the Kims put endless efforts and enjoy the benefits that follow, they also have to battle against various factors that hinder their upward movement in the social hierarchy. Apart from that, *Parasite* suggests a realistic ending, which is, everything ends from where it starts. The Kim family remains at the bottom, and even below, in their semi-basement house without any certainty of moving upward – it is like living in the hamster wheel, as the director also describes class identity as permanent. Undoubtedly, this masterpiece raises a lot of interesting questions regarding the class identity.

Due to its internationally recognized quality, *Parasite* has been an enticing object of research in numerous fields. A discursive study by Gabilondo (2020) explored the power relation between the working class and the neoliberal elite, as projected in the movie. At the same time, the study also provided a new insight of how the film articulates a global neoliberal fantasy in geopolitical terms through nostalgia and resentment. Another study on *Parasite* was done by Ridgeway-Diaz et al. (2020) from a psychological perspective. It focused on the intrapsychic defense

and the potential damage of repression when left unexamined. In the field of business and media, Lee (2021) also studied on how *Parasite* acts as cultural diplomacy by contributing to the nation branding of South Korea.

Although *Parasite* has been the object material of various studies, none of them focuses on the study of identity construction. Generally, identity construction is both symbolic and social in which the way we distinguish one identity from another is through the marking of differences (Garcia, 2018; Woodward, 1997). *Parasite* cleverly projects how the differences in the class identities are marked out through even the smallest symbols, and through the perceptions of others. Those elements lead to the process called interpellation.

Several articles related to Althusser's interpellation were gathered and reviewed to support this research. A study by Sadjadi & Ahmadi (2017) critically investigated a Persian novel titled *Her Eyes* by Bozorg Alavi and found out the ways the individuals are transformed into subjects through Althusser's interpellation. Since ideology is conceived as systems of representation, a set of discourses, opinions and images surrounding the condition of our lives, Althusser developed the notion of interpellation, in which ideology hails concrete individuals as concrete subjects. By the time the individuals are exposed to an ideology and behave as it requires, they are altered to the subjects of that ideology (Althusser, 1970 as cited in Sadjadi & Ahmadi, 2017). It is further explained that the capitalist societies make use of the interpellation process with the aim to maintain and reinforce their domination over the public. Sadjadi & Ahmadi's research found that the main character in the Persian novel was interpellated by an ideology that appeared to her as natural.

The contribution of the unconscious processes of embedding ideology to the construction of identities can be explained by Avenburg (2012). The study examined the process of identity construction through musical experience, which was supported by Althusser's ideological interpellation. Since ideology forms a material manifestation, through language and

behavior, in the rituals of apparatuses, institutions or organizations, it creates an allusion to the categorization. In the study it was shown that a cultural expression such as music that is socially and historically shaped by certain ideological chains may interpellate the subjects to constitute identities as members of certain collectives. These subjects proceed from interpellation by practicing the rituals of recognition. Although the process involves recognition and acceptance from the subjects, which at any time might fail, interpellation is effective in a way that its ideology saturates the imaginary relationship of the subject that believes in it (Altunsoy et al., 2019; Avenburg, 2012; Stocchetti, 2019). It involves the mechanism of introducing the role of ideology in the social construction of reality and the self, also the individuals' confirmation to the ideological 'reality' by narrowing down their imaginary relationship within the symbolic limits of the ideological universe. Study by Avenburg (2012) showed that music acts as the apparatus of interpellation which then creates a shared sense of belonging, thus constructs collective identities.

Similar to those studies mentioned above, the construction of identity of the Kim can be observed based on Althusser's ideological interpellation. Therefore, this paper aims to examine the process of identity construction through hopes and terrors that are experienced by the majority in South Korea depicted as 'the Kim Family' in the movie. In order to do so, it is necessary to point out the differences between the two social classes. These contrasts influence the lower-class family to have stronger aspirations to move upward in the social hierarchy and also contribute to the process of interpellation which later leads to the construction of identity. Apart from that, this research will also elaborate the factors contributed to the struggles experienced by the lower-class to be socially mobile, especially in socio-cultural context, which then explains the permanence of class identity.

