

# Wanted A Chaperone: Effects of Gossiping on the Filipino Family Structure

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**Abstract:** Although dramatic in its approach towards everyday life, a play can interpret some of the problems that are inherent in society. Plays that are more so a commentary on everyday life offer insights that are in line with how society functions. The play, *Wanted: A Chaperone*, portrays the effects of misunderstanding between the social interactions of the opposite sexes. Specifically, as to how the culture of gossiping could turn a simple misunderstanding to a full blown scandal between members within the family structure. Thus, the study investigates the practice of gossiping within the play by inspecting how it affected the plot through scrutinizing its characters and their dialogues. In addition, the study uses the discourse analysis method of the qualitative approach. The data gathered is further analyzed with the use of George Herbert Mead's Symbolic Interactionism Theory and Mary Wollstonecraft's Feminist Theories as a means to analyze the practice of gossiping within the play. As analyzed thoroughly, the plot does involve a great deal of gossiping within the characters of the play. To the point where it greatly affected the family structure within the community causing the conflict to erupt between each member.

**Keywords:** Cultural, Family, Gossiping, Play, Theater.

## 1. Introduction

The history of Philippine theater can be traced back to the Spanish Colonial Period and had been evolving from humorous and romantic theatrics to political missives pertaining to the Revolution of 1896 (Castrillo, 1994). Although most of the plays at the time pertained to nationalist vigor and revolutionary ideas it still did make theater that are purely Filipino in matters of culture and patriotism. The many patriotic playwrights of this age wrote many allegories to Filipino resistance against the imperialist powers of their time, mainly the Spaniards.

However, there was one advocate of the revolt of the masses against the Americans as well (Castrillo, 1994). This was Tomas Remigio's *Malaya*, which serves, not only as an open defiance to oppressive American laws, but also as fuel to the revolutionary fervor of the Filipino people against American rule (Lumbera and Lumbera 1982, 106). The revolutionary zeal of the people would soon begin to wane at the turn of the age in a post-liberation Philippines and so began the Bourgeois Theater (1946-1964).

During these times, the archipelago was under the sphere of influence of the United States. Although liberated there were still grips of American influence within the country. The

dominant cultural gap left by the Americans remains ingrained in the Filipino cultural sphere. Consequently, bourgeois theater were plays written in English and mostly about the everyday life of the middle classes (Castrillo, 1994).

Drama was the more popular genre in theater due to the prevalence of the English language as theaters in Manila were showing the ancient Greek classics and Shakespearean dramas (Fernandez, 1983). In due time, Filipino playwrights wrote their own plays still written in the English language. However, it was works the Filipinos relate to, written as a way for them to share a connection with. One of these playwrights was Wilfrido Maria Guerrero. Guerrero wrote many plays, most of which pertains to the culture of Filipino middle-classes (Fernandez, 1983).

Wilfredo Maria Guerrero's play *Wanted A Chaperon* was a comedic satire which focuses on poking fun at familial values and the personal virtues of children. The play centers around the family of Don Francisco, a man that upholds conservative values within the liberally changing times of an evolving Philippines. Don Francisco, along with the dutiful wife Doña Petra, criticizes their children's behavior as a product of western influences. Don Francisco complains that the children are becoming too independent and no longer upholds the values that a parent would want for them.

The play takes well into account the Filipino familial relationships of how Filipino parental guidance should shape the children into respectable individuals of values and virtues befitting the ideals of a conservative kind. Don Francisco therefore establishes proper familial values within their structure and tries to uphold it as best one could. The conflict of the play showcases the prevalence of gossip culture among Filipinos.

The imagined scenario of the antagonist goes against the values held by Don Francisco thus conflicts into the traditional gender ideals he has in mind. Hence why the gossip culture of the Filipinos acts as the discourse which shapes the 'imagined community' of the community whereas Benedict Anderson describes, the nation-state only exists as a structure for people who perceive themselves as part of a group (Armstrong, 2020):

"It is imagined because the members of even the smallest nation will never know most of their fellow-members, meet them, or even hear of them, yet in the minds of each lives the

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image of their communion.” (Anderson, 2006). Gossiping among friends and acquaintances has been recognized by many as a part of Filipino social culture.

The act of gossiping, however, carries risks of misinformation, exaggeration, and misinterpretation, and the information they bring are often subjected to biases and assumptions of people who convey it. As one would make of it, the problem then arises within imagined implication of interactions between the genders (Armstrong, 2020). Due to its connection to the ‘real Filipino,’ being created by Filipinos and for Filipinos, gossip holds more power than “official discourse” in the community. As scholars have pointed out in existing research (Armstrong, 2020).

