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From Cultural Studies to Global Citizenship Education: South Korean Millennial Women' Confucian Reception of Hollywood's Romantic Comedy

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From Cultural Studies to Global Citizenship Education:

South Korean Millennial Women' Confucian Reception of Hollywood's Romantic Comedy

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the requirements for the degree

Doctor of Philosophy in Education

by

Yoo Mi Chin

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ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

From Cultural Studies to Global Citizenship Education:

South Korean Millennial Women' Confucian Reception of Hollywood's Romantic Comedy

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Yoo Mi Chin

Doctor of Philosophy in Education

University of California, Los Angeles, 2016

Professor Carlos A. Torres, Chair

Media are not only effective communication tools that transmit messages to the public, but also, powerful pedagogical tools that play an influential role in shaping ideologies as well as values and constructing the identities of viewers. Media have become even more impactful channels of message distribution over decades on a global level as the advancement of technology and the advent of social media have expedited the spread of ideologies and values, mostly transporting the core themes of American neoliberal capitalism. Consequently, today's global media capitalism has triggered a series of cultural crises resulting from clashes of disparate political, economic, religious, and social ideologies and values of different countries.

This dissertation examines the consequences of global media capitalism by focusing on the spread of American ideologies in Hollywood movies and their influence on Korean women's identity construction and value formation of their educational and professional goals. The American culture in Hollywood movies is distinctively different from the Confucian culture of Korea; while the former emphasizes liberalism and individualism, the latter encourages preservation of traditional values and collective harmony.

Presuming that movies serve as pedagogical tools that impose direct influences on their audiences, the dissertation examines whether Hollywood movies, specifically romantic comedies, whose recurring theme highlights the significance of romantic relationship in women's pursuit of happiness, play any determining roles in Korean women's envisioning and constructing of their future identities as well as projecting and planning their future, by chronicling the experiences of these young women living in the era of cultural and ideological crises.

Finally, this dissertation evaluates the value of cultural studies and media education as feasibly applicable and practicable pedagogical tools for cultivating global citizenship education for the Korean millennial women.

The dissertation of Yoo Mi Chin is approved.

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2016

DEDICATION

For my grandmother, the strongest woman I've ever known.

And for all the strong women of the past, present, and future,

who follow their hearts, believe in themselves, and never give up.

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Lastly, nobody could have been more supportive than my family. Max, your presence in my life is the best gift I've ever been given. Thank you for letting me hold on to you and rely on you since the day you were born. I am truly blessed to be your sister. Mom and Dad, you have raised me as someone who would never take no as an answer. You have shown me the beauty and strength of persistence, patience, and passion. Like you always say, failure is always an opportunity to be one step closer to success. Thank you for your patience, love, and support the past 32 years, and more years to come, while I continue to fearlessly make mistakes and confront failures. This is all for you.

PREFACE

"Scratch a theory, you find a biography."
- Troy Duster

Throughout my long journey of Ph.D. studies, my advisor and chair, Dr. Carlos Torres, often quoted Troy Duster's wise words: "Scratch a theory, you find a biography." While I understood what this phrase meant, I never could actually grasp the implication or empathize with this axiom until I started writing the final chapter of this dissertation. Only after describing years of observations, findings, analyses, and reflections on writing, have I come to appreciate the contributions of my senior scholars and their predecessors.

All my life, I have loved movies. My passion for movie-watching began when I was five. I still remember the first movie that my parents took me to. The movie we saw was *Snow White* (1987), and I fell in love with not just the movie itself but the overall experience. The next movie I saw at a movie theater, if I remember correctly, was *Mannequin* (1987). I was probably in the second grade, and the movie was released during the midterm exam period. No parents would take their child to a movie theater during the exam week. However, my parents did, knowing how much I loved watching movies. I remember vividly that the day before my math exam, my mother and I sat outside the movie theater, reviewing my multiplication table for the math exam, until the movie started.

As I reflect on my childhood and teenage years, all the movies I went back to watch over and over again included strong and determined women. Some of these women included Maria Von Trapp (Julie Andrews) from *The Sound of Music* (1965), Karen Blixen (Meryl Streep) from

Out of Africa (1985), women from *The Joy Luck Club* (1993), and Erin Brockovich (Julia Roberts) from *Erin Brockovich* (2000). Growing up, as I fantasized about and looked up to these heroines on movie screens, I made a promise to myself that I would become a strong, independent woman someday.

Many years later, when I entered the academia to pursue my doctoral degree, I learned that becoming the kind of an independent and determined woman that I had envisioned all my life was not going to be easy. What I had not realized was that most of the women that I grew up watching in movies came from Hollywood. I had also overlooked the fact that I am a Korean woman.

The idea of independence has a very different meaning in Korean culture; while independence and liberation are the founding values of the American democracy, these terms are foreign to the Korean society, whose core values are centered on collectivist philosophy, including harmony and interconnectedness. And of course, the representation of women differs profoundly between "Tinseltown" and "The Land of the Morning Calm."

When I told my friends in Korea about my acceptance to UCLA's Ph.D. program back in 2010, they expressed concerns about my decreasing chance of getting married and starting a family. All of them asked, quite unanimously: "How are you ever going to get married? What are you going to do with your PhD?" To my friends, pursuing a doctoral degree was seen as an obstacle to finding a future husband, having children, and eventually finding the pursuit of happiness. Very few women supported my new chapter back then.

With very little support, embarking on a scholarly journey to become the woman I've longed to become - let alone adjourning the academic expedition - was a strenuous adventure.

Throughout my journey, I was confronted with multiple crises of my own. I learned that the goal I had always hoped to achieve is not the road that is frequently taken by the Korean women, and therefore, taking "the road not taken" required more courage, patience, and persistence. I also learned that the road that is taken by the majority of Korean women had different routes, but the final destination this road was leading the Korean women to was the same destination I was hoping to reach eventually - that is, the pursuit of happiness.

Before conducting my field work, I viewed Confucianism from a Western scholar's point of view; my initial take on Confucianism was an obstacle that stopped Korean women from being independent and free. Along the way, however, I was awakened by the strong determination of Korean women who believe in restoring harmony in the community they belong to, which starts from a family unit, by practicing Confucian traditions.

So here's the chronicle of my academic and personal journey. Scratch this dissertation. You will find my bildungsroman.

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

"It was the best of times, it was the worst of times,
it was the age of wisdom, it was the age of foolishness,
it was the epoch of belief, it was the epoch of incredulity,
it was the season of light, it was the season of darkness,
it was the spring of hope, it was the winter of despair."

-*A Tale of Two Cities,* Charles Dickens (1859)

1.1 Globalization: A Tale of Two Cities

Swedish playwright August Strindberg once said, "there are poisons that blind you, and poisons that open your eyes." As many wise men and women have said throughout history, the world we are living in chronicles a tale of two cities. What was once considered black is not black anymore, and what used to be defined as white is no longer white. Today, in our Information Age, with the advancement of technology at its peak, the definitions and qualifications of dualities are fluctuating and metamorphosing more frequently, spontaneously, and intermittently than ever.

Globalization, one of the most discussed topics in the 21st-century Information Age, exemplifies such multiplicities of today's cosmopolitan community that we identify ourselves within. The contradictory nature of globalization chronicles the 21st century's "tale of two cities." As much as it has benefited the global economy, creating job opportunities in developing countries, globalization has created greater economic inequalities. The very same globalization, which brought women out to the workforce, has also deepened gender inequalities in the labor market, particularly in East Asia.

The three countries that complete East Asia - China, Japan, and South Korea (hereafter Korea) - not only are the members of leading and thriving global economies, all of which have demonstrated incredulous economic growth, contributing to the world economy, but also, are known for their success in education. In 2012, Shanghai marked the highest score in OECD's Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA), outperforming all the participating countries in all three subjects - mathematics, science, and reading. Japan and Korea were the next on the list, ranking fourth and fifth respectively (PISA, 2012). Ironically, these countries, known for their high academic achievements for both men and women, are known to have the greatest gender inequalities and gaps among the OECD countries. In 2009, according to the World Economic Forum's Global Gender Gap Index, out of 145 countries that were surveyed, China was ranked 91st, Japan was ranked 101st, and Korea was ranked the lowest, coming in 115th place. That same year, Rwanda, whose economy and education status falls behind, compared to these three East Asian countries, was ranked sixth on the index.[1]

Conventional wisdom goes that the higher economic and education level a nation achieves, the less gender inequality its citizens would experience. Then how is it possible that gender equality is so prevalent in these developed countries, driving women out of work force?

[1] The World Economic Forum's Global Gender Gap Index has been criticized for its overgeneralization and its unreasonable comparative measuring method. For instance, the literacy rate for both men and women in Korea is 99 percent. Korea was ranked 22nd for gender equality in the category of literacy. On other hand, Lesotho, which has 66 percent literacy rate for men and 85 percent literacy rate for women was ranked first for gender equality in the literacy category. Korean women have the same literacy rate as Korean men; however, comparatively speaking, women of Lesotho has higher literacy rate than men of Lesotho do.

1.2 Defining Globalization

The age of globalization is highly complex, and its history is unmeasurable. While the mostly accepted consensus on the birth of globalization is tied to Christopher Columbus' arrival in America in 1492, it is hard to refute many historians' arguments that the idea of globalization had already diffused throughout many civilizations even before the discovery of the New World.

Despite its significance over centuries, only very recently has globalization become the concept of interest and importance. Nowhere in the history of human mankind has the term "globalization" been used as overwhelmingly as it is today. The 21st century has become an era, in which it is impossible to initiate and orchestrate any political, economic, social, or cultural discussions without doing so the lens of globalization.

Today's omnipresent discussion of globalization has built a misleading impression and fallacy that globalization is a single, massive, and exclusive entity *sans* dimensions of complications, overlooking the layers of complexities and perplexities, which require an invitation of a series of thorough scrutinization and critical interpretations. A comprehensive understanding of globalization - if it is ever possible - requires relentless deconstructing on multiple levels and from diverse perspectives.

What is globalization? Simply put, globalization is a process that encompasses transnational flow of political, socio-economic, and cultural ideologies. It is the "product of the emergence of a global economy, expansion of transnational linkages between economic units creating new forms of collective decision making" (Torres, 1998, p. 71).

The nature of globalization, however, is too complicated and multifarious to be summed up in a single sentence in any given language. To begin with, the term, globalization, itself is

difficult to define - some call it an ideology while others refer to it as a phenomenon. Much of the extensive literature reviews on globalization infer that globalization has benefited the world, bringing the hybridization of cultures and the plurality of identities to our borderless society. Neoliberal who see globalization with a hopeful light praise globalization for having enriched the world scientifically and culturally, and benefited many people economically. They view globalization as a process that maximizes market profits and prospers global economy through the free flow of capitals. To their belief, globalized economic competition helps the nations focus on economic policies.

Contrastingly, globalization has triggered the homogenization of global culture and reversed its original purpose as it invites cultural imperialism and promotes disproportionate global wealth and power, thus creating more political, socio-economic, and cultural inequalities. Critical theorists argue that globalization pushes the nation-state to make the national economy attractive for the mass capital that moves globally and focuses more on acting as "economic growth promoters for their national economies than as protectors of the national identity" (Carnoy & Rhoten, 2002, p. 3). Therefore, the definition of globalization varies, depending on the perspective of a narrator.

This is why our existing literature has not come anywhere near the complete understanding of globalization (Al-Rodhan & Stoudman, 2006). Because of its complex nature, globalization can neither be a single process defined within a set time frame nor can it be universally applicable to all people and in all situations and times (Sousa Santos, 2002). Hence, the term globalization becomes a misnomer. Considering that globalization is not an outcome formed by a single process, the term should be in a plural form: *globalizations*.

1.3 Globalizations, Neoliberal Capitalism, and the Media

One would hope that the raison d'être of the 21st-century globalization is to put an end to the post-colonial era and make everyone a winner, bringing prosperity to all. Instead, globalization, many experts argue, has deepened inequality gaps and expanded the territory of post-colonialism. While wealth and new jobs have been created in developed countries, poverty rate is still increasing. Global economic crisis exemplifies the downside of globalization. The 1997 Asian Financial Crisis, for example, demonstrates the failure of globalization led by the unbalance of entangled bonds of global economic network and their power dynamics as well as relations, which exacerbated various forms of inequalities. The crisis, which started in Thailand as a consequence of the national burden of foreign debt leading to the collapse of the Thai currency, instantly spread and risked the economy of not only the neighboring Southeast Asian countries, including Indonesia, Malaysia, and the Philippines, but also East Asian countries.[2]

Over the decades, the realms of unilaterally vertical globalization have expanded further. Today, globalization is acting as a "bulldozer" riding over not only the economies, but also, the cultures and people of our global community, placing the Global North at the top of the hierarchical ladder of globalization to control the Global South and allowing the powerful to practice and enforce its hegemony over the less powerful (Torres & Van Heertum, 2009). While the advancement of technology, along with social media, has generated more active diaspora of

[2] Among the East Asian countries, Korea was the most severely affected nation during the IMF crisis, as the foreign debt-to-GDP ration in Korea rose from 13 percent to 40 percent (Asian Development Bank, 2003).

cultural burgeoning and diversity, the mainstream culture of our global community continues to be defined and framed by the hegemonic predominance of Americanization and Europeanization.

What has facilitated and expedited the spread of Western hegemonic culture in the late 20th and the early 21st centuries is the media, one of the most popular tools that disseminates ideologies, norms, messages, and even fantasies across the borders. It is through various genres of media which individuals and collective groups construct their views of the world. Media culture incessantly provides "materials out of which individuals in contemporary media and consumer societies forge their very identities, including sense of self, notion of what it means to be male or female, and how people experience class, ethnicity and race, sexuality, age, nationality, and other markers of identity" (Kellner, 2009, p. 5).

Understanding the insurmountable power of media's ability to transform the minds of their viewers, global conglomerates use the corporate media as a tool to incorporate and promote their marketable messages to their global customers and drive the consumer culture. The problem here is not just about the consumer-driven and capitalistic messages; rather, the controversy is that these messages are represented solely by financiers who prioritize monetary profits and no one else is on board to be part of the decision-making process. What this means is that the messages these corporations are constantly transmitting to their audience are uniform and unilateral; this gradually elevates the audience's desire to consume the media capitalists' ideas and values, which are commodified, packaged, and marketed in the most simplistic form of purchase.

Moreover, media capitalism triggers the crisis of identity construction on a global level. The surge of Western neoliberal capitalistic values that are transmitted through the American

mass media set the definitions and standards of the global community. As a result, the world is facing a clash of multiple cultures and values as global neoliberal media capitalism continuously perpetuates the homogenous interests of the corporates.

The media, which have emerged as the main tool of communication and key message transmitter of neoliberal capitalistic corporations of the 21st century, determine and position the fate of our global democracy and citizenship. The concept of democracy is linked to the notion of social justice, which can be initially implemented and achieved when a society creates and maintains institutions that view education as a public asset and not merely as a private good. The requirements of democratic citizenship "necessitate vigilance in public affairs, criticism of public officials (and corporate interests), and participation in political decision making in the interest of expanding accountability, equality of opportunity, justice, and the public good" (Giroux & Pollock, 2010, p. 20). Thus, it becomes the public's critical responsibility to diagnose and analyze how the hegemony of Eurocentric ideologies, predominantly American values, is triggering identity crises in non-Western peripheral societies.

1.4 West Meets East

This research examines the consequences of globalization by focusing on the spread of the American ideologies in Hollywood movies and their influence on Korean women's educational as well as professional values and their identity constructions. Presuming that movies serve as pedagogical tools that impose complex influences on their audiences, the study observes if Hollywood movies play any influential roles in Korean women's envisioning and constructing of their future identities as well as projecting and planning their future, by

chronicling the experiences of these young women living in the era of cultural and ideological clashes and crises.

Over the past four decades, Korea has undergone a dramatic Western modernization. The wave of Western capitalism has not only restructured the Korean economy and politics, but also the culture. Today, as a consequence of globalization, cultural contradictions are prevalent in the Korean society, which voluntarily conserves the remnants of its traditional Confucian values while accepting the Western capitalist-driven culture. As a matter of fact, globalization, which has emerged in the synonymous form of Westernization, is rife in the Korean economy and culture as a result of the rapid and massive dissemination of technology, knowledge, social institutions, and images that originate from the West (Yi, 2002). For example, over the years, Korean traditional music and arts have lost their places in the daily lives of Korean people, who have come to find the Western-style theater, music, and art more familiar and appreciable. Such Western global influence on Korean culture has reshaped values and standards of younger generations. Interestingly, at the same time, Korea remains to be the most Confucian country in the world, where the traits of Confucianism are omnipresent, from politics to economy, and from workplace to homes. Confucianism is a living philosophy that breathes into every Korean's narrative.

Therefore, it is safe to assume that Korean women are living in a society of contradictions, characterized by the traits of both the East and the West. Women's roles have undergone multiple phases of changes the past decades. Korean women's primary role has long been confined to domesticity. The foremost responsibility of women has been, and continues to be, tied to growing families, conforming to the traditional Confucian values. Today, in the era of

globalization, on top of becoming nurturing mothers and wise wives, Korean women are expected to be well educated and schooled. Another defining trait of the younger generational Korean women is that they have grown accustomed to the Western socio-political and cultural values, some of which are likely to have been acquired through their consumption of the American mass media and acceptance of the messages in these media texts.

Lately, the level of educational achievement and financial independence of Korean women has elevated and accelerated, partially because of globalization, accompanied by the spread of the Western culture, often through Hollywood movies; moreover, the transformation of women from the traditional Confucian women to the "modern women" has prevailed.[3] Watching Hollywood's continuous portrayal of so-called independent women with successful education and careers, Korean women often associate success with fiscal independence, intellectual achievement, and individual freedom. However, their academic and career aspirations often reach limits as they are expected to meet the Korean Confucian society's gender expectations. This is where the contradictions of the East and the West emerge. Korean traditions continue to emphasize the importance of marriage, thus challenging women in the process of developing their independent identities outside of their martial relationships and familial circles. Although the society's attitude toward women has shifted these days, women are still expected to play their primary roles as mothers, wives, and daughter-in-laws.

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[3] Associated with the term "new women," modern women were the new emerging group in Japan in the 1920s. This group consisted of educated, progressive young women who "transgressed social boundaries and questioned her dependence on men [and] started to pose a threat to gender relations" (Sato, 2003, p. 13). Originally, this new woman, who was synonymous to Henrik Ibsen's Nora, cultivated herself through reading and writing, and demanding social equality. As the idea of modern women became more popular, increasing number of females began to dress like modern girls, believing that their choice of dresses and hair represented their empowerment. Typically, modern girls wore Western-style clothes, cut her hair short, spent money frivolously, and pursued promiscuous sex. Consequently, such attitudes and features of modern women initiated the consumer culture (Sato, 2003). This modern woman culture later was adopted by Korean women during and after the Japanese colonization of Korea in the early 20th century.

1.5 Research Focus

Today, most Korean women pursue higher education to achieve their career aspirations and to meet the expectations of the globalized Korean society. During their pursuit of education and financial independence, women define themselves as independent women; however, their independence is often challenged by Confucianism, which prioritizes familial and marital responsibilities over individual achievements. In the Confucian setting, a man is expected to fulfill his familial responsibility as a breadwinner while a woman is to serve her familial duty as a nurturing mother, a supportive and faithful wife, and an obedient daughter-in-law.

This research concentrates on the role of the American mass media as a pedagogical tool in an everyday non-formal setting outside the United States. More specifically, the purpose of this research is to observe how Korean women, who are living in multiple cultures, define gender roles and construct their identities. Moreover, the study takes a close look at Korean women's Confucian reception of gender identities and roles that are constructed in women's movies, also known as chick-flicks.[4] The study examines the influence of global Hollywood and its neoliberal capitalistic messages diffused throughout Korea, by investigating how women construct their education and career goals and if their academic or professional aspirations have been guided and influenced, in any way, by Hollywood, with a justified assumption that Hollywood movies

[4] Chick-flicks, a nickname for romantic comedies, emerged in the early 1990s. One of the features that defines this genre is the female-centered narrative. Chick-flicks universally employ a narrative structure in which a single woman is portrayed as being successful at everything, but love; in the end, after consistent attempts, the female protagonist finally finds the right man whom she can confide with and commit to a heterosexual partnership (Schreiber, 2011). Most movies of this genre feature a male character who is immature in both "bodily humor and sexual innuendo" and a female who appears as a girl-woman, an innocent figure bound up in a narrative that prioritizes romance (Tasker, 2011). Some of the most successful chick-flicks include *Pretty Woman* (1990), *The Princess Diaries* (2001), *The Devil Wears Prada* (2006), and *Sex and the City* (2008).

are reinforcing the culture of Western hegemony and gender roles of a patriarchal capitalistic society.

Aside from examining the convergence and divergence of the two cultures - Confucian culture that has been deeply ingrained in the Korean society for centuries versus Western capitalism that has pervaded throughout the Korean nation over the past few decades - the research also probes the value of media education as an effective tool of a non-formal critical pedagogy. While critical media literacy, a new language that needs to be learned in the era of media and technology capitalism at its zenith, is an active and engaging field of study in the Western world, including the United States and European countries, has not yet marked its significant presence in either academia or public discourses in Korea. The questions this study attempts to answer are as follows:

1. Do Hollywood movies, particularly romantic comedies, play any roles in shaping Korean millennial women's values and ideologies?

2. Are there cultural and ideological clashes between Confucian values and the influx of Western culture via movies in South Korea? Living in the society where two splitting values coexist, how do Korean women respond to the divergence and convergence of the cultures of Korean Confucianism and Western neoliberal capitalism?

3. Can cultural studies and critical media literacy serve as a pedagogical tool for cultivating and instilling global citizenship in Korean women, providing them with a critical lens and a democratic space for their shared dialogues and narratives of their reception of the American mass media?

The representation of women in Hollywood movies has transformed over the past decades, however, not as radically and significantly as it should have been. Unfortunately, neither filmmakers nor media conglomerates can be enforced to be socially or politically responsible for generating diverse gender representations. Changing the minds of media conglomerates, whose primary goals are focused on financial profits, is almost impossible: "Questions of modernizing sex-role stereotypes are rarely on the filmmakers' minds, even when the story is about a woman and man in love" (Smith, 1972, p. 15).

Similarly, the spread of global neoliberal capitalism is unstoppable. We cannot enervate the dominance of American corporatization in our global community. What can be done to freed women from their stereotypical traditional gender roles and images is by educating the audience, both men and women, giving them opportunities to build their own world views with their critical lens and their critical media literacy. Since media literacy has not found its place in Korea yet, the need for media education is urgent. Hence, this study serves as an introduction to media literacy for the Korean female participants as well as the readers of this research, hopefully opening the gateway of experiential education and introducing a meaningful pedagogical approach.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

"The nation is imagined as *limited,*
because even the largest of them, encompassing perhaps a billion living human beings,
has finite, if elastic, boundaries, beyond which lie other nations...
It is imagined as a *community*,
because, regardless of the actual inequality and exploitation that may prevail in each,
the nation is always conceived as a deep, horizontal comradeship.
These deaths bring us abruptly face to face with the central problem posed by nationalism:
what makes the shrunken imaginings of recent history generate such colossal sacrifices?
I believe that the beginnings of an answer lie in the cultural roots of nationalism."

-*Imagined Communities,* Benedict Anderson (1983)

2.1 Global Neoliberal Capitalism

Globalization has many faces, which present a multitude of intertwined concepts, ideologies, and perspectives. Often, globalization is primarily affiliated with the field of economics, bringing the topics such as free trade and foreign investments to the table. However, globalization transcends the border of economics and extends further, crossing multiple boundaries of various fields. From political and economic perspectives, the various pacts among nations in our borderless society influence local policies. From a cultural aspect, the free flow of ideas shape people's identities and values and create hybrid cultures.

Globalization is a complex concept, mostly because of its composition of multifarious forms. One of the most widely disseminated and ingrained forms of globalization is the "top-down globalization," also known as "globalization from above" (Sousa Santos, 2002). This vertical form of globalization has long served the interests of winners, who often become the

narrators of the discourse on globalization.[5] Sousa Santos analyzes and evaluates globalization more in depth by acknowledging different forms of globalization. He discusses "globalized localism," which consists of the "process by which a given local phenomenon is successfully globalized" (Sousa Santos, 2002, p. 42). The universal acceptance of the English language as lingua franca, the popular spread of Western ideologies underscoring individualism and independence, and the ubiquity of American franchises such as Starbucks and McDonald's around the globe are some of the examples of globalized localism.

Another form of globalization Sousa Santos points out is "localized globalism," which includes free-trade enclaves, touristic use of historical treasures, and massive depletion of natural resources to pay for foreign debt. As Sousa Santos proposes, globalization has taken a form as "globalized localism," representing "globalization from above," through which neoliberals attempt to "privatize public goods and service, under the premise that markets are superior to government as mediators of social relations" (Torres & Van Heertum, 2009).

Not only has the phenomenon of globalization been led by the Western nations, but also, the study of globalization has been performed unilaterally by the Global North. The nature of globalization, which has long been framed within the context of the current U.S. and European foreign policy, has been criticized by the scholars of these Western regions (Torres & Van Heertum, 2009). Scholars have produced prolific in-depth studies on the issue of globalization, mainly discussing its impacts on foreign countries and cultures; unfortunately, the discussion on

[5] However, even "top-down globalization" and "globalization from above" are not comprehensive and thorough enough to frame the overall picture of globalization. It is neither "globalization from above" nor "globalization from below" that will equilibrate the existing power relations between countries. Rather, the only way to palliate this crisis is through "globalization from inside," which can be achieved by the nations through educating their local citizens to become global citizens who can define globalization on their own terms and apply their local politics, economy, and culture in the global community rather than passively being assimilated to the Western-philiac global ideologies.

the significance of solving the problem within the local and national borders has not yet received much attention.[6]

More often than not, the term globalization is oversimplified and overgeneralized as it is predominantly viewed from an economic perspective. It is an inevitable truth that the spread of globalization was triggered by the economic expansion. However, one of the aspects that is often undermined in the public discourse is the spreading homogeneity of the global culture. While it is true that globalization has brought benefits and positive outcomes in multilateral ways, it has also widened the gap between the more privileged and the less privileged, thus creating more inequalities and failing to bring about social justice.

The dominant form of the 21st-century globalization, in all contexts, including economy, politics, and culture, is neoliberalism. Since the fall of the Soviet Union in 1989, neoliberal capitalism has marked dominance globally, leading "aspirations to economic development based on capitalist profit making and private enterprise" to reflect in the aspirations and the economic plans of most nations (Knauft, 2007, p. 791). The proponents of neoliberalism describe that neoliberal economic models and practices encourage deregulation of markets, less government intervention, and privatization and standardization of public services, and argue that free markets and unrestricted flow of capital produce the greatest social, political, and economic good. The concept of neoliberalism, just like globalization, is a complex idea:

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[6] What is also worth noting about the term and the concept of globalization is that there is actually no "genuine globalization" in the Western capitalist world system. Sousa Santos (2002) argues that what we call globalization is always the "successful globalization of a given localism" and "there is no global condition for which we cannot find a local root, a specific cultural embeddedness." Globalization entails "localization." The author once again points out that the reason we prefer the term globalization even when there is no "genuine globalization" is that "hegemonic scientific discourse tends to prefer the story of the world as told by the winners" (Sousa Santos, 2002, p. 41).

> Neoliberalism is not a neutral, technical, economic discourse that can be measured with the precision of a mathematical formula or defended through an appeal to the rules of a presumptively unassailable science that conveniently leaves its own history behind. Nor is it a paragon of economic rationality that offers the best "route to optimum efficiency, rapid economic growth and innovation, and rising prosperity for all who are willing to work hard and take advantage of available opportunities" (Kotz, 2003, p. 16).

Neoliberalism has failed in many ways. Under neoliberalism, while governments are becoming less involved, private corporations are taking their economic freedom to the maximum level. The deregulation of the economy has led to the increase in extreme neoliberal measures such as privatization, standardization, and commodification. The one goal that is shared by the majority of corporations today is generating and accumulating revenues. Corporate social responsibility, while the practice of this concept has become more visible today, is not a major concern for many companies.[7]

Moreover, neoliberal policies are used to pursue "rapacious free-trade agreements and expand Western financial and commercial interests" on a global level through the heavy-handed policies of the World Bank, the World Trade Organization (WTO), and the International Monetary Fund (IMF), all of which are supported and organized by the United States, "to manage and transfer resources and wealth from the poor and less developed nations to the richest and most powerful nation-states and to the wealthy corporate defenders of capitalism" by imposing restrictions and conditions for granting loans, "euphemistically referred to as a program of structural adjustment," not only subjecting to capitalist values, but also, undermining the possibility of an "inclusive and substantive democracy" (Giroux, 2005, p. 6).

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[7] The Harvard Kennedy School of Government's definition of "corporate social responsibility" is as follows: "Throughout the industrialized world and in many developing countries there has been a sharp escalation in the social roles corporations are expected to play. Companies are facing new demands to engage in public-private partnerships and are under growing pressure to be accountable not only to shareholders, but also to stakeholders such as employees, consumers, suppliers, local communities, policymakers, and society-at-large."

Although its epistemology lies within economic terms, neoliberalism is a broad ideology that crosses the borders of economics, politics, and culture. Neoliberalism is an ideology, which at times becomes "a fanaticism that subordinates the art of democratic politics to the rapacious laws of a market economy that expands in reach to include all aspects of social life within the dictates and values of a market-driven theory" (Giroux, 2005, p.12). It also serves as a cultural theory, which becomes "a historical and socially constructed ideology that need to be made visible, critically engaged, and shaken from the stranglehold of power… [exercising] over most of the commanding institutions of national and global life" (Giroux, 2005, p. 12). In a neoliberal society, democracy is defined in the context of free markets while the issues of equality and justice are used to disparate those who suffer systemic deprivation and chronic punishment. Although Giroux makes keen critiques on the negative consequences and immoral nature of neoliberalism, his definition of globalization is, again, not comprehensive and complete enough to draw a conclusion on globalization. Globalization, after all, is a contested terrain.

Without a single definite theory on globalization, we are still in search of more comprehensive, universal definition of this global phenomenon. Further study is needed especially since most theories of globalization are "reductive, undialective, and one-sided, either failing to see the interaction between technological features of globalization and the global restructuring of capitalism or failing to articulate the complex relations between capitalism and democracy" (Kellner, 2002, p. 289). Thus, we must continue to question, observe, and critique how globalization is affecting the organized solidarity, how market forces are affecting both local and global citizenship, and how education, in the crisis of neoliberalism, can save the global citizenship (Torres, 2002).

2.2 Global Hollywood's Imagined Community

Media construct and reimagine cultures by framing public's perceptions as well as misperceptions. As Giroux (2009) explains, culture, which has strong ties to media, is a social field where a circuit of power, ideologies, and values are produced and circulated, identities are constructed, agency is manifested, and discourses are created:

> As an escape from social misery, or distraction from the cares and woes of everyday existence, people turn to media culture to produce some meaning and value in their lives… Soap operas and situation comedies provide education for coping in the contemporary social order, while action entertainment demonstrates who has power and who doesn't, who can and cannot exercise violence, and who does and does not get awarded with the benefits of the "good life" in the media and consumer society. Advertising demonstrates how to solve problems and how to be happy, successful, and popular – through proper commodity behavior. Films glamorize the "American way of life" and provide unreal models of identification, while images of violence constantly increase (Kellner, 2003, p. 332-333).

The glamorous "American way of life" not only shapes the minds of the American people on the American soil, but also, creates a "global imagined community," making the American culture the standard form for all, regardless of the global citizens' nationalities, cultures, religions, and so on. Benedict Anderson (1991) defines the nation as an "imagined political community," claiming that "the members of even the smallest nation will never know most of their fellow-members, meet them, or even hear them, yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communion." Borrowing Anderson's term, the American mass media, especially Hollywood movies, create imagined communities on a global level, presenting the audience with the recurring homogenous images of their communities and networks they belong to.

Joseph Stalin once said, “if I could control the medium of the American motion picture, I would need nothing else to convert the entire world to Communism” (Vaughn, 2006, p. 7). Hollywood movies, for decades, have shaped the global citizens’ feelings and minds through their standardized imagined community.

“Americanization,” the term scholars refer to in the discourse of media hegemony, has been criticized for being the “new political hegemon in the Western world [restructuring] markets and patterns of trade through the Marshall Plan, which guaranteed access to the European markets for American products” (Kroes, 1999, p. 465). The opening of the European markets gave America an access to export its cultural artifacts, principally Hollywood movies, and this economic imperialism gradually metamorphosed into, or extended to, cultural imperialism. Furthermore, as carriers of an American version of the ‘good life,’ American products, from cars to movies, from clothing styles to kitchen apparel, all actively doubled as agents of American cultural diplomacy, translating trade into political imperialism” (Kroes, 1999, p. 465).

What often accompanies Hollywood’s cultural imperialism is the theme of neoliberal capitalism of the white patriarchy, the dominant ideology that the United States was founded on. White patriarchal capitalism doesn’t necessarily mean that wealthy white men gather to oppress everyone else in the nation; rather, it is an ideology that influences the ways most Americans believe in and think about themselves and the world around them (Benshoff & Griffin, 2004).

Hollywood movies, whose underlying principles include white patriarchal capitalism, have portrayed men as independent, powerful, and masculine leaders – the oppressors – and women as weak and dependent subjects – the oppressed. Not only have Hollywood movies

invested in the over-representation of hyper-masculinity, widening gender gaps, but also, they encourage spreading the ideology of neoliberalism by introducing consumerism, highlighting "a reformulation of liberal individualism through the notions of 'choice' and 'consumer sovereignty'" (Butler & Desai, 2008, p. 7). For the past century, the production of commodities has mushroomed all over the world. The United States, a strong proponent of the neoliberal capitalism, has "signified the codes of modernity and promised the pursuit of happiness in most up-dated version, as the pursuit of consumption" (Wagnleitner, 2001, p. 443). America, thus, no longer stands for a country in a classical sense, but rather presents itself as a brand (Lasn, 1999):

> America™ is no different from other famous brand names which are not only "sold" to the citizens of the United States, but to consumers worldwide. The brand name "America" is associated with catchwords such as "democracy," "opportunity," and "freedom" but, as is the case with many advertisements, the American reality is very different from its brand image… Continuing this line of thought, the United States of America then would no longer be made up of its fifty states but of fifty dominating brands – The United Corporations of America (Wagnleitner, 2001, p. 459).

As Wagnletiner (2001) argues, the power of American conglomeration and media capitalism is insurmountable. The media, which are mostly owned by the corporate power, provide a "platform for high profile right-wing pundits and politicians to remind us either of how degenerate the power have become or to reinforce the central neoliberal tenet that all problems are private rather than social in nature" (Giroux, 2005, p. 9).

One of the most evident examples that demonstrates the power of American media is Walt Disney, a "paradigmatic instance of globalizing capital" (Giroux & Pollock, 2010). Disney owns six motion picture studios (Walt Disney, Pixar, DisneyToon, Hollywood Pictures, Touchstone Pictures, and Miramax Films); Walt Disney Studios Home Entertainment; the ABC

television network with its 226 affiliated stations; cable television networks (including the Disney channel, ESPN, and at least six other channels), 227 radio stations; four music companies (including Buena Vista Music Group and Hollywood Records); five theme park resorts located in California, Florida, Tokyo, Paris, and Hong Kong; three cruise lines; two theatrical production companies that produce Broadway and touring ice shows; several book publishing imprints; fifteen magazine titles; five video game development studios; and the ubiquitous Disney stores, just to name a few, providing a "safe, secure environment for consumers to experience the Disney brand anytime and anywhere" (Giroux & Pollock, 2010). As an icon of American middle-class culture, Disney has always actively appealed to both children and parents. Disney is believed to be "a worldwide distributor of a particular kind of cultural politics… a teaching machine that not only exerts influence over consumers but also wages an aggressive campaign to peddle is political and cultural influence in the United States and overseas" (Giroux & Pollock, 2010, xiii-xiv):

> For non-Western cultures and for children today, Disney cannot embody nostalgia in the same way it does for Westerners and for baby boomers; instead, Disney offers access to a postmodern world of free-floating identity signifiers, as it unmoors a concept of selfhood from the stable social institution and codes of an earlier generation (for instance, family, nation, and church) and replaces it with a performance-driven notion of the self as a brand that has the power to generate its own *global* social networks. In this context, self-actualization and empowerment – rather than a nostalgic sense of loss – come packaged as various self-enhancing commodities made available to those who have money to spend and the optimism to believe in them (Giroux and Pollock, 2010, p. 9).

Accordingly, as neoliberalism eliminates the government regulation of market forces and "celebrates a ruthless competitive individualism" through the hands of "power corporate interests, the privileged, and unrepentant religious bigots," the world we are living in becomes a

heavily consumer-driven place (Peters & Fitzsimons, 2001). The presence of neoliberalism is also visible in our citizenship. Today's neeoliberal citizenship, which is often delivered by the popular culture, is used to constitute a political intervention, connecting knowledge, power, and free market ideology (Giroux, 2009).

The significant role that media hold in our society's construction of values and ideologies is undeniable. This is why the topic of media often lies in the hotbed of public discourses. In the course of dialogues of this topic, however, the core of the problem is overshadowed and undermined. That is, while the unanimous agreement on the ubiquity of media in our society is overwhelmingly pervasive in the dialogues, the actual problems that today's media bring to our local and global table are often marginalized. It is not the unfathomable value and the impact of the media that we should continue to blatantly criticize; rather, we should tackle the core of the political, economic, educational, cultural, and social consequences that today's media bring about.

As media produce and generate ideas, beliefs, and values, they create cultures. In doing so, they often manufacture misleading and oppressive ideologies and dictate what is right or wrong, good or bad, accepted or not accepted, and normal or abnormal. All this is possible because media incorporate the power of persuasion by repeating the same narratives and transporting their audience to the narratives.

The audience are prone to believe in the stereotypes and values generated by the media because same ideas are perpetuated repeatedly; this repetition of narratives eventually paralyze the audience's reception. Media culture, consequently, becomes an educational site where "identities are being continually transformed, power is enacted, and learning assumes a political

dynamic as it becomes not only the condition for the acquisition of agency but also the sphere for imagining oppositional social change" (Giroux, 2009, p. 89).

Media and cultural studies, by nature, are always a subject of contestation and transformation as they are continuously evolving (Kellner, 2009). This is why we need critical media literacy, a critical pedagogical tool that provides the audience with opportunities to decode and encode cultural artifacts within their cultural context and with their own critical lens. Moreover, cultural studies should encourage analyses and critiques from multiple perspectives, inviting audiences from diverse cultural, religious, political, and socioeconomic backgrounds in order to allow cultural studies to be as critical and comprehensive as possible.

2.3 Hollywood in Korea

With an intractably fast spread of neoliberalism, along came the free flow of cultural markets. One obvious path of globalization is the export and import of cultures. As much as English has become a lingua franca of money and power, American mass culture, which is often associated with money and power, has become the global culture (Jameson, 1998).

"Hollywood is a place you can't geographically define. We don't really know where it is," John Ford said on BBC in 1964 (Bordwell, 1988). The American dominance of popular culture does not need to be questioned. In 1998, the overseas box office of $6.821 billion equaled the domestic figure of $6.877 billion of the movie industry in the United States. In 2001 and 2002, all top 20 films with the greatest gross revenues in the world were, again, from the United States. The benchmark for a successful Hollywood in India alone has increased almost by 1,000 percent over the past ten years, from $100,000 to $1 million. And Hollywood's overseas sales

continue to grow. In 2015, global box-office receipts hit 38.3 billion, as international movie ticket sales accounted for about 73 percent of the U.S. box office, which was up from 66 percent in 2010 (Motion Picture Association of America, 2015).

