

SHOULD WE PASS ON “PASSING WOMEN”? THE STAKES OF (TRANS)GENDER
ONTOLOGIES FOR SOUTH KOREAN *NAMJANGYEOJA* TELEVISION DRAMAS

BY

SHELBY STRONG

THESIS

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of Master of Arts in East Asian Studies
in the Graduate College of the
University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, 2018

Urbana, Illinois

Adviser:

Professor Jeffrey T. Martin

ABSTRACT

Scholarship has gendered the protagonists of *namjangyeoja* dramas, South Korean live-action television dramas that focus on the lives of female-assigned people who pass as men, as “women”. I argue that we must push back against this narrow reading of *namjang* characters and instead embrace ambiguity and plural possibilities in *namjang* gender representations. The widespread pattern of *namjang* characters being depicted as being coerced into “confessing” that they are “women” calls into question the idea that their “real” gender can only be read as female, static, and singular. Indeed, a deeper reading reveals how some *namjang* protagonists are portrayed as identifying as gender non-binary and gender fluid. I propose that using “transgender” and “*namjangyeoja*” in conjunction with each other can help us orient to transgender possibilities in *namjang* dramas and illuminate how the pervasive practice of using “*namjangyeoja*” to categorize performances of gender nonconformity by female-assigned people is imbricated with institutionalized forms of transphobic heteronormative familism in South Korea. Ultimately, I argue that we must be vigilant about how our choice to affirm certain ontologies (e.g., “*namjangyeoja*”) over others (e.g., “transgender”) enacts epistemological forms of violence that support larger, institutionalized projects of death by exclusion and illegibility.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

First and foremost, I would like to thank my advisor, Dr. Jeffrey T. Martin and my thesis committee members, Dr. Robert Cagle and Dr. Jungmin Kwon. Their guidance and support throughout the many stages of this research project were invaluable and instrumental to its development.

Thank you to the many people, from strangers in supermarkets to friends far away to colleagues in classrooms, whose brief and regular appearances in my life disrupted my orbit around perspectives I was attracted to. Your productive disruptions propelled me to collide with new ideas, travel different trajectories, and gravitate to unfamiliar spaces. My sincere appreciation goes to Dr. Toby Beauchamp and the inspiring people who collaborated in making the fall 2017 section of Transgender Studies at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign both a place to seek knowledge and a place to feel acknowledged and share appreciation for diversity.

My deep gratitude goes to the informants and readers who shared feedback, personal stories, suggestions, encouragement, comments, and advice on various versions and aspects of this project. In particular, I would like to thank Taegyeong, Jaeseung, Anita Greenfield, YJ, Soo, and Dr. Jessica McCall for their support.

Last but not least, thank you to the friends and fans who build communal spaces for “prosuming” manhwa, manga, dramas, anime, variety shows, novels, reality shows, and pop music culture. This paper is indebted to friendships and interactions with people who identify as K-drama, K-pop, manga, and anime fans.

All errors and omissions in this paper are my own.

*To my family, friends, and all those who strive
to nurture love for the warm and cool embraces of tolerance*

TABLE OF CONTENTS

NOTE TO READERS	vi
INTRODUCTION	1
GENDER AND SEXUALITY MOVEMENTS IN 21 ST CENTURY SOUTH KOREA.....	6
“SHE’S NOT; SHE’S A WOMAN.”: PRESCRIPTIVE GENDERINGS OF <i>NAMJANG</i> CHARACTERS BY BROADCASTERS AND SCHOLARS	41
ILLEGIBLE LEGIBILITY: AMBIGUOUS REPRESENTATIONS OF GENDER (NON)CONFORMITY IN <i>NAMJANG</i> DRAMAS	50
CONCLUSION: THE STAKES OF TRANSGENDER ONTOLOGIES FOR <i>NAMJANG</i> DRAMAS	60
BIBLIOGRAPHY.....	70

NOTE TO READERS

All Korean language words that appear in this paper have been transliterated using the Revised Romanization of Korean system. Exceptions were made for some cases, such as for the stage names of celebrities (e.g., the late Jonghyun from SHINee) that already have officially endorsed or established spellings in roman letters. All informant names that are mentioned in this paper are nicknames or pseudonyms. References to the names of authors of online blogs and forum posts are references to the public (user)name associated with the post under discussion. Any translation and transliteration mistakes or shortcomings that occur in this paper are my own.

INTRODUCTION

“너 지금 정신이 있어? 없어? 어디 사나이도 아니고 기집애도 아닌 이런 물건한테!”
(Are you out of your mind? How can you [like] this thing that is neither a man nor a woman?)
– Sunyeong, *The 1st Shop of Coffee Prince* (2007)

The South Korean folktale *Kongjwi Patjwi* (공쥬 팔쥬) describes the travails of a beautiful young woman named Kongjwi¹. In this folktale Kongjwi is depicted as submissively acquiescing to her stepmom and stepsister’s demands that she perform arduous chores. Out of sight from her stepmom and stepsister, Kongjwi works tirelessly to do her chores but despairs and weeps when she is unable to complete them. Every time Kongjwi cries magical creatures come to her rescue and help her finish her tasks. Later, when Kongjwi crosses paths with a lord he immediately falls in love with her beauty, pursues her, and proposes marriage. Contemporary adaptations of this folktale typically conclude with descriptions of how Kongjwi and the lord married and lived happily ever after.

Similar to American adaptations of the tale *Cinderella*, *Kongjwi Patjwi*’s narrative paints a gender and class stratified world where women are rewarded for conforming to heteronormative and patriarchal discourses (Lori Baker-Sperry and Liz Grauerholz 2003; Linda Parsons 2004). These discourses construct being physically attract(ed/ive) to men, dependent on men, hardworking, and submissive as gender appropriate behaviors and ideal goals for women. Although its adaptations are usually set in a Joseon Dynasty-era past, *Kongjwi Patjwi* encapsulates ideologies that should be understood as both evolving products and influential shapers of structures that maintain inequality in current-day South Korean society. Furthermore, variations of the Kongjwi trope, the pattern of a young, socioeconomically disadvantaged woman

¹ One indication of this folktale’s continued popularity is its steady inclusion in contemporary books, television programming, and websites directed at children (e.g., see Jr. Naver (쥬니어네이버) at <http://jr.naver.com/>).

being rewarded for their beauty and work ethic with a marriage to an upper-class man, are widespread throughout 21st century South Korean television dramas (Suk-Young Kim 2013, 96, 98; Jiyeun Lee & Sung-Yeon Park 2015, 403).

Recognizing the ubiquity of the Kongjwi script in contemporary Korean romance dramas is critical to understanding the conspicuity and significance of the *namjangyeoja* drama trend in South Korea. *Namjang(yeoja)* dramas are South Korean live-action television dramas that focus on the lives of female-assigned people who pass as men. The expression “*namjangyeoja*” trivializes its referent’s performances of manhood and gender nonconformity by prescribing that they are just a “woman” (i.e., “*yeoja*”) who is “dressed like a man” (i.e., “*namjang*”). Given that the protagonists of *namjang* dramas often fall in love with wealthy, privileged men, *namjang* dramas’ outfitting of female-assigned people in menswear may seem like a superficial sartorial change to the Kongjwi script. However, I argue that the repercussions of this change are significant and manifold. The significance is that *namjang* drama texts are imbued with the potential to be read in ways that resist essentialist understandings of gender as an innate, immutable identity. In this essay I argue for a reading that transforms and expands the range of gender appropriate behaviors for everyone by making nonconformist people, such as gender fluid people and women who enjoy “manly” pursuits and non-feminine attire, and nonconformist men, such as men who are attracted to gender nonconforming people, visible as models.

Namjang dramas go beyond reductively criticizing the Kongjwi script and other models of womanhood as good or bad. The manner in which *namjang* dramas revise the Kongjwi trope enables them to both reveal the shortcomings of adopting Kongjwi as a role model for navigating life *and* expose the collusive relationship between gender norms and mechanisms of control. By featuring protagonists who knowledgeably exploit gender systems by adopting the strategy of

gendered passing to achieve their goals, *namjang* dramas support a reading which operates through foregrounding the way that institutional practices and administrative norms are (re)producers of social inequality (see Dean Spade 2015). In this reading, *namjang* dramas call attention to how the Kongjwi trope encodes directives to adopt individualist strategies (e.g., pouring one's energy into working hard, waiting to be saved (by men), and striving for heteronormative beauty ideals) that are actually ineffectual for dealing with social disparities because they ignore and necessitate complicity with social structures that unequally distribute life chances to entire populations. Thus, in opposition to the Kongjwi script, *namjang* dramas creatively reimagine gender nonconformity and gendered passing as a tool for thwarting masculinist hierarchies that exclude female-assigned and non-male-assigned people's participation from academic, economic, and political spaces.