The implications carried by these gossips has the potential to create tension and conflicts within families and communities. At the same time, without gossip and unofficial discourse, Filipinos would lack the ability to participate in the discourse of their imagined community (Armstrong, 2020). Hence it is a feature within Filipino culture to participate in gossip because doing so brings someone a sense of identity and a sense of belonging, a symbolic interaction between peoples of all creeds within the Filipino society.

This paper is an examination of the effects of gossiping on members of a Filipino community, as presented in the play *Wanted: A Chaperon* by Guerrero.

Theater is more than just a depiction of dramatic antics and a display of tragedies and comedies. For some, theater is history, it is human emotions and culture all depicted by the desire for entertainment. Theater is also a commentary on social issues as well as being a purveyor of wit within the issues that pervade our society.

## 2. Literature Review

In the study *Wow! These Americans: Philippine Bourgeois Theater in English, 1946 – 1964* by Priscelina Patajo-Legasto, the American period of Filipino Literature had been described to be a combined result of welcoming Americans “with open arms”, the postwar economy going “from bad to worse”, and seeing “no significant changes in class composition” in the postwar society, with the traditional ruling elites reemerging after the social order constructed by the Japanese crumbled (Petajo-Legasto, 2008). It was described that during this period, the idea of conforming to an outside ideology was prevalent, and western works of literature were valued and used as models in terms of plot, themes, and structure. Patajo-Legasto further stated that, as a result of these practices, Wilfrido Ma. Guerrero wrote the play *Wanted: A Chaperon* in an effort to depict the lives of Filipino elites at the time, in the form of a modern play (Petajo-Legasto, 2008). Patajo-Legasto’s study also reflected upon the idea at the time that Filipinos should change to be more like Americans, who enjoyed a privileged position in the Philippines. This desire to adjust for American standards was also reflected in theater productions (Petajo-Legasto, 2008).

Pamela del Rosario Castrillo took a different approach in her analysis of 20<sup>th</sup> century Philippine theater. In his work *Philippine Political Theater: 1946 – 1985*, she described this period as a rise of psychological realism in theater (Castrillo,

1994). According to Castrillo, theater of this period was mostly supported by the wealthy, and as a result, used English as its primary language, separating theater from a major part of the Filipino audience (Castrillo, 1994).

Similar to Castrillo’s study, Doreen G. Fernandez pointed out in her study *Contemporary Philippine Drama: The Liveliest Voice* that the American Period of Philippine theater had an emphasis on realism (Fernandez, 1983). Fernandez further described that although initially there were few plays written in English by Filipinos, “the gap was filled somewhat” by the many pieces written by Guerrero, whose works were “authentic and proper to the time”, making him an example of realism in theater (Fernandez, 1983). Fernandez also pointed out that the language Guerrero used in his plays was the same language used by the educated people he was trying to depict, which contributed to the authenticity of his works, but also lost a large part of his potential audience (Fernandez, 1983).

Conducted by Sandy Valmores Chua and Kristine June de la Cerna Uy of University of San Jose, the study *the Psychological Anatomy of Gossip* outlined the currently-negative public opinion of the idea of “gossip”, and inspected the psychological functions of the act of gossiping (Valmores, 2013). This study proposed that the act of gossiping can be a way for individuals to react to their own anxieties as well as a way to seek attention and affection (Valmores, 2013). How a person gossips, according to this study, can also be reflective of a person’s self concept. It was further stated that gossiping is inevitable and that everyone can potentially gossip (Valmores, 2013).

*Gossip as Cultural Learning* is a study on the act of gossiping conducted by Roy F. Baumeiste, Liqing Zhang, and Kathleen D. Vohs, which took a different approach and inspected the act of gossiping in the scope of social and cultural study. In this study, Baumeiste, Zhang and Vohs viewed the act of gossiping both as a way of obtaining and passing on information, and as a way of giving others indirect aggression (Baumeister, 2004). While gossiping has sometimes been understood as idle talk not for any specific purpose, this study established that gossiping can be done with ill intent, in order to damage the reputation of a person or a group (Baumeister, 2004). Aside from a tool for damaging others, however, gossiping can also serve as a vessel for transporting information. This multifunctional view of the act of gossiping was used in the study to explain the prevalence of this act throughout time (Baumeister, 2004).

An online blog written by John Emar Salazar analyzes Wilfrido Ma. Guerrero’s *Wanted A Chaperon* based on Feminist views. By utilizing Feminist Theory, Salazar’s study attempted to challenge the stereotypical representations of women and deals with the characters within the play. The study mentions that the women in the play were very empowered, respected, and treated as equals. The study also states that the portrayal of women within the play deviates from the patriarchal views held by society towards women. That the women in the play were written more so as a character, but wholly human and more than just what society perceives them to be.