Korea, alongside with China, offers a favorable market to global Hollywood. Imported foreign movies, predominantly American movies, have always been popular and successful in Korea. The number of imported films, mostly from the United States, almost doubled from 27 in 1985 to 50 in 1987. The number increased to 175 in 1988. By 1990, they were taking up to 80 percent of the box office (Rosen, 2003, p. 29). Between 1990 and 1995, Hollywood's profit grew by 741 percent in Korea, while profits in other countries were not as significantly high: 198 percent in Brazil, 188 percent in Spain, 187 percent in the United Kingdom and Ireland, 144 percent in Switzerland, 133 percent in Italy, 109 percent in France, and 63 percent in Canada (Wagnleitner, 2001).

The success of Hollywood movies in Korea requires further analysis as they have made significant impacts in the transformation of the Korean popular culture. As much as the American media industry burgeoned on the Korean peninsula, the media market of Korea has also flourished strikingly, marking an explosive growth of cultural exports in the late 20th and the early 21st centuries. Korean soap operas (also known as dramas), films, pop music, fashion, and cuisine have emerged on the surface of the global market and begun to satiate the global cultural appetite. Since 1999, the exports of Korean video games, television dramas, and popular music, also known as the K-Pop, have doubled, generating $1.8 billion in 2008 and validating the significance of "Hallyu," which translates to the Korean wave (*The Economist*, 2010).[8]

[8] The term, "hallyu," first coined by Chinese journalists in the late 1990s, is one of the most popular research topics in academia. Translated as the Korean wave, it expresses the love of Korean cultural products (K.H Kim, 2011).

Although “Hallyu” has been acclaimed for having helped Korea gain its fame in the international entertainment media industry, what has often been undermined is that the media texts of “Hallyu” often resemble many traits of the corporate-driven, capitalistic, and patriarchal Hollywood industry.

The traits of Hollywood movies are reflected in many contemporary Korean movies. Hollywood is no longer just a place in California. Hollywood’s recurring themes and plots that have helped them sell have become the global standard. Some of the common themes, plots, and characters that appear repeatedly in many successful Hollywood movies, which generate significant revenues both at home and abroad, include a simple “good guys” vs. “bad guys” plot, with clear division of appearance and behavior between protagonist and antagonist, “formulaic and emotional” stories with happy endings, obsession with beauty, and hope and optimism (Olson, 2000).

The elements that determine a global context, according to the standards of Hollywood, are as follows: 1. “circular stories,” which refer to tales that begin where they end, or “return to the same equilibrium as existed at the beginning of the tale”; 2. “archetypal characters,” including familiar stock heroes, villains, and incidental characters that keep storylines “within the comfort zone of audiences”; 3. “open-ended plots,” in which stories lend themselves to “endless cycling, renovation, and recapitulation”; 4. “inclusion strategies,” which refer to “devices that pull audiences into action and help them feel involved” with the use of the point-of-view shot, a “standard device in the Hollywood omniscient style”; 5. “negentropy,” the process by which the electronic media assure audiences that life is not “fundamentally chaotic,” but rather, “orderly and purposeful”; 6. “awe,” a spectacle that inspires the audience, using aesthetics

and high production technology and sets; and 7. “omnipresence,” saturation of the human environment by electronic media stimulation, which creates a condition in which being an audience is a “common and frequent experience” in various venues, from shops to restaurants, and through consumerism (Olson, 2000, p. 12).

Many Korean movies, especially the internationally acclaimed ones, share the traits of Hollywood blockbusters, bearing the Hollywood imprint.[9] Korean cinema was originally based on the Western technology of film, which localized to Korea’s socio-political context, which consists of a mixture of colonialism, capitalism, and nationalism: “the history of the [Korean cinema’s] success shows contemporary Korean cinema’s ambivalent state where the national sentiment of *haan* was encroached upon by globalization, and Hollywood film conventions were absorbed into the Korean national identity” (Jung, 2011, p. 10). Under the globalization led by the United States, Korea “obsessively learned how to completely mimic [American culture, socio-economic system, and lifestyle] and how the whole Korean society could be Americanized” (G.W. Kim, 2002, p. 27).

There has been a substantial amount of research done on the influence of Hollywood on a global scale. Unfortunately, there has not been much study conducted on the influence of Hollywood on the Korean audience in Korea. Furthermore, critical media literacy is relatively novel and esoteric in Korea. The need to question and discuss how American movies shape the Korean audience’s minds is more urgent than ever.

[9] Since *Shiri* (1999), one of the most successful Korean blockbusters a la Hollywood-mode, many Korean movies have mimicked Hollywood’s recurring themes and techniques. Needless to say, the power of Hollywood remains ubiquitous.

2.4 Constructing Identities in Hollywood's Imagined Communities

The power of media culture and its influence on both national and global communities cannot be underestimated. Media culture, in the forms of images, sounds, and spectacles, produces the fabric of everyday life, "dominating leisure time, shaping political views and social behavior, and providing the materials out of which people forge their very identities" (Kellner, 2003, p. 1).

In the process of reading and analyzing the media, one needs to understand that media don't simply serve as entertainment, educational, or informational sources. Media also function as economic and political tools. For decades, Hollywood has repeatedly reflected misleading images and ideas on various racial, cultural groups, sexual, religious, and socio-economic groups. Consequently, marginalized and less privileged groups have become more marginalized, while groups of authorities have gained more power, further widening the gap of inequalities. Such traits of hegemony are not only prevailing on a domestic scale, but also, on a global scale, giving more power and privileges to more developed countries and promoting a homogenous culture instead of creating heterogeneous global communities. When people interact with others from different cultures, they develop their own views of the world; however, when they are given only one cultural image, the American way of life for instance, there is no space for the hybridity and diversity of world views, but only a single-handed, standardized view of the world, which casts a shadow over one's identity formation.

Lately, individual identity crisis has been led to collective identity crisis on a national level, and finally snowballed into a global phenomenon (Huntington, 2004). If the American culture were composed of diverse groups, serving and served by different interest groups, the

problem of homogenization and standardization would not be so excruciating. What exacerbates the problem is that the American culture portrayed by Hollywood is homogenized and monolithic as the result of media capitalism.

Among the various ideologies that have been constructed and disseminated by Hollywood throughout the rest of the world, one world view that has marked its significant presence in East Asia is Orientalism (Said, 1978). Orientalism, the West's Eurocentric view of the East, mainly the prejudiced attitude toward the Middle East, has been a popular source of ideology in Hollywood. The themes around xenophobia have been repeatedly ingrained in various genres of Hollywood movies for years; from *Rambo* (1982) to more recent *Borat* (2006) and *The Dictator* (2012), American movies often vilify Central Asians as the malicious enemy of the state. The recurring negative images of the Middle East have not only pushed Americans to turn their backs against Arabs and Muslims, but also made the Middle East a global enemy of the state and a scapegoat for global terrorism.

Hollywood's Orientalism also makes a strong presence on the Korean peninsula. Over the last 10 years, the number of foreigners has increased significantly in Korea. Nonetheless, the country remains homogenous and monolingual; Koreans still do not have many opportunities to interact with foreigners. Despite the lack of active and direct interactions and engagements with foreigners, when it comes to defining and identifying "otherness" and "aliens," Koreans use the framework of Orientalism that Hollywood has constructed. For instance, when Koreans hear the word "immigrant worker," the ethnicity they picture originates from Southeast Asia or the Middle East; they hardly consider Caucasians from Europe or North America as immigrant

workers, although these white foreigners are, legally speaking, immigrant workers as well (S.H Kim, 2011).

This dissemination of racism comes partially from the American mass media. As Said stated, "so far as the Orient is concerned, standardization and cultural stereotyping have intensified the hold of the 19th century academic and imaginative demonology of 'the mysterious Orient'" (Said, 1978, p. 26). Having employed and adopted the Western view of the East and Orientalism, Koreans equate white men to superiority and darker race to inferiority (S.H Kim, 2011). The world, therefore, is unconsciously defining "the other" in a standardized way, eventually creating identity crisis and deepening racial, ethnic, and religious inequalities on a global scale.

Thus, global Hollywood must be scrutinized with a critical approach. As we draw a more expanded borderless cultural map, we are anticipating more identity crises. What we see today is an increasing *identity,* or sameness, rather than *difference*: "the rapid assimilation of hitherto autonomous national markets and productive zones into a single sphere, the disappearance of national subsistence, the forced integration of countries all over the globe" (Jameson, 1998, p. 57). Consequently, what we have in our framework of globalization is a "picture of standardization on an unparalleled new scale" (Jameson, 1998, p. 57).

2.5 Cultural Studies

The need for cultural studies as critical media pedagogy is more exigent and crucial than it has ever been in the age of information and technology. Global democracy and citizenship are at risk, as the standardized, commodified, and corporatized popular culture derives the youth of

power to develop their capacities to "engage in critical thought, participate in power relations and policy decisions that affect their lives, and transform racial, social, and economic inequities that close down democratic social relations" (Giroux, 2010, p. 20). As mentioned previously, what is threatening the core values of democracy, including equality, freedom, and justice, is not the ubiquity of media, *per se*, but rather, the over-domineering ideologies that the media continuously feed the public. Throughout the history of Hollywood, we see recurring images and values, which are believed to define America as the land of freedom and opportunity to look up to. Hollywood and Wall Street are the symbols of prosperity, happiness, and success. The people who have been given the life of happiness and security are mostly white middle and upper class families and individuals. Such unilateral nature of the media explains the motivation and goal behind Antonio Gramsci's theory of cultural hegemony, which will be further discussed in the later chapter on theoretical frameworks.

One concept that has derived from cultural and media studies is hegemony, a concept articulated by Gramsci. The contemporary definition of hegemony, referring to the diffused dominance of values and culture of a dominant group, is rooted in the Marxist view of a society: the ruling class, who has more power and privilege, controls the economy and politics of society, and it is this class ideology that is accepted as norms and standard values (Marx & Engels, 1848). In the context of media, arguments over the issue of hegemony have been made transnationally from various aspects:

> Rethinking the concept of popular culture was part of a wider effort undertaken by Marxist theorists to understand the relationship between culture and class in nonreductive terms, while also attending to the cultural politics of nonclass divisions. The primary resource in this endeavor was the Gramscian concept of hegemony, leadership, or rule, which describes the production of consent to alternative versions of social reality as a diffuse process of cultural struggle. In

> influential essays, Stuart Hall and Tony Bennett used a Gramscian framework to define popular culture as a site where the struggle for hegemony unfolds, the terrain of an uneven, continually shifting engagement between dominant and subordinate forces. Popular culture, in this conception, was not reducible to a form of social control imposed from above, but neither could it be understood as a purely expressive culture emergent from below (Traube, 1996, p. 132-133).

As British cultural theorist Stuart Hall (1973) asserted, the two key concepts in cultural studies are ideology and representation. That certain identities and languages are coded and represented in particular ways is unquestionable. The next question is who controls these codes and how they are done. Using the Gramscian theory of cultural hegemony, Hall suggests that ideology is the product of a ruling class, who is in control of coding, through which popular and favorable consent is disseminated. Media messages are embedded with everyday beliefs and practices that favor the ruling class that reproduces hegemony. Thus, media message is a "transcription of social reality [challenged] with a redefinition that attributes ideological transformation to the media process" (Rojek, 2009, p. 51). In response to the media hegemony, Hall established his theory of decoding as an "ordinary accomplishment of audiences through the practices of reflexive assimilation and critical exchange" (Rojek, 2009, p. 51). Hall believes that hegemony constantly involves a balance of power, and the agency should not obscure the fact that media operate through "determinate codes which anchor semiosis and ultimately enhance the dominant cultural order" (Rojek, 2009, p. 53).

According to Hall, while producers send their messages through the mechanism of encoding, these messages are neither fixed nor transparent, and the meanings constantly change as the audiences are not passive recipients. Using the basis that media representations are constructed by producers and assimilated by the audiences, Hall categorizes coding mechanisms into four types: the dominant hegemonic code, the professional code, the negotiated code, and

the oppositional code. The dominant code refers to the practice of receiving the meaning full and straight in the way that the producer of the code intends. In other words, when the viewer decodes the message in terms of the reference-code, in which it has been coded, the viewer is "operating inside the dominant code." The professional code reproduces the dominant definitions by "bracketing the hegemonic quality, and operating with professional codings which relate to such questions as visual quality, news and representational values, televisual quality" – the professionalism. The third type of coding, which is the negotiated code, acknowledges "the legitimacy of the hegemonic definitions to make the grand significations," making its own ground rules. Finally, the oppositional code suggests that while it is possible for a viewer to understand the literal and connotative messages embedded by the producer, the viewer determines to decode the message in a contrary, oppositional way (Hall, 1973, p. 59-60).

One of the themes that cultural studies focuses on is cultural imperialism, which refers to the global dominance of American cultural values, images, and commodities. Underlying this imperialism is the "recognition of the connections between knowledge and power, which connects cultural imperialism to questions of post-colonialism and Orientalism" (Dunch, 2002, p. 303). In studying cultural imperialism, it is critical that one analyzes the recurring themes and messages conveyed by the producers of the popular American culture, which has snowballed into the global culture.

Textual analyses of cultural artifacts and media texts, including movies, books, and music, have flourished over the years. However, when it comes to studying the relationship between a cultural product and its audience, the study becomes complicated as it is challenging

to measure and impossible to quantify the degree of influence a cultural artifact has on an individual.

What are often missing and biased in both the theoretical and empirical studies on media culture is the comprehensive and multilateral interpretations and analyses. Media culture is highly complex. However, the existing theories are not adequate to thoroughly explain the complexity of the multi-layered media culture. More often than not, theorists focus on discussing media manipulation and domination and analyze how cultural hegemony exacerbates inequalities among gender, race, and class.

Additionally, what complicates the study of the relationship between culture and its receivers is the idea of culture itself. The terms "culture" and "imperialism" are difficult to define in the first place. Many have attempted to define the terms, but they end up in perplexity, asking whether measuring cultural dominance is even possible. What complicates the study even more is the question of perspective; Dunch (2002) argues that it is challenging to decide how to delineate not only an epistemological standpoint of defining cultural imperialism, but also a moral standpoint for critiques. The existing cultural studies, which focuses on critiquing Americanization, with a reference to cross-cultural exchanges, is, therefore, a "view that sees cultural change as the result of external impositions leads ultimately to a conception of modern world history in which the West has wielded a determining influence on global culture, in which modernity reduces to Westernization"; moreover, "the discourse of cultural imperialism, originating in opposition to Western cultural hegemony, can ironically lead to a conclusion which is profoundly Eurocentric in its denial of agency or autonomy to non-Western populations" (Dunch, 2002, p. 307).

And there's more. Some other factors that add to this perplexity of cultural studies are the controversies and unsolved questions revolving around the audience reception theory.[10] It is not fair to conclude that movies pose direct influences on their viewers. There are studies that have shown that there is no direct relationship between the media and the audience. Studying the relationship between movies and audiences has long been a popular topic across many fields, from psychology to medicine, and from law to education.

One of the most researched subjects on this issue is media violence. Researchers of various fields have attempted to prove and disprove the media violence on youth. Barker (2001) asserts that there is no connection between media violence and real life violence. On the other hand, the experiments of Anderson and Buschman (2001) have found a sharp increase in the aggressive behavior immediately after the media exposure. However, this only shows the short-run impact of media violence on aggressive behavior, and not whether this translates into higher levels of violent crime in the field. Along with Anderson and Buschman, experiments by Johnson (2002) show that survey respondents who watch more violent media are more likely to be involved in self-reported violence and crime. On the other hand, Clark (1983) claims that media are "mere vehicles that deliver instruction but do not influence student achievement any more than the truck that delivers our groceries causes changes in our nutrition" (Clark, 1983, p. 445).

While the audience members may not be directly infected by media messages, they select materials that matter to them from a much broader array of media content. They do not simply absorb and pass along a static content. Rather, they interpret the meaning of the text based on

[10] Closely elaborated by Hall, audience reception theory refers to a reader's reception or interpretation in making meaning from any form of text, from literary to visual.

their backgrounds and experiences (Hall, 1973) and re-contextualize the content in a way that fits their own needs (Green & Jenkins, 2011).

Another critical weakness of cultural studies is its prolific literature circumscribed within the academia. While cultural studies is largely pursued as an academic discourse, it is often far removed from the public where cultural studies needs to be put into the praxis. Cultural studies theorists have proliferated their research within their academic circles. Now, they need to write for public audiences via public circuit such as news publications and radio networks by "crossing over into sites and avenues of expression that speak to more general audiences in a language that is clear but not theoretically simplistic" and "[combining] their scholarship with commitment in a discourse that is not dull or obtuse and [expanding] the reach of their audience" (Giroux, 2009, p. 99). Furthermore, media and cultural studies, by nature, are always a "subject of contestation and transformation" as they are open and continuously evolving (Kellner, 2009, p. 6). Thus, they always invite analyses and critiques from various perspectives.

Such contested nature of cultural studies becomes both its strength and weakness. Nonetheless, further study on the oppressed receivers' reception of cultural imperialism is necessary as we see the accumulation and aggrandization of one dominant culture conquering the global community and standardizing the global culture.

One of the most effective educational responses to the contemporary media empire is the critical media literacy, a "pedagogical approach that promotes the use of diverse types of media and information communication technology (from crayons to webcams) to question the roles of media in society and the multiple meanings of the form and content of all types of messages" (Share, 2009, p. 127). Analysis of media content, "combined with inquiry into the

medium, the codes and conventions, the media industries, and the sociocultural contexts within which capitalism and media function to shape identities and empower and disempower individuals and groups" is ah hermeneutical approach (Share, 2009, p. 127).

Borrowing its critical lens from the Frankfurt School and British Cultural Studies, critical media literacy has gained popularity in Western societies. Critical media literacy is an "educational response" that allows "multi-perspectival approach" to address issues of gender, race, class, and power (Kellner & Share, 2007, p. 60). As a matter of fact, critical media literacy is the most effective and practicable methods of teaching and promoting participatory education and democracy. In the process of teaching and learning critical media literacy, not only can students develop skills to critically view the media from their cultural perspectives, but also, both educators and students are given opportunities to teach and learn from each other through various tools of productions. With media tools, such as video production, students can express themselves using their own voices and sharing their experiences. Hence, critical media literacy, which involves a multi-perspectival critical inquiry addressing the issues of class, race, gender, and power, "constitutes a critique of mainstream approaches to literacy and a political project for democratic social change" and promotes the production of alternative counter-hegemonic media (Kellner & Share, 2008, p. 62). Through this pedagogy, students are given opportunities to assess, analyze, evaluate, and communicate with the media they interact with, by decoding the messages encoded in the media. As feminist scholar bell hooks writes, "the classroom remains the most radical space of possibility in the academy" (hooks, 1994, p. 12). In order to make the classroom a space of possibility, education should be liberatory in pursuing the "practice of

freedom," by challenging the banking system of education (hooks, 1994).[11] In this sense, critical media literacy provides both students and teachers with the practice of freedom through the engaged pedagogy.

Critical media literacy is no longer an option, but a necessity, in our world that's taken over by market-based politics, economy, and culture. A market-driven media culture has "fragmented, connected, converged, diversified, homogenized, flattened, broadened, and reshaped the world" (Kellner & Share, 2007, p. 59). Media literacy is an educational response that follows the footprints of progressive educators such as John Dewey and Paulo Freire, who believed in the power of progressive and transformative education. The former proposes education for democracy, pushing active learning through engaged pedagogy, while the latter calls for critical consciousness to fight oppression (Kellner & Share, 2007). Combining cultural studies and critical pedagogy, Kellner and Share argue that critical media literacy strives to expand literacy in media culture and communication educating the audiences to critically analyze the media texts rather than to passively absorb them. In our time of unilateral globalization, participatory democracy is the only way to bring social justice and equality to and for all.

2.6 Korea

Historically, Korea has been the most secluded and closed country in East Asia. For centuries, Confucianism was at the core of the Korean society, defining the Korean ways of life.

[11] "Banking system" is a concept developed by the Brazilian educator and critical theorist Paulo Freire, who observed that teachers feed facts into students, and these students are forced to regurgitate the information they absorbed without thinking critically or approaching creatively. Freire often criticized and refused the "banking system" of education, as he believed that such system is a "deformation of the creativity of both learners and teachers" (Freire, 2000, p. 32). Unfortunately, in a strong neoliberal capitalistic society like the United States, standardized testing devoid of critical thinking has become the standardized way of teaching students and almost excommunicated the pedagogy of freedom.

The Korean monarchy adhered to a closed-door policy for foreign relations until the early 20th century when the Japanese occupied the Korean peninsula and opened an era of colonization. The traditional Korean philosophy was further interrupted by the influence of Western-philiac globalization after the Korean War and especially during President Kim Young-Sam's administration in the mid-1990s. Kim, with his "globalization policy," pushed neoliberalism, which allowed market principles permeate even into academia, abruptly causing a crisis in the humanities in Korea (Lee, 2004). Today, Korea is identified as a modern nation-state in many aspects, with its political institutions reflecting a representative liberal democracy.

Despite the rapid and dramatic globalization and Westernization that swept Korea, there are still many remnants of traditional Confucianism in the Korean society. Collectivism, which is one of the strong indicators of the Confucian culture, can be easily and quickly observed in the Korean culture. Unlike individualism, which emphasizes autonomy, independence, and competition, collectivistic cultural values highlight filial devotion, harmony, sociability, and a "willingness to put aside personal needs for the good of one's social group" as the self is considered to be "an aspect of a shared group identity" (Cho, Mallinckrodt, Yune, 2010).

Korea's collectivistic culture is embedded in everyday dialogues. Koreans are less prone to use the first-person singular pronoun, "I," - translated as "*na"* in Korean - and more likely to use its plural form, "we" - "*woori*" in the Korean language. For instance, while an individual refers to "my family" in a society that values individualism, "*woori* (our) family" is the accepted form in Korea. As a matter of fact, no one in Korea would refer to "*nae* (my) family."

The nature of the Korean collectivist culture is further identified by Geert Hofstede's collectivism model, which measures cultural dimensions.[12] The findings of Hofstede's cultural dimensions model indicate that Koreans "manifest in a close long-term commitment to the member 'group,' be that a family, extended family, or extended relations" (Hofstede, 2001). The society fosters strong family-like relationships outside homes and beyond families and everyone takes responsibility for fellow members of his or her group.

Family is considered the basic component of social life in Korea (Kim, 1993). In the Confucian Korean culture, family is viewed as an institution that is more important than an individual. According to the Confucian values, family is "not only the foundation of one's identity, but also the repository of all the values and mores deemed essential for human flourishing, a place where one learns how to become a civilized human being" (Hahm, 2003, p. 336). Confucianism has put a heavy emphasis on family values and directly shaped Korean family systems as well as social and legal values. Because families play critical roles in underlying the foundational principles of many everyday aspects of the Korean society, the roles of each family member are often predetermined.

Two of the most important principles of Confucianism are filial piety and gender segregation (Cho & Park, 1995). Children are expected to respect and obey their parents, following the principles of filial piety. As much as there is a clear hierarchy between parents and children, there is a clear line between men and women in a family in terms of their roles and responsibilities. Based on the Confucian philosophy, men are identified as the "structurally

[12] Geert Hofstede's cultural dimensions theory explores the effects of a society's culture on the values of its members and how these values relate to behavior. The theory proposes four dimensions to analyze cultural values: individualism vs. collectivism, uncertainty avoidance, power distance, masculinity vs. femininity, long-term orientation, and indulgence vs. self-restraint.

relevant members of the society" and women are relegated to social independence (Song, 1987). Confucianism distinguishes the roles of men and women, by assigning women to the inner or domestic sphere, also known as "yin," and men to the outer or public sphere, known as "yang"; moreover, it emphasizes the subordination of the inner sphere to the outer sphere (Deuchler, 1977). An ordinary modern family in Korea would be comprised of a husband breadwinner and a homemaking wife who does house chores, raises children, and performs other family duties as a daughter-in-law.[13] Because of the strict gender segregation, the worlds of men and women are distinguished as "outside the home" or "inside the home" (Kwon & Roy, 2007).

These Confucian values have not only set the definitions and established the standards for moral and ethical codes, but also, they have become the foundations of the Korean legal codes. For instance, the marriage of a couple sharing the same surnames and ancestral seats was prohibited by law until the end of the 20th century.[14] It was not until 1997 when the Korean Constitutional Court ruled article 809 of the Civil Code, which prohibited marriages between men and women who have the same surnames and ancestral seats unconstitutional. Family, clearly, goes beyond establishing the foundation of one's identity in Korea.

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[13] Child bearing is an important issue for both women and men; having a child, preferably a son, to this day, is considered to be a duty of a married woman. A typical Korean daughter-in-law is expected to be actively engaged in family duties, from making regular phone calls and visiting the parent-in-laws to deliver her greetings to assisting her mother-in-law with special occasions, including holidays, memorial service rituals, and weddings and funerals of extended families and relatives.

[14] Ancestral seat refers to the name of the locality where the first ancestor of a clan first settled. Ancestral seat is crucial because it determines one's ancestry. Two people can have the same surname, Kim, for example, but their ancestral roots might be different. In this case, even though they have the same surname, their marriage would legally be permitted. However, if the two Kims had the same ancestral seat, their marriage would not be approved by the government. In extreme cases, young couples who found out their love could never be consummated because of the sharing of the same surnames, chose to commit suicide (Hahm, 2003).

2.7 The Korean Confucianism

The universal philosophy of Confucianism prioritizes harmony and patronage. Confucian ethics are built on "hierarchy, discipline, control, and motivation that will defeat the West in economic competition, given the latter's excessive egalitarianism, rivalry, pay-offs, and self-indulgence" (Han & Ling, 1998, p. 57). While the main principles are, by and large, communal, the approaches and practices of Confucian philosophy and practices vary.[15] For instance, while both Korea and Japan share the harmonious teachings and principles of Confucius, the former puts emphasis on filial piety while the latter focuses on advocating nationalism. This is why understanding, acknowledging, and distinguishing the subtly different forms of Confucianism is essential.

Confucianism, with its 2,000 years of history, has deep roots in shaping political, economic, and cultural values and practices in East Asia, especially in Korea. When Korea adopted Confucianism as the official philosophy during the Chosun Dynasty (1392-1910), the country rigorously developed the Confucian practice during its five-hundred-year reign. Korea was less exposed to the West, compared to the other East Asian countries because of its seclusion policy, geographically remote location from the main sea lanes, and unattractiveness for Western trade expansion (Koh, 2004). Thus, Confucianism in Korea was able to last longer and stronger. It was this strongly rooted Confucianism that prevented Korea from joining the process of

[15] To use Christianity as an analogy, while both Protestantism and Catholicism believe in Jesus, their approaches and practices of the religion are significantly different. While the Protestant Church divides the world into two – heaven and hell – the Catholic Church believes in the purgatory, a midway between the heaven and hell. Furthermore, their practices in religion differ; while reverends have freedom to start their own families, Catholic priests and nuns are forbidden to practice any nuptial rites. Confucianism, too, has different forms of practices and focuses from one country to another.

modernization in the early 20th century. Subsequently, this has made Korea the strongest Confucian country in the world today.

Confucianism doesn't have a physical presence; but rather, it "manifests itself in the mind, patterns of behavior, and institutions" (Koh, 2004, p. 95). Since its adoption of Confucianism from China centuries ago, Korea's politics, economy, and culture have been shaped by Confucian tenets. Given that Confucianism constituted the backbone of the Korean history of politics, economy, and culture, Korean Confucianism became an important force in the unfolding of Korean history, contributing to the formation of national sovereignty. Korean Confucianism has provided a "universal cultural consciousness that has given rise to a value system directly related to a highly developed view of ethics and politics and has helped stimulate a unique national consciousness directly related to the existence and future prosperity of Korean people" (Cha, 2003).

To the Western capitalists, however, Confucianism was once viewed as a detrimental factor that slowed down the modernization process of Asian countries; they argued that Asian culture was "incapable of indigenous economic growth" (Cha, 2003). The Western capitalists' view on Confucianism in Korea in the late 20th century was as follows:

> Extreme egoism of a bureaucratic group, a closed organizational system on the ground of favoritism and paternalism, authoritarianism on the basis of a doctrine putting government above people, and a deplorable custom of a feudal social strata system based on the traditional four classes have been surfaced as negative elements and regarded as dominant causes of crony capitalism (Cha, 2003).

Confucian capitalism, with its core value lying within the Confucian values such as frugality, diligence, education, order, and discipline, was created by the "capitalist mechanism of

selection and elimination, which applies pressure for survival on those who live under the capitalist system" (Cha, 2003). In terms of ideology, Confucian capitalism differs from the Western capitalism as it values a communal profit rather than an individual one. In terms of economic practice, the traits of Confucian capitalism comprise of "close family ties, sense of social discipline, and deep respect for hard work" (Cha, 2003). The Korean economy, therefore, has pushed for centralized policies with frequent government interventions and allowed the very few Korean wealthy families, known as *chaebol*, practice nepotism.[16] Such practices were often thought to have slowed down the process of modernization in Korea. The criticism of Confucianism ended, however, in the 1970s and 1980s, when the "four small dragons" – Korea, Taiwan, Hong Kong, and Singapore – showed the world their miraculous economic growth. Soon, "Confucian capitalism" appeared in Western intellectual discourses with positive connotations (Cha, 2003). Advocates of Confucian capitalism tend to interpret this process of social change, known as modernization or Westernization, as a process of voluntary self-transformation encountering with the impact from the West rather than a process of importing social systems from the West. Thus, these East Asian countries did not reject their central Confucian systems of the past for the sake of modernization and Westernization (Tu, 1991). The world of capitalism resembles a vast terrain filled with different species of plants that belong to the same family. This is why we label capitalisms of different nations and systems differently, from popular capitalism to turbo capitalism. And each capitalism is unique in its own way.

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[16] Nepotism is widely accepted in the Korean society. The top five corporates in Korea - Samsung, Hyundai, LG, Daewoo, and SK groups - are all owned and run by *chaebol* families. The *chaebol* has been criticized for being the "primary barrier to universalism" in Korea as *chaebol* heads are known to be strict Confucian practitioners who emphasize generational order, hierarchy, patriarchy, subordination of women and stress on royalty (Rozman, 2002). These *chaebol* corporates have also been criticized for corruptions, most of the times having to do with tax exemption; yet it is an undeniable fact that it was these companies that contributed to establishing Korea's strong economy today (Goldman Sachs Investment Research, 1998).

Likewise, there are subtle differences between the Korean Confucian capitalism and the Western neoliberal capitalism.

It has been argued that Confucianism is incompatible with the social and political manifestations of modernity, which revolve around democracy and capitalism: "the Confucian dictum that one should pursue justice, not profit, conflicts with the commercial ethos that undergirds capitalism and the ethics of self-interest that drives it" (Bell & Hahm, 2007, p. 3).

Korea's early capitalism heavily relied on the tenets of Confucianism. However, during the Kim Young-Sam administration, between 1993 and 1998, when Korea underwent one of the most drastic transformations of westernization, Korea's capitalism slowly morphed into a form of modern American neoliberal capitalism. A once-national agrarian system was replaced by a capitalist production system, changing the traditional Confucian philosophy of "collective solidarity" to "contract relations"; politically, the rigid class system in which social standing was determined by family ties was taken over by a system of contract relations between equal and free human beings (Lee, 2004). Subsequently, this brought changes in ethics and values, shifting from a collective group to an individual. As a result, the loss of cultural self-identity due to drastic social change has generated a "tremendous confusion in the consciousness of those living in a cultural zone" (Lee, 2004, p. 11).

One of the strongest Confucian traits in Korea is the nation's passion in education. Education fever, also known as "*gyo-yuk-yeol*" in Korean (*gyo-yuk* = education, *yeol* = fever), is one of the national characteristics of Korea. Regardless of gender and socio-economic status, education is considered a necessity of life. Today, Korean students spend at least thirteen hours studying every day.

Korea's national obsession with education can be witnessed by the increased enrollment in higher education. In 1950, only 11,358 students were enrolled in the institutions of higher education. Fifty years later, the enrollment increased to more than 3.5 million. In 2006, it was reported that more than 95 percent of 18-year-old children graduated from high schools and more than 70 percent of them went to colleges or universities. Today, Korea has one of the highest college enrollment rates in the world (Kim & Lee, 2006).[17]

The discourse on the Korean education fever is not complete without discussing the importance of early English education. English is seen as a proxy for success. The average Korean is known to get nearly 20,000 hours of English education from kindergarten through university (Kim, 2013).

The English-language frenzy began in the 1990s when Koreans became concerned that their nation needed to bolster its English proficiency to establish Korea as a global country that is capable of competing in the global economy. The indescribably heavy focus and emphasis on the English education became the national norm when President Kim Young-Sam pressed the Ministry of Education to include English education in the school curriculum for younger children

[17] The national fever on education has led to competitive college admissions, which then triggered a rampaging expenditure on private education. The level of participation in private tutoring is substantial in Korea. About three-quarters of primary and secondary students participate in private tutoring (Kim & Lee, 2010). As Nam (2007) estimates, the total household expenditure on private tutoring was about 24 trillion Korean won (equivalent to US $24 billion) in 2006. This counted for 2.79 percent of South Korea's GDP that same year. Korean parents spend a substantial amount of income on their children's college-preparatory cram schools and weekend tutoring because they feel that it is needed to supplement highly regimented public school curriculum.

(Rubin, 2014). With the nation's emphasis on the early English education on the rise, Korea's *hagwon* industry began to expand on the English education business.[18]

When the English-language kindergarten programs, using the American-style of pedagogy and attempting to incorporate critical thinking in the curriculum, were introduced in the early 1990s, many Korean parents expressed excitement and were willing to invest in their children's early English education. More recently, the English-language programs went beyond kindergarten. In 2015, South Korea assigned Jeju, a small island in the Korea Strait, located 455 km from Seoul, as Global Education City and announced that twelve prestigious Western private schools would open. The first school to open the campus was North London Collegiate, a private all-girls school in London. A few other Western private schools opened in Seoul around the same time; some of these schools include Dulwich College, a private British school, and Chadwick School of California.[19]

Koreans attribute such national obsession of education to their cultural heritage of Confucianism, whose principles highlight the cultivation of personality and learning (Seth, 2002). The major theme of Confucianism is governance by men of merit, talent, and virtue. Hence, history recalls that education was valued as both "a means of self-cultivation and a way of achieving status and power" (Seth, 2002). Confucius emphasized the role and value of

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[18] *Hagwon*, meaning cram school in Korean, serves to provide supplementary education that students need to keep up with their school curriculum and to prepare students for university entrance exams. Most students start attending *hagwon* as early as at the age of seven when they enter elementary school. Typically, middle and high school students would attend *hagwon* to improve their scores on core subjects, such as English, Korean, math, social science, and natural science, whereas younger students in elementary schools would enroll in English, Korean, and math classes, and a few arts classes. Even kindergarteners and pre-schoolers attend *hagwon* on a regular basis, mostly focusing on the subjects such as music, art, and critical thinking-based math. Research carried out in 2009 estimates that there are 95,000 hagwons and up to 84,000 private tutors.

[19] The reason the government invited some of the world's leading schools from the United States and the United Kingdom was to offer an alternative English education system to parents who send children abroad to the English-speaking countries. The number of Korean students from elementary school through high school who went abroad for education increased to 27,350 in 2008 from 1,840 in 1999 (Choe, *The New York Times,* August 22, 2010).

education in his philosophy: “If one loves humaneness but does not love learning, the consequence of this is folly; if one loves understanding but does not love learning, the consequence of this is unorthodoxy” (Shen, 2001, p. 1).

Initially, the Confucian tenets of self-cultivation and enlightenment through education applied to only men. For a long time, women were not granted educational opportunities. It was not until the mid and late 20th century when women were given more chances of schooling as the national economy began to flourish and there were shifts in family structures, from extended families to nuclear families. Even today, women’s independence hasn’t been fully acquired; nevertheless, women’s mobility in labor economy has brought changes into politics and domesticity. Scholars believe that women’s social and political status has improved over the years. After Korea’s independence from Japan in 1945, women were given the right to vote. The government also sponsored family planning programs to help liberate rural women’s labor and relieve them of the burden of large families (Yoon, 1977). Women have gained more opportunities in terms of economic independence and education. An increasing number of women are receiving higher education today. In 1960, the average number of years of education was 4.78 years for men and 2.92 years for women. By 1998, however, the figures increased to 11.18 years and 9.37 years respectively. Furthermore, the enrollment in higher education increased over the years. In 1990, 24 percent of women were enrolled in higher education. Seven years later, the number increased to 50.9 percent (Hampson, 2000). Today, there is almost no gap in the levels of education between men and women; the number of men and women receiving higher education is almost identical.

The rise of women's participation in education, may suggest, on a surface level, that gender gap has been narrowed. However, the topic of gender equality is a much more complex issue in Korea in year 2016 as every individual, both male and female, lives in a multi-cultural society that makes his or her identity construction challenging.

What's aggravating the current cultural confusion and identity crisis on a global level is the lack of critical thinking that overlaps in both Confucian and neoliberal cultures. Filial piety is one of the most important values in Korea. What comes naturally with filial piety is obedience.[20] In a society that prioritizes obedience and submissiveness to the elders and the superiors, finding a space for critical thinking is challenging. Such deprivation of critical thinking is also significant in the neoliberal setting. As Giroux states, neoliberalism offers no critical vocabulary: "nor is there a language for either the ideal of public commitment or the notion of social agency capable of challenging the basic assumptions of corporate ideology as well as its social consequences" (Giroux, 2005, p. 10). Hence, neoliberalism "eliminates the very possibility of critical thinking, without which democratic debate becomes impossible" (Buck-Morss, 2003, p. 65). The absence of critical thinking, therefore, deprives the Korean society of more equal opportunities and social justice.

Additionally, Korean Confucian culture offers the space for patriarchy, and so does the Western capitalism. Han and Ling (1998) juxtapose Western masculinist capitalism and Confucian parental as well as paternal governance. This dichotomy produces "hybrid hyper-masculinized state results that glorifies aggression, achievement, control, competition, and power

[20] In *The Analects of Confucius*, when Master Confucius is asked what filial piety is, he replies: "It is being obedient." When he is asked what he means by being obedient, he says: "That parents, when alive, should be served according to ritual; that, when dead, they should be buried according to ritual; and that they should be sacrificed to according to ritual."

in the name of national reconstruction" (Han & Ling, 1998, p. 54). It is probably such double-patriarchal setting occupying the Korean culture that allows the audience to easily accept and absorb the patriarchal and masculinist cultural values of the United States portrayed in Hollywood movies.

As long as the Western values monopolize the process of globalization in Korea, cultural imperialism will continue to hold its place. Understanding the commonalities as well as discrepancies between these two cultures is critical. The integration of the East and the West can never be achieved without recognizing what they have in common and how they differ from one another.

2.8 Korean Women

History chronicles that women were constantly subject to marginalization. Often tied to domesticity, women's voices were excluded and silenced in political and economic spheres. Traditionally and historically, Korean women were seldom identified as themselves; rather, they were expected to play the roles of mothers, wives, and daughter-in-laws. A "wise mother and good wife" has been viewed as the "most influential gender ideology in modern Korea" (Choi, 2009).[21] In the patriarchal Confucian family, marriage had little do with affection of a male and a female, but was viewed as a means to extend and maintain the lineage. And it was always the women who joined their husbands' families, not vice versa, for one of the principles that the Confucian patriarchal society emphasized was that males shall dominate females (Kim, 1993).

