Article

Skeuomorphic Domestic Television's Analog Divide: Television and Social Stratification in Singapore

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Abstract

Through the ethnographic survey of the ownership, use, and display of television-related devices of forty households in Singapore, this article frames the concept of Skeuomorphic Domestic Television. This term describes the continued centrality of the traditional "living room television" amid digital media's portability. Results from the stocktaking of the ownership of television-related devices in the surveyed households point to the narrowing of the digital divide arising from the greater affordability of media technologies. However, within the highly densely populated city-state, it was found that social distinctions from television cultures were maintained in the skeuomorphic luxury of the "TV-Sofa space" in living rooms of surveyed households. Such a space that distinguishes individuals watching television in cluttered rooms against the more communal viewing practices in designated spacious living rooms characterizes the "Analog Spatial Divide" of skeuomorphic domestic television cultures.

Keywords

Skeuomorphic Domestic Television, TV-sofa space, analog spatial divide, Singapore

Introduction: The Space and Place of Television

Madam Ask (pseudonym), a Singaporean single mother in her forties, lives together with her three children, aged between eight and twenty-one years in a modestly furnished two-room Housing & Development Board (HDB) public housing apartment.

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As the sole caregiver to her youngest son from a previous relationship, Ask can only take on casual work and is reliant on community and public welfare assistance in her highly subsidized rental flat. Not only does Ask belong to the Malay-Muslim ethnic minority in Singapore, she is also part of a low-income household with a monthly income of less than SGD1,500 (US$1,300). Ask's personal financial prudence as well as the greater affordability of media devices has helped to reduce the digital divide between her household and those from middle- and upper-income families. During the authors' observational visits, Ask watched the "main television" on her own, as her children were either absent from home or viewing programs on their own mobile devices in the makeshift partitioned bedroom. However, as this research survey will illustrate, her viewing habits can be contrasted to both the idealized images, and the actual practices of wealthier families watching television communally and comfortably in their spacious living rooms.

    This study will refer to the area surrounding the television set, its related devices, and its viewers' seats as the "TV-Sofa space." It frames the materiality of the specific domain governing the material cultures around television viewing arrangements and habits (T. Miller 1988). Although it appears to be technologically vestigial, the authors argue that this domain, once the symbol of the idealized middle-class nuclear family watching television together (Scannell 2009), still persists. Forty households with some two hundred participants were surveyed as a representative sample of the highly connected, technologically advanced city-state of Singapore. These families' sociotechnological trends vis-à-vis Singapore's changing mediascapes and televisual viewing cultures were studied. The findings indicate that the families' increased use of mobile screens for televisual entertainment occurred simultaneously with their continued investment in the living room television set. As will be discussed herein, these findings highlight the changing sociospatial trends of television cultures in Singapore. Borrowing the concept of skeuomorphism, which is the ornamentalization of previously utilitarian functions, this article argues that the living room television cultures continue to exist alongside other more portable media counterparts in the home. This copresence of the television set and other media devices will be framed here as the Skeuomorphic Domestic Television. Identified as the "TV-Sofa space" in the layout of homes marked between the television and sofa sets of living rooms, Skeuomorphic Domestic Television illuminates the analog social divide within the digital age. Such a divide is based not on ownership of material devices per se. Rather, it is the luxury of space that can be set aside for such otherwise vestigial living room televisions cultures (Scannell 2009).

When TV becomes the Patina

With images of comfortably seated parents and children before television sets within prettily furnished living rooms, the small screen has been associated with the modern lifestyles of the urban middle-class nuclear family for decades (Bryce and Leichter 1983; Chambers 2016; Church et al., 2010; Halstead 2009; Holloway and Green 2008; Morley 1992). Deviations from these idealized images are often associated with

dysfunctional households of absent parents and unsupervised children (Davis et al. 2004; de Mediros et al. 2009; Livingstone 2009; Zoeller 2009). However, increased individualization in the deregulated media environment of Internet TV and smart-phones has resulted in the television industry struggling to sustain television's communality in the midst of a more fragmented audience base (Dawson 2007; D'heer and Courtois 2016; Groening 2010; Hollows 2000; Leal and Oliven 1988; F. Lee 2010). In light of the televisual evolution from the analog era of Paleo-TV to the cable and early digital formats of Neo-TV, and thence to the Hyper-TV of the Internet (Scolari 2009), the living room may no longer be primary to the television experience. In this respect, the changing practices along evolving media imageries are characterized by four broad overlapping chronological shifts: traditional domestic, mobile domestic, home-working domestic, and cosmopolitan domestic (Chambers 2016, 171–74). The shift to each stage brings greater mobility, convergence and convenience, connectivity, and interactivity to the home.