This reading of *namjang* dramas opens up a new perspective on competing discourses about gender and sexuality which are vital to the preservation of hegemonic institutions in present-day South Korea. However, this perspective is seldom expressed. To date broadcasters and scholars have endorsed the view that *namjang* protagonists are "women". This paper aims to make an intervention by challenging prior scholarship's reading of *namjang* characters as women by arguing that they embody gender fluidity as a mode of subjectivity. Centering gender fluidity as a viable subjectivity shows how the normalization of the conventional practice of reading *namjang* characters as women dovetails with South Korean administrative practices that reproduce social inequality through their privileging of heteronormative familism. What are the stakes of framing *namjang* protagonists as (passing) women and what aspects of depictions of *namjang* characters' performances of gendered passing does such a framing neglect? Could framing *namjang* protagonists as gender non-binary people, gender fluid people, and/or

transgender people transform the range of sociopolitical interventions that readings of *namjang* dramas could help make?

To explore these questions, first I discuss the embeddedness of heteronormative familism in contemporary South Korea. Then, I examine how broadcasters and scholars have gendered *namjang* protagonists as “women” in official paratexts and scholarship about *namjang* dramas. Next, I discuss how the widespread pattern of *namjang* characters being depicted as being coerced into “confessing” that they are “women” calls into question the idea that their chosen or “real” gender can only be read as female, static, and singular. Using scenes from popular *namjang* dramas, I demonstrate that some *namjang* characters are portrayed as identifying as gender non-binary or gender fluid. Then, I consider the applicability and benefits of using the term transgender (i.e., *teuraenseujendeo*) to describe the complex gender practices of *namjang* protagonists. Lastly, I use correspondences with transgender identifying South Koreans to illustrate how classifications of *namjang* characters as “women” are interrelated with society-wide transphobia in South Korea.

I conclude that we must push back against the dominant practice of narrowly reading *namjang* characters as (“heterosexual”) “women” and instead embrace ambiguity and plural possibilities in *namjang* dramas. That is, in addition to the possibility for *namjang* characters to be read as heterosexual women I also show that it is possible to read *namjang* characters in multiple other ways. Furthermore, I argue that using “transgender” and “*namjangyeoja*” in conjunction with each other can illuminate the relation between institutionalized forms of transphobic heteronormative familism in South Korea and the practice of using the term “*namjangyeoja*” to categorize performances of gender nonconformity by female-assigned people. In short, I argue that we should orient to the presence of the term *namjang(yeoja)* as a

productive marker of the co-constitutive absence of the term transgender. In doing so, we can occupy a nuanced vantage point that allows us to be attentive to the potential for *namjang* dramas to be read as containing representations of transgenderhood and consider how the *namjang* drama trend and its visibility in South Korea is maintained by transphobic practices that constrain the production and reception of Korean dramas. In conclusion, this paper demonstrates not only how transgender studies scholarship is useful for deepening our understanding of how gender and sexuality is constructed in *namjang* dramas – and more importantly in South Korean society in general – but also how critically discussing one’s choice to (not) acknowledge ontologies is part and parcel of self-reflecting and being vigilant about our own complicity in constructing and affirming hierarchies of normalcy that operate as techniques for maintaining inequality. In doing so, this paper strives to nurture awareness and tolerance for minoritarian, intersectional understandings of gender and sexuality that can help us envision feminist strategies for coping with and addressing forms of systemic violence.

GENDER AND SEXUALITY MOVEMENTS IN 21ST CENTURY SOUTH KOREA

“Chastity involves neither morals nor laws. It is merely taste. Just as we eat rice (*pab*) when we want to eat rice, and we eat rice cake (*ttōk*) when we want to eat rice cake, chastity depends on our will and practice.”

-Hyeseok Na (1935) (Quoted in Hyaeweol Choi 2015, 93)

In order to understand why the *namjang* drama trend is conspicuous in South Korea, it is first necessary to discuss the institutionalization of transphobic forms of heteronormative familism and their intimate intertwinings with Confucian familist discourses in South Korea. As I will illustrate later in this paper, it is precisely because of the naturalization of heteronormativity in South Korea that gender and sexuality representations in *namjang* dramas make *namjang* dramas stand out from the majority of other television dramas. Therefore, this paper begins by tracing the development of South Korea’s dominant cultural brand of heteronormative familism and its social, political, and material impacts on life in South Korea.

As recently as 2017 the South Korean military’s criminalization of homosexuality² has been used to support the view that South Korean society is a pervasively homophobic and transphobic nation. However, leaving descriptions of South Korea (henceforth Korea) at that is a dangerous oversimplification of its inheritance of the Korean peninsula’s long, rich history of both tolerating and disciplining gender nonconformity, gender liminality, sexual nonconformity, and sexual fluidity³. Given the multiplicity of gender and sexual practices that have flourished on

² See Youngshik D. Bong 2008, 90; Alvin Lee 2010, 73; Tari Young-Jung Na 2014, 365; Sang-Hun Choe 2017; Bo-eun Kim 2017.

³ E.g., some examples that highlight this history include: (*nam*)*sadangpae* (see Jeeyoung Shin 2013, 101; Sung Soon Kim 2014, 46, 52; Chuyun Oh and David C. Oh 2017, 12); *hwarang* (see Young-Gwan Kim and Sook-Ja Hahn 2006, 61; Jeeyoung Shin 2013, 93); *yeoseonggukgeuk* (see Seonghui Yang 2013); Yeoyunhoe, an association of lesbian taxi drivers that began in the 1960s (see Hyun-young Kwon Kim and John Cho 2011, 209-210); Silla Dynasty’s King Hyeogong and Goryeo Dynasty’s King Gongmin (see Jooran Lee 2000: 274); and cross-dressing in K-pop (see Oh and Oh 2017).

the Korean peninsula, when and how did compulsory heterosexuality come to characterize contemporary Korea?

Typically, the (re)entrenchment of Confucian ideologies is blamed for Korea's institutionalization of administrative practices that privilege men, heterosexual familial relationships, and a binary gender system (Eunjeong Kim and King Davis 2003; Youna Kim 2005; Soo Jin Park-Kim, Soo Youn Lee-kim, and Eun Jung Kwon-Lee 2006; Youngshik D. Bong 2008; Jesook Song 2010; Joohee Lee, Jinseok Kim, and Hyunsung Lim 2010; Woong Kyu Sung 2012; T. Na 2014; H. Choi 2015; John (Song Pae) Cho 2009, 2017). Korea's normalization of Confucian ideologies can be traced back to when Confucianism began to take root in many communities on the Korean peninsula during the Joseon Dynasty (1392 CE - 1897/1910 CE). This spread of Confucian values helped institute hierarchal binary gender relations that privileged men as superior via their symbolic linkage with heaven and denigrated women as inferior via their association with earth (Kim and Davis 2003, 112; Y. Kim 2005, 28; H. Choi 2015, 88). Consequently, despite the rich variation in everyday practices and behaviors that people living on the peninsula adopted depending on their class⁴, region, and ethnic backgrounds⁵, Confucian ideologies started to play an increasingly greater role in the creation of gendered populations and the naturalization of socio-political structures that systematically targeted these populations for inclusion or exclusion from power and resources. For example,

⁴ See Hyaewool Choi (2015, 89) for a description of how conformity to Confucian principles varied by social class and changed over time during the Joseon Dynasty.

⁵ It should be noted that many of the practices that developed under the influences of Confucian ideologies during the Joseon Dynasty differed from the family, gender, and sexual practices that were commonplace in communities on the Korean peninsula during past eras. For example, scholars agree that unlike what was the case for the latter half of the Joseon Dynasty, during the Goryeo Dynasty (918 CE - 1392 CE) the status of women was high, all offspring regardless of gender were eligible to inherit and manage their natal family's property, matrilineality was practiced in addition to patrilineality, and rigid gender segregation was purportedly *not* the norm (see Michael J. Seth 2006, 92-93).

Confucian concepts such as *namnyeoyubyeol*⁶ and *namjonyeobi*⁷ promoted practices that reinforced gendering bodies into the groups of “women” and “men,” constructed these populations as diametrically opposed, and subjected these populations to gender segregation. Additionally, the Confucian concept known as *samjongjido* reinforced the gender ideal that women should be obedient to men throughout their life by respectfully following and sacrificing themselves for their father, husband, and son (Kim and Davis 2003, 112; Y. Kim 2005, 30). As time passed Confucian ideologies heavily influenced changes to inheritance and marriage customs and were used to justify the practices of denying women the right to participate in educational and political institutions and requiring women of certain classes to avoid contact with men, primarily remain indoors, and wear face veils when appearing outside their house (Y. Kim 2005, 28).