[21] Known as *"hyunmo-yangcho,"* which translates as "wise wife, good mother" was the virtue that every married woman has adhered to. Even till this day, virtuous, good wives and mothers are socially recognized with fame and rewards. Every year, the government presents a reward to the most virtuous and wisest wife and mother.

Women's mobilization began to emerge in politics, economy, and education in the 1960s when Korea went through dynamic economic reforms under President Park Chung-Hee (1961-1973). It is vital that any scholar who studies the modern Korean history understand the significant impact of the 18 years of the Park Administration on the Korean economy and politics as Korea underwent the most dramatic economic and political transformations in the modern history.[22]

Park came into power and became the head of Korea after having successfully overthrown the government with his military coup d'etat in 1961. After he took over the government, Park made economic development his first priority, creating steel and chemical industries and increasing exports. When he launched the First Five Year Economic Plan (FYEP) in 1962, Korea's exports were a mere $55 million; by 1978, they had reached $12.4 billion. During this same period, per capita GNP rose from $87 to $1,242.[23]

Since the Park Administration, women made progress in the areas of formal education, marriage, and family life (Moon, 2002). The level of women's education increased in comparison to men's. Marriage became an individual choice, and child bearing became less burdensome. Moreover, women's participation in the labor market made a significant

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[22] The Park Administration confronted a clash of "two ideologically diverging paradigms of modernization." The gap between these two ideologies on two extreme sides were unbridgeable. While Park justified his economic strategy of "growth first, distribution later" that the benefits of growth would eventually "trickle down" through the market, there was a significant political and social movement that spoke for distributive justice. Moreover, while Park rejected Western democracy in favor of "administrative" or "guided" Korean democracy, young activists and proponents of liberal democracy shared a vision of Western liberal values (Park, 2013, p. 380)

[23] A miraculous economic growth comes with a price. Such dramatic push of industrialization and economic transformation didn't leave room for providing healthy and safe work environments. For instance, not only did most factories and marketplaces fail to provide sleep-deprived workers with proper compensation, but also, they did not create enough ventilation; as a result, many employees suffered from various illnesses, including chronic fatigue, malnutrition, and even tuberculosis. To protest against such conditions and the oppressive rule of President Park, Tae-il Chon, a 22-year-old Korean worker in the garment industry, on November 13, 1970, committed suicide by pouring gasoline over himself and then setting himself on fire. As he transformed himself into a human torch, he shouted: "Observe the Labor Law! We are not machines! Let us rest on Sundays!" (Lankov, 2011)

shift. During the era of industrial revolution and economic reform, women's employment rate increased from 92.8 percent in 1963 to 97.4 percent in 1974. In the agriculture sector, women's labor doubled - from 1,400,000 in 1960 to 2,500,000 in 1970 (Yoon, 1977). As a result of high-priority industrialization policy, women working in manufacturing industries and fishery rose from seven percent in 1963 to 16.9 percent in 1974, and the employment rate in construction, transportation, and related services increased from 24.3 percent in 1963 to 29.3 percent in 1974. Service sectors also saw an increase in women's employment, from 6.8 percent in 1963 to 10.6 percent in 1974 (Kim & Lee, 1977). With rapid industrialization and economic development during the 1970s, women were pushed to labor markets. However, this did not mean that women were equal-opportunity employees. As a matter of fact, gender discrimination and abuse of women's body became more severe not only at work places, but in every aspect of the society. Women's liberation and empowerment in Korea was never achieved easily. Women's movement involved unimaginable and intolerable pain and struggle.

Women's rights movement was initiated in the 1970s by groups of highly educated middle-class women. The movement did not have significant impacts on the society as these feminist organizations were not concerned with real problems: the problems and interests of the poor women struggling with poor working conditions and facing gender inequality every day.

It was in the 1980s when the discourse of gender inequality and women's liberation left the selective and exclusive circles of the educated middle-class women and the national women's movements were on rise. The omen's movement was sparked on a national level soon after June 1986 when a sexual assault on a female student activist In-Sook Kwon by a policeman was disclosed. Kwon was arrested and imprisoned for using a false identification card to get

employment in a factory.[24] During the investigation and interrogation, Kwon was severely tortured, sexually assaulted, and raped by a male policeman. The National Council of Churches of Korea, joined by a team of nine human-rights lawyers, demanded that the policeman be indicted. The government first avoided any prosecution of the policeman. However, as the protests and rallies supporting the release of Kwon and the elimination of brutal torture grew nationally, further joined by a number of women's organizations and the Korean Federation of Bar Associations, the government had no choice but to release Kwon and imprison the policeman. This unity of women's organizations eventually led to the formation of the Korean Women's Associations United (KWAU) in 1987 and a more strategic and organized democratization process of Korea, providing political and social space for women to practice their rights and freedom as individual citizens.

First, women's movements helped broaden the agenda of democratization from narrow political to broader social issues. Second, departing from radical and violent street demonstrations, which had often been organized by young male students, women's groups introduced a more harmonious and feminine way of resisting undemocratic government. Third, women's organizations contributed to the Korean transition to democracy by strengthening the power of the democratic labor unions that formed rapidly after the summer of 1987 (Nam, 2000).

The increase in work opportunities provided women with economic power and independence; yet they were not given complete freedom, independence, or rights. A careful look at the division of labor raises the question of gender equality. While more women were at work

[24] While President Park was extremely successful with his miraculous national economic reform, accelerating modernization and industrialization and establishing Korea as one of the most industrialized countries, he made little effort to make Korea a democratic nation. The Park Administration has often been criticized for its corrupt dictatorship. The government made every attempt to reduce activist movements, which were often organized and led by young college students.

by the late 20th century, the majority of white-collar jobs, including finance, insurance, real estate, and business services, was occupied by men. Women's jobs, often seen as temporary, consisted of mostly clerical works. Even in the same industry or work force, men and women were treated differently. For instance, Janelli & Yim (2002) observed that the managers of the company were mostly males who profited from a gendered and unequal differentiation between positions and career paths. This was to legitimize paying lower salaries for work: "by using seniority as the primary criterion for justifying pay increases and encouraging or even requiring women to terminate employment after a few years of service, the bourgeoisie were able to reduce costs by paying lower wages and benefits for the work that women performed" (Janelli & Yim, 2002, p. 119). Not only were women underpaid compared to men and had limited chances of promotions, but also, they were discriminated in both social and cultural constructions of gender at work. For instance, women were required to sign pledges to resign when they got married. They were also subject to different dress codes.

In the 21st century, Korean women have developed a substantial understanding of women's rights (Kim & Lee, 1977), and the law grants equal rights and freedom to both men and women in the labor market. The law prohibits any sexual discrimination at work. Women are now equally represented in the white-collar workforce as men are. Nonetheless, gender discrimination still commonly interferes with women's labor.

One of the reasons behind this expectation on gender roles, again, relates back to Confucianism. The prevalent national Confucianism is one possible rationale behind this phenomenon. Traditional Confucian values, which are patriarchal by nature, draw a distinctive line between female-male gender roles and prioritize communal harmony through strong,

organized family structures. Korean women, therefore, are often found to be associated with and tied to households and are unlikely to pursue their academic and career aspirations after the marriage. Accordingly, although contemporary women have gained more financial, educational, and political freedom than had their predecessors, their academic and vocational freedom is often constricted.

To this day, marriage plays an important role in young women's lives as well as their families'; hence, it is not surprising to observe that higher education and successful career are perceived as a "mechanism for attracting a higher status husband" and a cultural capital (Hampson, 2000, p. 171). Moreover, child bearing remains an important issue for both the women and the men; having a child, preferably a son, is considered to be an obligation of a married woman.[25]

Consequently, regardless of increasing numbers of women's enrollment in higher education, women's career span is significantly shorter compared to men's. Nearly two out of five married women in Korea stop working for reasons of marriage, children, and other family-related obligations (*Yonhap News,* 2011). Such Confucian culture of Korea, which prioritizes family as a necessary institution, is highly patriarchal, and proves to have created greater gender inequalities. Although the preference of sons is not as strong as it used to be a couple decades ago, the indication of patriarchy in Korea still remains strong.

The Korean society no longer prevents women from committing themselves to education or careers. The election of Park Geun-hye as the first female president in Korea proves this. Park,

[25] The Confucian concern for the production of heirs has impeded the use of contraception. Korean women are reluctant to use oral contraceptives for two reasons. First, many Korean women believe the pill to be dangerous, which might prevent them from giving births. Second, in a society where conservative Confucian values still dominate, women are not encouraged to have control over their bodies or sexuality (Hampson, 2000).

the daughter of President of Park Chung-hee, who became the 18th president of South Korea on February 25, 2013, not only started the new chapter of the history of both Korean politics and women, but also has been internationally recognized as a strong female leader, having been named as one of the most powerful women by Forbes magazine.

However, for many Korean women, pursuing their careers is a daunting journey. Because Confucianism is deeply embedded in the society, men and women prioritize raising families, abiding by the pre-determined gender roles within the family to restore harmony. Women, tied to domesticity, consider doing housework and raising children to be their primary responsibilities. In 2007, among OECD countries, Korea had the lowest employment rate for women with college degrees (Choe, 2010). Compared to other industrialized countries, highly educated women are underpaid and underrepresented in the work force in Korea.

Confucian values impose specific norms and roles on gender. It is true that the country's rapid political, economic, and social transitions have changed the family structure, weakened the Confucian traditional value system, and provided women with more opportunities in education and workforce; yet, Korean women's choices are still constrained by the key concepts of Confucian thoughts, which include: filial piety and family loyalty; a perception of the state as an active, moral agent in the development of society; a respect for status and hierarchy; a concern with social harmony (Eckert, 1990; Kihl, 1997; Hampson, 2000).

Gender equality is a work that is still in progress as women continue to be discriminated against in political, economic, and social spheres. This is why feminism requires constant revisits from scholars and further developments of theory and praxis, reaching out to all female populations.

CHAPTER 3: THEORETICAL FRAMEWORKS

"All theories are legitimate, no matter. What matters is what you do with them."
-Jorge Luis Borges

3.1 Gramsci's Theory of Cultural Hegemony

The 20th and 21st centuries went through many political, economic, and social changes. After so many clashes and wars that resulted from diverging and conflicting ideologies, what we see today is the restructuring of capital and the redistribution of wealth at the top of the economic pyramid, widening the gaps of inequalities.

Gramsci's analysis of the realignment of ruling and traditional social and economic forces are timely relevant and cogent for the present conjuncture (Landy, 2008). Gramsci's theory of hegemony elaborates that a dominant ruling class has the power to manipulate and disseminate cultural values throughout the society; when one acquires a worldview, one's conception is likely to belong to a particular dominant group, which shares the same mode of thinking, even when the ideologies and cultures promoted by the hegemonic group are misleading and irrelevant to the individual (Gramsci, 1935). His theory is critical in our society, in which we see an "unprecedented increase in social inequality and an intensification of exploitation of both people and nature in an increasingly naked pursuit of profit" (Gill, 2003, p. 6).

Gramsci's analysis on the roots of hegemonic achievements of the ruling class, the hegemon so to speak, is clearly articulated in his 1934 essay "Americanism and Fordism."[26] Building on Marx's analysis of the transition from a small-scale capitalism to a complex global

[26] Gramsci attributed the term Fordism to the assembly-line production, managerial hierarchy, and technical control introduced by Henry Ford (Antonio & Bonnano, 2000).

capitalism, Gramsci assessed the new type of capitalism that was being consolidated in the United States, articulating his view that "the capitalist economy is embedded in broader, historically specific socio-cultural regimes, each with distinct structures and processes, dominant and subordinate strata, hegemonic and counter-hegemonic blocs, and patterns of struggle" (Antonio & Bonnano, 2000, p. 34). Gramsci argued that Fordism instituted comprehensive top-down control as "the Fordist labor process relied centrally on Taylorist rationalization, which simplified necessary operations, eliminated others, and radically routinized, deskilled, and intensified labor" (Antonio & Bonnano, 2000, p. 34). Gramsci (1934) further elaborated on the commodification and dehumanization of human labor in his Fordist terms:

> Recall here the experiments conducted by Ford and the economies made by his firm through direct management of transport and distribution of the product. These economies affected production costs and permitted higher wages and lower selling prices. Since these preliminary conditions existed, already rendered rational by historical evolution, it was relatively easy to rationalize production and labor by a skillful combination of force (destruction of working-class trade unionism on a territorial basis) and persuasion (high wages, various social benefits, extremely subtle ideological and political propaganda) and thus succeed in making the whole life of the nation revolve around production. Hegemony here is born in the factory (Forgacs, 2000, p. 278).

His analysis of Fordism was not confined to the economic terms. In this essay, Gramsci not only examined the increasing dominance of American expansionism and cultural imperialism in the modern media capitalism and culture, but also elaborated on his theory on the cultural hegemony, emphasizing the increasing presence and the role of mass production and the

consumption of media and culture.[27] Landy (2008) analyzes the role and the significance of today's media and entertainment as following:

> Media, bolstered by the common sense of triumphant global capitalism, have played a critical role in reinforcing belief in the inevitability of war, corporate greed, and natural disasters. Television stations such as Fox have become State channels to articulate these views. Sectors of the film industry have largely succumbed, as well, in their offering a spate of war films, portraits of dysfunctional social life, and dramas of social uplift and personal fulfillment. At the same time, for discerning viewers, the media also make visible the persistence of the long march of capitalism and its updated and diverse mechanisms of consent and coercion that involve State and civil institutions. Disaffection with the new order is apparent along the political spectrum, expressed in antagonism to "mismanaged" wars, fiscal irresponsibility, lack of economic and social benefits promised by the old/new order of capital, the proliferating expansion of the underclass, and abuses of State power (p. 131).

Landy's view of the media from the Gramscian perspective is not only relevant in the context of the United States, but also on a global level. American neoliberal capitalism is prevalent in many countries and cultures; in the process, homogenization, along with cultural hegemony, often imposed by private corporations, has marked its presence.

Scholars argue that today's globalization, which is driven by free market deregulation, has a "U.S. template" and "speaks American" (Antonio & Bonnano, 2000). They also criticize the current pattern of globalization, which is led by the U.S.-dominated sector, arguing that U.S. pop culture and lifestyle are inscribed in the product as epitomized images of Americanism, such as Nike or McDonald's, overtake the product in the postmodern style of peddling goods. They further contend that the "massive media concentration through takeovers, tie-ins, and licensing empower American purveyors of video goods and images... and flood global markets undermine

[27] In the early 20th century, the Italian film industry underwent a significant transformation. However, by the end of the second decade, the industry slowly died as Hollywood movies, which were gradually dominating the world, arrived in Italy and neither Italian nor American audiences were any longer interested in the Italian films.

local media industries, and spread U.S. consumer culture to nations that cannot sustain it without destructive cultural and environmental consequences" (Barber, 1996).

The strong presence of the American media and culture in Korea exemplifies and validates Gramsci's theorization of Americanism and Fordism. The traditional Confucian values deeply rooted in the Korean society do not share any overlapping denominators with the liberal values portrayed in the mass-produced capitalist American movies, which contribute to generating American ideas and icons. Nevertheless, young Korean women do not seem to question the discrepancy of the two cultures; instead, they find the joy in the experience of the consumer culture of the West. Korean women believe that they have more freedom as they dress themselves in designer labels and sit outside in the patio, enjoying the Parisian brunch while flipping through the most recent issue of a glossy American fashion magazine, a typical scene in many Hollywood romantic chick-flicks.[28] However, what these women do not realize is the prevalence of hegemony of politics and economy – the push for patriarchy and the spread of consumer culture as a result of the privatization and commodification of neoliberalism – portrayed in the Hollywood movies.

3.2 Marx's Theory of Alienation

To better understand the global influence of Hollywood capitalism on its international audience, Marx's theory of alienation, also known as *Entfremdung* - the German term for

[28] The brunch culture, which is now common among women in Korea, was not visible until the early 2000s when *Sex and the City* fever spread throughout the metropolitan cities in Korea. With the switch to the five-day work week from the six-day work week, women began to spend their Saturdays with friends, sitting outside the restaurant and cafe patios, replicating the scenes from the movie. It is not too much to say that *Sex and the City* established the brunch culture in Korea; prior to this TV series, there were no restaurants specializing in brunch. Today, there are hundreds of restaurants and cafes with specially designed patio seatings in Korea.

"estrangement" - must be invited. The theory suggests that people living in a society that has a stratified class system feel estranged socially and culturally from aspects of their human nature. Marx (1927) argues that under capitalism, workers would lose the ability to determine his or her own will as the labor, the objectified mode of production, would deprive the workers of the rights and abilities to think. Marx categorized his theory into four classes of alienations: 1) alienation of the worker from the work; 2) alienation of the working from working; 3) alienation of the worker from himself as a producer; and 4) alienation of the worker from other fellow workers.

Marx begins with the alienation of the workers labor as he views the labor as becoming a commodity just like the product that the workers produce. Eventually, the product that a worker makes confronts him as an alien object, both in terms of production and exchange. Man alienates the products of his labor because he alienates his labor activity, "in which he does not affirm but denies himself …[and]… does not free buy subjugates him" (Petrovic, 1963, p. 421). Accordingly, man alienates his essence from himself and also himself from his essence. Man, by nature, is a creative, practical being; hence, when he alienates his creative essence from himself, he is alienating his human essence from himself. The objectified nature of the worker's relationship to the other workers separates him. To sum up, alienation becomes a "totally enveloping process" (Twining, 1980). In the end, the human consequence of this alienation becomes self-estrangement, the *entfremdung* (Petrovic, 1963; Twining, 1980); one eventually loses his or her identity as well as the power to acknowledge the existence of a meaningful self.

Marx's theory of alienation should not be overlooked in the field of cultural studies. Cultural studies needs to revisit the Marxist theory since contemporary cinema has emerged as a

capitalist technology that generates mass production. Today, the cinema offers the audiences who "dwell in industrial capitalist societies' images and sounds that help them to make sense of the rapid transformations that they experience" (Tinkcom & Villarejo, 2001, p. 5).

Therefore, the theory of alienation is germane in the contemporary media culture. In a classical Marxian view, digital technology of the twenty-first century can be viewed as "reinforcing the principles of automation, exploitation, and rationalization, for example in the context of electronic performance monitoring systems that are enhancing many of the Tayloristic thoughts on productivity, division of labor, and surplus value (Gidlund & Nygren, 2012, p. 509). Furthermore, Marx's alienation theory and Foucault's "pastoral power," combined, describe the identity crisis and loss of self-control and empowerment in the era of media and technology evolution. By proposing a dialectical analysis of digital technologies in relation to superstructure, hegemony, and daily practices, "pastoral power not only directs the focus to the relation between power and technological practices, but also to the making of individuals who willingly take on the responsibilities of power" (Gidlund & Nygren, 2012, p. 515).

Digital technology allows the subject to individualize, helping one to construct and display his or her individuality. In the process of individualization, we witness the emergence of alienation. In our digital age, the digital itself becomes a commodity and human totality becomes alienated from self-consciousness:

> We are "seduced" by the world of consumption into performing our self on the digital stage. Here the individual is merely a screen onto which the desires, needs, and imaginary worlds manufactured by the new communications industries are projected. Those who no longer find the guarantee of their identity within themselves are ruled, indistinctly, by what escapes their consciousness (Gidlund & Nygren, 2012, p. 514).

It becomes apparent that the digital alienation is preventing its subjects from experiencing themselves as the acting agents and is making the world alien to them. Media, likewise, provoke social and cultural alienations. Hence, the theory of alienation is one of the many lenses that would facilitate and explicate the effects of Hollywood's dissemination of capitalism and its hegemonic ideologies, values, and spirits in this study.

3.3 Korean Feminism

Feminism is no longer a novel concept. It is a popular ideology that often emerges in academic and public discourses. Since the second half of the 20th century, the frequent appearance of feminism that transcends across various sectors, from politics to economy and education to culture, has lifted women from the shadows of centuries of oppression to a more democratic space, granting more rights and freedoms.

Feminism has undoubtedly liberated women in many ways; nevertheless, feminism is, more often than not, treated and viewed as a single entity, which leads to the overgeneralization of women's issues. The study of feminism and women's movements were often initiated and approached by educated, middle-class white women, and overlooked differences and gaps of race and socio-economic status; subsequently, 20th-century feminists often exist as exaggerated and cartoonish images of "hairy-legged, braless, angry" white women in the minds of many people (Gilmore, 2008).

Such limited portrayal of women is unfortunate, partly because many forms of contemporary feminist analyses require a thorough historical knowledge and an academic language; the discourse of feminism is often available only in the academia. Defining and

deconstructing feminism is challenging as it involves extensive literature review as the concept has different uses and approaches. Moreover, academic feminists are characterized as "out of touch, confining ourselves to a realm of theory with no tangible significance in either the political or the personal sphere" (Sorisio, 1997, p. 135).

Subsequently, the definitions of feminism are contested. While some scholars define feminism as historical and political movements in the Western world, including the United States and Europe, others use the term to refer to injustices against women. Hence, recent feminists suggest that a vocabulary to describe new ways of feminist thinking, which acknowledges individual differences, is necessary. Drake and Heywood (1997) argue that feminists need a different name altogether, pointing to the inadequacy of the contemporary American vocabulary to describe the new breed of feminist thought. Sandra Harding (1993) takes the limitations of feminism to the next level, posing a critical question: "how can feminists create research that is for women in the sense that it provides less partial and distorted answers to questions that arise from women's lives and are not only about those lives but also about the rest of nature and social relations?"

Critical theorists divides feminism in three stages. First-wave feminism, which occurred during the 19th and early 20th centuries in the United States and Europe, focused primarily on women's suffrage. The-first wave feminists, who were largely white and middle-class, also attacked the male monopoly of education, careers, and culture; married women's economic and legal dependence; and women's lack of control over their bodies.

During the first wave, feminism was interpreted in a homogenous, unified way, in the most simplistic form. The French activist Nelly Roussel, for example, assumed that all women

had similar essential experiences in the patriarchal societies: “All of us can declare war on today's society, for all of us are more or less ruined, our bodies, our hearts, our consciences brutalized by its law” (LeGates, 2001, p. 3). Roussel’s statement, while it carried strong message to women who strived to empower and liberate themselves under patriarchy, overlooked that women of various races, ethnicities, religions, and classes, have different living experiences and struggles. Chicana, African America, and Asian-American women were mostly marginalized in the first-wave feminist movements, which are viewed as an elitist exercise by feminists of second- and third-wave feminisms.

Second-wave feminism, which marked its presence from the early 1960s to the 1980s, had a bigger scope. What differentiated second-wave feminism from its predecessor was the shift from the women’s rights to the women’s liberation (Nicholson, 1997). The issues that the second wave focused expanded from women’s suffrage, the first wave’s agenda, to a wide range of issues, including sexuality, women’s body, reproductive rights, family, and the workplace. The transition from the first wave to the second wave took place rather smoothly and naturally, thanks to the preceding feminist writers and philosophers, such as Simone de Beauvoir (1949), who laid the groundwork:

> Humanity is not an animal species: it is a historical reality. Human society is an anti-physics: it does not passively submit to the presence of nature, but rather appropriates it. This appropriation is not an interior, subjective operation: it is carried out objectively in praxis. Thus woman cannot simply be considered a sexed organism: among biological data, only those with concrete value in action have any importance; woman's consciousness of herself is not defined by her sexuality alone: it reflects a situation that depends on society's economic structure, a structure that indicates the degree of technical evolution humanity has attained (p. 62).

During the era of the second-wave, feminists not only focused on women's oppression as theoretically compelling as Marx's, but also, established relation between their theories and Marxism: "the limitation of Marxism was expressed in the narrowness of many Marxists' interpretation of the concept of 'production'; feminists argued that 'production' needed to be understood as including not only work geared to the creation of food and objects, but also work geared to the creation and care of human beings" (Nicholson, 1997, p. 2). Moreover, second-wave feminists began to recognize that the political meaning of feminism cannot be derived from any pre-given concept of "womanhood"; rather, it should evolve as various political actors (Nicholson, 1997).

Third-wave feminism is the theoretical framework that would be heavily and primarily interpreted in this research. "Third wave," coined by Rebecca Walker, daughter of Alice Walker, the author of *The Color Purple*, includes a younger generation of women who were born in the 1960s and 1970s and who "express their desire to fashion new styles of feminism" (Brabon & Genz, 2009, p. 64). In her essay on feminism, "Becoming the Third Wave," Walker (1992) wrote:

> "I am ready to decide, as my mother decided before me, to devote much of my energy to the history, health, and healing of women. Each of my choices will have to hold to my feminist standard of justice. To be a feminist is to integrate an ideology of equality and female empowerment into the very fiber of my life. It is to search for personal clarity in the midst of systemic destruction, to join in sisterhood with women when often we are divided, to understand power structures with the intention of challenging them.,, Let this dismissal of a woman's experience move you to anger. Turn that outrage into political power. Do not vote for them unless they work for us. Do not have sex with them, do not break bread with them, do not nurture them if they don't prioritize our freedom to control our bodies and our lives... I am not a postfeminism feminist. I am the Third Wave."

This new feminism, the youngest feminism of all, marked by an interest in power feminists, including a revisionist reading of Margaret Thatcher as a free market feminist,

provides “an optimistic and celebratory picture of a confident, assertive group of young women who are reporting high levels of achievement and success across private and public sectors” (Brabon & Genz, 2009, p. 64).[29] In popular culture, third-wave feminism has been associated with young, powerful, and popular icons such as Spice Girls and Madonna and fictional characters such as Bridge Jones of *Bridget Jones' Diary* (2001), Ally McBeal of *Ally McBeal* (1997-2002), and Carrie Bradshaw of *Sex and the City* (1998-2010).[30]

Third-wave feminism, therefore, has made another transition, just like how the second-wave feminism broke away from the first-wave:

> A key move of new feminism is a decoupling of the personal from the political, signaling a break with second wave feminism, which [...] was too preoccupied with sexual politics and reductive accounts of female victimhood… The second wave's reliance on women's victim status as a unifying political factor is seen as disempowering and outdated and therefore should be replaced with “power feminism” that is unapologetically sexual, free-thinking, pleasure-loving, and self-assertive (Brabon and Genz, 2009, p. 64).

The new feminism was, in a way, a continuation and expansion of the combination of its two predecessors, resonating with them:

> By adopting the “wave” metaphor, the third wave clearly situates itself within [...] “the oceanography of feminist movement” - a chronology that comprises the surge of feminist activism in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries - commonly referred to as the “first wave” of feminism, which culminated around the campaign for women's suffrage in the 1920s - and the “second wave” resurgence of feminist organizing in the 1960s (Brabon & Genz, 2009, p. 157).

Another significant trait of the third-wave feminism is the acknowledgement of the postcolonial feminism. Epistemology, just like history, too, is written by victors or ruling

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[29] The term “new feminism” indicates a “more definitive rupture and distinction from and ‘old’ kind of feminism,” which is considered outdated, unfashionable, and obsolete (Brabon & Genz, 2009, p. 66).

[30] One distinguishing feature of the “new feminism” that differentiates itself from its earlier waves of feminisms is its acceptance, use, and manipulation of its insider position within popular culture (Brabon & Genz, 2009).

hegemons. As previously mentioned, first-wave feminism was initiated by the educated, middle-class white women. Second-wave feminism did not make much progress in terms of building diversity. It was during the third wave when postcolonial feminists, such as Gloria Anzaldua and bell hooks, finally critiqued the over-dominance of the Western feminism that unified the feminisms, setting paradigms for universality, and called for the recognition of the different meanings for feminisms in non-Western cultures.[31]

Feminism in Korea, or Korean feminism, clearly offers different traits and approaches from the Western first and second-wave feminisms. Korean women's movement, as discussed in the previous chapter, appeared during Korea's modernization under the Park Chung-Hee Administration. Between 1963 and 1990, the number of female workers increased 14 times (Park, 1993).

While women were heavily involved in the economic development process during Korea's modernization, women have always been marginalized; such marginalization stems not only from patriarchy, but also from the subordination within the capitalist system. Liberal feminists of Korea argue that Korea's development did not improve women's status, but rather, had an adverse impact on women, "reinforcing traditional patriarchy or eroding whatever power and authority they had in the traditional society" (Park, 1993, p. 128). As Park (1993) comments, the maintenance of patriarchal relations is crucial to the maintenance of capitalism and capitalism intensifies the continuing subordination of women. Hence, women's marginalization in capitalist development is " a manifestation of capitalism and the international division of labor

[31] Third-wave feminism is not the final destination of all the feminisms, however. While third-wave feminism is a more comprehensive form of feminism of all, which has taken the flaws and limitations of the previous two feminisms into account for revision and improvement, the new feminism will sooner or later be confronted with the fourth-wave feminism or the post-postfeminism.

characterized by the exploitative center-periphery relationship: women's oppression is structural, caused by capital accumulation" (Park, 1993, p. 129-130).

Korean feminism is complex mainly because there are multiple layers of cultures and institutional factors that structure the contemporary Korean society. Women have always regarded their jobs as temporary because of the "retirement at marriage" practice; furthermore, they have regarded their income as supplementary to family income as men are considered to be the primary breadwinners. Such tradition has deepened the dependency of women on men, reinforcing the persistence of Korea's patriarchal culture; hence, despite the rapid industrialization and the expansion of educational opportunities, "die-hard traditional values are still deeply entrenched in the society" (Park, 1993, p. 140). Hence, Confucianism should neither be disregarded nor overlooked in the discourse of Korean feminism.

On the surface, women may appear to have attained equality, and in some cases, they may have gone "too far" to claim their rights. However, if we fathom the issue of gender equality closely, women still lag far behind men in terms of equality. The high entry barriers into political and economic participation created by cultural, social, and political factors have resulted in low representation of women in the legislature (Chin, 2004).

Korean Confucianism, unsurprisingly, is described as the "enemy of feminism," mainly because the nature of Confucianism, which highlights men's superiority to women, is embedded in the patriarchal Korean society:

> Korean feminists have argued that Confucianism advocates patriarchy: they believe that Confucian ideologies act against gender equality. *Yangsong p'yongdung* (gender equality) is the slogan of the women's movement in Korea. From the point of view of Korean feminists, women's subordination to men is based on the tradition of patriarchy. In patriarchal systems men have power over other members of a family, community or society; not only is the father of a

> traditional family considered superior to any females but so are the grandfather, the great-grandfather, and the first and other sons (Koh, 2008).

While actively participating in and supporting globalization and Westernization, most Korean men view feminism as the "Western propaganda that should be blamed for women's neglect of family values"; these men still believe that women are to remain mothers, submissive daughters, and obedient daughters-in-law (Kim, 2009, p. 249).

Feminist scholars who see Confucianism as an obstacle to feminism claim that "the relationship between Confucianism and feminism is too far apart to get close to each other" (Lee, 2001, p. 138). It is true, to a certain extent, that Confucianism has slowed down women's liberation and empowerment in Korea. However, the relationship between Confucianism and gender equality requires further reevaluation and reassessment. Some scholars argue Confucian philosophy itself is not against gender equality (Koh, 2008).[32] They also argue that Confucianism is an important source of Korean identity; therefore, Korean feminism needs to be distinguished from the Western feminism. Taking the cultural differences into consideration, feminists should re-evaluate Confucian tradition to make feminism distinctively Korean and find a "meeting point" for Confucianism and feminism to establish and define "Confucian feminism" (Lee, 2000). The proponents of Confucian feminism contend that Confucianism can actually contribute to the progress of Korean feminism by removing all elements of anti-feminism and gender discrimination from Confucianism.

Some argue that feminism in Korea has stretched and taken gender equality "too far":

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[32] It is possible that some of the excerpts from *Confucian Analects,* the book of Confucius, have been misinterpreted. For instance, in one of the passages relevant to the gender issue, the original term "low-class people," such as servants, have been misinterpreted as "lower-class women" such as maidservants. This demonstrates that taking Confucianism as anti-feminist philosophy can mislead to overgeneralization and unjustified interpretation (Koh, 2008).

> Men often complain that gender equality has gone too far. The ascendancy of women's power has put men on the defensive to such an extent that anti-feminists groups have been formed to guard against the encroachment of women on men's vested interests. Men blame women for taking the lion's share of the benefits without accepting the accompanying responsibility. Throughout Korean society, feminism has incurred a conservative backlash intended to keep society from being "contaminated" by the feminist intrusion. Conservatives view feminism as the chief scapegoat for destabilizing the family, which they regard as the foundation of society (Chin, 2004, p. 295).

Korea is one of the few countries in the world that includes a governmental division for women. Interpreted as the Ministry of Gender Equality and Family (MOGEF) in English, the official Korean name of this cabinet-level division of the government is *Yeo-sung-boo*, which means the division of women. Created in 1988 as the presidential commission on women's affairs, the MOGEF has the following objectives: planning and coordination women's policy and improvement of women's status through the enhancement of women's rights; establishment, conciliation, and support for family policy; fostering welfare and protection of youth; and prevention of violence against women, children, and youth (MOGEF, 2015). With the strong presence of this ministry in the government, feminists have made every attempt to protect women in every way possible, and some of their attempts are considered to have gone "too far." For instance, men are discouraged from making any compliments on the appearance of women as these praises may be viewed as sexual humiliation and can lead men to unwanted legal consequences. Take Mr. Kim, a 35-year-old employee, as an example. One day, he makes a compliment on a new lip gloss that Miss Kim, his female co-worker is wearing. Miss Kim may accuse Mr. Kim of sexual harassment because he is commenting on her physical appearance.

Another important topic that needs to be recognized in the discourse of Korean feminism is the socio-economic status. Such dismissal of class issues by homogenizing women as one single group is one of the flaws in Korean women's studies. For instance, Kim and Lee (1977) point out that one of the problems Korean women are facing today is the isolation and seclusion from society, having been confined to their domestic roles. There is an "increasing desire" for jobs or voluntary and social activities. What Kim and Lee failed to look into is the class issue. Clearly, the group of women they are referring to represent middle or upper class. Women of lower income class would not look out for jobs or social activities to fulfill their sense of accomplishment; the main reason for them to remain int he workforce would be for their financial sustainability. Such homogenization of women as a single group further creates inequalities among women from different socio-economic classes.

One major challenge of evaluating and interpreting the contemporary feminisms is that feminisms appear in varieties, even within the field of Korean feminism. The list of feminisms have grown long: Marxist feminism, socialist feminism, radical feminism, revolutionary feminism, reform feminism, cultural feminism, existential feminism, psycho-analytic feminism, postmodern feminism, Third World feminism, black feminism, Jewish feminism, Asian feminism, Chicana feminism, agrarian feminism, to name a few (LeGates, 2001).[33] Nevertheless, all these different shades of feminisms are often overlooked.

[33] The term Asian feminism demonstrates over-generalization and homogenization. Asia, the world's largest and most populous continent, consists of more than 50 countries. The lives of women living in Southeast Asia are distinctively different from the women of East Asia. Labeling the feminisms of all these countries as Asian feminism, a single entity, is misleading and unjust.

One alternative or solution to this challenge that the third wave is facing is the standpoint theory, whose approaches eliminate dominant group interests and values from the results of research and values of "successfully colonized" minorities (Harding, 1993):[34]

> The starting point of standpoint theory - and its claim that is most often misread - is that in societies stratified by race, ethnicity, class, gender, sexuality, or some other such politics shaping the very structure of a society, the *activities* of those at the top both organize and set limits on what persons who perform such activities can understand about themselves and the world around them... In contrast, the activities of those at the bottom of such social hierarchies can provide starting points for thought - for *everyone's* research and scholarship - from which humans' relations with each other and the natural world can become visible. This is because the experience and lives of marginalized peoples, as they understand them, provide particularly significant *problems to be explained* or research agendas... So one's social situation enables and sets limits on what one can know (p. 54-55).

3.4 Feminist Film Theory

Cultivation theorists assert that television has effects on its users of long-term exposure to television and shapes the audiences' views on social reality (Gerbner & Gross, 1994). Television cultivates reality as viewers rely heavily on and believe in the representations they see on screens.[35] Hence, it is critical that we deconstruct and decode the symbolic representations and messages encoded in all genres of media texts as they serve as an influential tool that shapes one's world view.

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[34] Harding's postcolonial and standpoint theories in the field of science are equally applicable to the field of feminism. Harding states that the world's knowledge, especially in the field of science, is highly Eurocentric. Subsequently, learning about other cultures' knowledge systems and science focuses on the need for the West to develop new research protocols for studying other societies (Harding, 2011). The same applies to feminism. Borrowing the history, philosophy, and values heavily from the West, feminism carries hegemonic Eurocentric ideas and beliefs, from which the non-Western feminist scholars find themselves distanced.

[35] The premise of this cultivation theory can be further strengthened by the reception theory. In discussing reception theory, Hall asserts that none of the media texts is passively accepted by the audience. Rather, the audiences relate the messages and themes in the media texts to their culture and society, and interpret them with meanings.

Combining the aforementioned cultivation theory of cultural studies and feminism, feminist film theorists dissect the media text, including movies, television shows, and commercials, from the Marxist perspective. History of feminist film theory goes back to 1972 when the first issue of an American journal called *Women and Film* was published:

> The women in this magazine, as part of the women's movement, are aware of the political, psychological, social and economic oppression of women. The struggle begins on all forms, and we are taking up the struggle with women's image in film and women's roles in the film industry – the ways in which we are exploited and the ways to transform the derogatory and immoral attitudes the ruling class and their male lackeys have towards women and other oppressed peoples (Thornham, 2009, p. 5).

Throughout history, men have dominated the film industry, producing and distributing narratives from their point of view. Subsequently, the role of a woman has almost always revolved around her physical attraction and the mating games she plays with her male counterparts (Smith, 1972); while men have been given multiple roles to play, ranging from struggling against nature or militarism, to proving his manhood, women have played the roles of passive, submissive mistress figures or the vicious femme fatale. Even when women began to participate in the cinema, giving birth to women's movies as a novel genre, misrepresentations and underrepresentation of women continued, as these movies revolved around the same recurring themes:

> 1) the way in which the heroine herself is defined, in particular as a sexual object; 2) a shift away from melodrama to romantic comedy as the primary structural vehicle for the feminine narrative, resulting in the predominance of hybridized narrative forms; 3) and the creation of a set of narrative tropes that function for thematic purposes like medieval commonplaces […] tied to social developments surrounding the feminine subject and the heterosexual couple in the wake of second wave feminism and also to the larger technological and economic environment of the 20th century and early 21st century (Radner, 2011).

Having witnessed the oppression of women within the film industry and seen the need to correct the stereotypes as a means to open up a new world of culture, second-wave feminists began delving into film studies as a political act, using women's voice.

For the past few decades, cinema has been "the crucial terrain" on which women's identities have been defended and defined. Just like all the existing theories that are constantly questioned, deconstructed, and re-constructed, feminist film theory has undergone various phases of transformations. Feminism (and post-feminism), too, is a discourse whose concept and philosophy is not static. This suggests that the discussion of feminism constantly invites and promotes the continuity of reconsideration and reconceptualization. Hence, the discussion of feminism makes great sense when its history, including political movement and philosophy that points to the pervasive impacts of hierarchies and gender equality, is scrutinized (Tasker, 2011).