However, the persistence of the conventional television set amid the plethora of increasingly portable digital devices goes against the conventional narratives of television's linear evolutionary transitions. Assuming its functions have been superseded by mobile and digital technologies, the relevance of the television set and the domestic arrangements around it would take on more "cultural," vestigial, and ornamental significance. To explain the continued centrality of the living room television set amid digital media's prominence in daily life, the authors have adapted Chambers's (2016) chronological shifts in television domesticity and proposed the concept of Skeuomorphic Domestic Television to look beyond technologically deterministic trajectories in television cultures.

Skeuomorphism, derived from the Greek words *skeuos* (implement) and *morphe* (form), was coined by Henry Colley March (1889) to describe the ornamentalization of previously utilitarian functions of tools into decorative purposes. As an evolutionary process, skeuomorphism reveals the intersections between the utilitarian and representational attributes and processes in technological changes (Blitz 2015; Frieman 2010), as well as the simultaneity of familiarity (pastness) and novelty (futurity) in technologies (Fleming and Brown 2015, 84). As symbolic icons like the material shapes of the envelope for e-mails, diskette for saving online documents, and trash bin for deleted data, contemporary skeuomorphs help with technological transitions in computerization and digitalization by bridging past values to new practices (Blitz 2015). Their ornamental designs serve as nonfunctional luxuries like faux-installations in architecture that aim to convey the affordances of traditional craftsmanship. The same skeuomorphic practice applies to the continued placement of the television set in the living room in the era of the multiscreens.

Thus, Skeuomorphic Domestic Television entails the evolution of the domestic household's media ecology, as it encompasses both technological and intangible socio-cultural dynamics. To better understand the social structure in households where television sets continue to be present, we must first consider the notions of distinction and class stratification by habitus in the "stylization of life" for the bourgeois, and the cultural relationality dividing those freed from urgency and the working classes who are

"submitting to necessity" (Bourdieu 1984, 376–78). Technology in the habitus is "embodied in lived practice" so much so that "even the basic 'phenomenological' aspects of technological practice and experience are themselves parts of the habitus" (Sterne 2003, 385).

Here, Bourdieu provides two pictorial illustrations to underscore these variations—an elegantly furnished and spacious living room with a formally attired man seated at leisure (Bourdieu 1984, 313) and a tighter shot of three women engaged in domestic chores and hairstyling in front of a television set in a cramped living room (Bourdieu 1984, 377). The caption for the former reads, "The objects are not there to fulfil a technical or even aesthetic function, but quite simply to symbolize that function and to solemnize it by their age, to which their patina bear witness" (Bourdieu 1984, 313).[1] The latter picture is not captioned; instead, it is discussed within the context of pragmatic working-class women economizing on resources and making "realistic choices" (Bourdieu 1984, 378–79). These variations of aesthetics and necessities in lifestyles critically reflect power relations, locations, and the classification of social identities (Veenstra 2005). The functionality of the television set may not fall within Bourdieu's taste culture, but different re-elaborations and re-mediations of this otherwise single-mass produced cultural product are possible. In the case of the television set, its placement within the home highlights its significance in the larger "place of things" (Leal 1990, 20–21). This contrast between the functional and the ornamentalized helps in framing the concept of Skeuomorphic Domestic Television as the contemporary Singapore household's techno-patina.

To mark the social distinctions of the Skeuomorphic Domestic Television cultures, the authors intend to frame the discourse of techno-patina along the three interrelated dimensions of technological domesticity, family communality, and social identification. The television set mitigates the disruptive entries of new media devices into the home by serving as a vestigial arrangement within technological domesticity (Silverstone 1994). Linked to this factor is the sustained communal role of television in bringing families together within the home. Social differences and identities within the domestic environment can be distinguished through the examination of each household's investment in the vestigial TV-Sofa space within the living room.