In a blog post titled “Wanted: Chaperon”, web user Ching recommended the play *Wanted: A Chaperon* as being “good for

all people” and being very representative of the attitudes of some Filipinos. In the same blog post, Ching made the point that this play bears a moral lesson for its audience, teaching that being part of an elite class is no excuse for mistreating others. Ching also outlined the play’s nature as a household comedy, commenting on its bright tone in depicting its plot and conflict, as well as drawing attention to the settings, which are that of a household, proposing that the familiarity in settings helps better engage the audience in the play.

In an online article written by Julinda Gallego entitled *Gossip: The Filipino Favorite Past Time*, mentions that gossip can be akin to recreational drugs. The article takes into account the negative connotations of the ‘tsismosa’ or the gossipier and that the information they often share are lies. Moreso, the prevalence of gossip can be attributed to prying on individuals and how people are more inclined to learn about one another regardless if their knowledge is proper or not. The article also states that although the act of gossiping is no less than harmless, sometimes it can get out of hand as it is being used as a way to damage the reputation of other people.

On the connection between gossiping and Filipino culture, Evee Rellora DV of University of the Philippines Diliman made the point that gossiping is something that humans universally do, and is not exclusive to Filipinos or Filipino culture. She further drew connection between the act of gossiping to envy, proposing that the reputation of Filipino gossip stems from Filipinos being particularly open when they gossip or when they become envious, making the stigma complete.

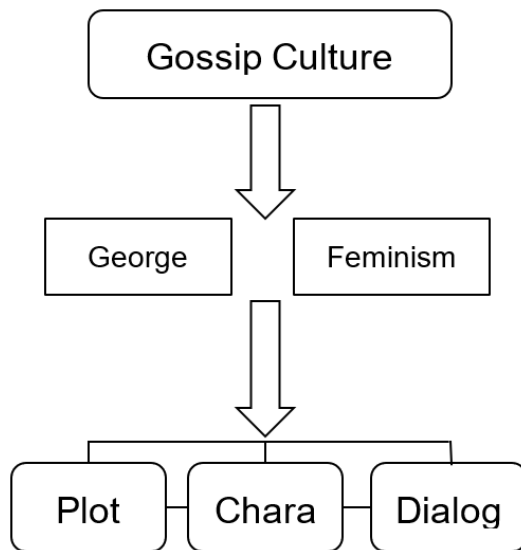


Fig. 1. Schematic presentation of the theoretical background of the study

In an article posted in the Inquirer opinion section entitled *Tsismis*, Michael L. Tan states that although the word ‘chismis’ comes from the Spaniards, the act of gossiping itself is not entirely a practice that was introduced by them. Tan suggests that although the words ‘chismis’ and ‘cuento’ are of the Spanish language, one must not view the act of gossiping as a shared culture. In the study, Tan suggests that the Filipino gossip of culture is different from that of the Spaniards. Although different in its approach, the two cultural aspects

within the culture are similar and that they can be quite destructive.

The study investigates the practice of gossiping in Wilfredo Ma. Guerrero’s *Wanted A Chaperon*. Specifically, it looks into the plot; characters and; dialogues. To do this the paper shall utilize Symbolic Interactionism Theory and Feminist Theory.

Proposed in the book *Mind, Self and Society* by George Herbert Mead and posthumously published by his students, the theory of Symbolic Interactionism proposed that individuals give meanings to phenomena around them, and use these meanings in social interactions which take place within their society and community. Later, Herbert Blumer and John Dewey further developed the concept of Symbolic Interactionism, putting a special emphasis on the use of language in social interactions, proposing that “Most human and humanizing activity that people engage in is talking to each other” (Griffin, Ledbetter, Sparks, 2015).

As the play *Wanted: A Chaperon* displays its story and characterization largely by dialogues among characters, with cultural implications attached to these interactions, the theory of Symbolic Interactionism is employed to conduct this study.

Feminist Theory postulates that society values a more patriarchal view on many issues and denies the idea of equal opportunities amongst the genders. Even now Feminist Theory still argues against gender inequality, discrimination, objectification, and in general, the oppression of the patriarchy against women.

One strong proponent of Feminist Theory was also its earliest pioneers, Mary Wollstonecraft. M. Wollstonecraft was an ardent believer of feminism during the period known as The Enlightenment. She was perhaps well known as the earliest of feminists to question the idea of patriarchal domination of the society and questioned the belief of Enlightenment Philosophers particularly that of Jean-Jacques Rousseau (Menih, Larysa, 2018).