METHODS

This study of class identity construction which is related to social mobility was conducted based on a qualitative descriptive approach since it also explores some socio-cultural aspects. To collect primary data, I employed close reading and in-depth content analysis of Bong Joon-Ho's film entitled *Parasite*. Secondary data was retrieved through an extensive reading of related books, journal articles and online articles that reflect the social classes and social mobility in South Korea. The main object observed in this study is the Kim family and their narrative in the film as the representative of the society with lower socioeconomic status.

The qualitative approach involves the process of decontextualization, comparison, interpretation and compilation, therefore the outcome of this study is rather interpretive but fully well established. To support the findings, Althusser's theory of interpellation as cited in Lacassagne et al., (2011) was applied as a means of explaining the construction of identity. Marxist theory and the ideology of neoliberalism were also included in order to reveal the struggles in social mobility of the lower-class which serve as the reality in South Korea.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Constructing Identity through Hopes and Terrors

The conceptualization of identity involves looking at classificatory system (Woodward, 1997, p. 9) which shows how social relations are divided: in this case, the 'poor' and the 'rich'. In *Parasite*, the classification is done dramatically by including every element in the characters' daily life: their houses, neighborhoods, education, diets and even behavior. Whilst the lower-class family lived in the semi-basement house which was exposed by very little sunlight and was located in a shabby neighborhood, the upper-class family got to enjoy a huge comfortable modernistic house, which received generous amount of sunlight through its giant luxurious windows. In terms of education, the Kim family could not afford higher education for Ki-Woo and Ki-Jung, whereas the Parks were able to hire a personal tutor and an art therapist

whom they might not need. Apart from that, the food the upper-class family consumed in the movie has gained numerous responses from the audiences, which is thought to be a genius way to distinguish both classes. The Kims had to be satisfied with a loaf of white bread without jam as lunch, whereas the Parks enjoyed premium Korean beef in their instant noodles as supper.

Additionally, the differences can also be observed through the behaviors. In contrast to the Park family who acted based on their personal preferences and treated their employees as disposable and fungible means in an implicit way, the Kims were rather limited in self-expression and self-control mostly due to the culture-specific selves and patterns of thinking, feeling and acting influenced by the social class itself. According to Manstead (2018) those who grow up in low-income, working class environment are usually restricted in materials and opportunities for choice and control, therefore this condition affects the behavior.

These obvious discrepancies of the two social classes create a notion of being privilege and under-privilege. As it was mentioned earlier, social class standing predicts important life outcomes. Lower socioeconomic status more likely results in the poorer academic and occupational outcomes, greater occurrence of medical and psychological disorders and higher morbidity and mortality rates (Webb, 2014), whereas higher socioeconomic status opens more chances of better life outcomes. The Kim family experienced the inequalities that happened to most of the society in South Korea and soon it became the pre-given material that affected the process of interpellation. According to Althusser (1977) as cited in Lacassagne et al., (2011), interpellation occurs when those who are subordinated by the prevalent economic and political system accept the belief as "common sense" and "natural". In *Parasite*, the Kims were convinced that being rich was their only way to gain power and be saved from the misery.

In the movie, the very first process of interpellation happened when a wealthy friend of Ki-Woo's, Min-Hyuk, paid a visit and showed that his socioeconomic status influenced his

educational achievement, as consequences, he could get a job as a tutor of an elite family and afford to continue his study overseas. Besides, Ki-Woo also witnessed how Min-Hyuk was so different from him, especially in terms of behaviors. Min was much more confident and more expressive than Ki-Woo. His sister, Ki-Jung even commented, “You should be like Min. He is much cooler than you” (Bong, 2019). This living proof then led the family to have a strong aspiration to climb the social ladder, although it meant that they had to commit forgery and created fake identities in order to get decent jobs. The amount of effort they put in order to be socially upward is insanely huge. Ki-Woo had to disguise himself as a graduate from a prestigious university overseas. Not only that he changed the way he dressed, but also the way he talked and behaved. Ki-Woo created an English name, Kevin, to adjust with the upper-class culture. As it can be observed from the movie, the Parks constantly mixed Korean and English in their daily conversation as English has somehow been regarded as another marker in the social class. Since the early years of Korean modernization, English has been recognized as a means of being ‘new power elite’.