Further concretizing Bourdieu's order of everyday life where even the mundane placement of objects is homologous with social hierarchies, D. Miller (2005) underscores the materiality of such objects in patterning social relations. Material cultures are strongest when people are least aware of their presence. Hence, objects are important not because they are evident, but because we often do not "see" them (D. Miller 2005, 5). Given the narrowing of the digital divide by the rapid affordability of media technologies, material ownership may no longer define technologically based social stratifications in industrialized societies like Singapore. Instead, the concept of Skeuomorphic Domestic Television uses the householder's ability to maintain the more amorphous TV-Sofa space to delineate the analog divide between the haves who can afford family TV time in comfortable living room settings, and the have-nots in more physically cramped and socially atomized environments. This will be evident in the case study of Singaporean households' television culture in the following sections.

Electronic and Social Circuits: Background to Television in Singapore

Domesticity has been central to the study of modern television in the spatiality of the modern household, as represented by the "phantasmagoria of the interior" (Benjamin [1939] 1999, 19) separating the modern private citizen's home life from work. Nonetheless, shaped by broader national and global trends, the domestic sphere also reflects public discourse with television intimately reconfigured as part of tele-technological family life (Silverstone 1994). However, within the discussions on the domestication of television and media imaginaries (Chambers 2016), little has been written on the state's role in shaping such cultural patterns and representations. Here, the highly interventionist nature of the Singapore state offers a useful case study. Scholarly accounts on Singapore media and society predominately focus on the public arena, specifically, the regulatory aspects of public spaces, as well as media networks and content (Appold and Yuen 2007; C. Lee 2015; Mele 2017; P. Teo and Chiu 2016). However, less has been written on the extent to which the statist macro-political economy and mediascapes are reproduced in domestic living spaces.

Since its introduction into Singaporean households in the 1960s, the television set and its attendant material culture have been the most interminable indicator of socioeconomic progress in the republic's official statistics. Television ownership for households jumped from 50 percent in the 1970s to almost 100 percent in the late 1990s (Department of Statistics Singapore 2012, 6). Approximately 353 out of every thousand people owned television sets in 2018 (Statista 2018), and a similar trend toward full ownership is evident in other domestic media devices (Department of Statistics Singapore 2017, 25). The two reasons for this surge toward universal ownership of media devices and subscription are rising income levels of an average of SGD8,846 a month per household with an estimated 3.8 percent increase per annum in 2016 (Department of Statistics Singapore 2017, 5) from SGD6,179 a month in 2002, and the possible lowering cost of electronic consumer durables. Official household expenditure figures for communication items in 2013 increased from SGD172 in 2002 to SGD217, but the overall proportion of total spending fell from 4.5 percent to 3.8 percent (Department of Statistics Singapore 2013, 5).

These data are more important than wealth indicators because they are often set with the intention to maintain the social fabric of that which the state construes and normalizes as the domestic family unit. Departing from the relatively laissez-faire approaches of their predecessors, the interventionist postcolonial People's Action Party (PAP), which took office in 1959, sought to establish a more settled, modern, middle-class nuclear family as integral to the project of nation-building. Through the abolition of polygamy under the Women's Charter, active birth control measures to discourage large families, and extensive public housing provisions designed for smaller households of young families, the modern nuclear family emerged (Y. Teo 2010). These administrative policies and the traditionalization of the concept of the "family" encapsulated the communitarian ideology of "Asian Values," and together, they stood in deliberate contrast to "Western liberalism" (Chua 1995). The hand of the

contemporary Singapore state in the formation of family identities is constantly visible through the repeated displays of idealized images of contented middle-class families within well-equipped domestic tele-environments (Ministry of Culture 1988, 2).