What M. Wollstonecraft argued for was to extend the basic ideas of Enlightenment philosophy to women including Rousseau’s educational ideas of how to educate boys to girls. But she was against his writings on the education of women and their place in society (Menih, Larysa, 2018). She wrote: “The woman, who has only been taught to please, will soon find that her charms are oblique sun- beams and that they cannot have much effect on her husband’s heart when they are seen and children, expecting the growing numbers of literate middle class women to read the stories aloud to their babies until they could read on their own (Menih, Larysa, 2018).

As a way to further analyze the characters of *Wanted A Chaperone* the study shall utilize Feminist Theory in order to scrutinize the role of the men and women within the socio-cultural context of the play. As the play heavily satirizes the social cultures of the Philippines, particularly that of gossip culture, it is imperative to inspect the effects of what that could entail towards the roles of sexes in the Filipino social cultures.

This study benefits the studies concerning the effects of gossiping on social interactions, and the studies which focus on the origin and development of the practice of gossiping prevalent in the Philippines.

### 3. Methodology

As a way to analyze the play, the study shall utilize qualitative discourse analysis as its methodology. According to an online article posted on Scribbr, discourse analysis is one method of studying written or spoken language in relation to its social context. In accordance with how the study identifies the effects of gossiping towards the Filipino family structure and society. Discourse analysis shall be employed as a means to further develop a better understanding of the social context of the play; along with its plot, characters and dialogues. The method used for this study shall provide a deeply evaluative survey of the work studied. Moreover, it includes a non-statistical interpretation of data.

The primary source of data is Wilfrido Maria Guerrero's *Wanted: A Chaperon* first staged at the Saint Cecilia's Hall of Saint Scholastica's College in Manila during November of 1940. A digital copy was acquired freely and legally from the online library of uprepbib.tripod.com.

As for the secondary sources of data most were taken from e-resources, articles, blogs, reliable websites or web pages, as well as published and unpublished theses and dissertations.

The data gathering procedures follows two phases: Phase 1 Plot and Phase 2 Characters and Dialogues

#### *Phase 1: Plot*

The first phase shall focus on the analysis of the plot, utilizing Symbolic Interactionism Theory to study how elements of the plot show connection to the gossip culture in the Philippines through implications. Scenes will be analyzed in relevance to their positions within the plot. One table is used in this phase. The phase shall utilize a table titled Plot Analysis. This phase will utilize a table titled Plot Analysis.

#### *Phase 2: Character*

The second phase basis shall be on the analysis of the characters within the play, utilizing Feminism Theory of Literature. Characters will be studied in depth in their behavior, personalities, roles, status, and motivations in relation to the role they play in, and their attitudes towards gossiping. One table is used in this phase called Character Analysis.

#### *Phase 3: Dialogue*

The third phase is the study of dialogues using Symbolic Interactionism Theory and Feminism Theory of Literature. Dialogues that tell about or imply that gossiping has occurred will be studied based on their connection to the culture of gossip and the opinions they demonstrate towards the act of gossiping, in relevance to Symbolic Interactionism and Feminist views. This phase will make use of a table designated Dialogue Analysis.

#### *Data Analysis:*

This study utilizes qualitative discourse analysis. The method involves a non-numerical interpretation of data analysis. Investigating the primary and secondary source is to gather information of the study's main problem which is the play's connection to gossip culture. As for the main theory being used to analyze the main problems is George Herbert Mead's Symbolic Interactionism Theory and the sub-theory to depict the sub- problem is Mary Wollstonecraft's Feminism Theory. Furthermore, this study follows three phases to analyze the

play. Phase 1 Plot, Phase 2 Dialogues, Phase 3 Characters. The data gathered in each phase are used to illustrate the gossip culture during the American Period from 1900-1942.

#### *Ethical Consideration:*

This study avoids mendaciousness in the research objectives and the data gathered in order to produce information about primary and secondary data. The analysis used in this study does not involve hurting the rights of either humans or animals. It is properly citing the publications and gives recognition to the authors of the studies contained in related literature. Furthermore, the data used in this study can be seen in public domain, a copy of which consumers can have for free. All the data gathered does not break any laws.

### 4. Summary of Findings

Although theatrical, the prevailing problem within the play stems from the misunderstanding between its characters and the overall community within the story. Gossiping and miscommunication are hallmarks that could turn a misunderstanding into a scandal getting out of hand. As the community embroils itself in a frenzy of misinformation, the characters of the play become the center of attention to what would become the main conflict of the plot. In the play, the symbolic interaction projected by its characters decides how they perceive the conflict of the plot. Therefore, the study shall utilize three tables to analyze the flow of the play; hence using three tables to survey its Plot, Characters, and Dialogues The tables are accordingly titled as Plot Analysis, Character Analysis, and Dialogue Analysis.