In the early years of the feminist film theory, the most important debate revolved around discussing which theoretical tools would best serve the "political ends of feminism and how we might best understand the relationship between oppressive images, representations, or structures of looking, and gendered structures of social and material power" (Thornham, 2009). Within the feminist discourse, contemporary women have been imagined to be free to choose – "free of both old-fashioned, sexist ideas about women's limits and feminism's supposed imposition of an asexual, unfeminine appearance" (Tasker, 2011, p. 69). One of the weaknesses of such approach was that it lacked the diversity in women's images. While female strength, the primacy of the self, and freedom of choice were overtly and overly iterated, the discourse of feminism was only celebrated in "appropriately feminine terms"; since the language of traditional femininities are

aligned with passivity, submissiveness, and sacrifice, women's empowerment had not been fully attained (Tasker, 2011).

With the feminist film theory slowly rising on the surface, Laura Mulvey (1975) offered a psychoanalysis of the spectator-screen relationship and the processes of identification in "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema." Mulvey uses a Freudian approach as a starting-point to diagnose how films are put together, looking into the way film "reflects, reveals, and even plays on the straight, socially established interpretation of sexual difference which controls images, erotic ways of looking and spectacle," appropriating her psychoanalytic theory as a "political weapon demonstrating the way the unconscious of patriarchal society has structured film form" (Mulvey, 2003, p. 44). In Mulvey's terms, women stand in patriarchal culture as a "signifier" for men.

Under the premise that the unconscious dominant group structures ways of seeing and pleasure in looking, Mulvey deconstructs *scophophilia*, the Freudian term for "progenital auto-eroticism," in which "the pleasure of the look is transferred to others." At the extreme, this practice can "become fixated into a perversion, producing obsessive voyagers and Peeping Toms whose only sexual satisfaction can come from watching, in an act of controlling sense, an objectified other" (Mulvey, 2003, p. 46). In a world marked by sexual imbalance, Mulvey argues that pleasure has been split between active/male and passive/female, and "the determining male gaze projects its fantasy onto the female figure, which is styled accordingly" (Mulvey, 2003, p. 47). Consequently, in their "traditional exhibitionist" role, women are "simultaneously looked at and displayed, with their appearance coded for strong visual and erotic impact so that they can be said to connote *to-be-looked-at-ness*." Woman displayed as sexual object is the "*leitmotif* of

erotic spectacle"; from pin-ups to strip-tease, from Ziegfeld to Busby Berkeley, she holds the look, and plays to and signifies male desire" (Mulvey, 2003, p. 48).

A decade after Mulvey's theory on *scopophila* and *scopophobia*, Christine Gledhill (1987), following Stuart Hall's work on encoding and decoding, argued that "textual meaning is neither imposed, not passively imbibed, but arises out of a struggle or negotiation between competing frames of reference, motivation and experience"; Gledhill further discussed that popular media could become the site of "a struggle between male and female voices over the meaning of the symbol 'woman'" (Gledhill, 1987, p. 37).

What does it mean by being and becoming a "woman"? In studying the differences between men and women, one of the primary discussions that needs to be recognized is the differentiation of sex and gender. While sex can be identified as a biological distinction between males and females, gender is a socially and culturally constructed term that is more complex and requires multidimensional approaches and explanations. Gender can be defined in many ways, in terms of achievement, control of our lives, independence, and family, just to name a few approaches. It is a "culture specific arrangement of the universal relationship between males and females" (Jhally, 2009, p. 318). Both terms significantly differ from one another and function in diverging ways.

Nevertheless, the two terms become identical in the world of cinema. As a matter of fact, gender is equated almost exclusively with sexuality as their bodies have become the main focus of advertising, commodifying women's sexuality:

> Women especially are defined primarily in sexual terms: What is important about women is their sexual behavior. As the debate on pornography has indicated, viewing women from this narrow and restricted perspective can result in treating

> women as less than truly human… Women have become defined as an object for the other. Within advertising, this is reflected in four basic ways in terms of the representation of women (a) as *symbols* for an object and, thus, as exchangeable with it; (b) as a *fragmented* object made up of separate component parts that are not bound together in any coherent way to create a personality; (c) as an object to be *viewed*; and (d) as an object to be *used* (Jhally, 209, p. 318-319).

Another way of emphasizing such women's gender role is by defining men as masculine figures. Hypermasculinity has always been a recurring theme in advertisements. Moon (2002) uses the term "hegemonic masculinity" to illustrate the dominant practices of masculinity accepted by the Korean society: Reflecting on Gramsci's notion of hegemony, the author illuminates: "complexities involved in the contemporaneous process of producing and subverting the dominant configuration of masculinity [connote] the presence of multiple and heterogeneous notions and practices of masculinity that society promotes or suppresses in tandem with the gender hierarchy" (Moon, 2002, p. 79).

Moon further argues that defining masculinity is as equally important as identifying femininity in gender relations for it is "not a fixed or pregiven identity but a position (or a place) in gender relations that is produced and maintained through culturally specific and continuous practices"; thus, masculinity becomes meaningful and significant "only in juxtaposition to its binary opposite of femininity" (Moon, 2002, p. 82-83).

The culture of hegemonic masculinity is represented in three ways, according to Moon: the three components are ability to provide for the family, military service, and distance from daily reproductive labor. The last component of hegemonic masculinity, keeping distance from daily labor, which includes housework, is clearly encoded in the majority of movies.

Recently, feminist film theory has developed a multi-perspectival approaches, not confining itself to the study of gender and sex, but also, expanding its discourse to the critique of

race and class. One of the most critical aspects that early feminism lacked was the recognition of racial differences among women. Even within the world of women in the world of films, there is a distinctive hierarchy. Whereas white females are mostly portrayed as the subjects of admiration, perpetuating white supremacy, women of other races are often absent; when they are present, they are there to "enhance and maintain white womanhood as object of the phallocentric gaze" (hooks, 1994, p. 310). What appears to be ironic and controversial about the early feminism is that as it focuses on white middle class women, it is actually replicating the patriarchal structure that feminism criticizes. hooks (2010), thus, elaborates that by opening up a space for a critical black female spectatorship, women of color will be given new transgressive possibilities for the formulation of their identities:

> To create lives of optimal well-being and, most fundamentally, just to survive, we require a feminist theory and practice that not only raises consciousness but offers new and different ways to think and be, activist strategies that can only be radical and/or revolutionary because there is no place in the existing structure of imperialism white-supremacist capitalist patriarchy where we are truly safe, individually or collectively (hooks, 2010, p. 171).

What has also been disregarded in the discourse of feminism is class, as previously mentioned. One of the film genres that has gained popularity over decades is women's film, which has come to be known as "chick-flicks" recently. The genre of chick-flick originates from "chic-lit," a contemporary genre of popular literature, propagated by U.S. news media near the turn of the twenty-first century. This genre narrates "young, predominantly white women's messy journeys of personal and professional growth" and portray how these – "heroines gain self-knowledge and self acceptance, and are thus empowered to take control of their intimate relationships and professional lives" (Butler & Desai, 2008, p. 2).

Female characters in contemporary movies and literature have indeed gained power politically and economically. From domestic housewives and secretaries, women have ascended the corporate ladder and have become professionals with power and independence. Today's women have more freedom, choice, and individualism. The contemporary romantic comedy's heavy focus on the consumer culture in a neoliberal capitalistic urban setting has given rise to the modern girl surviving in the "Bridget Jones economy," which becomes one of the most fundamentally underlying elements that builds the late romantic comedy as a genre. The modern single girls of the "Bridget Jones economy" typically found in rich cities, from New York to London, and Tokyo to Paris, are the "main consumers and producers of the creative economy that revolves around advertising, publishing, entertainment and media" who have so much disposable money they can spend on the trends that the media and market set to sell. The most significant distinction between the a single young female, also known as the modern girl, and her married sisters it the amount of time and money she spends on "simply having fun" (*The Economist*, 2001).[36]

However, women's lucrative careers should not necessarily be equated to the success of feminism. Feminist scholar Angela McRobbie argues that women have always been seen as insecure beings who "must always be on the lookout, prioritizing this over success in the workplace, the risk that catching a mat at the right time might mean she misses the chance of

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[36] In 2001, *The Economist* coined the term "Bridget Jones economy." *Bridget Jones* is a 2001 British romantic comedy that narrates the story of its eponymous female protagonist, Bridget Jones, a single girl in her 30s living in London, who tries to make sense of life and love. The term refers to the trend of the rise of single young females in their 20s and 30s changing the economy and consumer patterns. Every year, global metropolitan cities in need of economic revival greet these new Bridget Joneses, who are highly educated and have careers that allow them to spend on their fun time: "Many of them have grasped that these are the shock troops of creativity and culture; that they drive gentrification because they are willing to live in the lots of inner cities and that they bring with lots of restaurants and night life. They lead... "the aesthetician" of the city and the evolution of "the city as spectacle" (*The Economist,* 2001).

having children (her biological clock is ticking), there is also the risk that, without a partner she will be isolated, marginalized from the world of happy couples" (McRobbie, 2009, p. 419).

Moreover, Haskell (1987) argues that central to the woman's film is the "notion of middle-classness, not just as an economic status, but as a state of mind and a relatively rigid moral code":

> The circumscribed world of the housewife corresponds to the state of woman in general, confronted by a range of options so limited she might as well inhabit a cell. The persistent irony is that she is dependent for her well-being and 'fulfillment' on institutions – marriage, motherhood – that by translating the word 'woman' into 'wife' and 'mother,' end her independent identity. She then feels bound to adhere to a morality which demands that she stifle her own 'illicit' creative or sexual urges in support of a social code that tolerates considerably more deviation on the part of her husband. She is encouraged to follow the lead of her romantic dreams, but when they expire she is stuck (Haskell, 1987, p. 22).

Consequently, some feminists have failed to tackle "real" and more practical feminist issues such as equal pay, affordable childcare, and abortion (Butler & Desai, 2008, p. 6). Such homogenization of neoliberal white feminists' theoretical frameworks creates more inequalities among social and economic classes and ethnicities. Framing chick lit, or chick-flick, as a white women's problem, making white women the only subjects of feminism to be saved from the "threat of postfeminist apoliticism" leads to a "domestication of the genre that seems especially problematic in the context of the genre's explosive globalization," both in terms of dominant American and British chick lit being consumed outside of the U.S. and U.K (Butler & Desai 2008, p. 6).

Thus, instead of "post-feminism" – a term used to indicate a lack of interest in state politics or structural inequalities – a new term should be sought to define the ongoing phenomenon of the women's world. The most appropriate term would be "neoliberal feminism"

based on the emphasis of individual choice of women pushed by the media. The term "neo-feminism" serves as a manifesto to feminism, especially second-wave feminism, and claims itself as the antidote to post-feminism, focusing on choice and individual fulfillment" (Radner, 2011).

Instead of focusing on state-ensured rights, feminist discourses have often shifted toward individual rights and choices. Neo-feminists seek to survive and succeed, without family or other sources of material support, counting their own bodies and the work, which performs as the principle resource (Radner, 2011). Thus, foregrounding neoliberalism this way will allow us to "interrogate the binaries that work to separate public from private, personal from political, consumption from production, and the cultural from the economic, attending instead to the ways in which such categories are mutually constituted" (Butler & Desai, 2008, p. 8). While neofeminism is, theoretically, said to challenge patriarchal structures, it can only do so in the name of capitalism, validating its more accurate term, "neo-liberal feminism," in which "the subject is a free agent working on [her] own interests with a view to optimizing [her] position outside of the confines of family and hereditary status, but within a profit-driven society" (Radner, 2011, p. 11).

3.5 Hall's Audience Reception Theory (Model of Encoding and Decoding)

Cultural studies is a discursive formation that has multiple discourses, histories, and trajectories. It has no simple origins as much of the work of cultural studies has always existed and already been present:

> [Cultural Studies] is a whole set of formations; it has its own different conjunctures and moments in the past… It had many trajectories; many people had and have different trajectories through it; it was constructed by a number of different methodologies and theoretical positions, all of them in contention (Hall, 1992, p. 99).[37]

While the trajectories and discourses individuals encounter in the course of apprehending cultural studies may differ and vary, the premise and the foundation upon which the purpose of cultural studies is built hits one focal point: the relationship of mass media and the audience and the messages that come in between, also known as the audience reception theory. This theory assumes that when readers interpret messages, there is interaction between them and the text. Reception theory not only observes audience's responses and reactions to cultural products as they process and interpret the meanings, but also, on a bigger scale, looks at the long-term effects of these cultural products on national identity.

Hall's audience reception theory becomes a full picture, a completed puzzle, with his model of encoding and decoding; using this model, Hall proposes that every media source has an embedded message, which is interpreted by the audience in his or her unique way. In his model of encoding and decoding, Hall (1980) suggests a four-stage theory of communication: production, circulation, use (also known as distribution or consumption), and reproduction. Each stage is "relatively autonomous from others," meaning that the coding of a message controls its reception, but not transparently as each stage has its own determining limits and possibilities (During, 1999).

[37] Hall argues that what is stable in cultural studies is a "Gramscian understanding of conjuctural knowledge," which is situated in, and applicable to, "specific and immediate political or historical circumstances as well as an awareness that the structure of representations which form culture's alphabet and grammar and instruments of social power, requiring critical and activist examination" (During, 1999, p. 97).

Hall (1980) pictures the process of communication in terms of a circulation circuit, linked by sender, message, and receiver, specifically in this order. The model of encoding and decoding is processed by the following steps: the sender, which is often the producer or the creator, yields encoded messages in the form of a meaningful discourse. The institution-societal relations of production passes under the discursive rules of language for the product to be realized. Before this message can have an effect, it must first be appropriated as a meaningful discourse to be decoded. This set of decoded meanings, which have an effect or influence, bring about complex perceptual, cognitive, emotional, ideological, or behavioral consequences. Then in a determinate moment, "the structure employs a code and yields a message; at another determinate moment, the "message," through decoding, issues into the structure of social practices."

Hall expands his theory on encoding and decoding even further, by identifying three hypothetical positions from which decodings of a media discourse may be constructed. The first hypothetical position is that of the *dominants-hegemonic position*. In this position, when the viewer takes the connoted meaning from a media text and decodes the message in terms of reference code the message has been encoded, the viewer is "operating inside the dominant code" - this is the position which the senders/producers, say television broadcasters, assume when encoding a message which has already been signified in a hegemonic mode.

The second position is the *negotiated position*. Decoding messages within this position consists of a mixture of "adaptive and oppositional elements": it acknowledges the "legitimacy of the hegemonic definitions" to make the grand significations, while it makes its own ground rules.

The third position refers to the *oppositional code*, in which a viewer understands both the literal and the connotative inflection, but decodes the message in a contrary way, by "[detotalizing] the message in the preferred code in order to retotalize the message within some alternative framework or reference."

Hall's model of encoding and decoding, processed in three stages - first is the moment of production, through which producers encode narratives and meaning, second is the text, where meanings are embodied, and then finally, third is the moment of reception, when the audience or the spectator read and decode the meanings - becomes significant method of textual analysis in all media texts, including feminist movies, the focus of this dissertation. As Gledhill (1988) points out, gender representation is at the heart of cultural negotiation in the feminist film analysis.

> While film theory suggests how narrative, visual and melodramatic pleasures are organized round this symbol, feminist cultural history also shows that the figure of woman cannot be fixed in her function as patriarchal value. The 'image of woman' has also been a site of gendered discourse, drawn from the specific socio-cultural experiences of women and shared by women, which negotiates a space within, and sometimes resists, patriarchal domination […] When popular cultural forms, operating within a melodramatic framework, attempting to engage contemporary discourses about women or draw on women's cultural forms in order to renew their gender verisimilitude and solicit the recognition of a female audience, the negotiation between 'woman' as patriarchal symbol and woman as generator of women's discourse is intensified (Gledhill, 1988, p. 177).

CHAPTER 4: METHODOLOGY

"If we knew what it was we were doing, it would not be called research, would it?"
-Albert Einstein

4.1 Research Design

This research analyzes the interconnected relationships of American media, Confucianism, and Korean women's education. The combination of all four perspectives and foci of this research - 1) media studies, 2) education, 3) feminism, and 4) Confucianism - is a uniquely approached theme, which has not yet been explored by scholars and researchers. While there is abundant literature and research on each of these four themes, there has not been any research that invites all four vastly different topics to a single terrain of research. The merger of Confucianism and neoliberal feminism to the discourse of media and audience reception of Korea, looking at the convergence and divergence of the American popular culture and Korean values, adds another layer of complexity to this research.

The research asks the following questions:

- How do Korean Millennial women define success?
- How are Hollywood movies, specifically romantic comedies, influential in framing Korean Millennial women's education and career choices?
- What does gender equality and inequality mean to Korean Millennial women?
- How do Korean Millennial women respond to the two conflicting cultures of Confucianism and American neoliberal capitalism, which co-exist in their everyday life?

This research explores and analyzes the above-mentioned major themes with both theoretical and empirical approaches, using two distinctive forms of methodologies: 1) textual analysis of selected media texts from the genre of romantic comedy; and 2) focus-group surveys and interviews, which include dialogues on the aforementioned selected media texts.

The textual analysis serves to validate the ground assumption that the Millennial women of Korea borrow and utilize recurring plots and characterizations that take place in various American media texts, which they interact with frequently, when identifying their goals and envisioning the future of their education. The analysis is intended to demonstrate media as a pedagogical tool and to highlight the significance and impact of messages that are encoded in popular media and the ways they are received and decoded by the audience.

Surveys and interviews, conducted in small focus group settings over the span of eight weeks, directly respond to the main research questions as the participants share their narratives and reflect on their experiences in their dialogues.

4.2 Textual Analysis

This research looks at the influence of Hollywood's romantic comedies on Korean Millennial women's view of the world and construction of their future aspirations and goals. Therefore, defining and deconstructing the most watched romantic comedies by these women must not be omitted; hence, textual analysis serves as a critical research method in this study.

Films provide us with a vocabulary that we can use to analyze moving image texts. This involves breaking down the texts into their individual components, naming each component, and seeing how each works as a unit of meaning (Bainbridge, 2011). When reading a moving image

text, such as film or television, the form, the content, and the cinematography, which comprises of the camera movement, the sound, and the editing, are deconstructed for the textual analysis.

The two distinctive forms of the textual analysis are content analysis and discourse analysis (Bainbridge, 2011). Content analysis focuses on the frequency of presence or absence of certain words or categories within texts, often involving the estimation of how often a word or a phrase recurs in the media. For instance, if one were to study the change in people's perfection of climate after watching *An Inconvenient Truth*, by Al Gore, through content analysis, one would count how often the phrase "climate change" appeared in the media before the release of the movie and measure the frequency of the appearance of this phrase after the movie release.

Discourse analysis, strongly influenced by the work of Foucault (1972), focuses on the ways in which media texts support or subvert certain aspects of the world, observing the ways that the world is represented. For instance, the legitimization or subversion of one presentation of the world (such as the emphasis on the white patriarchal society), the marginalization of others (the exclusion of minorities and women), and the subsequent unequal distribution of power in society are all subject to discussion. Discourse analysis also looks at the intertextual relationship between the individual texts and the larger ideas of representing the world.

One of the weaknesses of textual analysis, just like most of the qualitative research methods are, centers on objectivity. Textual analysis is inevitably selective. The question of objectivity is always raised in this method because in any form of analysis, there are certain questions about texts that we choose or choose not to ask. Fairclough (2003) provides the following response to the readers' concern about the objectivity of an approach to the text analysis:

> There is no such thing as an “objective” analysis of a text, if by that we mean an analysis which simply describes what is "there" in the text without being “biased” by the "subjectivity" of the analyst. [...Our] ability to know what is “there” is inevitably limited and partial… (Fairclough, 2003, p. 14-15)

Nonetheless, discourse analysis plays a critical role in this study, primarily because the nature as well as the purpose of this study is to scrutinize and analyze the ways that mass media represent different aspects of the world:

> Different discourses are different perspectives on the world, and they are associated with the different relations people have to the world, which in turn depends on their positions in the world, their social and personal identities, and the social relationships in which they stand to other people. Discourses not only represent the world as it is (or rather is seen to be), they are also projective, imaginaries, representing possible world which are different from the actual world, and tied in to projects to change the world in particular directions (Fairclough, 2003, p. 124).

Moreover, an appropriate and thorough incorporation of discourse analysis strengthens this study. Textual analysis serves to enhance social research when it is used in conjunction with other methods of analysis. It is a “valuable supplement” to social research, not a replacement for other forms of research; rather, it is an “open process which can be enhanced through dialogue across disciplines and theories, rather than a coding in the terms of an autonomous analytical framework” (Fairclough, 2003, p. 16).

That being said, four media texts are analyzed in this research, using Hall’s theory of decoding and encoding in the process of assessing the politics of representation and political economy. The purpose of the textual analysis of these media texts is not to criticize the media conglomerates’ downplay of reiterating the oversimplified and overgeneralized portrayals of races and genders; rather, the analysis serves to delineate the typical patterns that the majority of

romantic comedies abides by, almost religiously, when it comes to developing plots and characterizations.

The four romantic comedies - *Pretty Woman* (1990), *The Devil Wears Prada* (2006), *Sex and the City* (2008), and *The Proposal* (2009) - have been selected based on the following premises: one, they are categorized under the genre of romantic comedy, also known as rom-com or chick-flick; two, they are the highest grossed most recent romantic comedies of the 21st century in Hollywood; and three, they are some of the most watched and talked-about movies by young Millennial women in Korea.

4.3 Sampling and Rationale

This study includes eight Korean Millennial women who share their narratives on their experiences as Korean women and the messages they decode from the mass media they interact with. While the pilot study of this research was originally conducted in Seoul, Korea, the actual fieldwork of this study could not take place in Korea for personal reasons. In order to maintain the consistency of focus of this research, which is centered on the experiences of Korean Millennial women, restrictions were set on determining the eligibility of the research participants. In order to be included in this study, participants had to meet all of the following criteria:

- Participant *must* be a woman.
- Participant *must* be a citizen of Republic of Korea.
- Participant *must* be a late Millennial, having born between 1990 and 2000.
- Participant *must* be either 1) an international student on F-1 or J-1 visa who has not resided in the United States for more than six years, or 2) a permanent U.S resident who has not resided in the United States for more than six years.[38]
- Participant *must* have parents or immediate family members living in South Korea.
- Participant *must* speak Korean.
- Participant *must* consider herself a Korean.
- Participant *must be* a student enrolled at the University of Southern California (USC) or University of California Los Angeles (UCLA).

First and foremost, every participant was required to hold a Korean passport. No participant must be a citizen of other nation, including the United States, and each individual had to be classified as an international student on the F-1 or J-1 visa. A participant who is a permanent resident of the United States was also accepted to be part of this study, only if she had not resided in the United States for more than six years. In both cases, whether a participant was identified as an international student or a Green Card holder, she must not have lived in the United States for more than six years for the following reasons.

The purpose of this research is to look at how Korean Millennials read and interpret the American mass media. Therefore, it is crucial that each participant represents a Korean female to a certain extent. Since the participants were studying at American universities, their identity clearly is not entirely Korean; however, because these participants spent most of their childhood and teenage years in Korea, what constitutes the majority of their identity must be Korean.

[38] From a legal standpoint, an individual is identified as an international student if he or she is enrolled for credit at an accredited institution of higher education in the United States on a temporary visa (usually F-1 student visa or J-1 scholar visa). An international student is usually not a U.S citizen or an immigrant/permanent resident who holds the Green Card. An undocumented immigrant or a refugee is not considered an international student.

Following this rationale, any Korean Americans were automatically disqualified to participate in this research.

Six years was set as the maximum acceptable length of stay in the United States, considering that some international students arrive in the United States during high school to prepare themselves for the American college admissions.[39] Many of these students begin studying abroad in their sophomore or junior year in high school. Many U.S. high schools require students to complete a minimum of two years of coursework from the same institution for graduation. This means that a student has to be enrolled in a high school by the beginning of his or her junior year, at the latest, to be able to graduate from that specific high school. Korean parents often send their children abroad at the beginning of their sophomore year to ensure that they get an extra year to adjust to the U.S school system and the American way of life. By the time these students graduate from college, they would have resided in the United States for six to seven years. Some of the research participants of this study, having come to the United States during their sophomore year, had lived in the United States between four and five years.

The participants were also asked if they had any of their immediate families, including their parents, living in Korea. This question was asked to ensure that the participants had ties to Korea and also Korean traits to be justifiably included in this study. International students whose

[39] As mentioned previously, education fever, with emphasis on English proficiency, is a nationwide norm in Korea. Fluency in the English language is seen as key to success. Because achieving the English language fluency in Korea has many challenges, many middle-class and upper-class parents send their children to the United States, hoping that their children would come back to their motherland as strong candidates in the Korean job market. Those students who are not sent to boarding schools are either accompanied by their mothers or assigned legal guardians. When mothers accompany their children, the families become separated as fathers remain in Korea. In 2013, it was reported that some 300,000 fathers lived alone in Korea while their wives and children resided abroad for pre-college education, which usually begins at the high-school level. These families are known as “goose families” - households that migrate, like geese, to the United States for their pursuit of English education (Rubin, 2014). Not all students, however, come to the United States on a student visa, although that is the norm. Sometimes, mothers who bring their children to the United States apply for the Green Card so that they can be the legal residents of the United States. Entering the United States on a travel visa or the visa-waiver program (VWP) allows these mothers to stay in the United States for tourism or business for up to 90 days without having to obtain the visa.

families are in Korea tend to go back to their home country to visit their families more frequently than those students whose families live in the proximity in the United States; moreover, those who have families in their home country are more likely to return to and settle in their motherland after they graduate. As they regularly spend time with their parents in Korea, they are more susceptible to learning traditional Korean values from their families and thinking and acting the Korean way, more so than the American way.

To be eligible to participate in this research, students had to speak fluent Korean. Almost all international students and those students whose arrival in the United States is recent are capable of speaking Korean fluently. Nonetheless, proficiency in written and spoken Korean was reinforced once more as a qualification for participation in this research as all the interviews and surveys were conducted in Korean.

Participants had to be classified as late Millennials, with their birth years ranging between 1990 and 2000. To identify oneself as a Millennial, one has to be born between the early 1980s and 2000. The range of two decades is quite big - the Millennials who were born in 1983 clearly lived during different political era, received different forms of education, and experienced different cultures, compared to the Millennials who were born in 1993. While the former grew up rewinding a New Kids on the Block cassette tape on a Walkman, the latter grew up downloading Justin Bieber's single album on an iPod. Thus, to make the sampling population consistent and narrow down the scope of the samples, those born during the first decade of the Millennial era were excluded, and only the second half of the Millennials, born between 1990 and 2000, who are current college students, were included in this research.

Finally, USC and UCLA were selected in this research for three main reasons. First, both

of these schools are located in Los Angeles, which is the city that has the second most Korean population outside of Korea. These schools also have a high number of Korean international students. In fall 2014, out of 29,663 undergraduate students, 3,736 students were identified as international students at UCLA. This was 12.6 percent of the total undergraduate students. The top three countries that these international students came from were China, India, and South Korea. In the case of USC, in fall 2015, over 10,000 students, which was 23.8 percent of the total enrolled students, were international students.[40]

Second, both schools are top-tier schools in the United States, ranked as top 25 institutions. In 2015, USC and UCLA were tied for 23rd in the national college ranking put out by *U.S. News and World Report*.

Furthermore, these two institutions are global universities that attract a great number of foreign students, including Korean students. While it is common to find Koreans who have not heard of Dartmouth College or Vanderbilt University, which are ranked significantly higher than these two institutions in Southern California, it is not common to meet Koreans who have not heard of UCLA. USC has more significance in Korea, primarily because many of Korea's prominent business and political leaders received their degrees from USC. This is why these two institutions are on many international students' dream-school list every year.

Based on the aforementioned criteria, the following eight students were selected:

[40] Both USC and UCLA have long been known for high international student enrollments for years. In 2011, USC held the highest number of international students for 10 years in a row. That same year, UCLA had the sixth-highest international enrollment (*Los Angeles Times*, November 14, 2011).

Name	Hyewon	Joohee	Nayoung	Sena
Birth Year	1994	1993	1992	1993
College Year	Sophomore	Junior	Senior	Junior
Citizenship	Republic of Korea	Republic of Korea	Republic of Korea	Republic of Korea
Visa Type	F-1 Student	Green Card	F-1 Student	F-1 Student
Years in U.S	2 Years	6 Years	4 Years	3 Years
Families in Korea	Parents & Relatives	Parents & Relatives	Parents & Relatives	Parents & Relatives
Visits to Korea	Summer & winter break (2-3 months)	Summer & winter break (2-3 months)	Summer & winter break (2-3 months)	Summer & winter break (2-3 months)
Korean Proficiency	Fluent	Fluent	Fluent	Fluent

Table 1. USC Participants

Name	Jiyoon	Mina	Nara	Sohee
Birth Year	1993	1993	1994	1994
College Year	Junior	Junior	Sophomore	Sophomore
Citizenship	Republic of Korea	Republic of Korea	Republic of Korea	Republic of Korea
Visa Type	F-1	F-1	F-1	F-1
Years in U.S	4 Years	3 Years	2 Years	4 Years
Families in Korea	Parents & Relatives	Parents & Relatives	Father & Relatives	Parents & Relatives
Visits to Korea	Summer & winter break (2-3 months)	Summer & winter break (2-3 months)	Summer & winter break (2-3 months)	Summer & winter break (2-3 months)
Korean Proficiency	Fluent	Fluent	Fluent	Fluent

Table 2. UCLA Participants

The first step of the participant recruitment was reaching out to the professors of East Asian Languages and Cultures and Korean Studies departments. Korean students, especially international students, are likely to take Korean history, literature, or culture classes to satisfy their General Education or elective requirements during their college career, primarily because

they are familiar with the topics.[41] A recruiting message was sent to USC and UCLA professors in the East Asian Studies departments. The same recruiting message was also sent to the communications staff of the Korean student organizations of both schools. The message clearly stated all the aforementioned eligibility criteria and included the following as requirements:

- Participant *must* be available to meet for 90-minute surveys, interviews, and discussions once a week, and occasionally every other week, for the span of three months.
- Participant *must* be available to and willing to attend five movie screenings or watch them on her own.

Thirteen students expressed their interest in participating in this study; however, five of them did not meet all the requirements and were not offered to be included in the next round of surveys and interviews. The preliminary surveys and focus-group interviews took place in two geographical and time settings. The participants were divided by their schools, each group consisting of four participants. The first group that joined this research was USC, meeting from September 2014 to December 2014. The second group, UCLA, met from March to June 2015. The research followed the same protocol and timeline in order to maintain consistency for both groups and validity of the study.

4.4 Preliminary Survey

The first meeting consisted of a brief introduction, a description of this research, and a preliminary survey, which was to serve as the participants' biographical sketch. While some

[41] These international students would not necessarily take these classes as their major requirements as it is rare for them to pursue a major in East Asian Studies or Korean Studies. Some of the most popular majors that the international students, especially from Korea, are business administration, accounting, economics, and computer engineering.

participants knew each other, not everyone had met each other before. Each participant introduced herself, stating her name, major, and year.

After the quick introduction, participants were introduced to the research. The main purpose and focus of the research was not fully disclosed during this session as this could create bias in the participants' responses. Had the participants been informed that this research had been designed to study how Hollywood's romantic comedies influence the ways that Korean Millennial women construct their identities and envision their future, they could have been more conscious when sharing their narratives. In order to lead this research as effectively and authentically as possible, only the big picture of the research was shared; the participants were told that the study looked at what mass media mean in our lives today, how we interpret the messages conveyed in the media, and how these messages influence the ways we view this world and where we stand.

The majors that the participants were pursuing did not overlap. The diversity of their educational backgrounds validate the balance of this research. Had all the participants pursued the same major, it is possible that their narratives would have overlapped more frequently. The majors of the participants were also well-balanced. They included the fields of social sciences, physical sciences, psychological sciences, and humanities.

	Hyewon	**Joohee**	**Nayoung**	**Sena**
College Year	Sophomore	Junior	Senior	Junior
Major	Economics	International Relations	Communication	English

Table 3. USC Participants' Academic Information

	Jiyoon	Mina	Nara	Sohee
College Year	Junior	Junior	Sophomore	Sophomore
Major	Gender Studies	Applied Linguistics	Chemical Engineering	Physiological Science

Table 4. UCLA Participants' Academic Information

Participants were also asked to complete a brief preliminary survey on their movie-watching habits and preferences. The responses to this survey will be discussed in the later chapter.

The preliminary survey also included Pew Research Center's quiz, "How Millennial Are you," that identifies the traits of Millennials and measures the level of Millennialism.[42] This quiz was included in the preliminary survey to observe whether the participants share the common traits of the Millennials and whether they can be justifiably categorized as the Millennials, the specific population this study focuses on. The questions that the quiz asked are as follows, and the results will be discussed in the following chapters:

1. In the past 24 hours, did you watch more than an hour of television programming, or not?
2. In the past 24 hours, did you read a daily newspaper, or not?
3. In the past 24 hours, did you play video games, or not?
4. Thinking about your telephone use, do you have… a) Only a landline phone in your home; b) Only a cellphone; c) Both a landline and cellphone
5. In the past 24 hours, about how many text messages, if any, did you send or receive on your cell phone?

[42] In 2010, the Washington D.C.-based think tank Pew Research Center profiled the roughly 50 million Millennials between the ages of 18 and 19 through a simple quiz called "How Millennial Are you" to identify, examine, and analyze the common traits, cultures, and values of the younger generations and how these Millennials are different from other living generations, Gen Xers (ages 30 to 45), Baby Boomers (ages 46 to 64) and Silents (ages 65 and older).

6. How important is being successful in a high-paying career or profession to you personally?
7. Do you think more people of different races marrying each other is a… a) Good thing of society; b) Bad thing for society; c) Doesn't make much difference for society
8. In the past 12 months, have you contacted a government official, or not? This contact could have been in person, by phone, by letter, by sending an email, or posting a message on their website or social networking page.
9. Have you ever created your own profile on any social networking site such as MySpace, Facebook or LinkedIn, or haven't you done this?
10. How important is living a very religious life to you personally?
11. Were your parents married during most of the time you were growing up, or not?
12. Do you have a tattoo, or not?
13. Do you have a piercing in a place other than your earlobe, or not?
14. In general, how would you describe your political views?

4.5 Focus-Group Interviews

Following the preliminary survey, focus-group interviews contributed to the majority of this research. Focus group interviews are often criticized for generating results as samples are neither ample nor representative enough to draw a conclusion; however, this qualitative method was chosen, considering access and timeline of this study. Originally, this research was designed to be conducted in Korea and to include a bigger sample. For personal reasons, this research was modified and redesigned to take place in the United States, and this resulted in a smaller sampling size and a different sampling population, from local Korean students, born and raised in Korea, to international Korean students, educated in the United States.

A focus group is a "technique involving the use of in-depth group interview in which participants are selected because they are a purposive, although not necessarily representative,

sampling of a specific population, this group being 'focused' on a given topic." (Thomas, 1995). Accordingly, participants in a focus group are selected because they would have something to say on the topic, are within the age-range, and have similar socio-characteristics (Richardson & Rabbie, 2001).

Not until the last couple decades had the focus group been increasingly employed as a research tool; this form of research was mainly utilized in the field of marketing to explore the reception of new products or services. (Kitzinger, 1994). Historically, focus group was limited in the academia, for the method was often seen as only fit for preparatory, exploratory or complementary inquiry (Jowett & O'Toole, 2006). Recently, in the past couple decades, the position of the focus group in social research has moved to the center stage as a focus group is not only a relatively economical way of conducting a research (as a number of people can be brought together in the same place at the same time), but also, a worthwhile academic reflection as it provides opportunities for the participants to engage themselves more by hearing more detailed revelations about other people's thoughts, and thus, demonstrated to generate high quality data (Kitzinger, 1994; Macnaughten & Myers, 2004).

Interviews took place in a non-academic setting to provide the participants with a space in which they could feel comfortable to speak and share their thoughts. The purpose of this interview method, style, and setting was to ensure that the participants would not feel pressured to present any expected model or moral responses. Instead of sitting in classrooms, participants were invited to cafes located on and off campus, depending on their availabilities to meet outside the campus. Seated in cafes, where the participants experienced cozy ambiance, they seemed comfortable sharing casual and informal dialogues. These group dialogues, which resembled

everyday peer-to-peer conversations, engaged every participant; the conversations were led and expanded by the participants themselves, not requiring too much of the researcher's intervention or facilitation. Moreover, while there were always interview questions that had been prepared and structured in advance, these were non-directive open-ended questions that engaged students to generate active discussions on their own. Had the interviews been conducted as one-on-one individual interview sessions in a classroom setting, participants would not have found themselves as comfortable as they did in this small group setting.

A group format is likely to affect what is said as well as who speaks (Atkinson & Hammersley, 1983). Jowett and O'Toole (2006) report that focus group with young women about their attitudes toward feminism has proven to be productive. Moreover, when an interview is done in a focus-group setting, the interviewer-researcher usually finds it more difficult to maintain control over topic, thus, giving more chances and spaces to the informants to prompt one another (Douglas, 1976). Hence, conducting focus-group interviews instead of one-on-one interviews removed tension and created familiarity in this study.

The second session, following the preliminary survey and introductory session, began with a drawing activity. A picture is worth thousand words. Hence, a drawing activity was included in this study in order to provide an opportunity and space for the participants fully and freely express themselves in defining who they are and whom they want to become. During the session, the participants were given blank sheets of white paper, coloring pencils, markers, and magazines to come up with the visuals that best answer the following questions: What is your idea of being successful? In other words, who do you aspire to be?

Following the first question, participants were also asked to illustrate how they pictured

themselves in five years. Participants were provided with writing tools and magazines if they wished to create a collage instead of producing their own illustration. Once the drawing activities were completed, participants were invited to present their artwork and share their thoughts in an informal group discussion. Drawing allowed and encouraged the participants to express more thoroughly in a liberating matter.

While visual research methods, including drawing, have often been overlooked, they have demonstrated to be effective research tools as they show how people feel and think in the world of simplicities and complexities; drawings are "intricately bound up with power relations, social experiences, and technological interactions" (Guillemin, 2004, p. 275). Gullermin's (2004) research focuses on health sciences, looking at the drawings of patients and relating them to their social and cultural milieu; Gullermin's case study can adequately apply to the field of social sciences as visuals have been often incorporated into social research over the last couple decades. A great scope of literature has been published on the issue of integrating visuals into social research. Some see visuals as valuable data worthy of analysis (Ball & Smith, 1992); contrastingly, others are skeptical about treating visuals as the primary object of analysis. While images might not be sufficient to analyze and conclude a cultural phenomenon, it has been concurred that images can be effectively integrated with other forms of information to improve the research as they function as "tools" that facilitate the research, "[helping] to establish rapport with respondents, contextualize and lend specificity to the subject matter in question, and humanize the portrayal of respondents" (Gold, 2004, p. 1552). Images should be treated as a means of illustrating themes, relationships, and processes associated with the subject of study (Minh-Ha, 1992).

On another note, drawings are neither fixed nor stable as they are produced in a specific time and place. For instance, a woman's drawing that shows her perception of menopause today is likely to change when the same woman is asked to draw a year later. Thus, the drawing as a visual product is a "visual record of how the drawer understands his or her condition at that particular place and time," providing his or her understanding and view of the world (Guillemin, 2004, p. 275). The drawing reflects the drawer's lived experience.

The third session was composed of discussions on their favorite movies and fictional characters presented by Hollywood. This session opened with the following two questions:

- What are your most favorite Hollywood movies? What makes these movies your favorite?
- Who are your favorite characters in Hollywood movies? What makes these characters unique?
- Can you critique your favorite movie? Which part bothers you? Which part did you like the most?