“Even office workers tend to take the equation: English is equal to their social promotion or success. Some upper-class people are building an ‘English-class society’ by forming their own exclusive circles with English as a status symbol.” (Kim, 2015, p. 1).

The effort of the Kim family in dominating the house as the workers was remarkable. They cunningly framed the former employees and fooled the Parks. The Kims held their hopes high because they thought that their acts of deceiving the Parks and working for the elite family were the first normal steps of moving upward in the social hierarchy. *Parasite* clearly depicts Marxist theory, where the Parks were placed at the top of capitalism wheel as the bourgeoisie, whereas the Kims, the proletariat were interpellated to sell their labor power in exchange for wage. A form of consciousness later shared by the bourgeoisie and the proletariat: It is natural and legitimate for the bourgeoisie to control and exploit the working class since the wage they receive creates the notion of

‘justice’ (Das, 2017). When they received their salary for the first time, they celebrated it by eating buffet at the drivers’ cafeteria, in which they had never been able to afford before. Also, they had slight changes in their behaviors, as they were more confident and outspoken, proven by how they confronted the drunk man who always urinated in front of their house, whereas in the past, they would ignore and bear with the condition. The temporary change of the situation, which they think was a form of justice, made them believe and chase ‘the American dream’.

The term “American Dream” was first coined by James Truslow Adams in his book *The Epic of America* in 1931. It was depicted that America is a land of equality and resources for everyone (Kasiyarno, 2014). The key value of American dream is basically ‘hope of success and victory’ and understood as an aspiration to have success, fame and wealth through hard work and thrift. This mindset has been developed as a specific culture and identity of Americans, the main reason of the birth of the United States of America as a world superpower. It is also associated with the values of democracy, personal freedom and upward mobility. According to Kasiyarno (2014), the American dream has been expanded around the world through cultural globalization, enforcing the poor and developing countries to undergo the process of Americanization. It is also claimed that no matter how poor the people are, their life and identities can be reinvented in an American way, as the result of admiration which is continuously injected by the American dream. Luxuries, heroism, freedom and so forth are the goods sold in the dream. A fantasy to be the creature that represents the American dream has been infused into the minds of people all over the world. This ideology contributes to the aspirations of the Kim family as it created a notion that if they worked hard enough, they could own their home on the hills someday, just like the Parks’ residence, or even the very same house itself. The Kims were lured by the luxury they could enjoy if they succeeded to have higher income and move to the top of the social ladder. There was a moment when they became greedy and stole the chance to

experience the big house. They pretended to be the owners of the residence when the Parks were away. Ki-Woo even daydreamed to marry the Park's daughter so that the Kim family would take over the huge house someday.

The Kim family believed that being poor was a burden and being rich was a privilege. It was proven by the conversation they shared when they were enjoying their time in the Parks' residence. Mr. Kim began with the statement, "Mrs. Park is rich, but she is still nice." It was later replied by his wife, "No. It is another way around. She is nice because she is rich," (Bong, 2019) which was agreed by all family members. As it can be observed, the Kim family had formed a new mindset in which they thought that all the other great virtues would follow if they became wealthy. This interpellation led to the formation of a new perception of their own identity. Hence, it resulted in their identity construction as a lower-class family with an aspiration to climb to the upper-class.

Apart from that, the terrors they experienced also contributed to the interpellation process. The second half of the movie focuses on the competition between the two lower-class families. When the Kims figured out that Geun-Se lived miserably in the basement of the luxurious house, they were determined not to have a life like his. Later in the movie, the underground couple figured out that the Kims had been fooling the Park family and Moon-Gwang had to lose her job as a consequence. Thus, when both families had to fight for their survival by taking each other down, it ended up as tragic brutality. Their desire to maintain their position in the house, so that they would not go back to their depressing life, had driven them to do whatever they could. Their rejection to the idea of staying at the bottom of the social ladder, followed by unhealthy competition and violence, interpellated them to keep moving upward, although they had to put their humaneness aside.