#### *Phase 1. Plot*

The table below contains data collected from the play *Wanted: A Chaperon* concerning the plot of the play and each part's connection to gossip culture.

Table 1  
Plot analysis

Plot	Events	Connection to Gossip Culture
Rising Action	Servant told to make sign Pablo applying for job Argument over chaperon	"Moral falls" and education Chaperons needed for being "careful about reputation"
Climax	Argument with Dolores about party	Dolores protests lack of chaperon, Fear of gossip
Falling Action	Dolores and Fred leaving Truth about fighting revealed.	False assumption of "something must have happened"
Resolution	Pablo fleeing Lia and her father coming	Need for chaperons

From the data gathered in the table above, we arrive at the finding that the plot of *Wanted: A Chaperon* has connections to the gossip culture in a Filipino community. Events in the plot are driven or influenced by the gossip that the characters experience, and the story portrayed by the play would never have happened, if gossiping were not an active part of the social life within this community.

During the exposition of the play, the initial conversation with Roberting asking for money from Don Francisco has no direct relation to the gossip culture. However, when Petra advises Roberting to take a jeepney to his girlfriend instead of a taxi, Roberting protests. It is not stated why Roberting resents this idea, however the decision of going with the cheapest option possible without regard for comfort can be thought of as “being cheap”, and is often looked down upon (Kunsmann, 2021). Although not stated, it is possible that Roberting fears being gossiped about as a “cheap” boyfriend. Petra also makes a point in this segment of the play that there are certain things that only happen in the Philippines, by saying “*I know a place where the children work and don't give their-parents any money and still ask for their allowance*” (Guerrero, 1941), which implies that the events that will take place might be exclusive to the Philippines’ social environment at the time. Don Francisco mentions that courtship in his time was different from the courtships young people consider to be proper, which is the first time among several instances where changes in social life over time can be observed.

The rising actions sees Francisco, Petra, Roberting and Nina discuss whether or not a chaperon is necessary for a young lady during an outing, while Pablo responds to the sign outside the family’s residence and applies for a job as a servant, but insists on calling the position “mayordomo”. During his argument about chaperon with Petra, Don Francisco insists that a chaperon is necessary as per tradition since this is the Philippines, and that Nena’s friends from abroad are bad influences. Petra counters Francisco’s view by pointing out Nena’s good education, however Francisco makes the counter-argument that academic success does not guarantee one’s moral integrity, and expresses his worry that Nena may end up in trouble should Petra not watch out. This is the first time in the play when Don Francisco raises the issue of chaperons. Later in his conversation with Roberting, Francisco is once again unhappy with the fact that Roberting’s girlfriend went unchaperoned with him. Francisco makes mention of his time, when several chaperons could accompany a young lady, and makes a connection with having a chaperon to protect a lady’s reputation. As a person’s reputation can be damaged by gossips of them doing indecent acts (Gordon, 2020), chaperons are a traditional way of warding against such gossips (Collins Dictionary, 2022), this is a sign that Francisco worries about the negative effects of gossips on members of his family. Don Francisco’s concern over potential damage to reputation is also an indication that the fear of gossip can cause tension between members of the family, since Francisco puts pressure on his family over the issue of chaperones.

The climax of the play is characterized by a scene of argument, with the newly-introduced characters, Dolores and her son Fred, arriving at the family’s home, upset over something. It is later revealed that Dolores is angry that Nena went to the party last night with Fred without a chaperon, and she worries that the gossip this causes will include her son Fred. Here it is observed that chaperons are considered useful in preventing gossip. From Dolores’ fear of gossip, it can be deduced that the effects of gossip are often negative, damaging

one’s reputation. It is also shown in this part of the play that only girls are expected to have chaperons, since when Fred and Nena went to the play, neither of them were chaperoned, yet it is not expected for Fred to have one. When Dolores notices that people are talking about the party last night, her reaction is to come to Nena and blame her family for allowing her to go out without a chaperon. This is indication the sending a chaperon out with a girl is considered a responsibility of her family, that young girls are not expected to safeguard their own moral standing by themselves, and that the reputation of one person as well as their protection from gossips are considered the duty of their family and not only themselves.