Confucianism’s simultaneous denigration of women and valorization of motherhood had a long-term impact on the social fabric of Joseon Dynasty communities. Eventually it helped lay the foundation for contemporary South Korea’s brand of heteronormative familism⁸ and the gender ideal known today as *hyeonmoyangcheo* (“wise mother good wife”). *Hyeonmoyangcheo* prescribes that the end goal of women’s education is for its use in wifedom and motherhood and extolls women who pour their energies into serving their husband and children as the most respectable and desirable. Many scholars credit interactions between Confucian discourses with Japanese ideologies (e.g., *ryousaikenbo*) during the Japanese Colonial Period (1910 CE -1945

⁶ Lit. there are differences (i.e., *byeol*) between women (i.e., *nyeo*) and men (i.e., *nam*).

⁷ Lit. men are high and noble and women are low; “honored men, abased women” (Kim and Davis 2003, 112).

⁸ In this paper, the terms “heteronormative familism,” “Confucian familism,” and “heteronormativity” are at times used interchangeably to refer to the institutionalized intimacies between Confucian ideologies, familism, and heteronormativity in South Korea. These usages are meant to echo John Cho’s observation that contemporary South Korean society is characterized by “neofamilism”. John Cho defines “neofamilism” as the imbrication of heteronormative familism with neoliberalism (i.e., “the widespread restructuring of the Korean economy from a late-developmental model directed by the state to a neoliberal one founded on the entrepreneurial energies of individuals”) (J. Cho 2017, 245).

CE) and Christian values (e.g., ideologies of domesticity propagated by American Protestant missionaries) during the 19th and 20th centuries with playing a formative role in constructing and circulating the ideology of *hyeonmoyangcheo* and engineering the co-optation of it for state goals (H. Choi 2009; Soojin Kim 2014; H. Choi 2015, 90). As will be illustrated later in this paper, the legacy of Confucianism's regulation of patriarchy-serving mother power in contemporary Korea is that generally being a heterosexual, married, monogamous mother is not a "choice" – it was and continues to be constructed as the "only" viable option for female-assigned people who wish to be included in Korean society (Kim and Davis 2003, 108, 113; Y. Kim 2005, 28-29, 39-40).

The influence of Christianity, Japanese colonialism, and American imperialism was not limited to altering women's roles, but also left an indelible mark on gender, family, and sexual systems and (re)affirmed patriarchal and heterosexist practices. For example, Jeeyoung Shin asserts that "it was not until the late nineteenth century that Western science, Christianity, and neo-Confucianism converged in Korea to taint same-sex relationships as pathological" (2013, 93). In addition, Japanese colonialism invasively promoted and mandated the codification of patriarchal familism in administrative spaces. This is exemplified in the way that a predecessor to the *hojuje*, the family head system⁹ that exclusively privileged men as the heads of family units and which was formally established as an administrative tool via its inclusion in the passage of Korea's Civil Code in 1958, was forcibly implemented during the Japanese Colonial period (The Hankyoreh 2005; Michael E. Robinson 2007, 95-96; E. Taylor Atkins 2010, 42-43). The long-lasting consequences of Japanese colonialism's impact on gender roles and family law cannot be overstated: For much of South Korea's history, e.g., from the 1950s until the early 2000s, the *hojuje* legalized gender discrimination in the way that it "prohibited women from officially heading families," "gave males exclusive rights to serve as the heads of families," and

⁹ *Hojuje* is also sometimes referred to as the "family headship system" or the "household registration system".

forced female-assigned people to be listed on their natal family's registry "until they are married, in which case the women's name moves to her husband's registry" (Chan S. Suh, Eun Sil Oh, and Yoon S. Choi 2011, 163; Patricia Goedde 2011, 239). The family headship system imposed severe hardships on women and gender minorities in the way that whereas a man could always remain on his family registry regardless of his marital status women who divorced or remarried had to change family registries (e.g., have their name moved to their new husband's family registry) and female divorcee's children were required to "remain on the former husband's register and keep the same surname, regardless of whether they lived with her, thus advertising their family status and attracting social stigma" (Patricia Goedde 2011, 243). At one point family and citizenship related legislation and the *hojuje* even reinforced the stance that only children born of *male* Korean citizens with family registries would be recognized by the state and thereby encouraged racial and xenophobic discrimination against minorities such as the children of South Korean-born women and their foreign-born partners.

Despite the abolishment of the *hojuje* in 2005 and its replacement with the Family Relations Register beginning in 2008 (The Hankyoreh 2005; C. S. Suh, E. S. Oh, Y. S. Choi 2011, 163; T. Na 2014, 359; H. Choi 2015, 97), some have questioned whether administrative changes related to the *hojuje* have been merely symbolic steps towards "progress" rather than sincere attempts to usher in transformative social reform. In fact, a large amount of skepticism and criticism has been directed towards the Ministry of Gender Equality (lit. Ministry of "Women" (*yeoseong*)), a governmental organization that played a critical role in orchestrating the eradication of the *hojuje* (C. Suh, E. Oh, Y. Choi 2011, 159). It is arguably dubious who has benefitted from the establishment of the Ministry of Gender Equality in 2001 and its expansion into the Ministry of Gender Equality and Family (lit. Ministry of "Women" (*yeoseong*)) and

“Family” (*gajok*) in 2005 given that this ministry has been heavily involved in promoting and passing laws that reinforce heterosexual familism, binary gender roles, and criminalize sex work, such as the Anti-Prostitution Act (Yeoseonggajokbu; C. Suh, E. Oh, Y. Choi 2011, 159; T. Na 2014, 359-360). Perhaps one of the most infamous examples of the Ministry of Gender Equality and Family receiving criticism for their tone-deaf actions occurred in 2006 when the ministry announced that as part of its “prostitution prevention” (*seongmaemae yebang*) campaign they were holding an event where they would *compensate men* who refrained from purchasing the services of sex workers after year-end (office) parties (*yeonmal hoesik; songnyeonhae*) (BBC News 2006; Yujin Lee 2006; Reuters 2006). Rather than choosing to design and implement a policy to provide monetary and material resources to sex workers, one of the most disadvantaged populations in Korea, instead the Ministry of Gender Equality and Family decided to reinforce the pathologization of sex work and provide financial resources to sex work customers (many of whom one would imagine are people with financial and/or male privileges). In addition to receiving backlash over their attempts to criminalize sex work and dictate what a “wholesome” (*geonjeonhan*) family is, the ministry has also come under fire for their homophobic behavior. For example, lesbian rights activists Soo Jin Park-Kim, Soo Youn Lee-kim, and Eun Jung Kwon-Lee observed that in its early stages the Ministry of Gender Equality was blatantly homophobic in a way that undercut lesbian identifying populations’ access to material and financial support from the government and contradicted the ministry’s avowed commitment to protect and improve women’s rights:

“The Ministry of Gender Equality is the department that distributes funds to women like the Korea Foundation for Women does, but they have never distributed any funds to

lesbian organizations. When I asked the reason why we could not get funds from the ministry, they answered: ‘You know, the members of the distribution subcommittee are quite homophobic.’ People do not help us because they are ignorant or have phobia of homosexuals.” (Park-Kim, Lee-Kim, and Kwon-Lee 2006: 169)

Ironically, the Ministry of Gender Equality and Family’s neglect of gender and sexual minorities is further highlighted by their role in implementing the replacement for the *hojuje*, the Family Relations Register. Critics have argued that the Family Relations Register system fails to protect gender and sexual minorities because it perpetuates the practice of recognizing marriage between heterosexual couples as “the primary method to establish a new family” (T. Na 2014, 359). This method of using marriage to establish families has disastrous consequences for many minorities because alternatives to heterosexual marriage, regardless of whether or not they are a family arrangement that involves co-habitation between partners, are not currently legally recognized in Korea. As a result, populations who remain at risk under the current Family Relations Register system include both gender and sexual minorities who are in family arrangements that resist traditional marriage structures as well as those who desire the right to participate in state-sanctioned “same-sex marriage” practices in order to conform to normative family ideals (T. Na 2014, 359-360). Tari Young-Jung Na asserts that “rather than expanding the current system to grant inferior and differential rights to same-sex marriages, critics of the marriage rights movement propose that all nontraditional family relations based on genuine intimacy and mutual care be recognized as an alternative” (T. Na 2014, 360). In summary, the Ministry of Gender Equality and the Ministry of Gender Equality and Family’s actions have been inconsistent with their professed goal to promote gender equality (e.g., do sex workers not

deserve equal protections in their workplaces?) and improve women's rights (e.g., are non-heterosexual identifying women not women and less deserving of the rights that heterosexual women receive?).