State policies in raising educational standards and lifestyle and cultural changes in a rapidly modernizing Singapore have probably created the rising levels of divorce as well as childless couples and single-parent households (Goy 2015). With the conventional middle-class nuclear family falling from 56 percent in 2000 to 49 percent in 2014, the official tone is one of concern rather than recognition (Philomin 2015a, 2015b) With about 80 percent of Singaporean households residing in public housing apartments, the state's social provision of property has helped to mitigate social and economic inequalities over the decades. Here, Singapore's material class distinctions are evident not just between public housing and those residing in privately owned condominiums and "landed" (ground) houses. Within the category of public housing, there are price differentiations in apartments based on number of rooms, location and age, as well as owned and rented apartments (HDB 2018; Wong and Yap 2003). Official statistics indicate the population's gravitation toward larger public apartment units across the board, with two-generation modern nuclear families dominating the mainstream at 50 percent or an estimated 590,000 of residents (Ministry of Social and Family Development 2015, 19). Upward shifts are noted in single/divorced parent households, and the official ethnic Malay-Muslim and Indian minorities, as well as an increased number of households from these groups are moving to larger units (HDB 2014, 23). Here, the contemporary Singapore state is central in reproducing Lefebvre's three dialectically interconnected dimensions of the instrumentally "conceived" representation of spaces, and the daily patterns of imagined "perceived" and "lived" representational spaces (Chambers 2016, 10–11; Lefebvre 1974). In this respect, the domestic arrangement and use of the television set has effectively become symbolic and functional parts of the formative process of the family and public citizenship in Singapore. Hence, as the next section will demonstrate, no critical appreciation of television and public culture can take place without delving into the domestic environments of households.

Methodology: Ethnographic TV-stocktaking

This investigation follows the ethnographic methodologies of surveying television viewing routines developed in earlier studies (Irani et al. 2010; Logan et al. 1995; Lull 1990; Wilson 2016), and includes a stocktaking of household inventories. Semistructured individual and group interviews were conducted with members of households in both public housing and private estates, as part of the larger study on social television funded by the Ministry of Education's Tier-1 grant on Social Television in Singapore. Data and materials within the household setting were captured with a work package comprising three instruments of data collection: domestic census, television stocktaking, and on-site observations.

The domestic census was the first step in obtaining vital demographic statistics such as number of occupants, ethnicity, educational and income level, occupation, and

pastime of households. Individual subjects were queried on the programs they preferred, the amount of time spent watching television either alone or with the family, whether these programs were viewed during the day or night, and whether they watched these programs at home or outside the apartment. With the consent of the participating households, the project team then embarked on television stocktaking.

During the television stocktaking process, devices related to the television set and their locations in the home environment were photographed and documented. As materiality in ordinary designs and objects has been used to theorize the social interactions of television (Chitakunye and Maclaran 2012), television stocktaking enabled the authors to determine the extent to which households allocated "extra media space" to their television sets in their residences. The project team also tried to find out the amount spent by the surveyed households on their television sets and other related devices. The team finally observed the subjects physically for "prime time" hours of at least one weekday and one weekend to ascertain viewing habits and activities while watching television.

The project team attempted to provide a meaningful sample population of households to reflect general television viewing patterns, as well as the subjects' ability to detect potential new television and media trends. In integrating this social television survey into students' group project assignments for two batches of students for the Television Studies module in their Master of Mass Communications program at Nanyang Technological University, the authors sought to find families belonging not just to conventional two-generation nuclear households. Larger three generational households from the middle class and lower income and ethnic minority households were also included in the survey. Each group, comprising four to six students, was tasked with sourcing participating households, stocktaking relevant inventory, and conducting interviews and observations within a ten-week duration. On gaining the consent of the participating households, the stocktaking of media devices was carried out, followed by interviews and observations. All interviewees and participants named in this article have been given pseudonyms to protect their privacy. The Malay-Muslim self-help organization Yayasan Mendaki supported this project by arranging for the authors and their teams to interview four participating households. The authors and their student research assistants conducted the relevant surveys on these four recommended households.

Generally, the student groups' greatest challenges were gaining access to the households' domestic sphere and permission to conduct the stocktaking of devices. Some households were reluctant to allow the research team and students to observe their family members during "prime time" television viewing hours, and did not consent to having their rooms photographed. It was also difficult to determine the costs of the media-related devices, as some subjects could not recall the prices of their purchases and did not keep their receipts. In addition, the subjects' differing perceptions of "TV and related media devices" resulted in contrasting inputs in their inventory lists.

However, the overall process of physically gaining entry into homes for this project has yielded insights into otherwise undetected latent patterns of domestic television cultures. The survey results will be discussed in the next two sections. The first

segment covers the narrowed digital divide arising from the households' ownership of more affordable media devices. The second segment focuses on the spatial layout of the households, and the spaces accorded to maintaining the traditional centrality of the living room television.