The next five sessions were structured in a uniform manner, comprising semi-structured interview.[43] Prior to each session, participants were asked to watch the movies every week or every other week, as stated in the aforementioned research timeline. The links to the live streaming of the movies, mostly on Amazon and YouTube, had been sent to the participants in advance. During each session, participants shared their reflections and experiences, based on the following set of questions:

[43] Semi-structured interviews have "much of the freewheeling quality of unstructured interviewing, but is based on the use of an interview guide... a written list of questions and topics that need to be covered" (Bernard, 2002, p. 2050). Whitehead (2005) elaborates that semi-structured interviewing follows the open-ended approach, which defines ethnography. In semi-structured interviewing, the interviewer elicits answers from the perspectives of the study participant and attempts to gain a greater understanding of the context.

- How would you summarize this movie? What is the main theme in this movie?
- Who is your favorite character in the movie? Why?
- Can you relate yourself to any of the characters in the movie? How would you relate yourself?
- If you were the character in the movie, how would you have done things differently?
- Would you like to live the life of this specific character? Why or why not?
- How are women represented in the movie? Do you think women in the movie are educated and successful? Why or why not?
- How close/similar is your favorite character to your idea of successful woman you illustrated in the drawing activity?
- Is the movie too fictional or realistic?
- Do you think Hollywood movies are realistic in terms of Korean cultural context?
- How would you rate this movie? Why?

4.6 Ethnography

In order to validate this research, participants needed to be identified as Korean women who live in the dichotomy of Confucianism and Western neoliberal capitalism. Hence, ethnography was crucial as it was the most effective and genuine way of reading and interpreting the participants' Confucian traits.[44]

[44] Confucian traditions, traits, and values can be commonly found in people's gestures and languages. For instance, communicating explicitly is shunned in Korea. As a result, avoiding communication is likely to be higher among South Koreans whose Confucian values underlie their communication (Klopf, 1984). "Mitigated speech," which refers to any attempt to downplay or sugarcoat the meaning of what is being said, is one of the common traits of Confucianism, which emphasize filial piety, respect for elders, and collective harmony. In Korea, if when making a request, one wouldn't say, "I need this to be done by next week" to the face; instead, one would choose a mitigated circumlocution, saying: "Don't bother if it's too much trouble, but if you have chance, it would be nice if you could look at this over" (Gladwell, 2008). Such nature of mitigated speech is embedded in everyday-life communications and has caused some critical consequences such as Korean Air crash in Guam in 1997. According to the top five pilot Power Distance Index (PDI), Korea was ranked second after Brazil. Power distance is concerned with attitudes toward hierarchy, specifically with how much a particular culture values and respects authority. The main cause of the plane crash was the mitigated speech of the co-pilot, younger and lower in rank, who could not correct and direct the captain. There are plenty of other examples of Confucianism in everyday life. Usually, a lower-ranked or younger person must wait until a higher-ranked or older person sits down and starts eating; younger one does not speak in the presence of a superior; a younger person also has to rise when a social superior appears on the scene.

Defining a Korean woman, especially a Korean Millennial woman, is a challenging task as this identity embraces contrastingly different traits. One of the critical traits that identifies a Korean woman is Confucianism. On the other hand, some of the traits that define Millennialism have no associations with Confucianism; rather, many of these traits reflect on neoliberal capitalistic Western values, which have been transported to Korea by rapid globalization with the help of technology. For instance, Confucianism weighs education very heavily. For centuries, the value of education has deeply planted in Korea, where education is considered to be the key to success; subsequently, the nation has long been known for putting pressure on students to excel academically. Despite the nation's prioritization of education and the Confucian society's expectation on young people to pursue as much education as possible, few Korean Millennials believe that "hard work and study" will lead to a better future, according to Pew Research Center in 2015. The survey showed that only 32 percent of the Millennials said education is *very* important to getting ahead in life, and 22 percent of them said hard work is *very* important to getting ahead in life. On the other hand, 43 percent of Koreans of ages 50 and older responded that hard work is the most important quality for getting ahead in life and being successful.

Identifying Korean Confucian traits as well as Millennial characteristics cannot be done by surveys or yes-or-no questions. Aside from in-depth focus group interviews, ethnography recognizes these traits. Ethnography, a holistic approach to the study of cultural systems, is critical in many social science research cases. The goal of an ethnography is to investigate the aspect of the lives of the people, looking at how these people view the situations they are confronted with, how they regard one another, and how they see themselves in "natural" settings, which have not been specifically set up for research purposes (Atkinson & Hammersley, 1983).

Just like textual analysis, ethnography, by itself, does not serve as a rigid investor control experiment, but rather, in the attempt to achieve the validity, it becomes a "process of discovery, making inferences, and continuing inquiry" through its "interpretive, reflexive, and constructivist process" (Whitehead, 2005).

One of the main strengths of conducting ethnographic field work is that this particular method generates genuine social setting that is less structural. For instance, what people say they do is not what they actually do. Therefore, their words differ from their actions and attitudes. Ethnography eliminates such discrepancy. The objective of ethnography is to be able to discern the "real" from the "ideal," the "tacit" from the "explicit," and "the back" from "the front."

For above reasons, while ethnography is not one of the core methods used in this research, the significant role of ethnography cannot be completely overlooked in this study. Hence, the attitudes, behaviors, and languages of the eight participants were constantly observed through the ethnographer's lens and analyzed to understand their Confucian values and Millennial characteristics.

CHAPTER 5: TEXTUAL ANALYSIS

"When I was a little girl, my mama used to lock me in the attic when I was bad.
And I would pretend I was a princess... trapped in a tower by a wicked queen.
And then suddenly this knight on a white horse with these colors
flying would come charging up and draw his sword.
And I would wave. And he would climb up the tower and rescue me.
But never in all the time... that I had this dream did the knight say to me,
'Come on, baby, I'll put you up in a great condo.'"

- *Pretty Woman* (1990)

5.1 Romantic Comedy as a Genre

Romanic comedies have been a cornerstone of Hollywood entertainment since the early 20th century: the history of American film demonstrates that the success in romanic comedy has put many actors and actresses to stardom, from Audrey Hepburn and Gregory Peck in *Roman Holiday* (1953) to Julia Roberts and Richard Gere in *Pretty Woman* (1990). Nevertheless, romantic comedy is one of the least studied genres (Radner, 2011).

Defining romantic comedy as a clear-cut genre can be challenging, often more complicated than what the audience, film critics, and scholars expect it to be. What makes this genre more difficult to identify is the insufficient attention that has been given to. American Film Institute's poll in 2008 defined romantic comedy as a genre in which "the development of romance leads to comic situations." The most pivotal question that is to be asked in any romantic comedies is: "Will these two individuals become a couple?" (Mernit, 2000, p. 13). According to Mernit, romance is the core of the plot in this genre and the transforming power of love is the overarching theme. Film scholars explain that romantic comedy is a "process of orientation, conventions, and expectations" (Neale & Krutnik, 1990). Romantic comedy is also a genre,

"which has as its central narrative motor a quest for love, which portrays this quest in a light-hearted way and almost always a successful conclusion" (McDonald, 2007). Nevertheless, defining romantic comedy is more complicated than what these succinct definitions suggest.

Romantic comedy is not a simple, unilateral genre; rather, it encompasses hybridity. Unlike other genres of film, such as action, horror, drama, comedy, or adventure, the name of the genre is comprised of the combination of words; the term "romantic comedy" itself denotes layers of definitions and suggests multitudes of traits. This genre is expected to not only portray the romance of protagonists, highlighting the genre's universal theme of love, but also, to sprinkle many elements of comic traits to tickle and trigger the laughter pipe of the audience. The common occurrence of both romance and comedy within many other film genres generates difficulties in appreciating what precisely identifies the romantic comedy.

Another factor that makes the genre of romantic comedy difficult to define is the genre's themes of love - plotted around romantic relationships - a universal concept that the audience are very familiar with. The basic problem with Hollywood's romantic comedy is that it employs a storyline that is so formulaic and over-familiar that it is often taken for granted: "The love story is so familiar in our culture that we rarely give it a second thought… 'Boy meets girl, boy loses girl, boy gets girl back' is exhibit A of standard plots in all fictional media" (Shumway, 2003, p. 157).

The genre has been taken lightly also because of the role that romantic comedy is expected to play. Romantic comedy, also known as *romcom*, serves to provide the viewers with "guilty pleasures," which is referred to as easy, uncomplicated pleasure (Berry & Errigo, 2004).

What has been overlooked in the study of romantic comedy as a genre is the global perspective. Romantic comedy, which has served as the Holy Bible of the genre since mid-20th century, is often constructed and deconstructed with the lens of Hollywood. For example, Hollywood often de-emphasized the importance of sex in the late 1990s. By contrast, British romantic comedy of this era presented itself to be more comfortable with disclosing plots and traits on pre-marital sex (McDonald, 2007).[45] Despite the controversial attempts made by the British cinema, the majority of the global audience accepted Hollywood's de-emphasis of sex as the norm.

Identifying the traits of Hollywood romantic comedy as a genre is a daunting task because this genre embraces more than the plot of love and the tone of humor. The three key components that constitute the attributes of any film genre are: visual characteristics, narrative patterns, and wider ideology (McDonald, 2007). Visual characteristics refer to the main images which become laden with a symbolism dependent on their genre, eventually becoming icons. These icons, or iconography in a more broad and comprehensive term, include locations, props, and costume. In the romantic comedy, the most common setting includes urban locations, props include articles associated with weddings, and costume is reflected through the special outfits that protagonists wear on date nights (McDonald, 2007). Narrative patterns that are repeated in the Hollywood romantic comedy include the basic plot of "boy meets, loses, regains girl" (Shumway, 2003).

[45] Such homogenization of a genre does not happen only within the boundary of romantic comedy. The promotion of Hollywood's work the global standard and epitome is seen in all genres, from action to drama. The traits that determine the genre of a movie, regardless of the origin of the country, have followed the standardized elements and characteristics of Hollywood movies.

While recognizing and analyzing these three key components in the romantic comedy is valuable, a further look at the history of this genre is necessary to understand the romantic comedy more comprehensively. The genre has undergone many phases of transformations over the decades. The romantic comedy of each epoch differs from one another as its plots, themes, and narratives responded to the social changes and political and economic surges that the society had been going through. The metamorphosis that the genre of romantic comedy lived through encompasses the following four sub-genres: screwball comedy, sex comedy, radical romantic comedy, and neo-traditional romantic comedy (McDonald, 2007).

One of the earliest forms of the romantic comedy is the screwball comedy. Believed to have faded with the coming of World War II, the screwball comedy's basic formula for its narrative involves "a rich woman meeting, being tamed and helped to mature by a poorer or seemingly socially inferior man" (McDonald, 2007, p. 19). Some of the examples of the screwball comedy are *It Happened One Night* (1934), *My Man Godfrey* (1936), and *Bringing Up Baby* (1938). The screwball comedy often served as a social class commentary as it appealed to many at a time when the nation was in an economic depression. The main traits of this comedy include (McDonald, 2007):

- Reverse class snobbery: To be poor is seen as to be better. To be rich is seen as to be out of touch.
- Inversion or subversion of the characters' normality: The heiress is forced to live poor whereas a pauper is suddenly gifted with money. A normally regulated life is turned upside down.
- Role play: Characters engage in masquerade, taking on different names, personae, and accents.

The sex comedy as a sub-genre of the romantic comedy, unlike the screwball comedy, which portrayed male and female characters clashing each other, expanded on its predecessor's theme by implying that such clashing was inevitable: "all men and women were perpetually in conflict because nature had set them up - or society had inspired them - with different goals" (McDonald, 2007, 38). The characteristics that define the sex comedy are as follows:

- Disguise and masquerade: Unlike the screwball comedy's use of this motif, the sex comedy adopts an alternative persona. This leads to the smaller sex comedy convention of "truth through lies."
- Hierarchy of knowledge: A male protagonist knows more than a female protagonist, and the audience know more than either of the two.
- Reversion and inversions of the "natural order."

McDonald (2007) suggests that this sub-genre portrays the following characteristics:

> Sex comedies also employ some micro-tropes, including: the protagonists who hate at first sight; tricks, insults and embarrassments; a set piece of an anti-marriage speech; and visual characteristics which include the apartment setting and glossy costumes. Music will often blend a romantic style for the intimate moments with a comedic score, reminiscent of the kind of music played to accompany silent slapstick (p. 45).

Some of the movies that exemplify the sex comedy are *The Moon is Blue* (1953), *Lover Come Back* (1961), and *Sunday in New York* (1963).

The next sub-genre, the radical romantic comedy, emerged in Hollywood in the 1970s after the gradual decline of the sex comedy. The radical romantic comedy, as its name suggests, abandons the emphasis on the happy ending of a couple, yet still strives to interrogate the ideology of romance. *The Graduate* (1967)*, The Heartbreak Kid* (1972), *Annie Hall* (1977), and *An Unmarried Woman* (1978) are some of the successful radical romcoms.

This sub-genre, just like it had been the case for the screwball and the sex comedy, was the product of its time:

> The radicalism of many of [the romantic comedies] was absorbed from the political and social upheavals of the late 1960s... those factors which affected the romantic comedy and altered it so drastically were not only the skirmishes attendant on the evolution of the feminist, black and gay rights movements, but a number of other events of great social and political consequence" (McDonald, 2007, p. 60-61).[46]

The radical romantic comedy acknowledges that its characters are in search of meaningful relationships (McDonald, 2007). It also acknowledges that not all couples live happily ever after. Loss and death were often invited in this sub-genre films. And such acceptance of more realistic elements in the narratives and plot was complemented by more realistic language, which increased the level of swearing and cursing. The typical characteristics of the radical romantic comedy are as follows:

- Self-reflexivity about the romantic relationship and the importance of sex to both genders;
- Self-reflexivity as a film text in a tradition of other film texts;
- Self-reflexivity as a modern and more realistic form of romantic comedy in contrast to earlier texts.

Based on the aforementioned traits and patterns, radical romantic comedy can be summarized in a sentence: "The radical romanic comedy generally retains the basic framework (boy meets, loses, regains girl) of the standard romantic comedy, by makes much of its own realism in certain areas - language, sexual frankness - being prepared to discard older

[46] The radical romantic comedy was seen as a disruptive sub-genre during that time. However, the sub-genre was not devoid of naivety. The references to real women's issues, including women's liberation, women's rights at workplace, the power dynamic and relations in a relationship, birth control, were neither discussed in depth nor in a realistic manner.

conventions and frequently permitting a much more open ending" (McDonald, 2007, p. 72).

The more recently emerging sub-genre, the neo-traditional romantic comedy, returns to the conventions of earlier comedies, ignoring the elements that made the radical romantic comedy exciting and popular for a time: "the neo-traditional romantic comedy reasserts the old 'boy meets, loses, regains girl' structure, emphasizing the couple will be heterosexual, will form a lasting relationship, and their story will end as soon as they do so" (McDonald, 2007, p. 86).

The easily identifiable traits of the neo-traditional romantic comedy include:

- Backlash against the ideologies of the radical film alongside a maintenance of its visual surfaces;
- Mood of imprecise nostalgia;
- More vague self-referentialism;
- De-emphasizing of sex;
- Overdetermination of romantic signifiers used in the films' titles: The film titles themselves parade their romantic comedy status, usually referencing romantic relationships, the city, or confirming the primacy of the couple.[47]

Furthermore, the three key components that complete a movie - visual characteristics, narrative patterns, and wider ideology - are more identifiable in the neo-traditional romantic comedy than in any other sub-genres. For instance, choosing New York City as a setting, by displaying "recognizable visual elements of New York as shorthand to create a romantic mood" demonstrates the framework of the visual characteristics in this sub-genre (McDonald, 2007, p. 90).

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[47] Neo-traditional romantic comedy often uses the plot and the theme of wedding and explicitly uses the word "wedding" and the related words in its titles. *The Wedding Singer* (1998), *The Wedding Planner* (2001), *The Wedding Date*, *My Best Friend's Wedding, My Big Fat Greek Wedding* (2002), *Made of Honor* (2008), and *Bride Wars* (2009) are some of the titles that exemplify such trend. Another popular method of choosing a movie title is including the names of metropolitan cities, the geographical icons that symbolize love. The movies that chose to use the prime location of love in their titles are: *LA Story* (1991), *Sleepless in Seattle* (1993)*, Maid in Manhattan* (2002), *Under the Tuscan Sun* (2003), *When In Rome* (2010), and *Midnight in Paris* (2011).

5.2 Reading Media Texts with a Political Mind

As discussed in the previous chapters, media are a powerful culture constructor, acting as a "producer of meaning that [provides] negative and positive depictions of gender, class, race, sexuality, religion, and further key constituents of identity" (Durham & Kellner, 2012, p. 17). Undoubtedly, media messages are embedded with beliefs and values that shape our world. More often than not, these messages are reflected as dominant ideologies that reproduce hegemony, as laid out by Gramsci; through this dominant hegemonic code, audiences accept and absorb media messages as reality and common sense. Hence, understanding the relationship between the media and the audience and approaching the media text with a critical and political mindset is pivotal. It is crucial that the audience realize that media do more than providing entertainment and information. The ultimate goal of media studies is to cultivate media literacy, helping the audience learn to "read, criticize, and resist sociocultural manipulation, [which will] help empower one in relation to dominant forms of media and culture" (Kellner, 2009, p. 6).

The two most fundamental elements that one needs to give recognition to in the process of reading any media text are *politics of representation* and *politics of economy*, through which media function as political and economic tools. It is through these two components of the media production that misleading and inaccurate stereotypes of various racial groups, genders and socio-economic classes are portrayed repeatedly and continuously on the screens. Consequently, the marginalized and the less privileged groups become more marginalized while the groups of authorities and oppressors gain more power, thus creating more inequalities.

Recent media and cultural studies emphasize the need to analyze cultural texts with political economy, a system of production and distribution of culture that "[takes] place within a specific economic and political system, constituted by relations between the state, the economy, social institutions and practices, culture, and organizations like the media":

> Political economy highlights that capitalist societies are organized according to a dominant mode of production that structures institutions and practices according to the logic of commodification and capital accumulation. Cultural production and distribution are accordingly profit- and market-oriented in such a system. Forces of production (such as media technologies and creative practice) are shaped according to dominant relations of production (such as the profit imperative, the maintenance of hierarchal control, and relations of domination). Hence, the system of production (e.g., market or state oriented) is important, as suggested below, in determining what sort of cultural artifacts are produced and how they are consumed. "Political economy," therefore, does not merely pertain solely to economics, but to the relations between the economic, political, technological, and cultural dimensions of social reality (Kellner, 2009, p. 9).

Within the framework of political economy, cultural production and distribution are, accordingly, profit- and market-oriented. Corporate bodies are well aware of the fact that culture shapes our sense of political agency. In the age of postmodern technologies, elite private interests monopolize the means of production and distribution of information so as to be able to more effectively "circulate, legitimate, and reproduce a vision of the world that suits their needs" (Leistyna, 2009, p. 339). As a result, producers and advertisers work together to redefine the meaning of the American Dream "from the search for a better life to the pursuit of a consumer lifestyle" by "[associating] products with middle- and upper-class lifestyles," which would increase both ratings and sales; thus emerged the advertising-driven media, "effectively [perpetuating] the myth that buying products would bring about class mobility" (Leistyna, 2009, p. 340). Hence, understanding the system of production helps one to understand how cultural artifacts are produced and consumed (Kellner, 2009).

The second element, politics of representation, is ubiquitously engrossed in almost all media texts. Two of the most commonly recurring traits of representation in Hollywood's romantic comedies is women's lack of security, and consequently, their dependence on men in the white patriarchal setting, regardless of their economic freedom and fiscal independence:

> This "new life" predates the feminist movement, arising in response to a new socio-economic system in which the home was not longer a site of production, with the family no longer functioning as an economic unit. More pointedly, in an era in which a woman could no longer expect to be supported by a father or a husband, women were motivated to seek financial security outside marriage. Similarly, the skills needed for the service industries could increasingly be acquired by women. The greater physical strength of men was no longer necessarily an asset to his employer; a woman could do the same work, as in the case of secretarial support. If she were paid less than her male counterpart, she could, nonetheless, acquire economic independence and autonomy, which continued to be advantageous to her even if she did, ultimately, choose to marry (Radner, 2011, p. 17).

Throughout the history of women's cinema, women have been instructed by their environment, from their home to the women's magazine and television shows, to "become" a woman:

> This concept of identity as a process of "becoming" has been understood as offering emancipatory possibilities to the individual who is invited, not to take up a stable, untested and fixed position, but rather, to see her "self," or even "selves," as subject to a multiple and on-going process of revision, reform and choices. (Radner, 2011, p. 6).

Female fragility and insecurity are portrayed in these movies through the female protagonist's obsession with her body and fashion, which often leads to scopophilia. In the typical romantic comedy, a female character is overwhelmingly concerned about her weight and figure. Losing weight is her priority and she gains her lost self-confidence through diet. Fashion, undoubtedly, is an important element that shapes today's women in media as well as our society:

> Fashion offers models and materials for constructing identity. Traditional societies had relatively fixed social values and sumptuary codes, so that clothes and one's appearance instantly denoted one's social class, profession, and status… In modernity, fashion is an important constituent of one's identity, helping to determine how one is perceived and accepted. Fashion offers choices of clothes, style, and image through which one could produce an individual identity. In a sense, fashion is a constituent feature of modernity, interpreted as an era of history marked by perpetual innovation, by the destruction of the old and the creation of the new" (Kellner, 2003, p. 264).

The following sub-chapters provide in-depth textual analyses of the five most iconic and successful romantic comedies of the 20th and 21st centuries, looking at the recurring plot of "boy meets girl, girl loses boy, boy regains or rescues girl" in an urban city setting and the common traits of neoliberal feminist cinema, such as women's acquisition of fiscal independence, lack of security, dependence on men, obsession with their look, including their bodies and fashion, which goes through significant Cinderella-like transformation, and the rise of consumer culture in the age of capitalism.

In each textual analysis of the media text, the issues of women's representations, roles, and values will be tackled by applying the formulae of politics of representation and political economy, and observing the transformations of the genre year by year, through the lens of critical media literacy.

5.3 *Pretty Woman* (1990): The 20th Century Cinderella Story

A new chapter of the romantic comedy as a genre was opened by *Pretty Woman,* the most iconic romcom, the epitome of 90s' romantic comedy. Directed by Garry Marshall, *Pretty Woman* is an extraordinary film that translates neo-feminist paradigm to cinema, by transforming

the traditional romance plot, which depends upon the heroine "finding validation of one's uniqueness and importance by being singled out among all other woman by a man," into a novel and radical plot, which signals a "significant variation in the structure whereby it is the woman herself who takes charge of the process […and] the role of woman is no longer a possession to be exchanged between men, from father to husband" (Radner, 2011, p. 32).

The story centers on Vivian Ward (Julia Roberts), a hooker in Los Angeles, who hops into the car of Edward Lewis (Richard Gere), a successful businessman, lost on Hollywood Boulevard while looking for his hotel in Beverly Hills, to help him get to his hotel with a monetary compensation. Finding Vivian's wit and personality charming, Edward makes a business offer, asking her to stay with him and accompany him to his social events. Vivian accepts the offer, and so begins her Cinderella journey of transformation from an untamed hooker to a civilized and educated, classy lady who learns to appreciate high culture such as opera and French cuisine. The transformation also takes place for Edward, too. While Vivian's transformation takes place *on* her, in a visible and physical way, with her makeover in fashion, table manners, and language, Edward's takes place *in* him, as he changes from a cold business person who has always pursued tearing businesses down to make profits, to a more humane individual who decides to help others build their business. Edward contributes to Vivian's physical transformation with his money and Vivian brings changes into Edward's psychological transformation with her nurture and femininity. Once Vivian realizes that she has fallen in love with Edward, she leaves him, as she fears being hurt in a relationship. However, their parting does not last long as Edward visits Vivian's apartment, roleplaying the knight on a white horse rescuing the princess from the tower, Vivian's childhood fantasy.

The movie encompasses all the elements that the contemporary neo-feminist cinema is identified with. Fiscal independence and obsession with one's body, both of which are the radical signifiers of women's liberation, emerge collaboratively.[48] Women were mostly given the roles of housewives in the decades prior to the release of *Pretty Woman.* When women were given professions outside of their homes, they were assigned the titles and positions that required submission and assistance, taking personal assistants and secretaries as an example. *Pretty Woman* broke the traditional system by introducing Vivian as an autonomous female individual who strives to gain her financial independence through her radical profession as a prostitute. The movie stresses Vivian's career in prostitution like no other; as Vivian is waiting for the bus after she helps Edward get back to his hotel, Edward approaches her and asks: "Going back to your office?" A similar reference is made again by Edward the following morning:

> Edward: Did you sleep well?
> Vivian: Yes, I almost forgot where I was.
> Edward: Occupational hazard?

Edward's continuous referencing of Vivian's prostitution to an official profession makes the role of Vivian different from any preceding female characters in the previous romcoms.

Vivian's job as a prostitute makes the movie easier to highlight the themes of the commodification of body, which then invites scopophilia and voyeurism. The movie begins with a close-up of Vivian's lace lingerie and bottom. It takes a few voyeuristic moments for the

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[48] Vivian may be the pioneering female character to demonstrate her ability to gain her own fiscal independence and to make her own choices on her body in Hollywood; however, before Vivian, there was the Bond Girl from the novels and the eponymous film adaptations of Ian Fleming's *007* series. The Bond Girl was "an early incarnation of the sexually liberated single girl that reached full maturity as an icon." The Bond Girl was an outcome of the evolution in the economic and social structure in which the individual rather than the female became the primary focus of identity. She represents a change in the woman's position, in which family and kinship no longer necessarily determine her fate. Economic status, her ability to negotiate consumer culture as both agent and object of exchange, become the prime determinant of her social expectations" (Radner, 2011, p. 15).

camera to finally reveal the face of Vivian. The camera starts with Vivian's bottom, covered with lace lingerie, and then her legs, when she zips up her over-the-knee leather boots. Even when her face is finally revealed, it is not her authentic look. She is wearing a heavy makeup and a wig to mask her true self.[49]

The theme of obsession with body and fashion is one of the key elements in *Pretty Woman*. Vivian undergoes an extreme fashion makeover, the way Cinderella does. In the movie, Vivian learns how to not only cultivate her appearance but also to appreciate the consumer culture and capitalism at the heart of Rodeo Drive: "Vivian, while also motivated by ambition int he sense that Edward required that she look like a 'lady,' takes pleasure in her transformation that is in excess of the effect on others that she achieves" (Radner, 2011, p. 35).

What is interesting to note is that Vivian's transformation takes place only when she realizes the power of capitalism and consumerism. When Vivian first walks into the hotel, she is not at all embarrassed by her look; she is wearing a typical hooker-outfit, exposing as much skin as she can. She sees that her appearance makes the rest of the crowd, especially women, in the hotel lobby uncomfortable. Nevertheless, she is nonchalant and carefree. It is not until the day that the salespeople on at a dress shop on Rodeo Drive ask her to leave their store because they do not have anything that Vivian can afford. It is this very moment that Vivian feels ashamed and humiliated, almost as if Eve opens her eyes and sees her naked body after eating the Forbidden Fruit in the Garden of Eden. For the first time, Vivian breaks into tears, and tells the hotel

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[49] The theme of masquerade continues throughout the movie. The manager of the hotel, where Edward stays at, gives a pseudo identity to Vivian, making her the niece of Edward and disguising her identity as a hooker. Edward, too, does not share Vivian's true identity as a prostitute with anyone in his business circle. Furthermore, her extreme makeover, Vivian is no longer seen as a prostitute; she is masqueraded as a cultured woman who belongs to the high society.

manager: “I need to buy a dress and nobody will help me.” It is the consumer culture in the core of capitalism that educates Vivian.

Her fashion transformation serves as an exemplar of the successful incorporation of political economy in the movie. After the movie’s release, fashion industry made a continuous reference to *Pretty Woman.* For instance, Bloomingdale’s advertised “Pretty Woman boots” shortly after the success of the movie. “Pretty Woman" is now more than a movie title; it is a concept that women, who wish to enjoy the pleasure and power in transformation, just like Vivian does in the movie while the famous “Pretty Woman” original sound track plays in the background as she makes herself comfortable in her wardrobe change, would pay for.

*Pretty Woman’*s setting in Los Angeles also recycles the recurring elements of the neo-traditional romantic comedy. As mentioned previously, the majority of successful romantic comedies take place in urban settings, such as New York, London, Paris, and Los Angeles.

Finally, the most significant trait of all romantic comedies returns to women’s continuous search of and dependence on men. *Pretty Woman* attempts to break the norm and structure of long-established gender stereotypes by delineating Vivian as an independent working girl who makes choices and decisions for herself. In the beginning, Vivian is clearly portrayed as a more liberated, independent, and powerful woman. Edward leaves the party with his friend’s car, and he is not used to driving a stick-shift. Not only is he struggling with his car, but also, he is lost, not able to find his hotel. Vivian rescues Edward. Not only is she familiar with the neighborhood, but also, she knows how to drive a stick-shift. Soon, they change their seats. Vivian takes the driver’s seat while Edward takes the passenger seat. A traditional scene would comprise of a man leading the car in his driver’s seat and a woman accompanying the man in her passenger seat.

Nevertheless, the movie fails to expand and carry on with this reversed gender role play. It is only in this scene that Vivian is seen as a powerful woman who leads the man. The rest of the movie portrays Vivian as a naive, fragile woman who needs to be protected, tamed, and educated by men, the role that Edward plays successfully. Vivian's untamed naivety and playfulness makes frequent appearances in the movie. She lies on the floor, laughing munching on late-night snacks while watching black and white romantic comedies on television, while Edward watches her. In another scene, Vivian is playing in a bath tub filled with bath foam and bubbles, listening to music and singing on top of her lung.

Her naivety and dependence on men reaches the zenith when she shares her childhood fantasy with Edward.

> Vivian: When I was a little girl, my mama used to lock me in the attic when I was bad, which was pretty often. And I would pretend I was a princess trapped in a tower by a wicked queen. And then suddenly this knight on a white horse would come charging up and draw his sword. And I would wave. And he would climb up the tower and rescue me.

Vivian's fairy tale, which clearly resembles the story of Cinderella, waiting for her Prince Charming to come and rescue her, is once again validated by her friend Kit during their dialogue:

> Vivian: Tell me one person who [the fairy tale] has worked out for.
> Kit: What, you want me to name someone? You want like a name? Oh, God, the pressure of a name.... I got it. Cindafuckin'rella!

Pretty Woman, becomes the modified fairytale of Cinderella, in the 20th-century setting, when Vivian's dream comes true. Edward, the knight in his shining armor, rescues the princess in the tower and wins Vivian back, in his limo, the white horse. After Edward approaches Vivian by climbing up the ladder and kisses her, the movie ends with the following dialogue of the two:

Edward: So what happens after he climbs up and rescues her?
Vivian: She rescues him right back.

The movie makes an attempt to revive Vivian as a strong and independent woman who rescues and leads a relationship; however, the question whether *Pretty Woman* can be acclaimed as a neo-feminist and neo-traditional romantic comedy that disrupts and breaks the historical women's submissive and need-to-be-protected gender role and representation remains unanswered.

5.4 *The Devil Wears Prada* (2006): Women and The Wardrobe

Devoid of heavy reliance on romance, *The Devil Wears Prada,* based on the eponymous novel by Lauren Weisberger, does not strictly belong to the genre of the romantic comedy; nevertheless, it does contain the main ingredients that are needed to be identified as the romantic comedy of the neo-feminist era. The only trait that separates *The Devil Wears Prada* from other romantic comedies is its subtle, almost minimal, focus on the romance part. The movie does not revolve around the love plot like most romantic comedies do; however, the heterosexual relationship of the protagonists and romance indeed exist in the movie and contribute to building the climax.

Directed by David Frankel, the movie centers on Andrea "Andy" Sachs (Anne Hathaway), a recent Northwestern graduate who lands a job in New York City as an assistant to Miranda Priestly (Meryl Streep), an editor-in-chief of *Runway* fashion magazine. Although the job she is offered is what "a million girls would kill for," Andy does not plan to stay at *Runway*.

She happens to have fumbled with this job and she knows that she does not belong in this fashion house. She has no knowledge and interest in fashion. She takes the job because she needs a paying job to survive in New York City until she finds a more "serious" reporting job, at *The New Yorker*, for instance. In her new position, Andy transforms, learning to appreciate fashion and begins to sympathize Miranda. During her "awakening" in the world of fashion, she is confronted with failing romantic relationship with her boyfriend Nate Cooper (Adrian Grenier), whom she decides to leave to pursue her career. This does not mean that their relationship is over. After Andy leaves *Runway*, repulsed by the power relations and politics, and takes a new job at another publishing company, she runs into her ex-boyfriend. The movie ends with the scene of the reunion of the two former lovers, with a subtle implication that the two may resume their romantic relationship.

Women in *The Devil Wears Prada* represent the twenty-first century's successful women, with their education and high-paying professions, making their own choices. Andy is a young single female who has a clear career goal and tries every means to pursue her dream. Although she is in a relationship, her boyfriend is not her final resort. What is more important to her, more than her romance, is her achievement. She pursues her happiness on her own. Miranda is another icon of success who also prioritizes her work; she does not let her failed marriage interfere her work and her life.

What appears to be ironic is the contrasting binary traits of women: what women want and strive to be vs. what the society expects women to be. This goes back to the question of

"becoming woman" (Deleuze & Guttari, 1987).[50] The movie exhibits Miranda as a successful woman who has money, power, and freedom, the three elements that men's success is often associated with. Nevertheless, the same qualities, when associated with men, and not men, are seen and taken by the society differently. When a successful man has the traits of confidence and competency, he is viewed as a likable leader; on the other hand, when a woman, equally successful, has the same traits, is less liked by both men and women.[51] And Miranda is not an exception. In *The Devil Wears Prada,* Miranda is the fearless, intimidating, and unlikable boss. Upon Miranda's grand arrival at work, everyone runs a marathon of cleaning up the office, changing into their high heels, and touching up their makeup.

Continuing with the trend of focusing on women's profession and fashion that *Pretty Woman* initially constructed, *The Devil Wears Prada* highlights contemporary fashion as another character in the movie, giving rise to the term "fashion flick" (Radner, 2011). *The Devil Wears Prada* opens a new chapter of the modern women's cinema and builds a paradigm shift of women's roles and responsibilities and heavy emphasis on consumer culture, specifically in high-end fashion, in the 21st century romantic comedy:

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[50] Deleuze and Guattari (1987) argue that "the reality of the becoming has little to do with a relation to real women, but everything to do with a relation to the incorporeal body of woman as it figures in the social imaginary." This body can be defined in terms of the affects associated with "dependent social status such as a capacity for dissimulation or for cultivating the affection of others, delight in appearances and role play." Hence, becoming woman does not involve imitating the forms of femininity, but rather, creating "a molecular or micro-femininity in the subject concerned by reproducing the characteristic features, movements, or affects of what passes for 'the feminine' in a given form of patriarchal society" (Patton, 1963, p. 81).

[51] This claim was validated by in Howard vs. Heidi case, which became more widely known after Sheryl Sandberg, the chief operating officer of Facebook, shared this study in her book *Lean In.* In 2003, researchers presented MBA students with a story of a successful entrepreneur. Half of the students were told that the name of this entrepreneur is Heidi, and the other half were told that the name of the entrepreneur is Howard. When the students were asked what their impressions of Heidi or Howard were, although they rated both Heidi and Howard as equally competent and successful, Howard was viewed as a more appealing, likable colleague. Heidi, on the other hand, was seen as selfish and unfriendly. What this study suggests is that our society adheres to traditional gender roles and gender language, also known as genderlect, and when a gender demonstrates a trait of the opposing gender, others sees this as an abnormal behavior and find it difficult to accept the radical behavior.

> The spectacular use of fashion [is]… at the heart of the series' mission and appeal - fashion as an element independent of character and action rather than subservient to it… [fashion at the cinema] allows for clothes to be the objects of the spectatorial gaze and to be admired or acknowledged in spite of the general trajectory of the film (Bruzzi & Gibson, 2004, p. 123).

Fashion takes on identity of its own in neo-traditional women's movies. It creates the second character, "drawing the viewer's attention to the world outside the story" (Radner, 2011). Through fashion, women transform, construct their identities, signify their successful achievement, and pursue their happiness. To stress such values of fashion, the movie continuously attempts to define and identify fashion.

> Nate: Why do women need so many bags?
> Lilly: Shut up.
> Nate: You have one. You put all your junk in it, and that's it. You are done.
> Doug: Fashion is not about utility. An accessory is merely a piece of iconography used to express individual identity.

Along with fashion comes the commodity of body. The opening scenes of *The Devil Wears Prada* is almost like a revival of *Pretty Woman* sixteen years later. In *Pretty Woman*, Vivian is introduced to the audience through her body. *The Devil Wears Prada* does something very similar. In the opening scenes, the camera focuses on the bodies of different women, all of whom getting ready for work, putting on their lingerie. The movie provides the voyeuristic experience to its audience, with a close-up on women's breasts, bras, legs, and lace panties. Then comes the make-up stage. Women's lips and eyes are zoomed in as they are putting on their lipstick and curling their eyelashes. And finally, the look becomes complete with their high heels. The girls are then ready to leave for work, only after they kiss their boyfriends or husbands. The way that women dress is clearly different in these movies; yet, their fashion serves the same

purpose - dressing to impress at work. Vivian puts her garments together to impress men and make money through her profession of prostitution; *The Devil Wears Prada* girls thoroughly and strategically consume and complete their fashion to appear professional at work and also, at the same time, to express who they are and construct their identities:

> The construction of self becomes the primary unit, more so than the construction of family. Neo-feminism, also referred to as "commodity feminism" when the term is deconstructed and its scope is narrowed down, implies a woman's "control and ownership over her body/face/self, accompanied through the *right* acquisitions, [which] can maximize one's value at both work and home" (Goldman, 1991).

Using Goldman's terms, Radner (2011) proposes that neo-feminism refers to the "tendency in feminine culture to evoke choice and the development of individual agency as the defining tenets of feminine identity - best realized through an engagement with consumer culture in which the woman is encouraged to achieve self-fulfillment by purchasing, adorning or surrounding herself with the goods that this culture can offer" (Radner, 2011, p. 6). This new freedom and choice of women has become fundamental to the accumulation of capital and the reproduction of the commodity.

The female characters' construction of self through their bodies is continuously narrated in the movie. The girls are constantly on diet to fit themselves into the framework of identity that *Runway* has constructed. The following dialogue between Andy and her co-worker Emily is a typical everyday conversation that the movie highlights:

> Emily: Andrea, my God! You look so chic.
> Andy: Oh, thanks. You look so thin.
> Emily: Really? It's for Paris, I'm on this new diet. Well, I don't eat anything and when I feel like I'm about to faint, I eat a cube of cheese. I'm just one stomach flu away from my goal weight.

In another scene, Andy's other co-worker Nigel, tries to wake Andy up and show the world of women she is part of.

> Nigel: Corn chowder. That's an interesting choice. You do know that cellulite is one of the main ingredients in corn chowder…
> Andy: So none of the girls here eat anything?
> Nigel: Not since two became new four, and zero became the new two.
> Andy: Well, I'm a six.
> Nigel: Which is the new fourteen.

When Andy finally comes to realize that fashion has a different identity in her world that she recently joined, she asks Nigel for help in her transformation. The emphasis on women's fashion and body, thus, continues in the movie. One has to wear a high-end designer label to not only look beautiful but also to demonstrate her success and happiness.