The Ministry of Gender Equality and Family's actions are not isolated cases of discriminatory policies, but rather the movements of a cog in the well-oiled machine of structural inequality in Korea. This is demonstrated by the myriad of correlations between Confucian familism and social inequality that have been observed in other governmental, pseudo-governmental¹⁰, and private organizational spaces, including social welfare and financial institutions. Take for example how administrative and private organizations have created and enforced housing and banking policies that discriminate against women and gender and sexual minorities (J. Song 2008; J. Song 2010). For instance, Jesook Song has observed that banks typically deny housing lease loans to people under 35 years of age unless they are "married people or people intending to marry soon (with evidence of a wedding schedule)" (J. Song 2010, 135). The purported justification for this policy is that youth, especially unmarried women, are "conventionally expected to live with their parents before marriage" (J. Song 2010, 132). Additionally, it is also the norm for unmarried people over 35 who do not have "a record of living alone for several years before applying for the loan" and previously married women (e.g., divorced women) to be denied housing loans from financial institutions "because they are considered to be an abnormal household" (J. Song 2010, 136). The rationales that are used to legitimize excluding single women, unmarried people, and unmarried people from receiving governmental and private financial assistance to attain housing can be linked to Confucian familist discourses that paint women's autonomy as being antithetical to family structures and social order (Y. Kim 2005, 39-40; J. Song 2010, 132, 134, 135, 136). As discussed above, a

¹⁰ E.g., the Korea Communications Standards Commission (KCSC).

factor which further compounds the harm that these policies perpetuate is that gender and sexual minorities who do not choose to assimilate into traditional heterosexual marriage arrangements are ineligible to receive the social privileges and legal protections that state-sanctioned marriages provide. Therefore, even if their policies do not explicitly acknowledge that they discriminate against non-heteronormative groups, financial institutions that systematically target unmarried/unmarrying populations for discrimination have the potential to disproportionately harm gender and sexual minorities and contribute to their socioeconomic insecurity.

Given the current homophobic climate, some gay and lesbian identifying Koreans choose to participate in heterosexual-passing family arrangements and “liv[e] part-time as ‘weekend gays’”¹¹ (J. Cho 2009, 2017, 245). Lesbian and gay Koreans have reported that they face severe harassment and discrimination in work, living, and military spaces, some change jobs or move out of fear of their being outed as gay, and some experience stress from “fear of social and job discrimination” (Park-Kim, Lee-Kim, and Kwon-Lee 2006; J. Song 2010, 135; *PD Notebook* 2017; J. Cho 2017, 249, 255). Opting to enter into a heterosexual-passing contract marriage (see J. Cho 2009) is one approach that some Korean gay and lesbian people use to mitigate Korea’s homophobia and participate in Korea’s marriage system (see T. Na 2014, 360). Although both members of such contract marriages may gain heterosexual and marriage privileges (e.g., improved social status; job promotions; housing security), lesbians are put at risk for “gendered subordination” to their gay partners due to the labor that domestic and familial duties disproportionately require married women to perform (J. Cho 2009, 402, 405, 409). Another survival strategy that some gay men choose is to aspire towards “deferred futures” (see J. Cho 2017). That is, some gay men have “imagined that they would come out and live openly as

¹¹ According to John Cho, “this term denotes queers who spend the bulk of their time during the week as ostensibly heterosexual men and women while reserving their sexual activities (such as clubbing in bars) for the weekend” (J. Cho 2017, 245).

fulltime gay men once their parents passed away” rather than challenge or disrupt familial (and by extension citizenship) models while their parents are living (J. Cho 2017, 252). John Cho describes this strategy as one which highlights differences between the “Western notion” of “gay men coming out of their blood family and joining an alternative gay community” because unlike their “Western” peers “Korean gay men imagine their closet as a temporary holding pad from which they would emerge as fulltime gays once their parents passed away” (J. Cho 2017, 252).

John Cho argues that entering into contract marriages and choosing a “deferred gay future” are *both* strategical responses to the pervasiveness of heteronormative familism in Korea. For example, Cho explains that the practice of sexual minorities choosing to commit to a heterosexual-passing marriage indicates “their efforts to negotiate South Korea’s heteronormative system anchored in the patriarchal family” and allows sexual minorities to “deflect the pressure to marry, but paradoxically only by conforming to it” (J. Cho 2009, 402). Similarly, Cho posits that the practice of imagining a “deferred gay future” is a reaction to “the renewed valorisation of the metonym of family as nation in order to discipline non-normative members of the population following the widespread unemployment of male heads of middle-class households and ensuing fears about the collapse of the patriarchal family and heteronormative nation” (J. Cho 2017, 245). Ultimately, these strategies for surviving in Korea’s heteronormative society typically require gender and sexual minorities to “spatially and temporally segregate their...activities from their public identities in order to create queer times and spaces” (J. Cho 2017, 256). Therefore, one major outcome of choosing to pass as a heterosexual person part-time or full-time is that doing so can provide the passer with *individual* benefits (J. Cho 2017, 256-257). However, adopting passing as a heterosexual family as a strategy is counterproductive for transforming Korea’s heteronormative social order and the

collective empowerment of gender and sexual minorities in Korea because doing so “reinforce[s] the sanctity of the family as the proper unit of social, moral, and national belonging” in Korea (J. Cho 2009, 416).

Turning our attention to sexual assault related legislative spaces provides even more examples of the embeddedness of Confucian familism in administrative norms and its exacerbatory impact on the vulnerability of gender and sexual minorities. Generally, “Korean rape laws, penal codes, and court decisions” have framed rape as “a violation of *woman’s* chastity” [emphasis added] (Bong 2008, 94; Joohee Lee, Jinseok Kim, and Hyunsung Lim 2010, 1202). Furthermore, in practice courts usually require “‘resistance to the utmost’ for evidence of rape and for a criminal charge to be brought against the perpetrator, though this requirement is not an official part of the penal code” (Lee, Kim, and Lim 2010, 1202 – 1203). The practice of requiring a woman to perform “resistance to the utmost” is strongly reminiscent of late Joseon Dynasty Confucian ideologies that “stressed chastity” for women and encouraged women to be “educated to commit suicide” if sexually assaulted (Y. Kim 2005, 29). As such, in contemporary Korea “only women who are nearly killed while attempting to protect their chastity with utmost resistance are considered to be rape victims and to deserve legal protection,” and if a rape victim cannot prove that they “resisted” to the “utmost” then “charges are often dismissed as...Hwa Kan, Korean word for consensual sex” (Lee, Kim, and Lim 2010, 1203).

Most recently, the high-profile court proceedings involving Yoochun “Micky” Park, a K-pop boy band member accused of sexual assault and rape by multiple women, have attested to the fact that proof of “resistance to the utmost” continues to be used as a de facto litmus test in Korean courts for whether consent was given. For instance, in one 2017 case involving Yoochun a judge ruled against an alleged sexual assault victim and in favor of Yoochun based on the

following justification which implies that the victim did not visibly perform “resistance to the utmost” properly from the court’s perspective: “The bathroom of the adult entertainment facility in which [A] claimed she was sexually assaulted has a lock on the inside. Considering that fact, it is difficult to understand why [A] did not leave the bathroom or yell for help...Even after [A] left the bathroom...she was seen laughing and happily talking to a waiter. These facts confirm suspicions that [A’s] claims of sexual assault were false” (R. Jun 2017a). In another 2016-2017 case with a different assault victim Yoochun’s lawyers argued that the rape victim’s accusation of Yoochun was false because “it’s not possible for rape to occur in a small bathroom” and therefore “consensual intercourse” took place (R. Jun 2017b). Despite how subsequent appeals did not find this rape victim guilty of “false accusation” or “defamation,” Yoochun was never convicted of any criminal charges because judges ruled that there was not enough evidence to prove the victim’s account that she was raped nor enough evidence to disprove Yoochun’s account that consensual sex occurred (R. Jun 2017b, 2017c).

One of the most discursively significant changes to sexual assault legislation that can be visibly linked to Confucian familism are the revisions to Korean penal codes that took place in 2013. Beginning in June 2013 for the first time in Korea’s history the state began acknowledging that men could be victims of rape perpetrated by women, and thereby the state appeared to distance itself from Confucianist definitions of rape (Claire Lee 2015). Prior to 2013 administrative definitions of rape disregarded the possibility that non-male people could be rapists and that non-female people could be victims of rape (Bong 2008, 94). By placing importance *only* upon assaults on women’s “chastity,” the state had aligned itself with the Confucian stance that a woman’s highest value lies in her physical ability to reproduce sons to support the patrilineal family system. That is, under Confucianist patrilineality “a woman was

regarded as an instrument to bear a son” (Y. Kim 2005, 29; H. Choi 2015, 88). Therefore, control over women’s sexuality and reproductive rights was the key to making patrilineal patriarchy operational (Park-Kim, Lee-Kim, and Kwon-Lee 2006: 184). Consequently, Confucian familism was used to justify the “double standard of sexual morality” that has resulted in “the chastity ideology [being] forced upon women only” (Kim and Davis 2003, 110, 112-113; Y. Kim 2005, 41; H. Choi 2015, 89, 93). During the Joseon dynasty if a woman became involved in any type of non-marital sexual activities, including either consensual or non-consensual sex, it was considered “the most unforgivable disgrace to their families” (Y. Kim 2005, 29; H. Choi 2015, 88). In accordance with Confucianism, since the Joseon era female sexual assault victims have continued to be severely stigmatized and scholarship suggests that rape is still heavily underreported in current-day Korea (Kim and Davis 2003, 113; Y. Kim 2005, 43; Joohee Lee, Jinseok Kim, and Hyunsung Lim 2010, 1201-1202; Woong Kyu Sung 2012, 283).