Multiscreens and Bridging the Digital Divide

The sample of the survey allowed the authors to determine the households' differences along varying levels of class and ethnicity. Although the income levels of the five Malay-Muslim households mirrored national patterns in being generally lower than their Chinese counterparts, it should not be seen as representative. The survey shows that every household had basic ownership of at least a television set and additional media devices like computers, PC Tablets, and smartphones, allowing family members access to television-related content on the broadcast, cable, and Internet platforms. With the exception of one household of seven people that had an inventory of television-related media devices costing an estimated SGD12,000, the expenditure of participating households ranged between SGD1,500 and SGD5,000 over a four-year period. The latest Smart TV was the main item contributing to these families' overall television-related expenditure. As a Smart TV costs about SGD2,500, this averages at SGD500 per family member in a household of five persons. This widespread ownership of television-related media devices reflects the lowering material cost of devices, as well as the increasing levels of disposable income in Singapore.

The scanned copies of the inventories submitted by two participating households in Figures 1 and 2 can perhaps offer a glimpse into the domestic television cultures in Singapore. Figure 1 was submitted by the Venka family, an Indian middle-class household of three members in a spacious seven-room HDB apartment, showing an estimated SGD4,450 in their declared inventory. Figure 2 was submitted by the Raud family, a Malay-Muslim single-parent household of three members in a three-room apartment; showing an estimated SGD4,589 in their declared inventory. The devices in Figures 1 and 2 were purchased over five years, with Raud's iPhone 6S offered as part of the student discount scheme under the Ministry of Education's corporate package. Although it is difficult to draw comparisons between the two households, both Figures 1 and 2 reflect a comfortable level of ownership of media devices in both families.

Despite the allure of the latest television models and the constant pressure to purchase them, some participants were more restrained in their expenditure and their opinions. One middle-class family in the survey resembled the idealized images of collective family viewing, as the entire household gathered to watch a faulty two-decade-old analog television set in the evenings. This is despite the fact that individual family members owned more advanced media-related devices. During the research team's observational sessions, one of the adults took out her laptop and started doing her own work when the image on the old television screen started to split. The rest of the family, however, continued to put up with the faulty device. Although this case is unusual, it underlines the copresence of analog technologies alongside more technologically advanced devices in the digital age. It tellingly indicates how the aesthetic of

Figure 1. Inventory list of Venka's household.
Note. HDB = Housing & Development Board.

Figure 2. Inventory list of Raud's household.
Note. HDB = Housing & Development Board.

family life and domestic morality can be ideologically embedded in daily consumer household habits and arrangements (Spigel 1992, 11). Despite the affordability of media devices, these respondents demonstrate financial prudence and the deeper (but older) middle-class values of restraint.

However, narrowed, social stratification along televisual cultures still exists among households. This is most evident in the comparison of two Malay-Muslim families, namely, the Shaistar household of four family members (husband, wife, and two adult

daughters) in a five-room apartment, and the Maz household consisting of a single mother and her teenage daughter and adult son in a two-room rented apartment. Shaistar's estimated declared household earning of SGD4,000 is several times more than Maz's SGD1,000. However, the latter's household television-related expenditure in 2007–2015, inclusive of subscription plans and installment payments, amounted to approximately SGD3,000. Whereas, the wealthier Shaistar family spent SGD5,000 within a shorter period of five years, having paid cash for all their purchases upfront.

One Malay-Muslim middle-class family stands out for being the most technologically advanced. This household, comprising a wife Ais, husband Shai, and an infant child, live in a five-room apartment. A cinematic projector is among this family's television-related devices. As the subjects did not provide an inventory list, the actual cost of their projector is unknown. A projector generally costs between SGD300 and SGD1,500. This seems to be the family's biggest investment. This household acknowledged the credit-based purchases of some of its media devices. Claiming that the family's use of installment payment plans was unexceptional because it formed part of the expenditure for the new apartment, Ais stated, "We only got this because we had a lot of things to pay for, like the house. We were quite tight on budget and we couldn't pay one lump sum. But we paid it off as soon as possible." During the interview, Shai also showed the interviewers items like the sound system that were cheaper secondhand items purchased from an online shopping platform and duly paid for in cash. This reflects the household's strategy to optimize its expenditure on electronic items.