> Nigel: You'll take what I give you and you'll like it. We are doing this Dolce for you. And shoes. Jimmy Choo's. Manolo Blahnik. Nancy Gonzalez. Love that. Okay, Narciso Rodriguez. This we love. Uh, it might fit. It might.
> Andy: What?
> Nigel: Okay. Now, Chanel. You are in desperate need of Chanel.

Finally, with the magical help from Nigel, the fairy godmother, Andy, after her transformation, from size six to size four, and from no-designer cable sweater over her white collared shirt matched with dull black shoes with no heels to Chanel tweed jackets and over-the-knee-boots, becomes the modern Cinderella, a figure that the romantic comedy always strives to present. She is now the icon of successful woman - educated, with her degree from Northwestern; financially independent, with her career at the most powerful fashion magazine, where millions of girls would kill themselves for; and fashionable, because she can afford to wear high-end designer clothes.

Andy can be best defined as a pseudo-radical feminist. She does not play the usual boyfriend-hunting role in this movie. As a matter of fact, she breaks up with her boyfriend Nate and chooses her career over her romance. No women, other than Samantha from *Sex and the City*, have ever chosen their careers over men. Andy's decision, therefore, demonstrates the true neo-feminist trait - that is, making her own choice that positions her in the center of her life and identifies her as a complete being. Nonetheless, Andy's choice is not the way that the movie ends. At the end of the movie, Andy is reunited with Nate. Whether they are back in relationship is unclear as the movie ends with no clear-cut happily-ever-after ending. However, Nate's re-entrance in Andy's life after she quits her job at *Runway* suggests that *The Devil Wears Prada* cannot leave the formulaic cycle of the romanic comedy as it enters the romcom zone whose plot always echoes: boy meets girl, girl loses boy, boy regains girl.

5.5 *Sex and the City* (2008): Single Ladies (Put a Ring on It)

Sex and the City is a film adaptation of the HBO comedy-drama series based on the eponymous novel by Candace Bushnell. The HBO series ran for six years, from 1998 to 2004, chronicling the lives of four white women living in Manhattan – Carrie Bradshaw (Sarah Jessica Parker), Samantha Jones (Kim Cattral), Miranda Hobbes (Cynthia Nixon), and Charlotte York (Kristin Davis). The series, which won seven of its 54 Emmy Award nominations and eight of 24 Golden Globe Award nominations, is still running on cable networks in and out of the United States, including Asia, Latin America, and Europe. The success of the show was once again reinstated when it was produced as a movie in 2008.

Sex and the City is known to be the most successful women's movie in the history of Hollywood. It is the highest-grossing female-oriented film of all time for an opening weekend, with $56.8 million (Settodeh, 2008). The movie made nearly $27 million in its first day in theaters. Online ticket seller Fandango reported that it sold more than one million advance tickets for the film, making it the top-selling romantic comedy of all time for the service (Britt, 2008).

No women's movie had ever been accompanied by a media extravaganza as *Sex and the City* was. While Warner Brothers' Dan Fellman described the event as "a cultural phenomenon," Josh Feldman of the *Los Angeles Times* wrote: "Because of its loyal following... *Sex and the City* is more like a 'fan boy' movie for women, with eager customers already turning opening night into an event." The movie was initially produced as a literary work, often referred to as "chick lit," a contemporary genre of popular literature, propagated by U.S. news media near the turn of the twenty-first century. This genre often tells about "young, predominantly white women's messy journeys of personal and professional growth – heroines gain self-knowledge and self acceptance, and are thus empowered to take control of their intimate relationships and professional lives" (Butler & Desai, 2008, p. 2).

The movie revolves around the 21st century romantic comedy's recurring themes of the co-existence of women's fiscal independence and dependence on men, as the consequence of their lack of security, and their obsession with body and fashion, greatly exposed to the consumer culture in an urban setting.

The four women represent post-feminist icons: educated, financially independent, thanks to their successful careers, and powerful libertine who are responsible for making their own choices. Carrie is a successful writer and columnist; Miranda is a Harvard alumnus and an

established lawyer at a big Manhattan firm; Samantha has a lucrative public relations career in Hollywood; and Charlotte, who now a full-time mother, after graduating from an Ivy League, once pursued a career as a curator in the before her marriage.

Sex and the City re-iterates and re-emphasizes the 21st century's definition of "modern women" - they are well educated, have successful careers that guarantee them financial independence, and they do not require families and husbands to pursue their goals. The women of *Sex and the City,* "with an income whose primary purpose is their sustenance and gratification, represent an important market for the selling of consumer non-durables" (Radner, 2011, p. 168). Moreover, they have no biological family; they exist for themselves and each other. Because contemporary 21st century romantic comedies, such as *Sex and the City*, pays too much attention on women's financial autonomy and professional success, they often overlook and disregard the real issues of real women:

> The needs of these new urban orphan girls are modest: they have neither mortgages nor cars; they are not providing for their children's education; at least as yet, medical care is not one of their major concerns. While their tastes fall outside products geared for the home or family, they represent ideal consumers of other kinds of goods, in particular luxury goods - objects with no purpose except the enhancement and gratification of their owners (Radner, 2011, p. 169).

All four female protagonists have highly paid careers; yet, they are not satisfied with their lives. Behind the façade of their independence lies their longing for men and vulnerability to relationships.

Over the span of six years, during which the show aired on HBO, on *Sex and the City* girls are in a continuous search for love and romance in heterosexual relationships. The women always dream of having the perfect men in their lives. Carrie, for example, has not been able to

replace “Mr. Big” with anyone else for years. This clearly explains how big a role husband plays in each woman’s life. Charlotte, the most conservative character in the movie who strives to become a perfect mother and wife after finding her “perfect love” and “perfect marriage,” one day, breaks down and cries: “I’ve been dating since fifteen, and I’m exhausted. Where is HE?” Despite her successful education and career, she finds emptiness and incompleteness in her life, only because she hasn’t found a husband.

In the 2008 movie version, the four women have finally found the love of their life and are happily married and settled down. Miranda and Charlotte have started the ideal American families; they are both married, with children. Samantha, the most authoritative female character with an ability and willingness to control and even manipulate men in her sexual relationship, ironically, becomes dependent on her man as well. In the movie, she has moved to Los Angeles just to be with her lover. Indeed, it is Samantha’s choice; yet, her choice is not made for herself, but to give more priority to her man. Clearly, “the fear of loneliness, the stigma of remaining single and the risks and uncertainties of not finding the right partner to be a father to children” are the major concerns of women, thus making them believe that their lives are incomplete in the absence of men (McRobbie, 2009, p. 419).

Carrie, too, is about to tie the knot. Carrie’s longtime boyfriend Mr. Big finally proposes, and Carrie and her friends reunite in Manhattan for Carrie’s wedding. However, on the wedding day, Big, a two-time divorcee who feels insecure about the marriage, fails to show up and walk down the aisle. After a year-long breakup, during which Carrie feels lost and empty, Carrie and Big finally tie the knot when they run into each other in the empty apartment they bought a year ago.

Sex and the City, while the title suggests women's liberation and empowerment and the characterization of the four female protagonists represent the most contemporary post-feminist icons who are powerful and liberated, with their own decision-making power, is back to square one, resuscitating and recycling the fairy tale of *Cinderella,* in the 21st-century style.

In the final episode of the television series, Carrie, who runs off to Paris to be with her latest Russian-artist lover, is rescued by her knight in the shining armor, Mr. Big.

> Big: It took me a really long time to get here... but I'm here. Carrie, you're the one.
> Carrie: I miss New York. Take me home.

The movie is no different. In the beginning, women appears to be more transformative, libertine, and empowering. Marriage is no longer perceived as a "must"; rather, women attempt to focus on their own independence and pursuit of happiness. However, Samantha is the only one in the movie who successfully sees her life fulfilling even in the absence of men.

> Samantha: I'm going to say the one thing you aren't supposed to say. I love you... but I love me more. I've been in a relationship with myself for 49 years and that's the one I need to work on.

The recurring "boy meets girl, girl loses boy, boy rescues girl" plot, wraps up the long-running the show. Then the same plot is again recycled in the movie a few years later, this time inviting an explicit revival of *Cinderella*. When Big and Carrie decide to get married, their decision on the marriage is unconventional. There is neither a guy-on-his-knee formal proposal nor a diamond ring, both of which are almost always highlighted in romantic comedies. Instead, the two reach a mutual agreement on their marriage:

> Big: Would you want to get married?
> Carrie: Well, I didn't think that was an option.
> Big: What if it was an option?
> Carrie: Why? What? Do you want to get married?
> Big: I wouldn't mind being married to you. Would you mind being married to me?
> Carrie: No, no, not if that's what you wanted. I mean, is that what you want?
> Big: I want you.
> Carrie: So really, we're getting married?
> Big: We are getting married. Should I get you a diamond?
> Carrie: No. Just get me a really big closet.

Things change, however, a year later. After a year-long breakup, Carrie and Big coincidentally find each other in the apartment they planned to move into after the wedding. Big wins Carrie back by bringing back and putting all the traditional elements of the romantic comedy together, by making a formal proposal, on his knee: "That's not the way you propose to someone. This is. Carrie Bradshaw, love of my life, will you marry me?… This is why there's a diamond. You need something to close the deal." As he proposes, he reaches out to the pair of Manolo Blahnik high heels, which were left in the closet for a year ago when Carrie bought them as her wedding shoes. This very scene, in which Big slides Carrie's wedding shoes onto her foot, replicates the prince putting the glass slippers on Cinderella and asks her to marry him. *Sex and the City*, therefore, fails to present a completely autonomous and independent woman by giving her no option but to be rescued by a man:

> Sex and the City pulled its punches, and let Big rescue Carrie. It honored the wishes of its heroine, and at least half of the audience, and it gave us a very memorable dress, too. But it also showed a failure of nerve, an inability of the writers to imagine, or to trust themselves to portray, ant other kind of ending - happy or not. And I can't help but wonder: What would the show look like without that finale? What if it were the story of a woman who lost herself in her thirties, who was changed by a poisonous, powerful love affair, and who emerged, finally, surrounded by her friends? (Nussbaum, 2013).

Another common theme portrayed in the movie is the protagonists' obsession with their bodies and fashion. The first three minutes of the movie illustrate Manhattan as "Menhattan"[52] and fashion mecca, where every woman longs to live. The movie opens with a parade of high-end designer labels with Fergie's "Labels or Love" as background music: "Gucci, Fendi, Prada purses, purchasing them finer things, Men they come a dime a dozen, just give me them diamond rings…" And the girls of *Sex and the City* have it all: "true love, self-worth and fabulous shoes" (Barker, 2008).

> While the emphasis on fashion at the expense of love in the title song underlined the importance of cross-media marketing of the pre-opening interest generated by the film, the narrative of the film itself highlights romance as a crucial ingredient in a woman's life, whether in the form of a permanent relationship or a series of relationships. Nonetheless, the film's visuals, which included over 300 outfits worn by the four female leads, "the girls," underlined the importance of fashion to a feminine sense of self as defined within the movie, invoking a very clear reiteration of the neo-feminist paradigm, in which self-fulfillment in terms of both "labels" and "love" provides the primary goal for a woman;s life (Radner, 2011, 156).

In the next scene, a young white woman is looking into the window of a department store, which displays a white mannequin in a tight red jersey dress, surrounded by designer shoes and purses on the floor. In the background, we hear Carrie's narration:

> Year after year, twenty-something women come to New York City in search of the to L's –labels and love.

Then, the camera takes its audience to Carrie's wardrobe, which is filled with boxes of designers. Carrie is in her underwear while walking through her closet. This unnecessary nudity exposes the actress' lean, petite body that meets the standard of Hollywood aesthetics. In this scene, Carrie has an option of wearing pajamas or tracksuits, something that is more commonly worn by a bigger pool of women. Yet she chooses to go partially bare. Fashion, undoubtedly, is

[52] One of Carrie's published books in the movie is titled "Menhattan."

an important element that shapes today's women in media as well as our society, for "fashion is an important constituent of one's identity, helping to determine how one is perceived and accepted" (Kellner, 2003, p. 264).

Fashion also becomes an important indicator of socio-economic inequalities in the movie. The four white women wear designer labels, including $4,000-Chanel purses and $600-Dior stilettos. On the other hand, Louise, who cannot afford luxury goods, rents a designer handbag from an online retailer on a weekly basis. Such fashion as a signifier of socio-economic status leads to the discussion of class and race within gender. Evidently, non white-middle-class women have been marginalized in popular culture

Sex and the City evidently is the product of capitalistic political economy. The movie brought vast profits to its producers as it was distributed in various forms of entertainment, through DVDs and soundtrack albums, in both English-speaking countries as well as non-English speaking countries. HBO didn't disclose its DVD sales figures of *Sex and the City*, but it's been reported that the show is syndicated in over 200 countries (Coster, 2008).

Advertising was a means to increase both ratings and sales in the case of *Sex and the City.* The studio had tie-in deals with eight marketers, Glacéau VitaminWater, Mercedes Benz, and Skyy vodka, which appear in the film (Coster, 2008). Women's handbag designer Judith Lieber created a jeweled cupcake purse just for the movie, later sold for over $4,000 at retail stores later. Moreover, Carrie's $900-blue Manolo Blahnik shoes were completely sold out in every department store. "Blahnik's success skyrocketed as a result of *Sex and the City*," said Paula Correri of Tobe Report, a retail consultancy. The prices keep escalating, but women "will starve themselves to score a pair of his shoes" (Coster, 2008).

And the business has expanded beyond the boundaries of entertainment and retail industries. Another sector that has enjoyed profits from the movie is the travel business. Travel agencies in New York offer three-hour bus tours that stop at places that have appeared on the show. The tour costs $40 per person, and it has attracted as many as 1,000 people a week. The high-end option of the tour, which costs as much as $15,000 per person, offers "set-jetting" weekends in New York, driving women around the town and give them opportunities to fantasize themselves as one of the four characters (Coster, 2008).

Consumer culture, undoubtedly, is one of the key takes from *Sex and the City.* The movie's highlights on fashion labels goes overboard for almost three hours, and the extremity of this focus, which brings in the "opulent and gratuitous display of consumer goods," has often been criticized (Radner, 2011). Eric Wilson (2008) wrote in *The New York Times*: "Carrie Bradshaw represents the ultimate endorsement of a luxury system that is built on the aspiration to look rich or famous. Buying $1,000 handbags brings fulfillment. Buying knockoffs brings emotional impotence."

The metropolitan setting, once again, becomes the key signifier of the romantic comedy. The movie showcases the iconic architecture of Manhattan, making the city a perfect place to be for those women who are in search of romance, love, and men. The significance of Manhattan as a geographical icon of success in career and romance, is validated in the dialogue of Carrie and her assistant Louise.

> Carrie: Aside from the space issue... why did you move to New York?
> Louise: ...To fall in love.

What's also important to revisit in the discourse of feminism in movies is the issue of gender and race. As mentioned previously, women's images and roles in movies have changed. Nonetheless, women of color are hardly ever portrayed as successful professionals. For instance, Louise, the only non-white, black woman in *Sex and the City*, is a personal assistant to Carrie, who is white. Louis holds a degree in computer science; yet her job responsibilities do not include much of computer work. Instead, her daily task involves assisting Carrie unpack and settle down in her apartment after she comes back from her trip to Mexico.

Finally, *Sex and the City* is an excellent example of how hegemonic feminism looks, how it thinks, and what it does: the movie exclusively reflects the perspectives and values of white, middle-class, heterosexual women who define themselves primarily as "oppressed victims of patriarchy":

> Sex and the City's master narrative is that the women's aim is to gain equal power to white, heterosexual, middle-class men within the existing hegemonic social structure. This reform narrative solely addresses the centered subjects. By developing the subjectivity of centered subjects, while simultaneously exploiting the marginalized groups, Sex and the City sustains a hegemonic feminist discourse (Bradfield, 2007, 133).

5.6 *The Proposal* (2009): Back to Square One

Directed by Anne Fletcher, *The Proposal* was the highest grossing romantic comedy of 2009, generating over $317 million worldwide. The plot centers on Margaret Tate (Sandra Bullock), a Canadian editor-in-chief of a book publishing company in New York City, and Andrew Paxton (Ryan Reynolds), Margaret's assistant, who hopes to pursue his career as an editor. One day, Margaret finds out that she is about to face deportation from the United States as

her work visa is soon to expire. To resolve this issue, without any prior consulting with her assistant Andrew, Margaret spontaneously announces to the executive board that she and Andrew are engaged and their marriage will prevent her from being deported as it will grant her a legal residency status in the United States. Andrew is forcibly dragged to this plot, yet, he has his own agenda. He insists that Margaret make him an editor and publish the book he has been recommending to her after their marriage. The couple then flies to Sitka, Alaska - Andrew's hometown - to announce their engagement and make their wedding official to the families of Andrew in order to prove to a U.S. immigrant agent, who suspects that Margaret and Andrew are committing fraud. During their stay in Sitka, the two protagonists begin to learn more about each other and eventually fall in love. On their wedding day, Margaret, who realizes the value of family for the first time since her parents passed away when she was sixteen, makes a confession in front of Andrew's families and wedding guests that this wedding started as a business deal to avoid her deportation, and leaves Andrew behind. As Margaret returns to her office in New York to pack her belongings to return to her country, Andrew walks into the office and says that he is in love with her. The movie, while it recycles the typical plot of the romantic comedy, attempts to make unconventional and novel approach on the surface.

Unlike most romantic comedies, *The Proposal* sets in Sitka, Alaska. The use of iconic architecture as a cosmopolitan symbol is gone in this movie. Instead, the love story blossoms in a very rural, middle-of-no-where setting, in Alaska. Nonetheless, the movie does not completely disregard and jettison the value of a metropolitan setting takes in the romantic comedy. Although the plot mostly unravels in Sitka, the inception of the plot sets in New York City, again the place where all love begins.

Women's fashion is also an integral element in *The Proposal.* As it has always been in the twentieth and twenty-first romantic comedies, since the release of *Pretty Woman*, women's success and happiness are associated with fashion and consumer culture. Margaret's office look, composed of the iconic 1940s look of Katharine Hepburn, with added deep cleavage, a nude Prada purse, and black Christian Louboutin heels, and her travel fashion, which comprises an orange Birkin burse by Hermes, Louis Vuitton luggage, Prada sunglasses, and another pair of Christian Louboutin peep-toe pumps, imply her financial independence and affordability for such high-end wardrobe.

One of the most unorthodox gender representations in this movie is the reversal of roles at workplace. Traditionally, women played the submissive and accompanying roles who assist and attend to their male authorities. In this movie, the role of man and woman is reversed: Margaret takes the authoritative, demanding, and powerful boss whereas Andrew becomes the assistant whose clock revolves around Margaret's, delivering her coffee and answering the phone.

The reversed role play makes a strong statement in the opening scene. The movie starts with Margaret in her workout clothes, working out while reading a book manuscript. On the other hand, Andrew, half naked, is in his bed. This scene is strikingly contrasting to the opening scene of *Pretty Woman*, in which the camera focuses on the female body for its voyeuristic purpose. Women are no longer portrayed as sexual icons whose bodies are subject to scopophilic commodification.

Margaret's tone of speech also validates the radical reversal of role play in this movie. Not only does she walk into her colleague's office with confidence to fire him, but also, she

positions herself in the traditional men's shoes, especially when she informs her supervisor that she and Andrew are getting married:

> Edwin: Isn't he your secretary?
> Andrew: Assistant.
> Margaret: Executive assistant. Secretary. Titles. But wouldn't be the first time one of us fell for our secretaries, would it, Edwin?

Margaret's points that men with power used to have affairs with their female secretaries, and that it should not be any different for women in the same level of position clearly demonstrates the new paradigm shift and the rise of the modern woman.

The portrayal of Margaret as a radically different modern individual continues at the beginning of the movie. After Andrew makes a deal with Margaret on his promotion to the editor after their marriage, he makes Margaret to propose to him on her knees:

> Andrew: Ask me nicely to marry you. You heard me. On your knees.

Margaret unhesitantly complies to Andrew's request. Although she performs his request in a light and sarcastic manner, she does get on her knees, on one of the busiest streets of New York City, and proposes. This is probably the first time that a woman proposes, on her knees, to a man, just like thousands of men have done, in Hollywood movies.

Needless to say, Margaret takes the image of a successful modern woman who has fiscal independence and does not need a man to support her. She does not see the need of husband, love, or romance. Nevertheless, Margaret, too, is transported to the role of insecure woman settled with and tamed by her man:

> After nestling in the bountiful bosom of family and some expected naked slapstick with Andrew, Margaret melts. He mans the ramparts, she lowers her defenses. He thrusts, she parries. He chops wood and loses his shirt. She loses her cellphone and ditches the heels. He rescues her, scooping her out of the water after she falls from a boat. She shivers and smiles and tears up as she talks about her tragic past, revealing the sad little girl who's long been hidden behind the cruel disguise of a sensationally successful professional adult.Ding-dong the witch is soon dead and in her place, well, here comes the bride (Dargis, *The New York Times,* June 18, 2009).

As the movie advances, Margaret's bossy trait is replaced by the domestic wife role. Andrew used to bring coffee to Margaret every morning at work. However, now it is Margaret who brings breakfast to his bed in Sitka. As Margaret begins to find herself in love with Andrew, she becomes a tamed shrewd. Her tone of speech changes, from adamant and authoritative to soft and gentle.

The movie reiterates the traditional gender role play at the end. It is Andrew who pops the question in the real proposal. Earlier in the movie, when Margaret proposes on her knee, she takes the lead because it is meant to be a business transaction, not a real knot that ties them into a marriage. When Andrew comes back, proposes and rescues her from being deported, Margaret becomes the feminine type, breaking into tears, whispering: "I'm scared."

The film brings the audience back to square one of the traditional gender representations, by highlighting the society's expectations on classic gender roles and responses to reversed stereotypes. Just like it was the case in *The Devil Wears Prada*, Margaret, the authoritative figure is seen as an unaccommodating and unfriendly figure. As Margaret walks into the office at the beginning of the movie, one of the coworkers sends a message that reads "It's here!" and everyone acts preoccupied with his or her work to avoid eye contact with Margaret. A few minutes later, Andrew sends a message to his team to inform that Margaret is about to walk out

of her office: “The witch is on her broom!” No one sees Margaret as an individual who is good at what she does and has made a successful career; rather, she is seen as an unpopular, unwanted, evil “witch” and a thing that is associated with “it.”

The Proposal, while it attempts to position Margaret as an independent, empowered woman who needs neither romance nor man to make her a complete being, succumbs to reiterating and recycling the common traits of the romantic comedy, by guiding Margaret to become a woman whose insecurity and loneliness terminates upon being rescued by a man.

CHAPTER 6: FINDINGS

"I want to define success by redefining it.
For me it isn't that solely mythical definition - glamour, allure, power of wealth, and the privilege.
Any definition of success should be personal because it's so transitory."

- Anita Roddick

6.1 Identifying Participants: Confucian Values Meet Millennial Traits

Confucianism is one of the most strikingly significant ideologies that determines the culture of Korea. Another phenomenal ideology that defines the 21st century Korean society is the neoliberal globalization. In the world of two co-existing values that contradict each other, the younger the generation is, the more untraditional and the less Confucian the cohort is likely to be. In other words, Generation Y is more likely to be more liberal and inclined to accept Western ideas and values than Baby Boomers and even Generation X. Today, the Millennials of Korea are inhaling both the air of traditional Confucian spirits and the breeze of contradictory Western values brought in by the waves of neoliberal globalization.

The participants of this study, all of whom were born between 1992 and 1994, are unquestionably identifiable as the Millennials. In order to validate that the participants exhibit the traits and qualities of Generation Y, each participant was asked to take "How Millennial Are You?" quiz, created by Pew Research Center. The results of this quiz, as shown in the tables, demonstrate the strong traits of the Millennial generation in every participant.

Questions	Hyewon	Joohee	Nayoung	Sena
In the past 24 hours, did you watch more than an hour of television programming, or not?	No	No	No	No
In the past 24 hours, did you read a daily newspaper, or not?	No	Yes	No	No
In the past 24 hours, did you play video games, or not?	No	No	No	Yes
Thinking about your telephone use, do you have a) Only a landline phone in your home; b) Only a cellphone; c) Both a landline and cellphone?	Only a cellphone	Only a cellphone	Only a cellphone	Only a cellphone
In the past 24 hours, about how many text messages, if any, did you send or receive on your cell phone?	50+ text messages	50+ text messages	50+ text messages	50+ text messages
How important is being successful in a high-paying career or profession to you personally?	Somewhat important	Somewhat important	Very important, but not the most	Somewhat important
Do you think more people of different races marrying each other is…	Doesn't make much difference for society	Doesn't make much difference for society	Doesn't make much difference for society	Doesn't make much difference for society
In the past 12 months, have you contacted a government official, or not?	No	No	No	No
Have you ever created your own profile on any social networking site such as MySpace, Facebook or LinkedIn?	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
How important is living a very religious life to you personally?	Not important	Not important	One of the most important things	Not important
Were your parents married during most of the time you were growing up, or not?	Married	Married	Married	Married
Do you have a tattoo, or not?	No	No	No	No
Do you have a piercing in a place other than your earlobe, or not?	Yes	No	No	Yes
In general, how would you describe your political views?	Moderate	Conservative	Moderate	Moderate
Millennial Score (100)	**96**	**89**	**93**	**98**

Table 5: USC Focus Group's Millennial Quiz Responses

Questions	Jiyoon	Mina	Nara	Sohee
In the past 24 hours, did you watch more than an hour of television programming, or not?	Yes	No	No	Yes
In the past 24 hours, did you read a daily newspaper, or not?	No	No	Yes	No
In the past 24 hours, did you play video games, or not?	No	No	Yes	Yes
Thinking about your telephone use, do you have a) Only a landline phone in your home; b) Only a cellphone; c) Both a landline and cellphone?	Only a cellphone	Only a cellphone	Only a cellphone	Only a cellphone
In the past 24 hours, about how many text messages, if any, did you send or receive on your cell phone?	50+ text messages	50+ text messages	10-49 text messages	50+ text messages
How important is being successful in a high-paying career or profession to you personally?	Somewhat important	Somewhat important	Somewhat important	Somewhat important
Do you think more people of different races marrying each other is…	Good thing for society	Good thing for society	Doesn't make much difference for society	Good thing for society
In the past 12 months, have you contacted a government official, or not?	No	No	No	No
Have you ever created your own profile on any social networking site such as MySpace, Facebook or LinkedIn?	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
How important is living a very religious life to you personally?	Not important	Very important but not the most	Not important	One of the most important things
Were your parents married during most of the time you were growing up, or not?	Married	Married	Married	Married
Do you have a tattoo, or not?	No	No	No	No
Do you have a piercing in a place other than your earlobe, or not?	No	No	No	Yes
In general, how would you describe your political views?	Liberal	Moderate	Moderate	Moderate
Millennial Score (100)	**96**	**93**	**94**	**91**

Table 6: UCLA Focus Group's Millennial Quiz Responses

In order to be identified as a Millennial on this quiz, one has to score 73 or higher. Almost all the participants scored 90 and above. Based on the Pew Research Center's Millennial survey, it is fair to conclude that all the participating women are Millennials.

As mentioned in the previous chapter on methods, Korea, as a strong Confucian society, stresses the value of education, which, once achieved with diligence and excellence, can take an individual to a better future, with a secure and respected career. Koreans have long been known for their assiduousness and passion for work, especially because of the Confucian tradition that values family more than anything else. For instance, Baby Boomers of South Korea are characterized as a "Sandwich Generation," defined as "a group of people who care for their elderly parents as well as having a duty to support their dependent children" (MetLife Korea Foundation, March 2011). As a result, burdened by their filial duties and parental responsibilities, Korean Baby Boomers are not familiar with lifestyle and social networks that their Millennial children are prioritizing. Since they are constantly pressured by their work hours and schedules, working nine to ten hours every day, even on weekends, there is very little time for them to enjoy social activities.

Unlike Baby Boomers, late Millennials do not see education the same way as their parents do. While their Baby Boomer parents pursued their education with the hope and goal of obtaining respected lifelong jobs to feed their families, Millennials pursue their education because obtaining a college degree is one of the norms as well as necessities, which would guide them to land on their aspiring careers that pay them well enough to be able to afford their lifestyles, which include traveling, dining out, and spending time with their friends.

> Nayoung: Having a successful career is pretty important to me. I want to pursue a public relations or marketing career in the fashion industry when I graduate from USC. This is why I am majoring in communication studies. Of course, my parents do not like the type of job I am hoping to get. They want me to get a job that is either professional, like a lawyer, or a job that has more stable and has flexible hours, like a school teacher for example. But I do not want to have an 80-hour/week job. I want to be able to enjoy my life.
>
> Jiyoon: Not going to college was never an option for me. Everyone has to go to college, right? My parents always stressed that I would have to go to a good university to be successful and have a better-quality life. That's why I came to UCLA. UCLA is a great school. When I graduate from UCLA, it will be easier for me find a job. I did not have any specific major that I was interested in when I applied to UCLA. I took a women's studies class at the end of my first year, and I really enjoyed that class and decided to do gender studies as my major. My parents ask me what I am going to do with my major. They don't even know what my major is really about. They have never heard of such major. They are worried that I won't be able to find a job when I graduate because my major is in gender studies. I am not as worried as they are. I never wanted to have a professional job anyway. I would like to work in a more fun and casual environment… like entertainment and media.

Moreover, not only did the participants identify themselves as the typical Millennials who spend a significant amount of their time on connecting with their friends peers online and on their phones and prioritize their lifestyles, regardless of their marital status, but also, they considered themselves to be globally educated, cultured, and minded.

As much as the participants demonstrated their global Millennial features and untraditional values that reflected many Western ideologies, they revealed the contradicting traditional Confucian traits. When the participants were asked what makes them Korean women, the two terms that they constantly brought up were "wise mother, good wife" and "gender inequality." All eight participants mentioned the idea of wise mother and good wife in their discussion of being and becoming Korean women. The participants of both focus groups unanimously stressed that being a "wise mother, good wife" is one of the virtues of Korean women. Not only did they state that "being humble, wise, and supportive of the husband" is one

of the roles that a woman should play, but also, some of them shared that it is this "wise mother, good wife" figure that they picture themselves of becoming in their later years.

> Mina: Being a Korean woman means putting family first. Women take care of the household, being nice to their families and in-laws. Women should be beautiful and wise. They also should be able to cook well. Someone like *hyunmo yangcho* - wise mother and good wife… who is quiet, humble, full of knowledge, and smart enough to know when to intervene and when not to. They have to be all over the place, maintaining the balance. To me, Korean women are all about being perfect. This is my "ideal" woman, whom I want to become.
>
> Sohee: Me, too. I want to be a wise mother and good wife when I get married. I guess as a married woman with a child, you have to play different roles to different people. To your child, you would be a wise mother, and to your husband, a good wife. The particular definition of "wise" and "good," of course is up to interpretation. But for me, a wise mother never discourages failure of the child… A "good wife" is someone who is constantly having an intimate relationship with the husband. The wife is a mental support for the husband, and through her expression of love, the husband is energized.

The responses from the USC focus group were not so much different. They all agreed that the primary role that Korean women are expected to perform is the one of mother and wife.

> Nayoung: Living as a Korean woman means assisting the husband at home. Women should always be feminine, think feminine, and act feminine. Women should not behave like men. The primary role of a married woman, of course, is being a wise mother and good wife, who puts family and house chores first, before anything else, even before her own career. You should be a good mother, taking care of your children and a good wife, taking care of and assisting the husband… cooking for him, cleaning the house, and saving money for the family.
>
> Sena: Being a Korean woman means that you should not go against the society's standards of being "women." Women are supposed to behave in a feminine way. After you are married, you are responsible for developing moral and intellectual skills to raise healthy and intelligent kids and providing your husband a break from everything, mostly his work, both physically and mentally. Also, as women, we are responsible for mastering domestic skills like cooking and cleaning.
>
> Hyewon: I agree. To live as a Korean woman means to live conservatively. And when we get married, we should value our marriage and family more than our jobs. We should live for our family and our husband… and raise kids and do house chores well.

The participants' discussion on wise mother and good wife is extremely important as it is a strong indicator that Confucianism is one of the core values that they have been raised upon. Had a French woman been asked to describe what makes her a French women, her response would have been different; her traits would not have included anything that is affiliated with Confucianism.

From the participants' responses, it was clear that their identity as Confucian Korean women was not an overnight cultivation. Their dialogues demonstrated that their families and teachers, in both formal and informal educational settings, unconsciously as well as subconsciously, raised and educated them to become women in the Korean way. Participants all agreed that they share the same idea of what women should be like, and being a wise mother and good wife is not a question for debate. It is a concept that is constantly and consistently taught, over and over, since their childhood. Hyewon's anecdote of being reprimanded by her teachers back in high school is one example of how girls learn to become women in Korea.

> Hyewon: Women cannot be outliers in Korea. I remember one time, when I went on a field trip at my high school. We were supposed to have kept our curfew and stayed inside. My friends, some of whom were boys, and I went out to play. Our teachers found out about this. I was reprimanded more harshly because I am a girl. Girls are not supposed to be adventurous and make troubles in Korea.

Joohee, too, shared her experience of being raised to think and act like a Korean woman. Whereas Hyewon learned what the society expects her to become from her teachers and friends, Joohee learned what it takes to be a Korean woman through her mother while growing up.

> Joohee: My mom always tells me that being born as a woman is a mistake, a misdeed… because women do not have the same privileges as men do. Women are supposed to stay at home, patiently raising kids, giving pride and energy to the husband, so that they can have a happy family.

To further investigate the different traits of Confucianism and the Millennial generation, the cohort that is known to have adopted many of the neoliberal American traits, participants were asked to come up with a few words that define what it means to be Korean and American, and how they perceive the differences.[53]

	Hyewon	Joohee	Nayoung	Sena
Words that Define Korean-ness	Cooperation, family	Togetherness, teamwork	Fast pace, conservative, hierarchy	Homogeneity, Confucianism
Words that Define American-ness	Privacy, freedom, independence, racism	Freedom, individualism, equality, opportunity	Manner, smile, diversity, open-mindedness	Freedom, globalization, diversity

Table 7: USC Focus Group's Reflections on Korean vs. American

	Jiyoon	Mina	Nara	Sohee
Words that Define Korean-ness	Family, togetherness	Compassion, harmony, *han* (resentment)	Impatience, fast pace, traditional	Family
Words that Define American-ness	Opportunity, Hollywood	Freedom, individual rights, materialism, American dream	Individualism, New York, white people	New, unfamiliar, confidence

Table 8: UCLA Focus Group's Reflections on Korean vs. American

Again, overlapping concepts were shared by the participants. Most of the participants referred to Confucian values and ideologies, such as family, togetherness, harmony, and hierarchy, to define Korean-ness. On the other hand, the ideas of freedom, individualism, opportunity, independence, and equality, were associated with the American values. Moreover,

[53] Many of the Millennial traits overlap with American cultural traits and do not associate with the Korean Confucian culture. For instance, when the participants were asked the question on the interracial and multiracial marriage, many commented that they had never thought about the issue. Korea is not a culturally and racially diverse country; it is one of the most homogenous countries in Asia. The participants never had an opportunity to think about this issue, while growing up. Furthermore, while the trend and culture of piercing and tattoo have become more visible in Korea lately, many people are reductant to accept this so-called "punk" culture. The participants claimed that some of the features that the quiz brought up were "American."

the participants drew a distinct line between the two cultures; their awareness of the two different cultures and ability to differentiate them indicate that these women cannot be defined as one way or another; as much as they are the descendants of the conservative, patriarchal Confucian families who value traditionalism, harmony, and interdependence, they are the emerging Millennials in the global community whose core values include freedom, opportunity, equality, and diversity.

6.2 Women and Success, Just Like in the Movies

Everyone has a different definition when it comes to success. However, the idea of success seems to have become mono-conceptual and unilateral for the Korean Millennials. When the participants were asked to come up with the visuals that portray their idea of being successful, the images that participants produced were strikingly similar. All their illustrations consisted of images of financially independent women, who are single, with successful careers - the typical modern female characters that the contemporary romantic comedy would portray.

For instance, the definitions of successful women were very alike for Nayoung (Figure 1) and Hyewon's (Figure 2). Both of them positioned a young, educated single girl with an established career. Moreover, another common trait in the two images is fashion. Both Nayoung and Hyewon associated fashion to women's success:

> Nayoung: When I envision a successful woman, the first thing that comes to my mind is a "career woman" who is educated and stylish. Wearing high-end fashion designer clothes and carrying a designer purse is important because it translates as success. Being able to afford expensive clothes implies that the person has a successful career.

> Hyewon: I think of a beautiful woman in her pretty clothes, driving a nice car. She is well educated and has a great job that allows her to enjoy her life.

The visuals that Joohee and Sena provided were more detailed and elaborate. Joohee narrated a chronicle of a successful female. Joohee (Figure 3) included the images that represent good education, high-paying career, and affordability for high-end designer labels. What differentiates Joohee's drawing from the others is the inclusion of a happy family. For Joohee, being a successful woman is not confined to a stellar career and education; a woman's success is crystallized when she meets her husband and starts a family. What is interesting to note in this drawing is that she drew a castle-looking house, which implies the finale of a Disney fairytale, in which a prince comes to rescue a princess and they live happily ever after.

Joohee elaborated that the most ideal successful woman for her would be Michelle Obama, because she has all the elements and factors that a woman needs in order to be seen as successful. According to Joohee, Michelle fits into the successful woman category because she is highly educated, beautiful, and fashionable. But what makes the First Lady more special, according to Joohee, is that she sacrificed her career to put her husband's career before hers. Michelle once had a promising career, but she gave up on her profession to support her husband and have a happy family. Joohee's ultimate happiness and success for a woman is reached when the woman's life has a complete, functioning family. The two very different traits can be observed in Joohee's visual: well-paid career and affordability for high-end fashion, which is closely tied to the consumer culture, signify Western neoliberal capitalistic values, while high educational achievement and emphasis on the family bring back Confucian values.

Sena's drawing (Figure 4), although not as elaborate as Joohee's, resembled Joohee's in many ways. Sena, too, associated women's success to a well-paying job and a happy family. What is unique about her definition of women's success is that although she chooses to raise a family, this family does not overtake her personal achievement and goals. The size of the female figure in this drawing is proportionally larger than the other two figures, suggesting that Sena sees herself as the most important person in her life, not her husband or her child. Sena was asked to elaborate on her drawing:

> I did not consider the proportion of the size of the stick figures when I drew this, but now I look at this, it actually makes sense. I consider myself to be the most important in my life right now… I sound selfish, right? That's probably why I drew myself bigger than my future husband or kids that I will be having later. The size of my stick figure will definitely get smaller when I start and raise my own family in a few years, maybe in my late 20s. In the meantime, I have four to five years to live my life and focus on me and do whatever I want. I want to have a good job and make lots of money so that I can enjoy my life before I get married.

Sohee's illustration (Figure 5) was very similar to Sena's. She also identified success with a happy family, with a loving husband and children who respect their parents. The successful woman in this picture has a good job and is "free and independent." Fashion is again linked to success. Sohee commented that the woman she aspires to be has her own sense of style. Unlike other participants, however, Sohee's conceptualization of success and happiness did not link to monetary prosperity: "My definition of successful woman does not entail being rich. It is about being happy, being loved, and loving others." She also mentioned that she would like to be loved unconditionally by her future husband. In Sohee's picture, based on the proportion of the size of each figure, she, too, is the center of the universe. While she values and prioritizes her family, what matters the most is herself at this moment. In describing her picture, Sohee said, "family is

really important to me." She elaborated: "to have a happy family, I think I will have to be a happy person first. If I am not happy, there is no way I can raise a happy family.