As such, *on the surface* the legislative revisions that were made to rape-related criminal codes in 2013 seem to resist certain aspects of Confucian familist discourses. However, these reforms contradict their ostensible purpose because they introduced a new hierarchy of administrative definitions that implicitly retain and affirm the pre-2013 view that “true” rape only occurs when a “woman” is sexually penetrated by a “man”. For example, currently “rape” (*ganggan*) is legally defined as occurring when a “female sex organ” is penetrated by a “male sex organ” (Juwon Kang 2013; C. Lee 2015; Dongju Yu 2018). Sexual assault that involves a woman penetrating someone’s body or sexual assault that involves someone penetrating a non-woman’s body, including men who force anal or oral sex on other men, is defined as “like-rape” (*yusanggan*) (J. Kang 2013; C. Lee 2015; D. Yu 2018). Whereas the minimum prison sentence for “rape” is three years, the minimum prison sentence for “like-rape” is only two years (J. Kang

2013; C. Lee 2015). Therefore, the new administrative definitions of rape that were implemented by the 2013 revisions allow the continued perpetuation of the state-sanctioned view that “real” rape is something that only occurs when a woman is sexually penetrated by a man. This suggests that the ideas that “real” rape is non-consensual heterosexual intercourse, “real” rapists are men, and “real” rape victims are women still has a significant foothold in administrative spaces. To make matters worse, the 2013 revisions also reinforce the harmful discourse that the most important form of chastity is vaginal chastity.

These discourses are problematic for a number of reasons. First, they prescribe that access to the civil right to be legally recognized as a rape victim is to be determined by one’s physical conformity to normative body ideals. Under this rubric certain populations, such as transgender populations, are defined as having less rights and being less deserving of the state’s protection, and as a result administrative spaces enable the marginalization and dehumanization of some of these populations. In essence, these revisions endorse gender discrimination by making it legal to treat gender conforming female-assigned rape victims differently from rape victims who are men and rape victims who are members of gender minority populations. In light of the inequality that is inherent to the 2013 reforms, it becomes necessary to ask does this mean that sexually assaulted female-assigned people who were born without a vagina are also not “real” rape victims? Does this mean that sexually assaulted people who do not identify with the state-sanctioned binary genders are not “real” rape victims? Does this mean that sexually assaulted transgender women (regardless of whether they have chosen to undergo (re)constructive surgeries) are not “real” rape victims?

The Korean government gave an infamous response to the latter question when the Supreme Court of Korea ruled in 1996 that a rape victim who was a woman who had been

assigned male at birth did not have the right to charge her rapist with rape because “transsexuals do not have reproductive ability and therefore the crime of rape is not applicable” (Bong 2008, 94; Yujeong Lee 2015). It took thirteen more years before the Korean administration would officially *slightly* shift its stance by stipulating via a 2009 case that “transsexual” women could be legally recognized as rape victims if they had undergone sex reassignment surgery, if they had “no problems having sexual relations,” and depending on how long they had lived as a woman (Si-soo Park 2009; Y. Lee 2015; D. Yu 2018). The precedents set by these cases and the 2013 revisions suggest that the state has continued to promote transphobia and deny equal rights to transgender, gender nonconforming, intersex, and gender fluid populations.

Another glaring red flag about the 2013 revisions is the manner in which they stress the importance of heterosexual-passing non-consensual vaginal intercourse over other forms of non-consensual sexual assault that are not heterosexual-passing or do not involve the genitals of a male-assigned person. This sends the dangerously heterosexist message that it is legal to discriminate against people who (willingly or unwillingly) engage in non-heterosexualities (Bong 2008, 94). Additionally, it also promotes masculinism by privileging “male” genitals as being capable of causing more violence than the genitals of other gendered populations and therefore by extension implicitly endorses the view that men (with male-passing genitalia) are more powerful than other people. Why should a person who rapes another person in a manner that is not culturally intelligible as heterosexual rape be given a lesser sentence than a man who rapes a woman or a woman who rapes a man? Moreover, why should it be the default standard to give sexual assault crimes that involve (male or non-male) genitalia higher sentences? Does this mean that rape committed by people who do not have/use certain genitalia is not “real” rape? As Claire Lee explains, assigning the highest minimum punishments to rape that involves male

genitalia penetrating female genitalia institutionalizes the trivialization of sexual violence caused by non-male genitalia, forced non-heterosexual sexual relations, and non-physical forms of sexual assault (see Claire Lee 2015). Given how the expectation that men are more powerful than women has been normalized within administrative spaces, it may come as little surprise that it was not until two years after the 2013 revisions that a male rape victim stepped forward and a woman was arrested on rape charges for the first time (Y. Lee 2015). Later that same year, for the first time in Korea's history a woman was charged with the crime of spousal rape (Jiyun Gwon 2015). In summary, administrative definitions of rape, the practice of holding different populations to different standards of sexual morality, the social stigmatization of sexual assault victims, and the underreporting of sexual assault crimes can be linked to Confucianist familist discourses that reinforced patrilineal patriarchy via the regulation of women's sexuality.

Last but not least, the influence of heteronormative familism can also be witnessed within academia. In fact, by many accounts, some academic scholars seem to be willingly complicit in promoting heterosexism. As illustration, Soo Jin Park-Kim, Soo Youn Lee-Kim, and Eun Jung Kwon-Lee observed that during the 1990s and early 2000s the fields of women's studies and feminism were strongly homophobic (Park-Kim, Lee-Kim, and Kwon-Lee 2006, 171-174). This is exemplified by how the Korean Association of Women's Studies, "Korea's largest feminist academic society," promoted scholarship that praised heterosexual marriage, "distorted and denied the existence of lesbianism," and "described Korean lesbianism as an indiscreetly imported Western culture that did not exist in the Korean history" (Park-Kim, Lee-Kim, and Kwon-Lee 2006, 172-173). Likewise, Hyun-young Kwon Kim and John Cho have made similar observations about Korean studies literature (Kim and Cho 2011, 222) According to Kim and Cho, "heterosexism is also evident in academic accounts of Korean democracy" such as Hagen

Koo's writing on "the role of the labor movement in Korean civil society" (Kim and Cho 2011, 222).

Although activists and scholars have critiqued some Korean studies academics for the heterosexist biases that these academics have reproduced in their research, among English-language Korean studies scholarship there persists a homosexist bias as well. For example, the marginalization of non-gay and lesbian voices within literature about the experiences of gender and sexual minorities has resulted in the dangerous tendency for gay and lesbians to be reduced to being representative of gender and sexual minorities and for homosexuality to be conflated with queerness¹². The dearth of literature on non-gay and lesbian experiences among English-

¹² During the past three decades queer theory and queer studies have gained increasing recognition in academic spaces. Adrienne Rich and other feminists were some of the people who helped lay the groundwork for what would later emerge as the field of queer theory. In her famous paper, "Compulsory Heterosexuality and Lesbian Existence," Rich introduced the term "compulsory heterosexuality" and argued that "heterosexuality, like motherhood, needs to be recognized and studied as a *political institution*" (Rich 1993 (1980), 232). To Rich, the act of ignoring how compulsory heterosexuality operates to structure disadvantaged populations and legitimize the marginalization of lesbian existences is an act of violence: "women are all, in different ways and to different degrees, [the] victims [of a "'sexual domination perspective' through whose lens, purporting objectivity, sexual abuse and terrorism of women by men has been rendered almost invisible by treating it as natural and inevitable"]; and part of the problem with naming and conceptualizing female sexual slavery is...compulsory heterosexuality" (Rich 1993 (1980), 236-237).

Some scholars, such as Jonathan Weinberg, have adopted Rich's definition of compulsory heterosexuality to argue that a queer approach is one that seeks to analyze and promote awareness about the construction and maintenance of compulsory heterosexuality. For example, Weinberg writes that "*queering* the text is more than pointing to potentially gay and lesbian characters or insisting on the sexual identity of an author; it involves revealing the signs of what Adrienne Rich called 'compulsory heterosexuality'" (Weinberg 1996, 12). For Weinberg, queer approaches rely on using frameworks that privilege gender and sexuality as being important for understanding social orders: "As a field of inquiry, queer studies potentially shifts the emphasis away from specific acts and identities to the myriad ways in which gender organizes and disorganizes society" (Weinberg 1996, 12). Similar to Weinberg, Harry M. Benshoff and Sean Griffin emphasize that queer theory is concerned with the intimate intertwinings of sexuality with sociocultural scripts and how those interrelations produce definitions of (ab)normality: "Queer theory suggests that social discourses – such as those spoken by the legal, medical, and religious establishments – play a large role in shaping our understanding of sexuality...In order to truly understand sexuality, one must acknowledge how these frameworks have shaped its meanings throughout history" (Benshoff and Griffin 2006, 7).