Multiple ownership of television sets and media devices seem normalized in the households surveyed. Only one participant, a Chinese woman in her seventies, spoke against this trend, deeming it personally unnecessary:

> In the past, there were few televisions; that's why everyone gathered to watch programs on the few television sets available. Now, every household has a television; each one larger than the other; each one more technologically advanced than the other. (Authors' translation)

Underlying this reservation is the subject's view of media devices as singular, functional instruments fixed within the domestic space of the home. This perception of the television set will be discussed in the next section as the Skeuomorphic Domestic Television.

Skeuomorphic Domestic Television: The Analog Spatial Divide

One common thread across all households surveyed is the designated centrality of the television set as a crucial defining and affirming characteristic of the home environment. Regardless of the type and size of the households, and the extent of ownership of individual media-related devices, a main television set in the living room has become synonymous with familial presence and homeliness within this TV-Sofa space of the Skeuomorphic Domestic Television. From the interior layout of all multiroom public housing apartments, the living room is designed to serve as a central communal

space. Within this demarcation, a substantial portion of the living room is often devoted to the television set and its related accouterments. A typical arrangement in living rooms is as follows: the television set sits on the main cabinet console, the adjoining cabinet compartments house related recording devices and sound systems, and the sofa set is at a deliberate distance away from the cabinet.

From field observations and the images made available by the participating households, it is apparent that the subjects, even those in the smallest apartments, consciously create a living room TV-Sofa space. Only one household surveyed did not have a television set in the living room. The lack of a centrally placed living room television unit in this household, comprising three men (the owner and two tenants), indicates the absence of the need to provide a "family space." Middle-class households will typically also have one prominent television unit in the living room, even though each room of their home is equipped with an individual television set. Wealthier households in the survey use the television set in the living room largely for occasional communal purposes like entertaining visitors and catering to elderly members who are more accustomed to the traditional viewing of scheduled programs on television in the living room. One participating household had a television set in every room that they seldom turn on, as they consciously discourage their young children from watching too much television. In this respect, the television set has become an ornamental part of the living room furniture rather than a functioning media device.

Figure 3 is a compilation of images made available by several participating households from larger families and homes. The generous allocation of televisual space within the different living rooms is evident in the images. The households' flat screen and High Definition Television (HDTV) sets are either mounted on the wall or placed closely against it, and their placement is visibly central to the arrangements of the cabinets and sofa sets. The luxury of space accorded within entire setup separates the viewer from the screen.

Figure 4 superimposes the images of television sets and related devices onto the floor plan of Rekha's multigenerational participant household. The household, comprising five members (two grandparents, two teenage grandchildren, and one adult parent), lives in an apartment with four bedrooms. Rekha's home has three television sets, two laptops, five smartphones, and a PC Tablet. As seen in Figure 5, the televisual space of the living room appears congested due to the large L-shaped sofa arranged against the cupboard close to a wall-mounted flat screen television set.

Ais and Shai's household, however, deviates from the norm as they had a projector system in the living room of their five-room HDB apartment. The layout of their household's living room in Figure 6 shows the projector's prominent placement in front of two individual armchairs and a spare sofa set. This "home cinema" setup occupies almost half the living room and is meant to further economize the TV-Sofa space. In this respect, the layout demonstrates the flexibility sought by the couple in catering to different viewing arrangements; it is one that fits both individual privacy and family viewing when possible and integrates the cinema experience into the domestic environment.
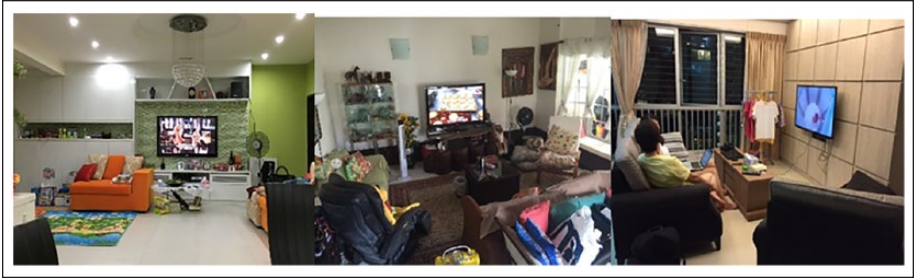
Figure 3. Sample of participating households' living rooms.