It is later revealed in the falling action of the play, however, that Dolores’ assertion of “something must have happened” last night is completely false, and both Nena and Fred can confirm that nothing happened. Dolores’ outrage, which is based on gossip from others and the mere fact that Nena was unchaperoned, is not sensible and completely uncalled for. Not only that, but Fred expresses that he has tried to tell Dolores that nothing happened, but his words fell on deaf ears. These events once again show that gossip from outside of the family can generate tension and disagreement within the family, hence how Dolores ignores Fred’s input in this whole matter. It is also the pressure from gossip which drives Dolores into arguing with Francisco and Petra in the first place. This shows that gossip by people outside of the family not only influences relationships between family members, but also relationships between families. An especially noteworthy phenomena is that Dolores insists that something happened despite having no evidence of that at all. Although Dolores is concerned about gossip, her choice of making claims from conjectures and baseless assumptions is extremely similar to the behavior of gossipers. Given that people can be socially motivated to gossip (Cruz, 2019), it is possible that victims of negative effects of gossip can be prone to the act of gossiping themselves, and Dolores can possibly also be a gossip herself.

The resolution of the play sees the new “mayordomo” Pablo fleeing the house as it is noticed that he steals Don Francisco’s cigars. The family’s troubles are not over, however, as another pair of angry visitors show up. This time, they are Roberting’s girlfriend Lia, who also went out with Roberting unchaperoned, along with her father, who is carrying a gun. It is never explained why Lia’s father is enraged to such a degree, but combining the fact that Roberting describes his outing with Lia as “nothing happened -- I think”, it is a possibility that unlike the outing of Nena and Fred, something actually happened with Lia and Roberting. However, another possibility is that the sole reason for Lia’s father to be angry is because, again, an unchaperoned outing will cause gossip that will damage the reputation of Lia and her family. Once again, it is proposed that Lia and Roberting also need a chaperon, as Don Francisco calls out “We need two chaperons!”. Once again, it is demonstrated that having the family provide a chaperon is the first and possibly the only way that Don Francisco can propose in order to ward off negative and scandalous gossip, showing again that Don Francisco does not believe letting the younger people govern their own moral choices will work.

Overall, the plot of the play *Wanted: A Chaperon* shows connections to the gossip culture in the Philippines at the time of writing and demonstrates that gossiping has effects on Filipino families at the time. Gossips are mostly perceived as negative and damaging to familial and personal reputation, and dating young people are especially susceptible to the harmful results of being gossiped about. The potential risk of gossip can be observed in this play as the center of concern, tension, and anger, both between family members and between two families. The desire to prevent these gossips, as well as the negative emotions driven by them, are observed to be fuses to disagreements. The families' reaction to these gossips and the hazards they pose is to seek a way to oversee and regulate the young people during their outings, which, in the end, is using chaperons.

### Phase 2. Characters

The table below represents the data for the Character analysis of the play *Wanted: A Chaperone* which concerns the connection of the characters to the gossip culture present in the play.

Table 2  
Character analysis

Characters	Characterization	Connection to Gossip Culture
Pablo the Mayordomo	Static Characters	Does not connect to gossip culture of the play
Francisco the Servant		
Don Francisco the Father	Round Characters	Defender of their children's reputations
Doña Petra the Mother		
Roberting the Son		
Nena the Daughter	Static Characters	Subject of gossip
Lia, Roberting's date		
Fred, Son of Dolores		
Dolores, Mother of Fred		

The table arranged the characters from least to most likely part of the gossip culture as well as analyzing their characterization whether they be round or flat characters. In an article written by Masterclass, Round and Flat Characters are indications of who to focus on in any narrative. Round characters are well-fleshed out and are usually the main focus of the plot of the story. Flat characters are lacking in any sort of characterization that indicates them to be important to the overall story and are mostly used as either a deterrent or subject of interest, no more no less. Although round characters serve the overall focus of the story, flat characters do also propel the story in some way hence why the narrative focuses on those characters still.

Starting with Pablo the Mayordomo and Francisco the Servant, these two characters were not involved in any way to any form of gossip within the play's plot as they were secondary characters who for the remainder of the play, served as comic relief. Therefore no useful data can be gathered from them both as their characterization indicates them to be static characters and only used for humor.

Then followed by Don Francisco and Doña Petra, the parents of Roberting and Nena. Don Francisco is a strict but overall respectable father who tries to raise his children to the acceptable social culture at the time. He does not want his children to attend any social events without a chaperone wary of any repercussions sustained towards their reputations.

Don Francisco worries for his children because of the culture of gossip prevalent within the community. Therefore, he insists on hiring a chaperone in order to avoid some form of incident that may involve his children. His inherent views on the social practice at the time can be described as highly conservative believing in proper and decent practices which he believes to have disappeared presently.

Doña Petra on the other hand is a dutiful and understanding mother who believes her children are still decent despite what her husband believes. She verbally disagrees with Don Francisco's views even arguing with him on some of the points he would assert. Doña Petra believes in her children's autonomy, respecting and valuing their independence and is defensive of them against Don Francisco's views. Because of this, she can be considered as liberal in her approach to parenting.