Struggles in Social Mobility

In the social and economic context, changing one's class identity is strongly related to

the concept of social mobility. According to Aldridge (2003) as cited in Nunn et al. (2007), "Social mobility is the movement or opportunities for movement between different social classes or occupational groups." The studies of social mobility also tend to show that there is a strong connection between the social positions of parents and those that their children subsequently occupy. For instance, those parents who own properties and assets are more likely to pass down financial security to their children, whereas the less fortunate children have to work harder with no certainty that they will reach a higher socio-economic status in their lifetime, just like what happened to the Kims in *Parasite*. A study by Lee & Kim (2012) points that positive views about upward social mobility in Korea are decreasing, as more people feel that inequality could widen in the coming years, results in limited opportunities for success. At the first glance, the ending of *Parasite* might be ambiguous as it leaves the audience the choices to read it either in a hopeful or hopeless way. Nonetheless, if we take a closer look, it is obvious that the director suggests the latter, as the last scene presented is the view of their semi-basement house. Their identity as the lower-class remains the same across the time no matter how much effort they make.

In this section, the struggles of the Kims in achieving their goals will be discussed further. Since social mobility concept is complex and multifaceted (Nunn et al., 2007), the factors influencing social mobility work in overlapping ways for different individuals, thus it is slightly inappropriate to make solid judgment that one is more important than the others. Nonetheless, in *Parasite*, it can be observed that there are three main elements that cause the Kims to stay stagnant at the bottom of the social ladder. These include their level of education, South Korean socio-cultural system which is the source of the terror, in the form of microaggression, and also income inequality.

Firstly, it cannot be denied that education is the primary pathway to achieve upward social mobility (Webb, 2014). Those with better education attainment have greater chance to achieve higher and more powerful occupational

position with higher income, which will move one's status towards the social class of destination. Although the probability for upward mobility is not significant, education provides some possibility of success for talented students of the lower classes (Shin, 2013), for example, through academic and merit scholarships. Nonetheless, the chances are extremely limited as competition over admission and scholarships into universities are exceptionally fierce, underscoring Korea's reputation for having one of the most merciless education systems in the world (Mani, 2019). Apart from that, it is such an irony that education attainment itself is strongly linked to social class origins. In *Parasite*, Ki-Woo was shown to have failed his college entrance for four times. However, it should be noted that he had the ability and knowledge to tutor an elite high school student. Min-Hyuk even mentioned that Ki-Woo was more capable than any other friend he knew in his campus, that was why he recommended Ki-Woo for the job. Therefore, Ki-Woo's failure in getting proper higher education can be assumed to be a product of structural factors such as differences in access to material resources, academic resources as well as non-financial social assets such as network, cultural knowledge and values. Webb (2014) also argues that upper-class students who get used to the institutional demographic profile and culture, experience fewer motivational barriers and less psychological burden in their academic attainment, whereas the lower-class students might find difficulties in adapting. Although in the end of the movie Ki-Woo seemed to be so determined to study hard, the structural factors mentioned above lead to his very slim chance of getting into a university. Therefore, he had lost the most feasible indicator to move upward the social ladder.

Secondly, socio-cultural system plays a role in limiting the social mobility. In the movie, Ki-Woo expressed his dream of marrying the rich family's daughter not long after they started dating. For a short moment, the Kim family was drowned into their own fantasy of having a rich daughter-in-

law which was an express way to become at the top of the social ladder. Nonetheless, the audience could truly grasp an understanding that the dream could never be made possible, because of the rigid social system in South Korea. The country is still influenced by its traditional past, in which the *yangban*¹ culture continues as the norm for the appropriate behavior (Robinson, 1994). It means that the marriage partner should match one's social, economic and educational backgrounds in order to be accepted. Deviating from this norm means that one is both less proper and less Korean. Thus, it was impossible for the Kims to change their class identities through marriage.

Another socio-cultural factor that needs to be taken into account is the occurrence of discrimination. In *Parasite*, the act of discrimination observed through Mr. Park's comment about Mr. Kim's smell and the face of disgust he made at Geun-Se's smell had created moral injury for Mr. Kim. This odor discrimination was primarily the reason why he stabbed and killed Mr. Park. Not only that, according to United Nations (2020), the presence and persistence of sociocultural biases and discrimination attitudes and practices can also produce feelings of disempowerment, hopelessness and despair for the future. This argument is supported by a scene in *Parasite*. Right after Mr. Kim heard the discriminative comment after he barely survived from the rainstorm and flood, he realized that he could not become more than a powerless lower-class employee. Desperately, he told his son, "Ki Woo, do you know what kind of plan never fails? No plan at all. With no plan, nothing could go wrong. Even if it goes wrong, it does not matter." (Bong, 2019). This heartbreaking scene describes vulnerability. It is surprising that such single comment related to perceptual discrimination could destroy one's hope. Additionally, still in relation to discrimination and bias, a study by Hays (2012) suggests that generally high-status members are given more opportunities to perform and are evaluated more positively than