Figure 4. Floor plan of Rekha's household.
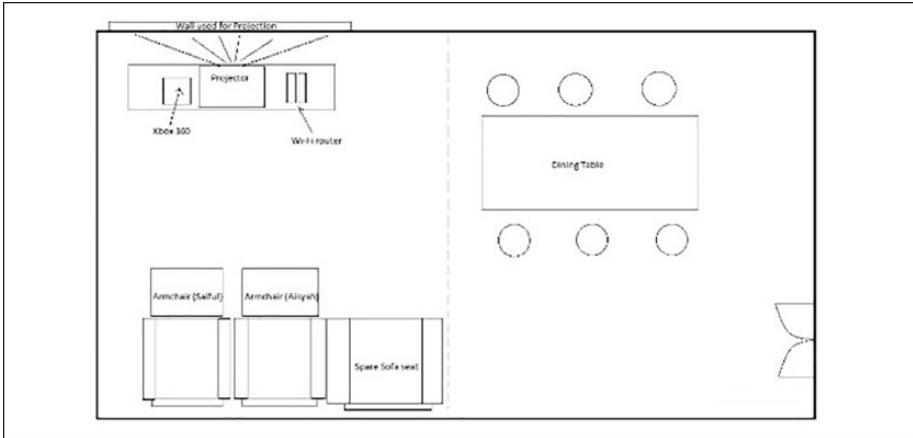

Figure 5. Photographic image of Rekha's household.

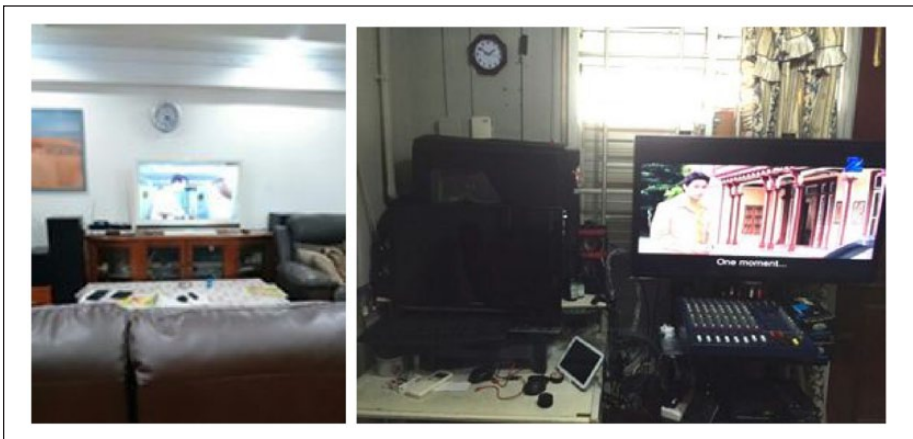**Figure 6.** Pictorial layout of Ais and Shai's household.

Figure 7. Photographic images of the living rooms of Mr. Shaik (left) and Madam Maz (right).