In this paper, I distance myself from the above gender and sexuality-centric brands of queer theory and instead choose to use Cathy Cohen's definition of "queer" as a label that "symbolizes an acknowledgement that through our existence and everyday survival we embody sustained and multisited resistance to systems (based on dominant constructions of race and gender) that seek to normalize our sexuality, exploit our labor, and constrain our visibility" (Cohen 1997, 440). Cohen's intersectionality conscious conceptualization of queerness is one that "understands that heteronormativity interacts with institutional racism, patriarchy, and class exploitation to define [people] in numerous ways as marginal and oppressed subjects" (1997: 448). Note, Cohen defines heteronormativity as "both those localized practices and those centralized institutions which legitimize and privilege heterosexuality

language Korean studies scholarship that acknowledges gender and sexual minorities implicitly affirms the discourse that sexuality is reducible to the false dichotomy of heterosexuality and homosexuality. This implicit stance has the potential to perform the violently totalizing action of throwing gender and sexual minorities under the umbrella term “homosexual.” This in turn undercuts our ability to understand the rich variation of gender and sexual behaviors that Korean people (and human beings in general) have practiced and how these behaviors have shaped or been shaped by sociopolitical structures in Korea. In essence, by focusing attention primarily on the experiences of gay and lesbians and by neglecting to include the experiences of non-homosexual identifying populations often well-intentioned scholarship sometimes “talks the talk” but fails to “walk the walk” – or worse, does neither¹³.

and heterosexual relationships as fundamental and ‘natural’ within society” (1997, 440). Therefore, similar to Cohen, I understand “queer” as a label that can be used to signal that *someone* or *something* is experiencing the process of being distanced or marginalized from power. From this perspective, interrelated vectors of subjection operate to produce queer populations and queer behaviors, including queer reading practices.

This understanding of queerness is reminiscent of Jungmin Kwon’s adoption of Alexander Doty’s conceptualization of queer readings as a reception practice where audiences construct positions that resist the dominant codes that are embedded within texts and the cultural contexts of their production and circulation (Kwon 2016, 1569). Similar to how Kwon explains that “whether a film is a queer one depends on the viewer’s perspectives and interpretation” (Kwon 2016, 1569), I align myself with the stance that texts do not inherently have a singular fixed interpretation. Therefore, I agree with the view that diverse interpretations – including multiple interpretations that reinforce heteronormativity and multiple interpretations that resist institutionalized reading practices that are complicit in reproducing inequality – are all simultaneously possible by audiences. Or in other words, I agree that in addition to being able perform readings that reproduce majoritarian discourses, viewers can intentionally choose to occupy positions that allow them to perform oppositional gazes (e.g., see bell hooks 1992) or viewers can unconsciously disidentify with texts in a manner that allows them to perform the survival strategy of “read[ing] oneself and one’s own life narrative in a moment, object, or subject that is not culturally coded to ‘connect’ with the disidentifying subject” (Muñoz 1999, 12). In summary, the label “queer” that is being used in this paper embraces the views that queerness is a process that can involve other modes of subjection in addition to (hetero)sexism and that texts are potentially infinitely queerable because texts can be interpreted in more than one way. Therefore, the understanding of the productive “queerability” of texts that is underscored in this paper is reminiscent of Jessica McCall’s claim that “if close reading is detached from an idea of finding the ‘right’ answer and reimagined as a method for generating meaning it becomes an avenue into the uncertain and exploration of the uncertain is what pushes on and rewrites discursive boundaries of what’s possible and, therefore, real” (McCall 2017, 58).

¹³ At this point it feels necessary to discuss how my background and experiences have influenced this paper and animate my attraction to *namjang* dramas. I am an American woman who was raised in a Black, English-speaking household in the United States, and I grew up without wondering why my immediate family was estranged from my paternal American born grandfather, paternal South Korean born step-grandmother, and various half- and step-relatives of African and/or Korean descent. It wasn’t until far too recently that I began to wonder – what does it mean that American militarism has facilitated South Koreans and Americans’, including my paternal relatives, participation in transnational flows and unequal exchanges of bodies, labor, ideas, cultures, and material goods between the United States and South Korea (Elisabeth Schober 2014, 38-43)? What does it mean that my living and

working as an English language teacher in South Korea benefitted from the global hegemony of English and the nationwide mandatory English schooling that helps reproduce elite closure in South Korea (Jae Jung Song 2011)? What does it mean that 25 years after Latasha Harlin's America, an era when the life of a Black woman was only valued at \$500, both Korean-Americans' monopoly of Black-serving hair and beauty supply stores and some Korean-Americans' participation in anti-Blackness have continued to flourish for over half a century and in collaboration with nation-wide transphobia and racism continued to teach that Black lives are disposable (Anjuli Sastry and Karen Grigsby Bates 2017; Danielle Kwateng-Clark 2017; Emma Sapong 2017; Danielle Young 2017; The BTGNC Collective 2017)? How in this here and now could my studying South Korean mediascapes help reinscribe an American imperialistic gaze? How can this wondering be made into something that is productive?

Even as these questions crowd my mind, another, very much related question insistently eclipses them: in light of the pervasive appropriation of Black cultures in American and South Korean pop cultures and omnipresent anti-Blackness in America and Korea (Juhwan Bae 2014; David Boroff 2014; Huiseon Chae 2015; Benjamin Percy; BBC News Korea 2017), why do I like *namjang* dramas? The short answer is that my firsthand experiences with transphobia, racism, homophobia, and xenophobia in the United States and South Korea taught me to love watching and discussing *namjang* dramas. The longer answer is that not seeing anyone who looks like you, sounds like you, acts like you, dreams like you, and has experiences like you takes its toll not just on you, but on everyone. Slowly but surely you realize that not only have you learned the message that you don't matter, but also the people who are destined to be your neighbors, peers, and authority figures in one place or another have often memorized this "truth" and even eagerly use it to argue that you don't exist.

This intentionally suffocating "truth" loses its efficacy when we begin to question *its* existence. For some these questions arise when we begin to observe vast differences between our lived experiences and the "facts" hawked by administrations through their media minions, which include coloring books, school textbooks, academic publications, toys, advertisements, novels, music, television shows, and movies, etc. When we perceive these absences as absences and feel these absences as absences, then we become awash in both pain and pleasure because this neglect that is meant to kill us becomes a healing tool for awakening and crafting our oppositional senses (bell hooks 1992). These senses help us perceive the world in flexible, critical, and intersectional ways that enable us to consciously resist hegemonic practices and enjoy disidentificatory pleasure from doing so (bell hooks 1992, 122-123, 126). Although these ever-evolving senses do not block deadly rays of racism, classism, misogyny, transphobia, ableism, and heterosexism from coming into contact with our souls, they have untold power to shape how we exert our energy responding to damaging, dominant practices. For me developing oppositional senses meant learning how to actively choose to watch South Korean dramas, variety shows, and reality programs over American television shows and honing the deconstructive skills necessary to recognize how the former is also not free from heterosexism, ableism, misogyny, transphobia, classism, xenophobia, and racism, including explicit anti-Blackness (e.g., see examples of blackface on variety shows; episode one of *Shining Inheritance* (2009), etc.). It meant learning to recognize no two absences are the same: to understand and reflect on why not seeing myself in South Korean media is different – and feels very different – from not being able to see myself in American media.

Being choked by entrenched transphobia and racism in America and Korea, leaves me in pain and continually hungry to see us – people who are gender nonconforming – in media, educational, work, and community spaces. And it motivates me to envision the day when perceiving a person as gender nonconforming is not used as a justification for violence and gender categories such as "women" are understood to be capable of including infinitely more people who are similar and different from each other. I share this to admit that these are my biases: I am a Black, 4c nappy hair wearing and loving, American, assigned female at birth, woman-identifying person who is currently complicit in affirming social inequalities in the way that in order to avoid being (violently) misgendered I regularly exert myself to try to present a public self that conforms to American gender norms, which are implicitly racist and ableist (Toby Beauchamp 2009, 357, 360; Spade 2015, 78; Sara Ahmed 2016, 23). I am someone who wants to see and hear gender nonconforming people and be entertained by media that affirms their existence – and indeed I do see and hear them everywhere when I watch *namjang* dramas which partially explains my attraction to *namjang* dramas. I see this desire as both a strength and a weakness of this paper and its analyses of *namjang* dramas because it affords me the vision to perceive gender categories as broad, flexible, and inclusive even as it ironically narrows my vision in some manners at times. In short, asking questions about gender and sexuality representations in *namjang* dramas and writing this paper is my way of rooting for people who are gender nonconforming and reflecting on why rooting for gender nonconforming people is necessary for everyone's sake.