¹The *Yangban* were the civil or military elites. Traditional Korea was based on both native Korean and Buddhist-Confucian values that allowed only limited social mobility. *Yangban* was

one of the five social classes which was just one class below the royalty. They are known to be the ruling-class.

low-status members. It shows that the biased perceptions of others might definitely limit the mobility rate.

Microaggression also has direct impact to the psychological state of Ki-Woo. As it is shown by the movie, Ki-Woo constantly felt that he did not belong to the rich setting, especially after he heard Mr. Park's discriminative comment. He constantly contemplated his actions to climb the ladder, because he sensed something wrong. There is also another scene when Ki-Woo asked the daughter of the Parks whom he dated, "Do I fit there?" (Bong, 2019) while pointing at the elite families who gathered for a birthday surprise at the Parks' yard. Ki-Woo's feeling about himself, his family and the others confirmed the Marxian framework which suggests that class identity is intimately tied to the development of a shared sense of belonging to a given class (Eidlin, 2014). Therefore, no matter how hard they tried to move upward in their life, they still felt the sense of belonging to the lower-class. Moreover, the likelihood of Ki-Woo experiencing bias and discrimination along his journey to free his father from the basement was also extremely high, especially because he now suffered from brain injury and had a criminal record of forgery. This circumstance might or might not scrape away his chance to climb the ladder. It all depends on his capability in enduring the future moral injury.

Thirdly, the last factor that contributes to the social immobility is income inequality. Lim & Jang (2006) argues that there is a systemic transformation in South Korea that has been produced by ongoing neo-liberal reforms. The consequences of the transformation are the increased presence of transnational capital in the economy, an increase in labor flexibility, inequality and poverty. The unfair distribution of resources that involves the reduction of wages and cutting of public expenditure for social services cause the rich to be richer and the poor to be poorer. In all over the world, neo-liberalism has been attacking the rights of labor, thus, under this circumstance, the lower-class society suffer the greatest loss. In the beginning of *Parasite*, the Kim family was shown to struggle with their low-paid

job as pizza box folders. Economic inequality still persists until nowadays. This inequality might also cause the feeling of desperation, making it hard for them to move upward in the social hierarchy, even across generation. This is the reason why the socioeconomic status of parents influences the social standing of their kids. People with property and more money are able to equip their kids with a multiple-step head start that could not be easily overcome only by working hard (Lee, 2019). The poor Mr. Kim was unable to pass down any financial resource, not even social or cultural capital to their kids, thus their ambition to change their lower-class identity was not more than an airy hope.

CONCLUSION

In summary, *Parasite* has successfully represented the contrast of two different social classes in South Korea by providing various symbolic markers such as the differences in property, neighborhood, education, diets and behaviors of the upper-class and lower-class families. These differences contribute to the interpellation process. The lower-class family is lured by the notion that the upper-class society is more privileged, particularly in opportunities, and if they work hard enough, they can finally meet their goal to arrive at their social class of destination, thus they must give their best effort to climb the social ladder. Interpellation of the 'American dream' ideology constructs their identity as a lower-class who would do anything to move upward. Nonetheless, along the way, they have to face their own greed and perceptual discrimination by others which then drag them down to where they start. Education, socio-cultural system and income inequality are assumed to be the three main indicators of their social immobility. Limited chances of the lower-class society and strict educational standard in South Korea contribute to the failure to get higher education. Socio-cultural factors such as the impossibility of cross-class marriage as well as bias and discrimination from others restrict the lower-class society to move upward the social hierarchy.

Last but not least, although the higher levels of income inequality might drive people to work even harder, it might also limit the opportunities of the lower-class to move upward. Social class is indeed cyclical as it moves from one generation to the next. In the end, it is a strong proof that the journey in climbing the social ladder is like living in the hamster wheel. The truth is, it is very unlikely for a person to change his or her class identity.

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