Figure 7 shows the contrast in the TV-Sofa space of the living rooms of the two households. The image on the left belongs to the household of Mr. Shaik, who lives in a five-room apartment, and the image on the right belongs to Madam Maz, who resides in a two-room rental apartment with her technologically savvy son, Muhammad. As evinced in the picture showcasing Madam Maz's living room, her TV-Sofa space seems well-equipped and wired with a supplementary sound system. However, Figure 7 also clearly shows that the disparity between Shaik's family and Maz's household is manifested spatially. Shaik's family has the luxury of space for a full sofa set, coffee table, and cabinet for their televisual experience. The spaciousness of Shaik's living room stands in sharp contrast to Maz's where the television set leans awkwardly
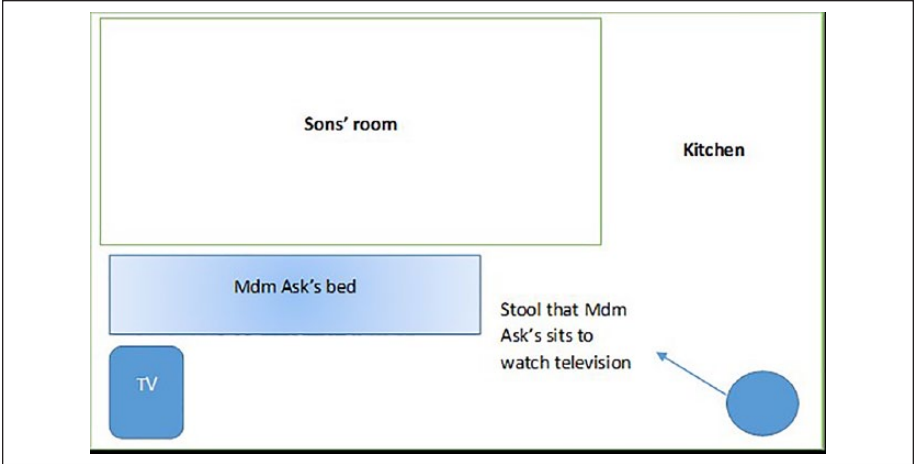
Figure 8. Layout of Madam Ask's one-bedroom apartment.
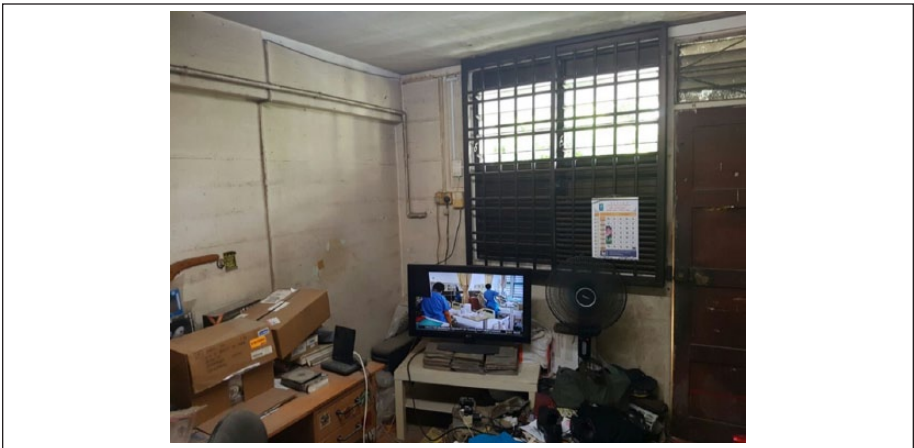
Figure 9. Living room of the Ho household.

against a closed window panel, darkening the entire room. At the end of the spectrum is the layout of Madam Ask's TV-Sofa space illustrated in Figure 8, where a stool has to be placed near the apartment's entrance whenever she wants to watch programs on her relatively dated television set.

From this survey, contrasting TV-Sofa spaces, rather than ownership of media devices, technological literacy, and access to information and content, are among the more visible manifestations of the social divide in Singapore. This divide distinguishes between the aspiring haves who are able to possess the Skeuomorphic

Domestic Television and its ornamentalized representative spaces, and the struggling have-nots whose living room televisions are in more utilitarian and lived spaces.

Conclusion: Ornamental Paleo-TV and the Singapore Living Room

The Ho family of Dan and his mother, residing in a two-room apartment piled with nondescript junk across its premises, is this survey's most interesting participant. As seen in Figure 9, their messy apartment typifies the pathological hoarders among Singapore's lowest-income households. However, the almost brand new and advanced cable wires connecting Dan's smartphone, personal computer, and his monitor screen stand out from these dilapidated conditions. His ownership and use of media devices show that he is definitely not falling through the digital divide. Nonetheless, the single worn, small study chair on which his mother sits to watch free-to-air local television programs from the computer monitor screen is the only indication of the TV-sofa space. Compared with the other surveyed households, the Ho family's television space reveals the analog spatial divisions more starkly.

Through the detailed ethnographic survey of the household patterns of television ownership and viewership in Singapore, this article has demonstrated the influences of more intangible sociocultural variables in the domestication of media technologies. As Singapore is a highly connected and prosperous city-state with a generally well-educated citizenry, the conventional quantitative indicators of technological literacy, ownership, and access shaping the discussions on the digital divide and social stratifications may not be the most relevant. Instead, the social divide in the republic is highlighted in the comparisons of different households' TV-Sofa spaces. Through documentation of the domestic environments in which television cultures are shaped (Fiske 2011), this social television project shows that media transitions as evolutionary processes are just as valid as linear transitions. The TV-Sofa space in the living room, however, dated in the digital age, *is* the ornamental Skeuomorphic Domestic Television distinguishing families and homes.

Declaration of Conflicting Interests

The authors declared no potential conflicts of interest with respect to the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

Note

1. A patina is the usually green film that forms either naturally or artificially on copper after long exposures and is valued aesthetically for its color (Merriam-Webster n.d.).

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