The illustrations of from Mina (Figure 6) and Jiyoon (Figure 7) also resemble each other. Their illustrations imply that in order to become a successful woman, one has to have a good career, which gives her fiscal independence and access to consumer culture. Confidence and liberty are two words that describe the traits of this woman. The outfits that their successful women are identical: both Mina and Jiyoon picture business attire when they envision successful women because these women either work in a corporate or run their own business. The cars they illustrated are also identical. Both of them drew red sports cars as they see the combination of power and femininity in red sports cars.

Nara's illustration (Figure 8) was very simple. In describing her ideal successful woman, she said that having a stable job was necessary. She said that her parents preferred that she would have a government administrative job, which guarantees eight-to-six work hours and stable income, although the major she is currently pursuing is chemical engineering, which is not the suggested major for any administrative positions in the government. Nara said that she chose engineering major mostly because of my father's influence. Engineering is neither a preferred nor popular field of study for many Korean women. Nevertheless, Nara chose to pursue this major, primarily because of her father's influence. Nara's father had studied engineering in college, and watching her father work in the field of engineering while growing up encouraged her to follow the footsteps of her father. However, she does not see herself being an engineer. Her parents would support any career she chooses to pursue; however, her parents constantly

express that having a stable job is recommended for women. Although not illustrated in this picture, Nara emphasized that she would have been married and have kids.

When all the drawings were shown to the participants of each focus group, they were surprised to see how their drawings carried common and similar themes. Three common features were reiterated and echoed in all of the participants' illustrations - femininity, academic achievement and fiscal independence that grant them access to consumer culture, and family - all of which they stressed repeatedly to identify a high-achieving Millennial woman. Hyper-femininity, which is often enforced by the society's standardized gender representations, was reflected in all the drawings through the figures' physiques, outfits, and accessories. All of the women that were illustrated by the participants signified feminine characteristics, including their girly outfits, feminine physique, including long hair, and gentle smiles. Every single woman, except for a couple of stick figures, was dressed in skirts, dresses, and high heels, which represent femininity. High heels were clearly highlighted in almost all drawings; some of the participants labeled the shoes as high heels even when their drawings were clear enough. When these participants were asked to explain why they emphasized high heels in their illustrations, no one had a solid reason. They all commented that it was an unconscious approach; the images of professional women walking across the office lobby in their black high heels were what they could think of when they pictured high-achieving women.

> Hyewon: It's funny how our drawings look so alike! Especially mine and Nayoung *unni*'s are so similar![54] Our figures are "career women" wearing high heels.[55]
>
> Nayoung: Yeah, it's funny. I did not intentionally draw high heels. I just… drew them because I imagined *Sex and the City* and *The Devil Wears Prada* and all those girls in TV shows and movies wearing high heels.

As the participants shared in their dialogues, the image of high-achieving women running in high heels and professionally feminine outfits is recurrently exhibited in the Hollywood romcoms.

Educational achievement and fiscal independence, which are intertwined traits, is also a crucial trait that determines and measures a woman's success, according to the participants. It was unanimously agreed that a successful woman has to be able to support herself and lead her own life. The participants said that they could well revive the images they produced, because they considered themselves as highly educated individuals who can take on jobs that would give them financial independence that would support their enjoyable lifestyles:

> Joohee: I was originally admitted to USC as a business administration major. After my sophomore year, I had a chance to take an international relations class, and I fell in love with it. That's when I decided to change my major to international relations. I dream of working in an international organization, like IMF or World Bank. I know it's going to be really hard, because you don't see that many women work in this field.
>
> Hyewon: I don't know what I want to do exactly when I graduate. That's one reason I chose economics as my major. It is one of the more broad and flexible majors that can be applied to different fields and industries. Marketing and advertising are some of the jobs I think I will be interested in.

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[54] Hyewon's language signifies her Korean Confucian traits. In Korean culture, the elder person is never addressed by his or her name. The younger expresses and shows respect to the elder by using appropriate salutations. In this case, since Hyewon is younger than Nayoung, she is addressing Nayoungas *"unni,"* which is translated as "older sister."

[55] The term "career woman" is a unique English word that is used in Korea to refer to professional women. In the United States, people refer to any woman with a job a "working woman." On the other hand, the term "career woman" is not used to describe any working woman in Korea; it refers to a high-achieving professional woman who has an established career in a competitive industry, such as medicine, law, and corporate. That the participants are using the term "career woman" also reflects their Korean traits as the term is not often used outside of Korea.

Most of the participants have chosen to pursue majors that would lead them to professional careers. None of the participants chose majors in arts and humanities, such as philosophy and history. They all said that these majors would not connect them to "real paying jobs." Sena, Jiyoon, and Mina, who are pursuing non-professional or vocational majors, such as English, gender studies, and linguistics, respectively, had their own rationales in choosing such majors. Sena and Mina chose their majors in English and linguistics because they were planning to become English teachers. Jiyoon chose gender studies, simply because she found the subject matter interesting; unlike other participants, Jiyoon was the only one who was conscious of the major she was pursuing because of the lack of connection between her field of study and the job market.

What is worth noting is that none of the participants depicted a female millionaire. No one envisioned a Bill Gates, a Steve Jobs, or an Alan Greenspan, the icons of success that are widely accepted. While these participants value their fiscal independence, they do not wish to be "overly successful" as they do not want to intimidate their future husbands and risk their chance of getting married to educated and successful men. During the conversation, Joohee said that although she wants to be financially independent in her twenties with a successful career, she does not want to be "too successful," making "too much income," because she knows that when a woman is too high-achieving, she is seen as a threat to men.

Family was unquestionably the most important piece that completed everyone's puzzle of happiness and success. Although the image of family was included in every drawing, everyone emphasized that the female figure in the drawing would get married and start a family at one

point, sooner than later. The images they illustrated reiterated the common traits of any given female character in the romantic comedy: a single girl, highly educated, pursuing a successful career, financially independent. This young and fabulous girl has no reason not to be happy; however, she is not happy because something is missing in her life - a happy family with a loving husband, and beautiful children.

The three traits not only made strong presence in the participants' drawings, but also, they are the typical traits that are easily observed in the romantic comedy genre, as discussed in the previous chapters. Hence, while concluding that the Korean Millennials identify successful women through Hollywood's lens is an overarching statement, the power and impact of romantic comedies in generating and regenerating the unilateral icon of female success should not be overlooked.

6.3 The Reality

What one dreams of does not necessarily become a reality that one plans or desires to be in. Such was the case of the participants. There was a distinctive line that separated their ideals from the realities. In their first drawings, every single participant exhibited an empowered, independent female figure with established career, education, and femininity. When these participants were asked to picture themselves in the near future, five and ten years down the road, they produced an image of a stay-at-home mother raising a happy family, the image that is rather contrastingly different from the image they displayed in the drawing of their ideal women of success. When asked to picture themselves in five years, almost all participants envisioned

themselves pursuing their first careers or working on advanced degrees immediately after having graduated from college.

Nayoung (Figure 9) and Jiyoon (Figure 10) pictured themselves as working women five years later. They said that they would love to work in the fashion industry, because it is likely to involve frequent international travel, which they would enjoy. They both expressed their preference of working in a less formal setting, a non-corporate working environment. Moreover, Nayoung saw herself being in a romantic relationship at this point. With a stable and a fun career and a romantic relationship, she saw herself as being a "successful, happy woman."

Hyewon's envisioning of her future in five years also included a college diploma and an established career, starting with an internship, working on achieving her financial independence from her parents (Figure 11). She added that she probably would not have married at the age of 25, however, she would like to see herself in a romantic relationship with a boyfriend, hopefully her future husband, who loves her unconditionally.

Sena saw herself pursuing a master's degree for her teaching career (Figure 12). She dreamed of being happy at this stage of her life as she would be making enough money that she would no longer need financial support from anyone. Again, fiscal independence was associated with the concept of success.

Sohee, too, pictured herself having obtained a graduate degree and started her profession as a physician's assistant (Figure 13). Like she mentioned earlier, money is not her priority and her definition of success. She said that she could see herself being happy at this point of her life, having a secure job and friends she could enjoy her life with. Sohee added that she wouldn't have married at this point yet; however, marrying a good Christian man is her plan. It is

important to keep in mind that Sohee comes from a religious family. Her values and beliefs, therefore, mostly originate from Christianity. Sohee's desire to be an independent individual who achieves educational and professional goals has to be interpreted with the lens of Korean Protestant culture and history.[56]

Mina's happy life in five years was centered on marriage (Figure 14). Earlier, she shared that being a wise mother and good wife is one of her desires and goals. She emphasized again that family is the most important thing in her life: "Five years from now, I would be teaching English at an elementary school and attending my friends' weddings as well as planning my own wedding." She also pictured herself having a baby immediately after her wedding. Although having a family is her priority, she said that she would like to continue working until she has a baby. Mina wants to be an English teacher for two reasons: first, she has always liked kids and enjoys teaching them; and second, teaching is a profession that would allow her to have flexible schedule, which would be beneficial when raising her own children. Mina's choice of profession puts her family in the picture.

Joohee, again, came up with a very elaborate, detailed illustration of herself in five years (Figure 15). She said that she would like to see herself working in the fashion industry, making enough money to be able to afford her living, lifestyle, and fashion. Joohee chose to study international relations, hoping that she could be a member of a multinational organization such as

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[56] Historically, religion, especially Christianity, has played a significant role in women's liberation and transformation in Korea. Korean women are actively involved in their church. This is why Korean church often generate female-centered communities. What is remarkable about these women's membership and involvement in the church is the "fervent spirituality and dedication with which they have played in the growth and maintenance of the churches" (Chong, 2006, p. 351). The church often meant more than a place of worship; it became a place of social gathering for women. For many women, their church involvement functions as a "crucial means for attaining a measure of social autonomy and empowerment, particularly by enabling women to forge autonomous sphere and make use of non domestic talents and abilities" (Chong, 2006, p. 360).

IMF or World Bank; however, she believes that this is a career that is "almost impossible to have" as a Korean woman. Not only is it rare to find a Korean woman working in a global NGO or an intergovernmental organization, but also, she emphasized that it is not easy for women to travel globally once she settles in to start her own family. In her drawing, Joohee displayed the importance of being in a romantic relationship. She was hoping to be engaged in her mid 20s so that she could get married before she turned 30. After presenting her drawing, Joohee pointed out at the end that she was a little frustrated that this drawing does not reflect what she had always dreamed of becoming. Becoming a globally active ambassador for a multinational organization after graduating with a degree in international relations was what she would like to picture; however, this would be her dream that is hard to achieve. The drawing below would be what she would actually encounter in five years.

The participants' visual responses to the last question, which asked them to picture themselves in ten years, were significantly different from their second drawings, which exhibited their five-year short-term goals. In the second drawing activity, most participants, except for a couple, pictured themselves as single, professional women in romantic relationships. In the last drawing, however, all of the participants displayed marriage and family as the main theme. As a matter of fact, all their drawings were strikingly similar and the same concepts and values were repeated.

Nayoung and Mina pictured themselves having a happy family in ten years. They would have become stay-at-home mothers as they value their family the most and raising children would be their priority: Nayoung said that she would be spending most of her time at home taking care of her baby while Mina said that she would work hard to become the good wife and

wise mother" (Figure 16). The striking difference of these third drawings from the first drawings, which visualized their ideal successful women, is that women's education and careers no longer hold any significance. Nayoung's female character changed her outfit from a professional business suit in the first drawing to a comfortable mother's babysitting outfit in the third drawing. Her briefcase and work documents were replaced by kids' toys that are "all over the place." Mina, too, highlighted her desire to have a "happy family" (Figure 17).

Being a good wife and wise mother, raising children and supporting the husband, was the main role that every participant wished to be responsible for. Some participants, however, mentioned that they would not want to give up on their career if "that is an option." Both Jiyoon (Figure 18) and Sohee (Figure 19) identified themselves as good wife and wise "working" mother: "I am working so hard to get my degree from UCLA and I do not want to waste my education. I would like to be a working mom, but honestly, I do not know if that is possible. I heard that it is almost impossible to have a job as a married woman with kids in Korea" (Jiyoon).

The participants expressed their surprise in the significant differences in their drawings. They commented that when they first started drawing their idea of a successful woman, they actually pictured themselves being in that picture. However, when they were asked to reflect on their future, they could no longer see them in the picture of their ideal women of success.

> Jiyoon: [My drawings] are so different. For me, the successful women's image… in business suit, really rich, has a big house, a nice car, and has expensive bags. But then for the picture of myself in ten ears, I was just a married woman.
>
> Mina: Yeah, mine was so different, too. The successful woman I am imagining is someone who is very independent and rich. But when I see myself in five to ten years, I am just an ordinary housewife. I think I am too afraid to be independent… and not get married.

Aside from the drawing activities, a substantial amount of time was spent on discussing the idea of women's success. In defining women's success, the traits that the participants pointed out included career, independence, confidence, education, courage, strength, and finally, maternal love. Some of these attributes, such as independence and confidence, are almost antithetical to Confucian values; Confucianism stresses harmony, cooperation, and humbleness. What this suggests is that in order to achieve success as a woman in Korea, one has to go against all these Confucian values that she has been taught to practice all her life.

The conversation continued with sharing their anecdotes and experiences that shaped their ideas of success. Jiyoon said that her idea of success is something that had been passed down on from her mother, who has always maintained a good balance between her career and her family. Jiyoon said that her mother is one of the very few working moms she knows of and that she is proud of her mother, who is her role model. On the other hand, most of the participants said that they could not recall having encountered any incidents that helped them construct the images that they drew. What actually helped them produce their visuals were their recollections of the images from the media.

> Mina: To be frank, I never thought about becoming a successful woman, while growing up. I studied hard so that I could go to a good college, like UCLA, because that's what I was told to do so. What I have always dreamed of and wanted to be is having my own family and being a good mother and loved wife. That, to me, is happiness. When I was asked to share my idea of a successful woman, the image that I came across my mind was someone that would be in the movie or on TV. Like Hilary Clinton… although she was not the first person that came to my mind. It was a fictional character, like Elle Woods from *Legally Blonde*, that I thought of at first.

The participants were then asked to come up with real women whom they could associate the word "success" with. The names that both focus groups mentioned instantaneously were as

follows: Helen Keller, Michelle Obama, Queen Elizabeth, Beyonce, Kate Middleton, J.K Rowling, Hilary Clinton, Audrey Hepburn, Oprah Winfrey, Lady Gaga and Sheryl Sandberg. Both Hilary Clinton and Michelle Obama were mentioned multiple times. What was intriguing about their answers was that no Korean women's name was mentioned. When the participants heard the word "success," they unconsciously viewed the concept as a Western idea and immediately associated it with American and European women they see in the news frequently. They were then asked if they could think of any Korean women who symbolize the idea of success. There was a brief silence. It did not take the participants more than fifteen seconds to name eleven Western female leaders; however, it probably took them five seconds to name two Korean women: Yuna Kim, a national figure skater, and Geun-hye Park, the current and the first female president of Republic of Korea.

> Nayoung: I consider myself to be very Korean. But when you asked that question about who are some of the successful women that I know of, I could not think of any Korean women. I immediately thought of Michelle Obama, when we have our own female president. I don't know why I couldn't think of Park Geun-hye.

It is difficult to point out one reason that these participants completely disregarded Korean women when defining success. There must be multiple factors that shape these participants' views on success; however, one element that explains the automatic connection of success with non-Korean women, or Western women to be more accurate, is Korea's strong emphasis on patriarchal Confucianism. Women have long been marginalized in Korea. Although the number of women who pursue professional careers are increasing every year, the patriarchal nature of Confucianism often discourages women from achieving their professional goals. Even to this day, women are associated with domestic roles, as wise mother and good wife.

6.4 Reading Romcoms

As mentioned perviously, one of the preliminary surveys looks at the participants' movie preferences. The table below demonstrates the responses of the participants from the survey.

	Hyewon	Joohee	Nayoung	Sena
Movie-Watching Frequency	1-2 times/month	2-3 times/month	2-3 times/month	2-3 times/month
Two Favorite Movie Genres	Romantic comedy, action	Comedy, fantasy	Romantic comedy, drama	Romantic comedy, drama
Three Favorite Movies	*Sound of Music, The Devil Wears Prada, Tangled*	*King's Speech, Iron Man, Taken*	*Love Actually, No Strings Attached, The Great Gatsby*	*Transformers, A Walk to Remember, The Great Gatsby*
Favorite Female Movie Character	Andy Sachs (Anne Hathaway), *The Devil Wears Prada*	Andy Sachs (Anne Hathaway), *The Devil Wears Prada*	Emma (Natalie Portman), *No Strings Attached*	Daisy (Carey Mulligan),*The Great Gatsby*
Factors That Identify This Female Character	Career, wealth, romantic relationship, beauty, lifestyle, fashion	Career, romantic relationship, lifestyle, New York City	Career, romantic relationship	Romantic relationship, fashion, wealth, lifestyle

Table 9: USC Focus Group's Movie-Watching Habits

Name	Jiyoon	Mina	Nara	Sohee
Movie-Watching Frequency	1-2 times/month	1-2 times/month	1-2 times/month	2-3 times/month
Two Favorite Movie Genres	Romantic comedy, animation	Romantic comedy, animation	Drama, comedy	Children's movies (Disney), action
Three Favorite Movies	*The Prince & Me, Grease, Harry Potter*	*Titanic, Frozen, Legally Blonde*	*Life Is Beautiful, Click, Grown-Ups*	*Titanic, Hunger Games, Frozen*
Favorite Female Movie Character	Paige Morgan (Julia Stiles), *The Prince & Me*	Elle Woods (Reese Witherspoon), *Legally Blonde*	Grace Hart (Sandra Bullock), *Miss Congeniality*	Rose, (Kate Winslet), *Titanic*
Factors That Identify This Female Character	Romantic relationship, friendship, money	Education, career, romantic relationship, fashion	Friendship, romantic relationship	Romantic relationship

Table 10: UCLA Focus Group's Movie-Watching Habits

In this survey, the majority of the participants, five out of eight, chose romantic comedy as one of their favorite movie genres. The three participants, who did not include romantic comedy as their favorite genres, said that while they enjoy watching the romantic comedy, they would not choose it as their favorite genre for two reasons. Nara, who picked drama and comedy as her favorite movie genres, said that the romantic comedy is often too repetitive; the plots are always recycled and the last scenes always close with happily-ever-after endings. She claimed that she finds such repetitive, recycled narrative boring and unattractive. The second reason that pushed the romantic comedy to the list of less favorite genres was the realism of the nature of the movie. Joohee, who mentioned comedy and fantasy as her favorite genres, commented that the plots of the romantic comedies are what we see and experience in our daily lives; therefore, she does not find the romantic comedy fun and adventurous enough. The romantic comedy as a genre is a bit too "real" for her, and the reason she watches movies is because she is enjoys being exposed to the creative minds.

When the participants were asked to list their favorite female movie character, they all wrote down the names of the characters from romantic comedies, except for Sohee, who listed Rose from *Titanic,* and Sena, who listed Daisy from *The Great Gatsby.* The participants were not asked to focus on any specific genre; nevertheless, the characters they listed shared common traits. The characters that were brought up are Andy Sachs from *The Devil Wears Prada,* Emma from *No Strings Attached*, Elle from *Legally Blonde*, Grace from *Miss Congeniality*, and Paige *from The Prince & Me,* all of whom portray the typical modern women in the neoliberal traditional cinema, as discussed in the previous chapter.

Hyewon and Joohee commented that Andy in *The Devil Wears Prada* is their favorite character because she represents the girl they would aspire to be: “Andy has everything that any girl would want. She has a successful journalistic career, money, a great taste in fashion, and a sweet boyfriend.” The participants also added that they also envy Andy's lifestyle, which includes invitations to Hollywood-like galas, a business trip to Paris, fashion perks, and life in Manhattan. The traits that Mina attributed to her all-time-favorite character Elle from *Legally Blonde* are similar to the ones of Andy. Mina refers the strengths of Elle to her education, legal career, fashion, and romantic relationship. Emma from *No Strings Attached* was also defined as a character with successful career as a doctor and romantic relationship. Unlike Andy, Elle, and Emma, the remaining characters Daisy, Grace, Rose, and Paige were not identified as characters with careers that the participants would aspire to have. However, all these female characters shared two traits in common - lifestyle and romance.

The participants’ observation and selection of these overlapping traits of these female characters from different movies imply that these Korean Millennial women value these traits - career, romantic relationship, and lifestyle - more than any other traits. Not only did the participants valued these traits, but also, they also shared that they enjoyed the vicarious experience through their characters, because although the movies are fictional, the plot and the characters are “not too unrealistic” and they can “actually happen in a real life.”

> Joohee: I think these romantic comedies are pretty realistic. We often say “oh, just like the movie!” We wouldn’t say this if we think everything about the movie is artificial and fictional. I also think that these movies are quite influential.
>
> Nayoung: Yeah, like how we think of *Breakfast at Tiffany’s* when we think about love and weddings. If it weren't *Breakfast at Tiffany’s*, we wouldn’t associate rings with Tiffany’s.

> Sena: Oh, speaking of movies and how we take them so seriously every once in a while... The other day, I was on campus till late, studying for my midterm, and when I got to the parking structure, it was so dark and no one was there. As I walked toward the parking structure, I was reminded of this typical scene in any action or thriller movie, where a murderer would follow you to the dark parking lot, and there's a whole suspense... (chuckles)

Similar responses were provided by the UCLA focus group. Participants stated that while fantasies and action movies are unrealistic and too fictional, genres such as drama and romantic comedy tackle the real issues and plot events that can actually take place, and shared their experiences in which the specific movie scenes appeared as déjà vu or they wished that they could see themselves in specific scenes of the movie.

> Mina: In one of the scenes in *Legally Blonde*, Elle prints her resume on a piece of scented pink paper to make her resume stand out. I thought it was so brilliant. I considered using a scented colored paper for one of my papers in my class.

As Stuart Hall puts forward, one's identity does not start with who she is or where she comes from, but how she has been represented and how that bears on how she might represent herself: "For Hall and other cultural studies scholars, 'identity' in the form or a 'self' or 'selves' is a necessary heuristic device - not simply for scholars, but also for the subject, who must fashion a 'self' in order to perceive, understand, and act" (Radner, 2011, p. 7).

One's identity, indeed, is constructed by his or her exposure to the common representations that the society reiterates and reinforces. One of the tools that is used in this process of regeneration and reiteration of various forms of representations is the media, which this research looks at, by studying the ways that Hollywood's romantic comedy influences the way women identify themselves as. This research demonstrates that it is not an overly stretched

claim that women learn how to become women by their constant viewings of the romantic comedy.

Two factors that make the romantic comedy a powerful genre that determines who women should be and shows the ways of becoming women are the repetitions of the formulaic patterns that the production of the movies is based on and the simplicity as well as the realistic nature of the genre. As discussed in previous chapters, contemporary romantic comedy reiterates the narrative of "boy meets girl, girl loses boy, and boy regains girl," and recycles the same traits to generate the images of successful women. Moreover, the settings and plots of the romantic comedy are so simplistic and not-so-fictional that the audience can relate themselves to the movie, just the way that participants of this research did.

What makes romantic comedies relatable and pedagogical, according to the participants, is "just the right amount" of hardships and dilemmas. Whereas action movies make the hardships purely fictional and impossible to bear in reality, the plots of romantic comedies are comprised of pains and tears that are tolerable.

The participants listed career, education, wealth, extreme makeover, romance, and just the right amount of dilemma as the universal traits that were brought back repeatedly in the development of successful female figures in the four romantic comedies they watched.

> Nayoung: One thing that defines a woman's success is career. No question. You don't call a housewife a successful woman. But you do call a lawyer, a doctor, an entrepreneur a successful person. The movies show this. All the women, except for Vivian, have successful careers and make big money that allows them to be independent.
>
> Sena: I don't think money actually gives women independence. No matter how successful and wealthy a woman is, people do not see her happy if she does not have a significant other. You need to accomplish multiple things to be successful. And one of them is someone you love and want to spend your life with.

Sena's point is validated by the repeated plots of the romantic comedy. Being happy is one thing and being successful is another. The combination of the two truly makes a woman happily successful and successfully happy. There have been very few women who bypass romance on their journey to reach success. The definition of a woman's success reaches its final destination when the romance succeeds and she moves on to the next chapter, of starting a family. This is why it does not appear as a surprise when three out of eight participants picked Charlotte from *Sex and the City,* and two picked Miranda from *Sex and the City*, as the two most successful and the happiest women. Carrie from *Sex and the City* also won a single vote, and so did Margaret from *The Proposal.* Charlotte and Miranda won the most popular votes because they have ideal American families.

> Nayoung: Miranda has a great career. And she has a beautiful son and a husband who is not as competent as Miranda is. Charlotte used to have a good career, but not anymore. But she has an amazing husband who makes good money and loves his wife and daughters so much. If I were to choose one, I would choose Charlotte's life.

The participants chose neither Miranda nor Andy from *The Devil Wears Prada* as their ideal women of success. They all agreed that while Miranda is the most powerful woman of all in the movies they watched, her marriage failed and she does not seem happy with her life. Samantha from *Sex and the City* also did not win anyone's vote because she leaves the man for the love of herself. The participants said that they could not "understand the logic" behind Samantha's departure; the idea of one's love of oneself, and over-independence as well as over-confidence are, according to the participants, too American and do not meet their ways of thinking, in Confucian terms.

6.5 Non-confrontational Confrontations

Through the drawing activities and discussions, it became evident that these participants were juggling between two different cultures they identify themselves with. The idea of a successful woman, for all of them, matched the icon of success that the Western capitalistic Hollywood romantic comedies have portrayed over the last couple decades. The images of women that the participants constructed almost replicated the iconic Hollywood romcom hero who has it all - education, career, consumer culture, financial independence, and a romantic relationship that closes the deal, completing her life.

Nevertheless, the reality that these Korean Millennials live in offers a very different concept of a successful woman. In the Korean Confucian culture, a woman's happiness is pursued through a family. All eight participants claimed that becoming and living as a woman in a Confucian Korean society is not easy because what they aspire to be and what they actually can be are often not on the same page and conflicting each other. As the participants shared in their discussion, what matters the most in their life is the family. Raising and keeping a healthy family, as a good wife and wise mother, is accepted as their role and responsibility, and if one's personal or professional goal needs to be sacrificed for the harmonious maintenance and healthy growth of the family, these participants would not be hesitant about withdrawing their professional plans and achievements. One of the factors that draws a distinct line between the ideals and the reality is the co-existing traits of the Confucian philosophy and the Millennial values. The participants identified and recognized themselves as Korean women who have been raised by Confucian parents in the Confucian society.

> Joohee: Instead of thinking about a business meeting the following morning, women should think about what to prepare for breakfast the following morning. Things become so much easier and simpler when you just don't have a job and be a stay-at-home mom. Maybe I am too conservative. That's why I might have this "old" way of thinking… But that's what I've seen my mother do all my life.

An important take from Joohee's response is that she, as a Millennial, is aware of the fact that her definition of Korean women has been constructed by her family; her framework of identifying Korean women has been a subconscious, if not, a conscious, process. While growing up, as a little girl, Joohee might not have realized that the construction of her identity was an outcome of her parents' cultivation; however, as she grew older, she realized that the way she has come to define herself as a Korean woman was mostly shaped by her families and the Confucian culture she grew in. That Joohee calls her belief in the traditional role of a Korean woman an "old way of thinking" suggests that she is a Millennial who sees Confucianism as an old, traditional philosophy and that she should think differently because she is part of the more modern and younger generation. Here, we can see that Joohee's identity as a Korean Millennial woman brings contrastingly different traits to the table.

All their lives, they have been provided with top-quality education; yet, they predict that there is a little hope that they will be able to practice their knowledge when they graduate from college because they are very well aware of women's restricted access and opportunities. Hence, these women see the society's reiteration of the value of good wife and mother as a 'barrier' that they cannot overcome.

> Joohee: There are many barriers women confront in Korea. One is gender inequality. There are limits to how much women can go in terms of their career. Another challenge is that women always have to play the stereotypical roles. Women are blamed and criticized if they do not stick to their traditional feminine roles. If you have tattoos, smoke in the public, or dress less conservatively, people will talk about you and see you differently and negatively.

> Nara: I think living as a Korean woman today has become more difficult because there are more barriers and societal expectations. Living in South Korea as a woman means that you do not get equal access and opportunities like men. In the past, during our parents' time, most women stayed at home. They did not have to deal with making money or finding jobs. But today, things are different. Women are allowed to work. But surviving in the work environment that is still dominated by men is hard. Also, women are expected to continue playing the roles of wise mother and good wife even when they have their own careers.

In the course of defining their identities as Korean women, the participants expressed their subtle frustrations of having their roles and responsibilities tied to and restricted by the Confucian family structure.

> Nara: In Korea, they always compare gender roles to the driver-passenger relationship. They try to make women feel better by saying that they are the ones who are actually guiding the driver. But it is the driver who is taking the handle. Also with the head-and-neck metaphor. You know how they say men are the head and women are the neck who control the head. But why can't I be the head? Once, I was at a social gathering, and mentioned that when I get married, I want to be the head. And everyone looked shocked. They said that women have to be submissive. Being a good mother and wife is something I will always be expected to do.
>
> Hyewon: Gender inequality is everywhere in Korea. For example, when a child is born out of wedlock, it is always the mother who gets criticized more than the father.

The split of the traits that identify Korean women and Millennials puts young Korean women in a conflicted position in which they need to juggle between their desires and responsibilities. Nevertheless, while the participants found this position to be uncomfortable, they were not completely discouraged. As a matter of fact, what seemed a confrontational situation did not seem too confrontational to these women. When they were asked how they respond to such challenging situations, they did not see their positions in conflicts although they did notice the disparities in their aspirations and their reality.

> Hyewon: I have a twin brother and he is treated differently from me at home. We live with our grandmother, my dad's side, and she is very old fashioned. And my mom, although not as extreme as my grandmother, is also old fashioned. Both women are more watchful over me than they are over my twin brother. I have curfew when my brother does not. I can't do certain things when my brother is allowed, because I am their daughter, not their son. But I don't complain. They are just trying to protect me. They want me to grow up as a nice girl so that when it's time for me to get married, I'd be a good candidate.
>
> Sohee: My parents are more liberal and generous to both me and my sister. Although they do not put much restriction on what we do, they do expect us to be good Christian women. I do experience gender inequality when I go back to Korea or at my church. But I think that's just the way that Korean culture is.
>
> Joohee: There are clearly things that I do not understand. My mom always tells me that women and men are different. I remember when I told my parents that I was going to change my major to international relations from business, they did not seem to mind or care. But when my younger brother told the parents that he, too, wanted to change his major from business to film studies, my parents did not approve because they wanted my brother to have a good career, a professional job. Now I've come to accept the way things are.

Binary often refers to two elements that are distinct and contradictory, leading to negative connotations and insights. However, the concept of binaries takes a different form in Korea, especially among women in this study. The binaries of gender and culture in Korea may appear disconnected; as much as gender binary separates masculinity and femininity and discourages the mixing of gender roles, the culture binary in Korea, split between traditional Confucianism and Western Millennial values, may be viewed as disconnected. Korean women, however, do not approach these binaries with negative perspectives. Instead of distinguishing the categories of gender and culture as distinctive elements, they tolerate and accept these differences naturally, taking them as complementary and interconnected forces, which are the underlying principles of yin and yang, one of the moral dimensions of Confucian ethics. Confucianism is such heavily embedded philosophy in the Korean society; Koreans grow up in formal, non-formal, and informal educational settings that constantly and consistently nurture and cultivate the virtues of harmony, togetherness, and righteousness, which become the dominant ideology.