Liberal-socialist, according to Rokeach, ideologically valued both equality and freedom to a higher degree than conservatives do. Whereas conservatives value personal happiness and family security (Sterling & Hardin, 2019). Therefore, the conservative Don Francisco prioritizes his children's safety and their reputations whereas the liberal Doña Petra wants them to be free and make their own decisions on how to live their lives. Regardless of their differences however, they still defend their children's reputations, adamantly defending Nena from Dolores, the play's antagonist. Hence, Don Francisco and Doña Petra are round characters due in fact of their views towards their children having changed throughout the play. With the former becoming even more adamant to protect their children while the latter becomes convinced of their spouse's views.

The next characters that are most likely connected to the gossip culture are Nena, Roberting, Fred, and Lia. They are the children of Don Francisco, Doña Petra, Dolores, and an unnamed character respectively. Nena is a free spirited girl who does what she wants, to the dismay of her father. She believes herself to be educated and capable of making her own decisions. Roberting on the other hand is a spendthrift, who wastes away his money towards his girlfriend, Lia. Lia appears by the end of the play so her character is unknown but she is said to be Roberting's girlfriend. Lastly, Fred, who Guerrero described to be "*so dumb and as dumb-looking nobody would believe it*" is the son of Dolores, the main antagonist of the play.

These three characters were the subject of gossip within the community due to an undisclosed connection with their respective companions the night of the party. Roberting was with Lia and Nena with Fred seemingly unchaperoned that night. Words spread around the partygoers that night and apparently believed that these youths might be together. Which was true for Roberting considering that Lia is his supposed girlfriend. Nena on the other hand never intended to be seen together with Fred. However, the damage has already been done

as people are already talking about that night. Which brings about the last characters, the play’s antagonist, Dolores.

Dolores is described to be *“a fat arrogant woman of forty, wearing the Filipina dress and sporting more jewels than a pawn shop”* and is rude, entitled, and loud. She bases her opinions towards Nena and Fred from the rumors circulating around them. Therefore, she is one of the ‘chismosas’ or gossipers that the play shows. Out of all the characters, she is the one connected most to gossip culture as she tries to make sense of the rumors regarding her son by disrupting Don Francisco’s family.

Therefore, the characters in the play take part in gossip culture in one way or the other. They unintentionally become embroiled in the subjective opinions of the community causing a rift between their families in return. The characters therefore become a part of the gossip culture that inhibits proper and decent discourse within the community.

*Phase 3. Dialogue*

The table below represents the data gathered on analyzing the play’s dialogues and their connections to gossip culture.

Table 3  
Dialogue analysis

Lines of Dialogue	Meaning	Connection to Gossip Culture
Line 70-74 Dialogue between Don Francisco and Dona Petra	Don Francisco already suspects something might happen at the party	Don Francisco's assumptions and opinions are subjective
Line 75-77 Dialogue between Dona Petra and Don Francisco	Don Francisco disagrees with Nena's choice of friends	
Line 124- 126 and Line 130- 135 Dialogue between Don Francisco and Roberting	Don Francisco worries not only for his children's reputations but of others as well	Don Francisco's mention of reputations is an indication of wanting to avoid the culture of gossip within the society
Line 345- 348 Dialogue between Dona Petra, Dolores, and Don Francisco	Dolores demands to know what happened between her son Fred and Don Francisco's daughter, Nena	Like Don Francisco, Dolores also assumes something happening at the party the night before
Line 391 Dialogue of Dolores	Dolores' opinions comes from other people	This part of the character dialogues reveal the 'chismis' and the 'chismosa' or the gossip and the gossiper
Line 395-398 Dialogue between Dolores, Dona Petra and Fred	Dolores extracts the information of the gossip from its source, her son's supposed date, Nena	Misinformed and subjective opinions stirs trouble for the family of Fred and Nena

The first instance of gossiping within the plot begins with Don Francisco already having suspicions of what may transpire in a social setting, in this case a party. Because Don Francisco’s daughter was unsupervised at that party by a chaperon he worries that something might happen. He then went on a tangent about distrusting Nena’s friends even though he fully does not know who they really are. These dialogues show that gossiping occurs naturally from a subjective viewpoint.

In accordance with Symbolic Interactionism, Blumer believes that individuals are engaged in a process known as ‘mind action’ in which they sometimes do not care to ponder on themselves or their relation to others as they are engaged in

mindful action where they assume the meaning of symbols and situations (Carter & Fuller, 2015). Don Francisco’s views Nena socializing with friends as a negative connotation due to the fact that, according to him, they have adopted strange customs without fully knowing the objective reality. Don Francisco’s subjective view of Nena’s friends is also in itself, a form of gossiping, believing them to have,

*...teach our daughter all the wrong things they learned from those places.*

Conforming to Feminism Theory, Walby believes that the patriarchy is a social system which is predominantly male and holds the overall authority of any social organization including the family structure (Rawat, 2014). Don Francisco as a patriarchal figure suspects his daughter of being in the wrong because of the two friends Nena accompanies with.