An example of this homophobic bias can be seen in Chuyun Oh and David C. Oh's writing about K-pop cross-dressing. Oh and Oh's elegant and persuasive article ironically begins with an overt discussion about how certain gender and sexual minorities, such as "bisexual groups in queer communities," are marginalized (Oh and Oh 2017, 10). Moreover, Oh and Oh point out that "queer is masked with certain stereotypical imagery [that] conflates diverse voices of queer communities around the world with the typical understanding of the gay subject in the West" (Oh and Oh 2017, 10). However, this nuanced awareness of the diverse possibilities of queer experiences is covertly undermined when Oh and Oh implicitly signal that they equate queerness with homosexuality:

"The performance itself enacts queer complexities. It is unclear whether the performers have queer identities in their daily lives, since no single K-pop boy has come out as gay, given that heterosexism and homophobia are common in Korea (Dong-Jin)." (Oh and Oh 2017, 22)

Here Oh and Oh are using the terms "performance" and "performers" to refer to a homoerotic performance by two members of Infinite, a K-pop idol boy-band. Oh and Oh's homophobic misstep occurs when they imply that the action of "com[ing] out as gay" is the primary means for indicating whether people "have queer identities in their daily lives." In this way, the possibility of communicating non-gay queer identities is ignored and "gay" is constructed as being interchangeable with "queer identities." This problematic overemphasis on homosexuality is further amplified by the way that Oh and Oh position "heterosexism" and "homophobia" as being the principal barriers for people who wish to openly identify as queer. The hypervisibility

of (hetero/homo)sexuality as a locus for structuring social inequality, renders invisible the interrelated but unique experiences of non-homosexual sexual minorities and gender minorities such as genderqueer and transgender identifying populations who face compounded discrimination due to transphobia, racism, xenophobia, classism, and/or ableism (Gloria Davies, M.E. Davies, and Young-A Cho 2010; T. Na 2014, 364). As a result, Oh and Oh perform a homophobic bias through their writing which contradicts their own critique of “the exclusion caused by the relative privileging of the ‘L’ and ‘G’ of LGBTQ” (Oh and Oh 2017, 10). Oh and Oh’s writing demonstrates that we must be careful to not mistake issues facing queered gender and sexual minorities and issues facing gay and lesbian identifying minorities as being equivalent to each other. Otherwise there is the dangerous potential for our research to contribute to the further marginalization of populations within already marginalized populations.

It is also worth noting that the above claim that Oh and Oh make about how “no single K-pop boy has come out as gay” or queer – one that is often repeated elsewhere – is arguably misleading. Notwithstanding how definitions about what counts as being part of mainstream Korean pop culture and who is part of it are subjective, the fact remains that there have been several K-pop celebrities, including music idols, who have openly identified themselves as non-heterosexual or openly discussed their gender nonconformity. Although the number of openly queer identifying celebrities remains small, they include the singer MRSHLL who came out as gay in 2015; Kangmin, a member of the idol boy band Romeo, who stated orally in a video uploaded to Romeo’s official YouTube channel in 2015 that his ideal type was a “man (i.e., *namja*) like me” (and reportedly reiterated in writing that his ideal type was a man like himself); Hansol who came out as asexual on Instagram in 2017 while he was still an official member of the idol boy band ToppDogg; Holland, an openly gay K-pop idol soloist, who debuted in 2018;

and Ungjae of the K-pop boy band IMFACT has reportedly stated that his ideal type includes men and acknowledged that his sexual orientation could change and thereby implied that his sexual orientation may be fluid, bisexual, or pansexual (Romeo 2015; jeongin's braces 2017; Jessica Oak 2017; MineMuses 2017; Pyo Hyemi 2017; S. Oh 2017; E. Kang 2018). Notably, Ren, a member of the idol boy band NU'EST, has not openly labeled himself with queer identities such as the gender label "femme". However, he has made public statements in support of freedom of gender expression, repeatedly stated that he likes feminine behaviors, and willingly worn clothing and hair looks associated with (hyper)feminine gender expressions. For example, during NU'EST's appearance on a Japanese television show Ren reportedly stated that he was "happy" about being compared to being like a girl (KPOPLE 2017). Furthermore, in 2016 Ren posted to his twitter account pictures of him modeling women's wear along with the statement "Am I a boy or a girl? I am a man. [emoticon] Fashion makes a person and its impression" (Ren 2016; K. Z. 2016). This suggests that Ren presents and identifies as a gender nonconforming man. Likewise, Amber, a member of f(x), an internationally famous idol girl group, has regularly presented herself as a gender nonconforming woman (Amber Liu 2017). For instance, Amber has repeatedly publicly criticized gender norms especially those that limit women to expressing normative femininity (see G. Jeong 2016; Amber Liu 2017), said that her own fellow f(x) members sometimes referred to her as "*oppa*" (a gender-marking term that is usually used by women to refer to men) (mssylee 2015), and while publicly affirming that she likes "men" (i.e., *namja*), shared that she has homosexual-identifying friends and confirmed that she has been asked out by homosexual-identifying fans (mssylee 2015; Lizzie 2015).

Similar to the list of celebrities who have openly identified with transgressing gender and sexuality norms, the list of celebrities who openly identify as LGBTQ+ allies appears small, but

it also includes some prominent K-pop idols. For example, members of the idol boy band SHINee, have publicly shown their support for gender and sexual minorities. In one case in 2013, SHINee's the late Jonghyun retweeted a statement by and personally reached out to a bisexual transgender student protesting discrimination against gender and sexual minorities (G. Jeong 2013; Seulki Yu 2013). More recently, up-and-coming girl groups such as Dreamcatcher and LOONA (and its various units) appear to have consciously constructed member personas and brand images that have the potential to be interpreted as incorporating queerbaiting (e.g., see the music video for LOONA/Chuu's song "Heart Attack"; Tamar Herman 2018). In addition to taking actions that might be read as motivated primarily by capitalist desires rather than a sincere interest in promoting awareness about gender and sexual minorities, some of the members of Dreamcatcher, such as JiU, SuA, and Yoohyeon, have been active in openly showing their support for LGBTQ+ communities (e.g., see IATFB 2018). On the flip side, there also have been idols, such as Super Junior's Siwon, who have openly spread hate and encouraged discriminating *against* gender and sexual minorities (e.g., see melkimx 2015).

Lest it be overlooked, Zico from the idol boy band Block B has been accused of outing their fellow boy band member Taeil as non-heterosexual in 2013 (Block Raw 3 2013). Although Taeil himself has not openly labeled their sexual identit(y/ies) as queer¹⁴, as evidence that Zico forcibly outed Taeil against his will some fans point to the following exchange between Zico and Taeil from a video that was included in Block B's BBC World Camp DVD, which was released in 2013:

¹⁴ In 2012 Taeil himself said "Ah...women...I don't like them" in response to the question "But you like women right?" during an episode of *MTV Match Up: Block B Returns* which aired in 2012. Immediately after Taeil's response his fellow Block B members made expressions of surprise and Taeil quickly amended his statement by adding "Ah! I don't dislike them either" (see Block Raw 3 2012; Block B Intl 2016).

Taeil [talking about Zico]: But he's really cool. As man to man

Zico: Do you kind of really love me?

Another Block B member: Coming out

[...]

Another Block B member: Taeil coming out?!

Taeil: [laughs] What the heck are you saying?

Zico: A while ago Taeil came to the dorm and told me something. He told me he's confused about his feelings for me.

Taeil: [laughs loudly]

Zico: He said he felt helpless. [lit. He said he doesn't know why he's like this.]

Another Block B member: When Taeil was a little drunk, he asked Zico whether he could kiss him.

(Block Raw 3 2013, 4:42-5:08)

In addition, controversy has swirled around the sexuality of Suga, a member of BTS, which is an internationally popular idol boy band who have won many domestic and international awards, including the Album of the Year Award at the 2016 Melon Music Awards and the Top Social Artist Award at the 2017 Billboard Music Awards. Some fans continue to debate the accuracy of the Korean/Japanese/English translations of an interview that BTS gave in Japan in 2014 where Suga reportedly stated that "I focus on personality and atmosphere. I don't have [an] ideal type. It's not limited to girls [lit. the opposite sex], I focus on the first impression and atmosphere, whether someone who has the same sense of feel as mine." (Nick 2014; Officially KMusic 2014). In summary, contrary to popular belief, there are K-pop celebrities

who have openly identified themselves as non-heterosexual or openly identified with gender and sexual minority labels, who temporarily and regularly perform gender nonconforming identities, and/or who have publicly branded themselves as LGBTQ+ allies. The fact that these willing (and unwilling) performances of queer identities have received little consideration in some academic spaces is a reminder of the deep embeddedness of heterocentric biases in educational institutions.