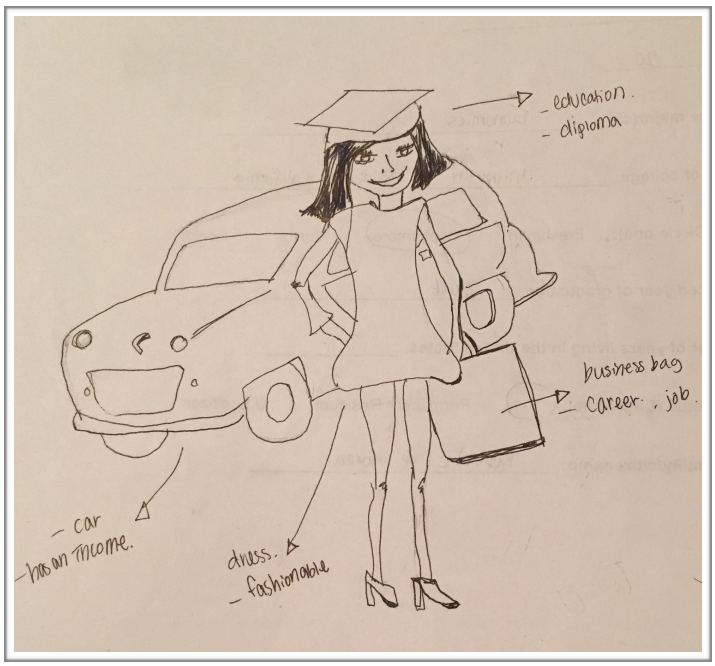

Figure 1: Nayoung's Idea of Success

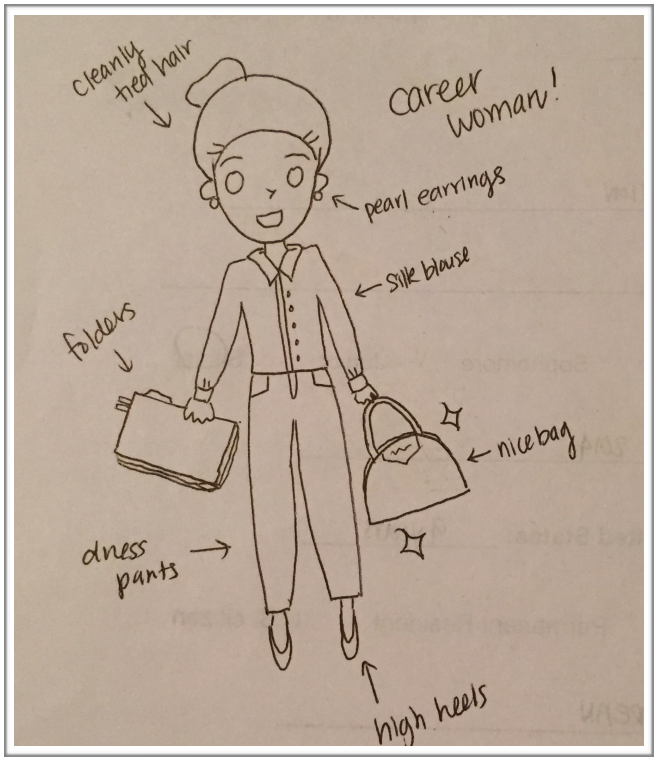

Figure 2: Hyewon's Idea of Success

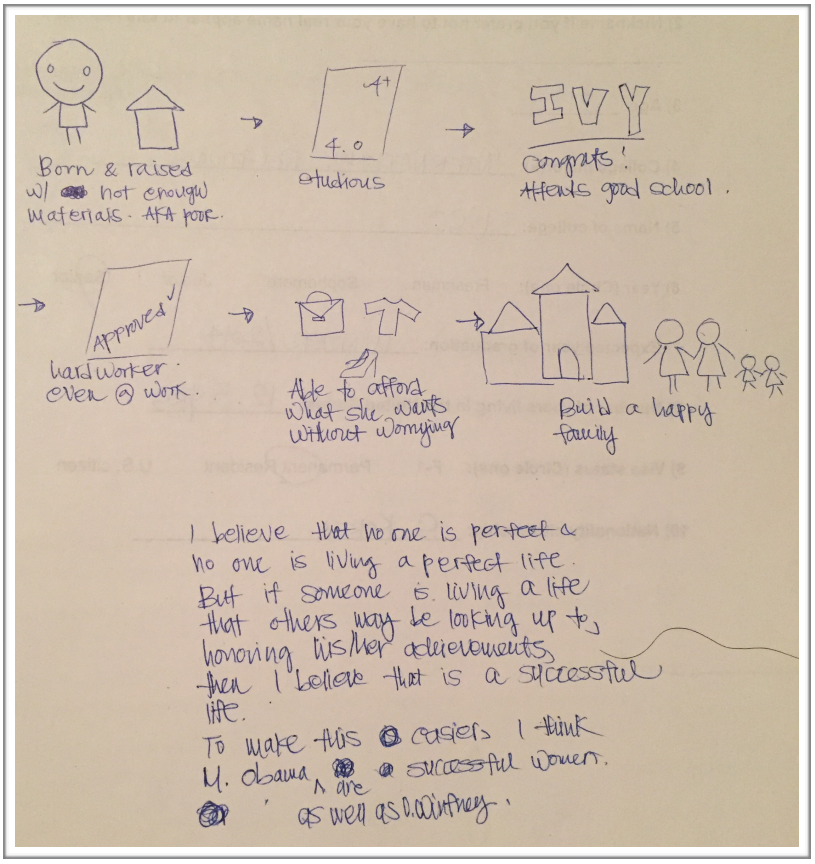

Figure 3: Joohee's Idea of Success

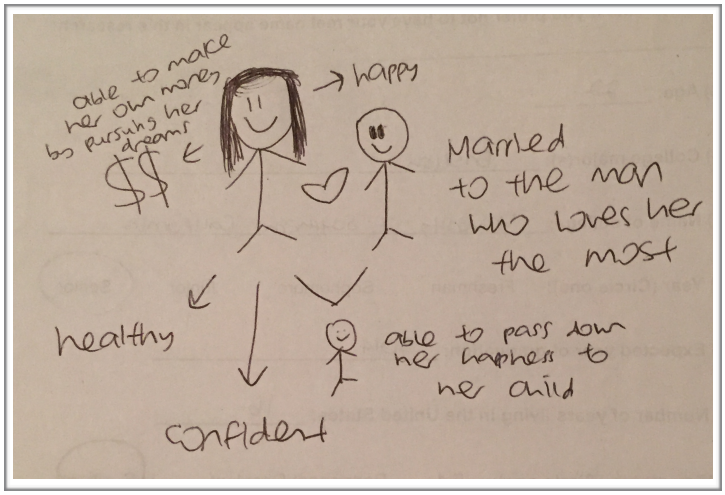

Figure 4: Sena's Idea of Success

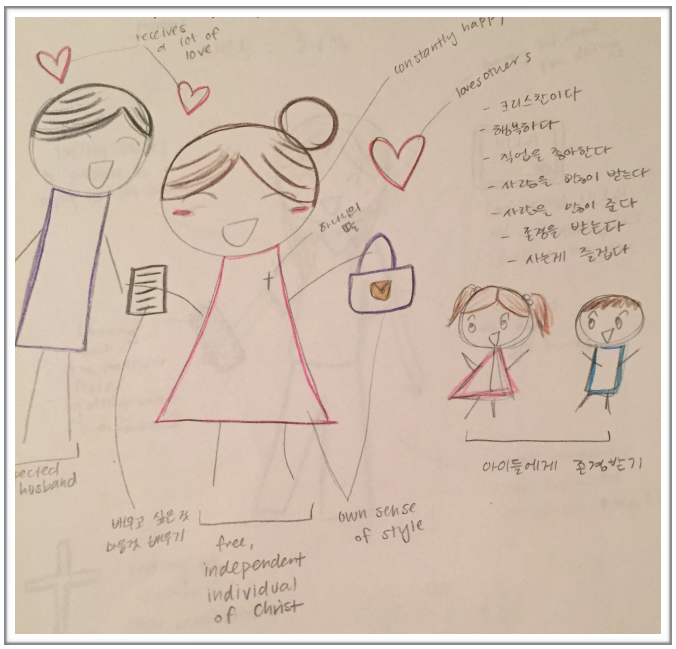

Figure 5: Sohee's Idea of Success

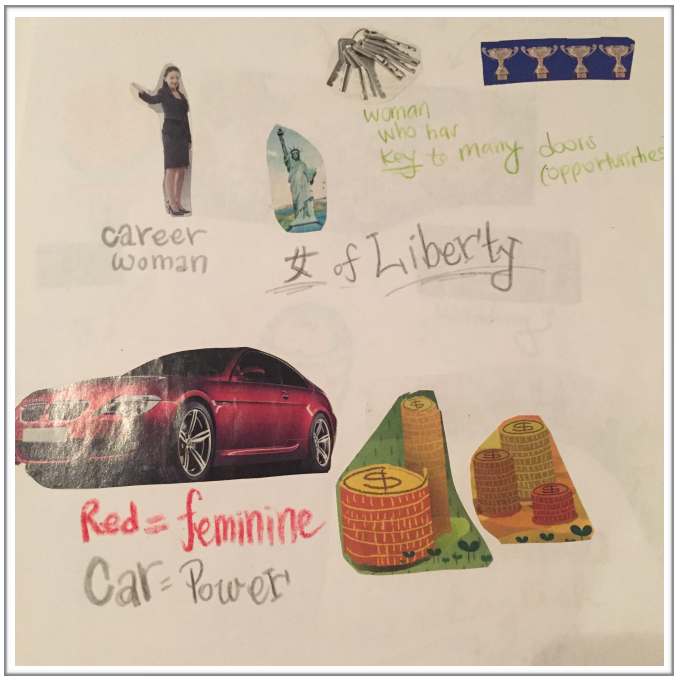

Figure 6: Mina's Idea of Success

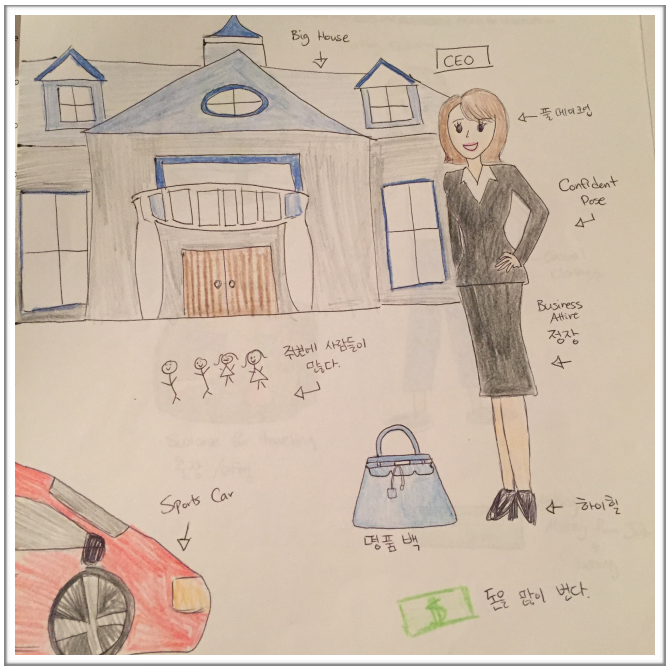

Figure 7: Jiyoon's Idea of Success

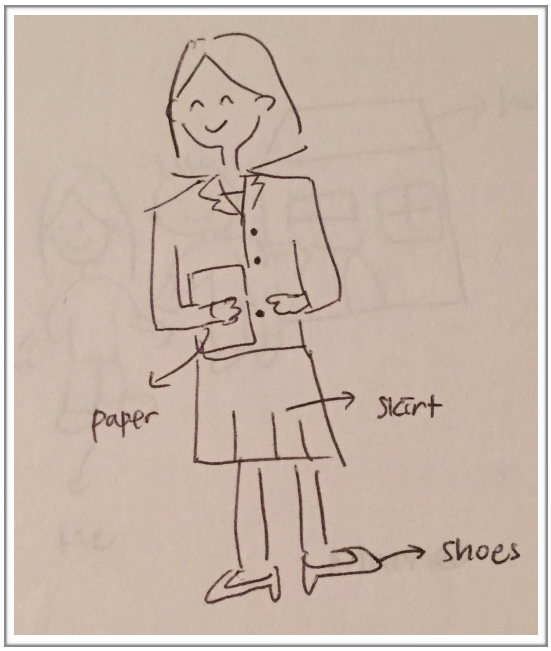

Figure 8: Nara's Idea of Success

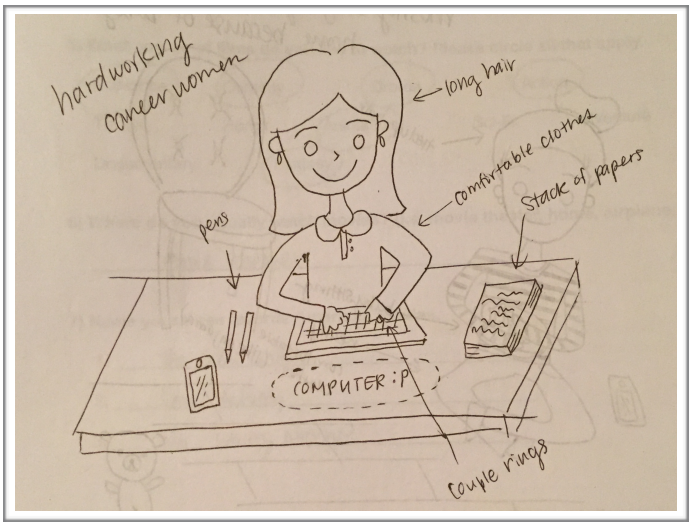

Figure 9: Nayoung in Five Years

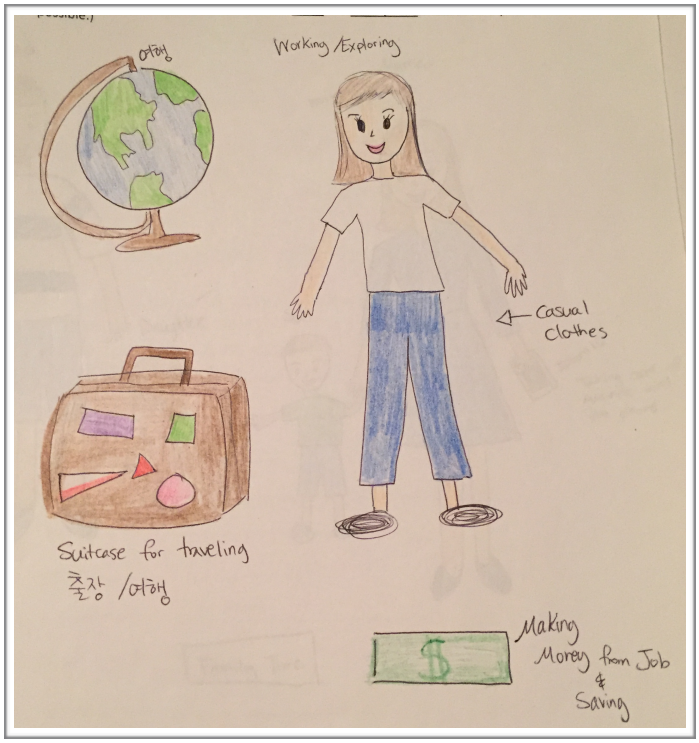

Figure 10: Jiyoon in Five Years

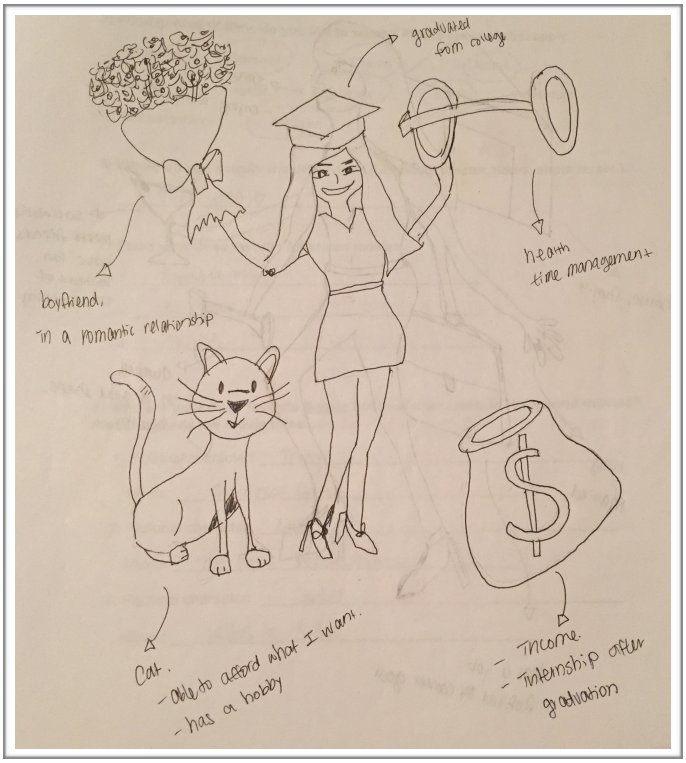

Figure 11: Hyewon in Five Years

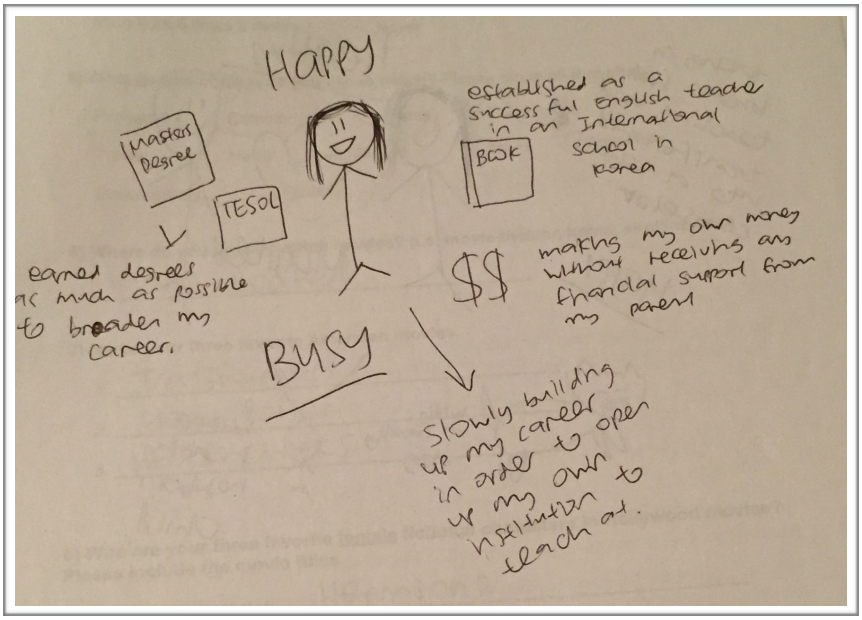

Figure 12: Sena in Five Years

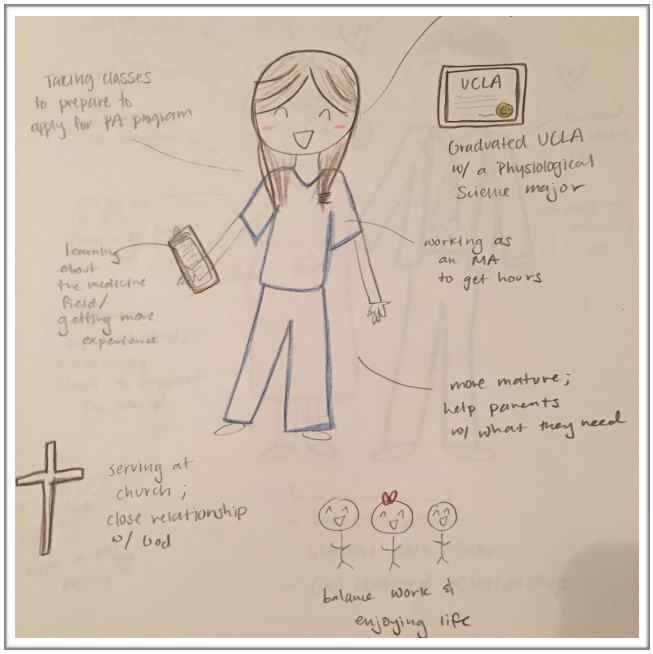

Figure 13: Sohee in Five Years

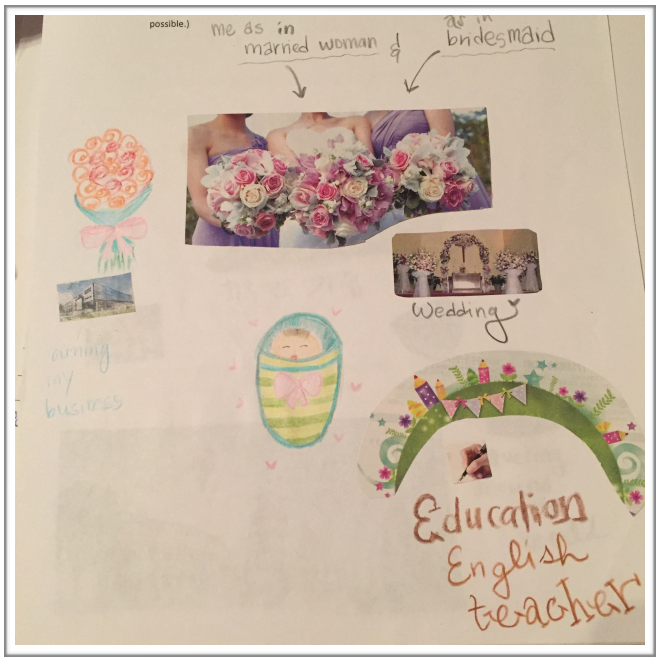

Figure 14: Mina in Five Years

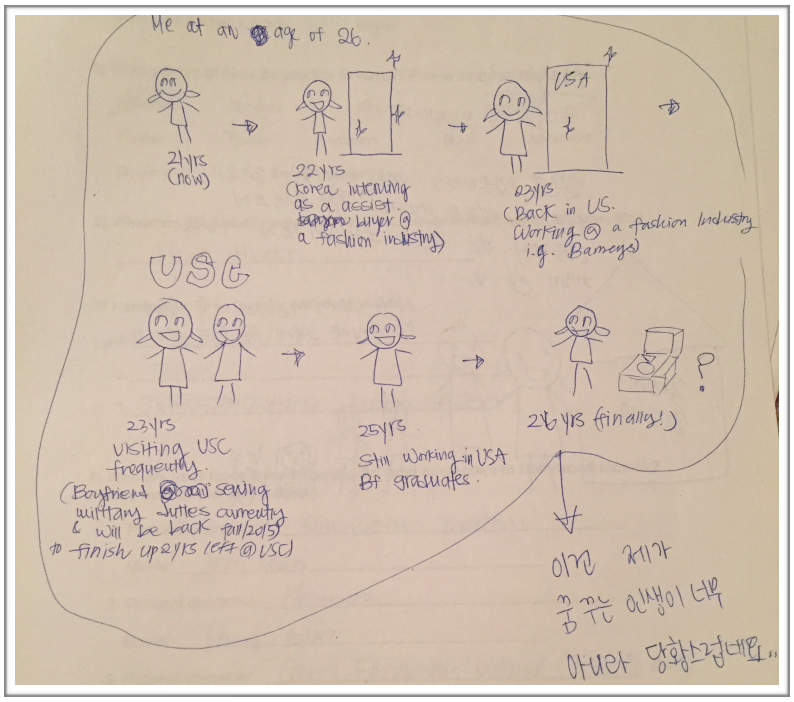

Figure 15: Joohee in Five Years

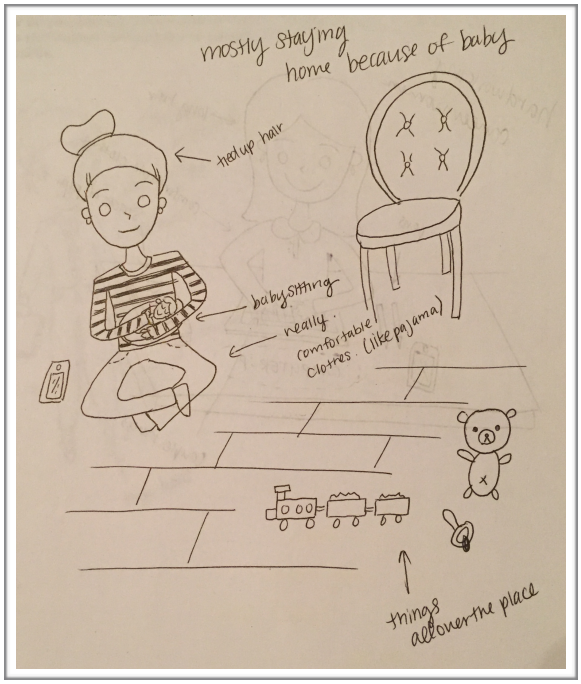

Figure 16: Nayoung in 10 Years

Figure 17: Mina in 10 Years

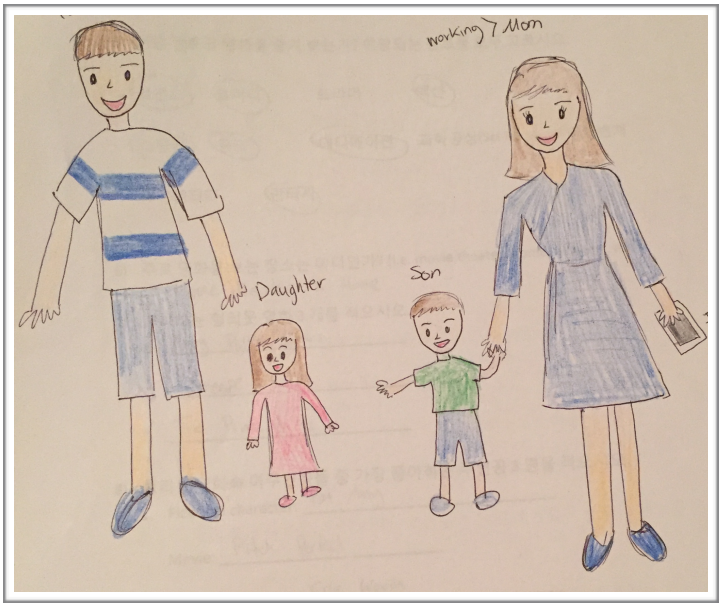

Figure 18: Jiyoon in 10 Years

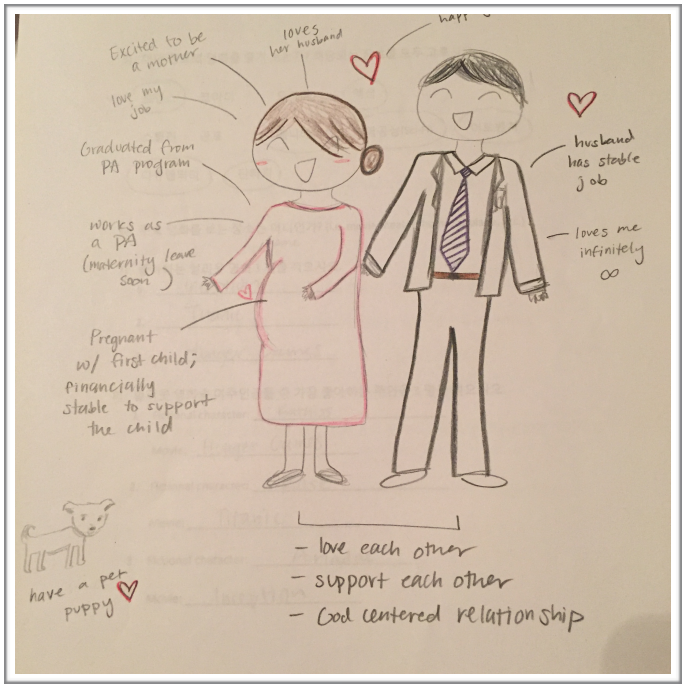

Figure 19: Sohee in 10 Years

CHAPTER 7: CONCLUSION

"One morning, upon awakening from agitated dreams,
Gregor Samsa found himself, in his bed,
transformed into a monstrous vermin…
'What's happened to me,' he thought. It was no dream."

- "The Metamorphosis," Franz Kafka (1915)

7.1 The Confucian Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism

The world we are living in today is incessantly metamorphosing. The metamorphoses that we live within and through, while they may not be as literally monstrous and agitating as the Kafkaesque transformation of Gregor Samsa, equally consist of the sense of estrangement and alienation, as we are often powerless identified as consumers, rather than proactive producers, alienating ourselves in the crisis of capitalism, borrowing the Marxian terms. Furthermore, these metamorphoses in the age of globalization are considerably convoluted and volatile. Perhaps, the 21st century global metamorphosis is more perplexing and entangled, because globalization has interlaced multiple ideologies and values of the cosmopolitan community in the process of cultural deterritorialization. What was once considered local is no longer purely local - after decades of being attacked by the radical and progressive critics, the top-down globalization model has begun to attempt to evolve as a less hegemonic form, switching over to the hybridism of the local and the global. However, this novel approach is neither an alternative to the prototypical form of hegemonic globalization initiated by the global north nor a solution to uplift the tension arising between the global north and the global south, and even among the nations of the global north. Instead, this new form of globalization that attempts to incorporate hybridity has created another layer of complexity to the global community - the intertwining, labyrinthine

layers and aggregations of different cultures has led an individual's identity crisis to not only a national concern but also a global concern. One of the powerful tools that has contributed to perplexing the process of constructing one's identity in the 21st century is, unquestionably, the media. Hence, this research looked at the role of the American mass media and its influence on the global audience in the midst of surging media capitalism, pinning the focus on the role of the Hollywood romantic comedy movies in the construction of identities and development of goals of the Korean millennial women.

The three questions that this research attempted to answer are as follows:

1. Do Hollywood movies, particularly romantic comedies, play any roles in shaping Korean millennial women's values and ideologies?

2. Are there cultural and ideological clashes between Confucian values and the influx of Western culture via movies in South Korea? Living in the society where two splitting values coexist, how do Korean women respond to the divergence and convergence of the cultures of Korean Confucianism and Western neoliberal capitalism?

3. Can cultural studies and critical media literacy serve as a pedagogical tool for cultivating and instilling global citizenship in Korean women, providing them with a critical lens and a democratic space for their shared dialogues and narratives of their reception of the American mass media?

The media, regardless of their cultural roots and geographical origins, hold critical roles in determining and developing the ideologies and worldview of their audience, or the *mediazens* - the citizens of the media. The findings of this research clearly exemplify the unbreakable

relationship between the media and their citizens, particularly in the context of the Korean culture.

During the visual research, through three sets of drawing activities, the participants acknowledged that they were reminded of repeated portrayals of single women with high-paying jobs living in urban settings when they were asked to identify a successful woman. Many of the figures that they illustrated, indeed, resembled the many educated and financially independent young women in the contemporary romantic comedy, such as Andrea Sachs from *The Devil Wears Prada,* Elle Woods from *Legally Blonde*, and Carrie Bradshaw from *Sex and the City*, and Margaret Tate from *The Proposal*. These women mirror each other as they all can be identified with successful education and career, fiscal independence, flawlessly maintained beauty, obsession with their fashion and body, and finally, constant search for the romance. All these traits were unanimously reflected in the participants' drawings; every female figure maintains flawless physique and beauty, has a college degree from a prestigious university, a high-paying job that provides the figure with the affordability for high-end fashion and leisurely lifestyle, and is in a romantic relationship. Moreover, that movies are wholly inseparable and undetachable has been verified and justified by the participants who made multiple references to the Hollywood movies in their narratives of defining their values and identifying their goals. The participants elaborated on their ideologies and values, drawing "like the movie" examples "from the movie."

Measuring the degree of influence that the media impose on their audience is unattainable, both in qualitative and quantitative methods. Hence, this research does not serve to measure the power of the impact of the media; rather, it validates the universal underlying assumption that Hollywood's romantic comedies, while not entirely engrossed, are penetrated in

the Korean culture. The pervasion of Hollywood's neoliberal women's cinema in the Korean society has been natural and intuitive probably because of Hollywood's and Confucian Korea's shared nature of patriarchy, which becomes the common denominator that overlaps between Confucianism and capitalism. Such shared patriarchal value of the two drastically different ideologies provide an explanation to the second question of this research regarding the nature of Confucian Korean audience reception and *mediatizenship* of the prevalent presence of Western culture dispersed by Hollywood.

The culture promoted in Hollywood movies represents the Western capitalist culture, which highlights individualism and freedom. On the other hand, the values of Confucianism in Korean society emphasize the opposite: order and harmony of the society, which can be achieved through an individual's discipline and sacrifice. Thus, in the early stage of this research, the initial hypothesis of the findings projected multiple struggles and conflicts emerging in the midst of cultural and ideological clashes between Confucian values and the American neo-liberal capitalistic culture, expecting the Korean millennial women, who have been raised the Confucian way while growing up in the age of Hollywood's global media capitalism, to have experienced critical struggles in defining their identities and constructing their education and career goals. While the underlying assumption that the American media play an influential role in the Korean millennials' identity construction was validated, the final outcome of this research shed light on the unsurpassably dominant nature of Confucianism in the Korean society.

As the narratives of the participants demonstrate, the Korean millennial women constantly inhale the conceptualization of neoliberal feminism through Hollywood movie screens. At the same time, they recognize the fine line between their aspirations and inspirations

and admit that what they are inspired to be is different from what they aspire to be. Accustomed to the repeated images of modern women in Hollywood romcoms, these women are often inspired by the strong, independent, and successful female characters in movie theaters; nevertheless, when it comes to their aspirations - the type of women they actually want to and plan to become - being a good wife and wise mother outweighs the inspirational professions that they abstractly visualize.

The participants brought up, from time to time, gender inequality issues, sharing their not-so-positive memories of gender-inequality experiences in their narratives of learning to become Korean women in their childhood and adolescent years and continuously in the present day. However, none of the participants seemed to have experienced any extreme conflicts from gender gap or been deeply irritated by the Confucian patriarchy.

They responded to what could have been a confrontational clash of ideologies in a non-confrontational way; they viewed Confucianism and American capitalism as two separate, distinctive entities - Confucianism being the bigger entity that embraced the capitalism versus capitalism, the smaller element that constitutes the Korean society. To them, the convergence of Confucianism and capitalism - or the enclosing of capitalism in the Confucian circle - was the dominant perspective; the divergence of the two was neither detected nor sensed much by the participants. The participants' intake of Confucian values that minimize the influence of Hollywood's unilateral portrayal of gender, therefore, verifies the fructification of Confucianism in the Korean society.

Subsequently, the findings of this research illustrate the need to observe, study, and tackle Confucianism from the Confucian ethical mind and jettison the spirits of Western capitalism. As

Hoffman (1995) argues, “the oppositional approach toward understanding gender in South Korea overextends what is in fact a Western bias toward conceptualizing gender as an intrinsically conflict-ridden contest for power” (p. 115). The discourse on gender structures often evolve from a Western assumption that inequalities are generated from the symbiotic relationship of dominance and subordination; such focus overlooks the native cultural terms through which gender is defined and negotiated:

> While I was in South Korea, brining up the topic of male-female relations would often arouse some discomfort. It seems that it remains one of the prime areas (there are others) where Koreans feel misunderstood, and perhaps misrepresented, by Westerners. Western views are in fact strongly clouded by a number of notions that, when taken out of the cultural context and viewed from the Western ‘egalitarian’ perspective, indeed seem to paint a very dark picture: Women of flower-like submissiveness, forced into family-mediated (read “loveless”) marriages; forever judged guilty by society if they fail to bear sons; socially condemned if they divorce or remarry even when widowed; pressured to leave work when they marry; and paid substantially less than men if they do work. By any internationally accepted standard, how can such women not be considered “oppressed”? (Hoffman, 1995, p. 117)

If the topic of gender is viewed through a Korean Confucian lens, as Hoffman suggests, the underlying reality of Korean women is not quite as bleak as it may have appeared to the Western feminist scholars’ eyes; the Korean Confucian society values the female in its own particular fashion, which is evidently different from the Western way:

> In contrast to the American ideal of emotional self-sufficiency and independence for both partners, the Korean wife and husband are considered in the idealistic sense to be emotionally quite interdependent and attuned to one another, with the wife always trying to “match” herself to her husband's kibun - to “fit his mood,” so to speak. In doing so, she subtly asserts her own dominant role as the principal emotional broker in the family (Hoffman, 1995, p. 121).

Borrowing the lens of Korean Confucianism, Hollywood’s constant reiteration of neoliberal feminism does not interrupt Korean women’s strong Confucian values, which are not

viewed as hindering obstacles to achieving gender equality. In the Korean Confucian culture, gender - of men and women - is not associated with equality, which revives the French revolutionary spirit; rather, it is linked to complementary interconnectedness, just like *yin* and *yang*, the Chinese philosophy that illustrates that in our world, two contrary forces - the duality - are destined to complement each other inter-connectedly and interdependently. Hence, men and women are not to be treated as equally separate entities. They are *yin* and *yang* that complete each other, becoming each other's raison d'être, in a society where the Confucian ethic overpowers the spirit of capitalism.

7.2 Year 2016: Revisiting The Genre of Romantic Comedy

The genre of romantic comedy has opened another new chapter since 2010. Hollywood has restructured gender with multi-perspectival approaches, acknowledging the multidimensional roles of modern women, especially paying attention to the working mothers. In the last five years, the genre of romantic comedy has diversified the roles of women, making the female figures more genuine and relatable, from single ladies between her late twenties and mid thirties to working mothers, or supermoms so to be speak, who strive to excel both at home and at work. But this is not to say that women become entirely different figures in the late movies. Hollywood may have attempted to empower women by portraying them as legendary super moms who strive to make everything happen perfectly both at work and at home; however, having both, or all, is never possible and women are ultimately given two options to choose from: work or family.

I Don't Know How She Does It (2011) exemplifies the latest transformation of women and their marital status and roles and dramatizes the dilemma of every working mom. Based on

the eponymous novel, known as “the national anthem for working mothers,” the movie illustrates Kate Reddy (Sarah Jessica Parker) as a head-fund manager who has just been given an assignment that requires frequent trips to New York from Boston where she lives. She juggles daily to balance her career with the need of her husband and children. She often finds herself awake after midnight making her to-do-list as a mom and wife; her list includes baking homemade apple pie for her daughter’s bake sale at school, fixing a part of the house, and maintaining an intimate relationship with her husband, to name a few. The movie illustrates the challenges today’s women face in juggling between their careers and families, despite gender-based double standards. It also well portrays the lacking sense of joy and pleasure of working, which is often missed out by working women who have it all: “More than once, a character exclaims, ‘Let’s make some money!’ But there’s no indication that all the wealth pouring down is producing any joy or pleasure, beyond the grim satisfaction of beating the competition and getting the deal done” (Holden, 2011). And the movie goes back to square one - Kate cannot have it all; if she chooses to advance her career, she will need to give up on her family; on the other hand.

The Intern (2015), the most recent romcom that centers around the life of a successful working mom, explores gender roles of year 2015 in a more courageous way, portraying Jules Ostin (Anne Hathaway) as a founder and chief executive officer of an online clothing startup who tries to do it all - from becoming a successful entrepreneur to being a great mother to her little daughter and a good wife to her stay-at-home husband, the unusually and unfamiliarly new role of men that is finally emerging in Hollywood. And she does appear to have it all in the beginning. However, she comes to a breakdown when she finds out that her husband is involved

in an affair with one of the mothers at her daughter's school. She can't have both: hence, she chooses to hire an external chief executive, the position she has been reluctant to give away, to be able to manage her time more efficiently to spend with her husband and her daughter. The movie brings women back to square one again, by confining Jules to a traditional soft, yielding female figure, even in her position as the leader of a promising startup, when she has the power to tell someone to clean a cluttered table in the middle of the immaculate office.

Not only do today's romantic comedy cinema portray the real issues that working moms are confronted with every day, as discussed above, but also, Hollywood realizes that as the number of high-achieving women, whose pursued careers are now positioned higher in the capitalist hierarchal system than their partners', the reversal of traditional gender roles triggers new forms of issues in relationships. *The Five-Year Engagement* (2012) exemplifies the struggle that modern couples whose relationships are often structured and led by high-achieving women. In this movie, Tom, a San Francisco-based chef, proposes to Violet, a British research student in experimental psychology, angling for a postdoctoral position at UCLA. The couple's engagement stretches over five years, much longer than originally anticipated and planned, because of Violet's commitment in the academia. Immediately following the engagement, Violet is offered a two-year appointment on the other side of the country, in Michigan; Tom agrees to put his own career on hold and move Eastbound to support Violet's career. While Violet's academic career grows smoothly, especially under the care of her charismatic professor, Tom sees no promising future in his career in the middle of deserted snowy Michigan. The prolonged five-year engagement makes Tom and Violent become uncomfortable and suspicious of their future as lifetime partners and decide to break up before it's too late. The fear of losing youth and

unsettled future is a common dilemma that couples of younger generations face today. In the previous decades, it was always the men's education and profession that determined the relationship structure and gender roles. In this movie, however, many stereotypical gender roles and concepts are reversed. Not only the female protagonist's career considered more professional, privileged, and elitist than her male counterpart, but also, the movie makes the feminist point that the commitment phobia, which has long been a male prerogative, is now being claimed by highly educated women, pointing out that women have been expected to endure and conceal the frustration of commitment phobia for centuries (Bradshaw, 2012).

The portrayal of women and the significance of their roles in the romantic comedy genre have shifted progressively. Nonetheless, Hollywood romcoms still have a long way to go as the cinema of romantic comedy continues to point its audience to overly-ambitious women "who don't eventually come to the realization that they're missing their chance to ever find love in the arms of a man and thus, their one shot at happiness" (Bindley, 2011).

7.3 The Limitations

No research is free from limitations, and this research is not an exception. This research identifies three major limitations. The first limitation of this research is the demographics of the samples. The research restricted the participants to international Korean students. In doing so, the study unintentionally standardized the socio-economic status of the samples. The participants were not asked to identify their socio-economic status in any part of the research; nevertheless, their status as international students imply that they represent elitist and privileged population within Korea.

As international students, these participants are not eligible for any public and private financial support from their institutions. While the discrepancy in tuition is significantly great between a private school, such as USC, and a public school, such as UCLA, for the state residents and citizens, it does not make much difference for the international students. The cost of attendance at both USC and UCLA, including the tuition, boarding and living expense, and other educational fees, adds up to over $50,000 for international students.

That the participants are studying abroad identifies these individuals as members of either high-income or upper-middle class families for not all families can afford $50,000 a year on their children's education. What this further suggests is the uniformity of these families' political views and the heavy focus and maintenance of Korean Confucianism.

Socio-economic status, which is often identified and measured by an individual's or a family's income, largely determines an individual's political view and behavior (Saenger, 1945). While not always and absolutely true and applicable, the higher one's socio-economics status is, this individual is likely to be a conservative traditionalist' on the other hand, an individual on the other end of the spectrum is highly likely going to be a progressive liberal. Based on Saenger's hypothesis, the participants of this research are prone to be more conservative who prioritize traditions, such as Confucian values, than their peers from middle-class or low-income families. This is not to say that the individuals from lower socio-economic status are anti-Confucian who do not believe in preserving the Confucian values. Confucianism is heavily embedded and deeply penetrated in the life of every individual, regardless of the individual's socio-economic status or political views. It is the degree of intensity that Confucianism is practiced that

distinguishes one family from another. Had this research been conducted in Korea, looking at the samples from middle-class or low-income families, the findings would have been different. Furthermore, the size of the samples determines another limitation of this research. Because of the geographical as well as time constraints, this research could not have included a bigger sample size.

The second critical limitation is the nature of this research. This research heavily borrows theories and praxis from cultural studies and feminism, both of which cannot fathom their findings and propositions with a quantifiable method. Both of these fields of study predominantly concentrate on the qualitative method, which invites multi-perspectival approaches. Hence, these two fields often become contested terrains. While this research provides an effective pedagogical platform that mirrors the contemporary society and offers various points of enlightening bildungsroman to the audience, it loses its justification when it comes to the quantifiable approach.

The third limitation relates to the researcher's cultural background. Having been raised and educated outside of the Korean peninsula, mostly in the United States, my understanding and interpretation of Confucianism and Korean feminism must have approached the issue with the lens of the Western scholars. Therefore, the analysis of this research cannot represent an organically genuine Korean perspective.

7.4 From Cultural Studies to Global Citizenship Education

In 2014, the UNESCO presented a proposal for the pursuit of global citizenship education. Global citizenship education is a multi-perspectival concept that cannot be defined

easily as the interdependency and interconnectedness between countries in our borderless global community are intertwined and multi-layered. While consensus on what global citizenship means and consequently what it should promote has not been reached, its universal goal is "to empower learners to assume active roles to face and resolve global challenges and to become proactive contributors to a more peaceful, tolerant, inclusive and secure world," thereby "promoting a global gaze that links the local to the global and the national to the international" (UNESCO, 2014). It is a way of understanding and relating oneself to others and the environment.

Global citizenship education can be interpreted and practiced as pedagogy in multiple levels and scales. The UNESCO's agenda on promoting global citizenship education often highlights peace and human rights education and strives to provide an international platform for dialogue to prevent violent extremism in the areas that are politically and economically challenged. Global citizenship education is not limited to extreme circumstances that call for immediate human rights and freedom. It becomes pivotal in our global community as a whole as we are confronted with a more complex identity crisis.

As found in this research, the ideologies that shape our worldview and construct our identities are often byproducts of globalization, which are predominantly initiated and structured by the global north. The spread of hegemonic patriarchal neoliberal representations is unstoppable in our age of media capitalism as media technology has evidently made our world a borderless community.

The most effective pedagogical tool and platform that can direct global citizens to the most democratic, liberating, and meaningful method of constructing their identities and relieve themselves from multiple identity crises they are confronted with would be cultural studies. Not

only is cultural studies an effective pedagogical platform and discipline, but also, it is one of the most feasible and easily applicable educational tools for all. Unlike many pedagogical methods, which is structured in a formal educational setting that requires an instructor to introduce ideas and coordinate lessons, media pedagogy can be incorporated in any setting, including formal, informal, and nonformal structures, and initiated by anyone who opens a dialogue and offers an invitation.

Because cultural studies is a contested terrain that encourages discourse over discipline, both critical and multi-perspectival approaches are necessary. One will be able to "articulate the social constitution of the concepts of gender, class, race, ethnicity, and sexuality," and the new perspectives will bring alternative representations, which will produce new and different ideas (Kellner, 2003, p. 94). Cultural studies, therefore, is the most powerful and reasonable alternative to question the hegemonic structure of our society and promote human agency, freedom, participatory democracy, and social justice. As today's media have become an "essential economic force, helping manage consumer demand, constructing needs and fantasies" (Kellner, 2003, p. 5). Needless to say, cultural studies, incorporating media education is the most practicable and applicable global citizenship education and the most powerful pedagogical tool in the age of media and technology capitalism, providing a space for the *globalization from inside.*

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