Don Francisco clearly disagrees with Nena’s choice of friends thinking that they influence her in a way that is not suitable for his idea of how women should act, as evident in the line mentioned previously. In a way, Don Francisco is trying to exercise his authority over the autonomy of his daughter Nena. Don Francisco, although initially respectable in approach to his daughter, begins to not respect her choice of companions and is therefore in want of control over her.

The underlying values held by Don Francisco implies that to avoid any form of misconception about social interactions between the opposite sexes, one must take the initiative of informed consent as a way to ward off misunderstandings. This shows that people are inclined to gossip because they will form their own opinions that may in turn be in conflict with the truth of the situation.

Using Symbolic Interactionism to analyze these dialogues further, Stryker infers about the individual and their correspondence with the society. Reasoning that individuals identify themselves and others in the context within the accepted social structure (Carter & Fuller, 2015). Don Francisco believes that informing the family is a way to combat gossiping, that the interaction within the social group must be discussed in a controlled setting as a way to avoid a misunderstanding. This is an example of the traditional courtship practices within the family structure of the Filipinos. Also known as ‘panliligaw’ it involves the man asking for consent from the parents of the woman. Evident in the lines,

*You young modern people. Do you realize that in my time when I was courting your mother, her father, her mother, her three sisters, her young brother Her grandmother, five first cousins and two distant relatives sat in the sala with us?*

Don Francisco still believes in the idea of ‘panliligaw’ and that the newer generations must adhere to it. This is also a way for the families to avoid unwanted attention and misinformation from other parties. In this way, Don Francisco complies with the accepted social structure and urges his son to do the same as a way not to complicate a situation and save the reputations of the woman involved in the process. Evident in the lines,

*Because in those days we were more careful about a woman's reputation.*

Furthermore, this line indicates that the woman’s reputation is likely to be more in question than the man's, which is a clear

sign of double standards. Also known as Sexual Double Standards (SDS) it is an ongoing prejudicial phenomenon of judging men and women differently for the same sexual behaviors (Berrocal, Vallejo-Medina, Moyano & Sierra, 2019). Although the topic of sex is not implicated as much in the play, it is evident that Don Francisco believes that the woman is likely to be more criticized in that situation than the man will be. This kind of double standards are prevalent in gossip culture especially in regards to heterosexual relationships (Zaikman & Marks, 2017).

Therefore, it is no surprise that Don Francisco worries for his daughter and Roberting's supposed date. Because Don Francisco assumes the complications regarding what might happen between the sexes, in this case reputationally. Therefore, he takes into account a culture of gossip prevalent within the society. A culture that is ubiquitous within the context of heterosexual relationships in a social setting.

Then the play introduces the classic 'chismosa' as the main antagonist in the form of Dolores, Fred's mother. Dolores stirs trouble because she only knows one side of the story. Dolores argues with Don Francisco's family because she thought that something happened between her son and Don Francisco's daughter, Nena, at the party. An information which she acquired by listening to people talk about her son and Nena, as evident in the line,

*People saw them come and go unchaperoned. Yes, unchaperoned! Imagine-imagine a girl going to a party alone!*

And followed by.

*People are talking about last night-*

Dolores believes that the rumors circulating around her son and Nena interacting at the party to be an implication of them doing what they should not do. Dolores believes that a man and a woman interacting at any given social setting is symbolic of a sort of union. This is in line with Blumer's idea of symbolic interactionism which pertains to the different and distinct way people interact with one another (Carter & Fuller, 2015).

In the case of the play's plot, an unchaperoned Fred being with an unchaperoned Nena at the party is a connotation that they might be together, which people might also have thought about, of them being in an arrangement of either marriage or 'panliligaw' (courting). Thus, this could be the reason why Dolores came to know what Fred and Nena did that night after the party or if they are together. This is a clear indication of gossip going out of control as it now involves the two families arguing over the meaning of the interaction between their children.

## 5. Conclusion

To conclude, the paper is an examination of the practice of gossiping within Wilfredo Maria Guerrero's *Wanted A Chaperon*. Specifically, it looks into how gossiping affects the family structure within the community of the play. As analyzed in the play's plot, characters, and dialogue; there was a great deal of gossip happening within the play. As gossiping was the main hindrance to proper discourse within the community, conflict arose between the families of Don Francisco and Dolores.

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