As I will demonstrate later in this paper, it is precisely because of the institutionalization of transphobic forms of heteronormativity in Korea that gender and sexuality representations in *namjang* dramas make *namjang* dramas stand out from the majority of other television dramas. That is, *namjang* dramas are conspicuous due to the way that they have bloomed in an environment permeated by heterosexism and Confucian familism. Moreover, within this environment television broadcasts have traditionally been subjected to heavier censorship and the “need[] to appeal to wider populations” than other media forms such as film, and therefore television is considered to be a “conservative” media space in Korea (Kwon 2016, 1569). In fact, in general “LGBT populations were rarely portrayed in Korean popular culture before the mid-2000s” (Kwon 2016, 1563).

In keeping with the typically conservative characteristics of television broadcasts, one of the most visible contexts that reveals the spectacularly quotidian nature of reinforcements of heterosexist values are reality, variety, and real variety genre television shows. All three of these television genres frequently produce shows that focus on heterosexual (un)scripted “love lines,” “partner selections/coupling” (i.e., *jjakjitgi*), real-life dating, virtual dating, real-life marriages, virtual marriages, parenting, and family life. Although there have been many format changes and

trends over time, reality and variety television programs that glorify heterosexual couplings have been popular for around 30 years in Korea (e.g., see The Korea Herald 2015)¹⁵.

Typically, post-production elements complement and compound the visual reinforcement of compulsory heterosexuality that occurs within such television shows due to their hegemonically featuring couples that consist of one female-passing individual and one male-passing individual. As illustration, the premiere episode of the second season of *Heart Signal* aired on March 16th, 2018. This episode was intentionally edited to bombard viewers with heteronormative values, as can be seen in how the MCs' comments and captions that narrate and commentate on the episode's scenes reproduce gender stereotypes about men and women and insert heterosexist directives such as "every night the residents have to send a text message to [a person of] the *opposite sex* that they are interested in"¹⁶ [emphasis added]. Additionally, the episode is also inundated with pre- and post-production elements that are imbued with gender stereotypes, such as the way that set designs, captions, and subtitles conform to a motif of pink for women and blue for men. For example, the MCs who commentate on the residents' romances are given props which include a chalkboard and pink chalk to indicate which female residents like which male residents and blue chalk to designate which male residents like which female residents, female residents on the show are assigned to sleep in a room that is decorated in shades

¹⁵ Some popular examples of television shows that exclusively focus on heterosexual romance, couplings, (virtual) dating, (virtual) marriage, and family life include *Sarangui Seutyudio* (1994-2001), *Match Made In Heaven* (2002-2003; 2015), *We Got Married* (2008-2017), *Gold Miss Is Coming* (2008-2010), *Mnet Scandal* (2009-2010), *Seutabubusyo Jagiya/Jagiya Baeknyeonsoonnim* (2009-present), *Jjak* (2011-2014), *Super Couple Diary* (2012), *Your Husband* (2012-2013), *The Romantic/The Romantic and Idol* (2012; 2012-2013), *The Return of Superman* (2013-present); *Hwansangsogui Geudae* (2013), *Dad! Where Are We Going?* (2013-2015), *Oh! My Baby* (2013; 2014-2016), *I Need More Romance* (2014), *Pit-A-Pat Romance* (2014), *With You* (2014-2017), *Mom Is Watching* (2015), *Dating Alone* (2015), *My Husband Is A Foreigner* (2015-2016), *Angry Wife* (2015-2016), *What Is Mom* (2015-2017), *Geullobeol Gajokjeongchakgi – Hanguke Sanda* (2015-present); *Same Bed, Different Dreams* (2015-2016; 2017-present), *Daddy and Me* (2016), *Mr. House Husband* (2016-2017), *Mom's Diary - My Ugly Duckling* (2016-present), *Newlyweds Diary* (2017), *Love 10* (2017), *My Love My Friend* (2017), *Single Wife* (2017), *Four Families Under One Roof* (2017), *My Daughter's Men* (2017-2018), *Nest Escape* (2017-2018), *Perfect on Paper* (2017-2018), *Heart Signal* (2017-present), and *Don't Ask For Mom* (2017-present).

¹⁶ "매일 밤 입주자들은 관심 있는 이성에게 문자 메시지를 보내야한다".

of pink whereas the men's room is decorated in shades of blue, and portions of the subtitles for speech spoken by women, such as the resident's name, appear in a pink font color whereas the subtitles for male residents do not.

Outside of programs that are intentionally created to be romance and family themed, heterosexual couple selection/pairing segments make frequent appearances in other variety and reality shows as well (e.g., *jjakjitgi* corners and fabricated love lines such as those featured in the variety shows *X-Man* (2003-2007) and *Running Man* (2010-present)). Moreover, homophobic and transphobic as well as misogynistic, racist, and xenophobic "jokes" are normalized in reality and variety show spaces. One such example of a triply misogynistic, homophobic, and transphobic "joke" occurs in an episode that was originally aired on December 27th in 2003 from the massively popular variety show *X-Man*. In one segment of this episode the celebrity guests play a game where they are given a secret prompt that they have to act out in order for a teammate to guess. During this segment Hyesung Shin is instructed to act out the prompt "you're like a woman"¹⁷ for his teammate Jihye Lee. Hyesung, Jihye, the MCs, and other guests grin and laugh uproariously as Jihye attempts to guess what Hyesung's prompt was:

[While Jihye tries to guess Hyesung's prompt, Hyesung continually makes different poses and gestures that are stereotypes of womanly behavior. The MCs and guests that are watching Jihye and Hyesung also interject comments.]

Jihye: You're gay right?

Jihye: [You're] too feminine. You're a woman!

[..]

Jihye: [You're a] pervert?

¹⁷ "너 여자같아".

Jihye: [You're] transgender? [the word “teuraenseujendeo” written in hangeul appears in commentative captions that pop up as Jihye speaks]

Jihye: You're like a woman!¹⁸

(SBS 2003, 45:24-47:16)

As Chuyun Oh and David C. Oh explain, heteronormativity plays an instrumental role in constructing the “humor” created by scenes like the above *X-Man* segment (see Chuyun Oh and David C. Oh 2017, 13, 17). That is, the fact that compulsory heterosexuality and Confucian familism is the norm in Korea combined with the fact that this *X-Man* scene occurs during the context of a game which is part of the larger context of this scene's episode being part of a variety show series that aims to entertain viewers and make them laugh renders invisible the idea that Hyesung's performances of womanliness and Jihye's interpretations of Hyesung's performances can be read as transgressions of heteronormativity. Since both Hyesung and Jihye's actions are not legible as sincere attempts to violate heteronormative conventions, both heteronormative guests on the show and heteronormative audiences watching along can comfortably laugh at this scene without the need to police Hyesung and Jihye's behavior. In short, it is the norm for television shows, regardless of whether they purport to be dating, marriage, or family focused programs, to violently ignore and/or make fun of gender and sexual minorities (as well as racial and foreign minorities). Television shows, including dramas, rarely

¹⁸ This is the dialogue in its original Korean:

이지혜: 너 게이이지?

이지혜: 너무 여성스러워. 너 여자야!

[..]

이지혜: 변태?

이지혜: 트랜스젠더?

이지혜: 여자 같애!

entertain the idea of, let alone feature, romances that do not consist of a man and a woman¹⁹, consist of asexuality, and/or consist of polyamory.

Despite the conservative nature of television broadcasts and the way that heteronormative familism is pervasive in social and administrative spaces, *namjang* dramas have been successful in Korea. According to many news outlets, the domestic (and international) popularity of the drama *The 1st Shop of Coffee Prince* (*Coffee Prince*, 2007) helped pave the way for the *namjang* drama trend in Korea (e.g., see Seunghui Go 2016). Following in the footsteps of *Coffee Prince*, numerous *namjang* dramas have greeted audiences and been warmly welcomed by viewers via screens, including *The Painter of the Wind* (2008), *Queen Seon Duk* (2009), *You're Beautiful* (2009), *Sungkyunkwan Scandal* (2010), *To The Beautiful You* (2012), *Goddess of Fire* (2013), *Nail Shop Paris* (2013), *Empress Ki* (2013-2014), *One Well-Raised Daughter* (2013-2014), *Love Detective Sherlock K* (2015), *Scholar Who Walks The Night* (2015), and *Moonlight Drawn by Clouds* (2016).

Arguably, this trend is not unique to Korea. In fact, it is mirrored in other parts of Asia, including Taiwan, Japan, and China²⁰. Notably, many of these Korean, Taiwanese, Japanese, and

¹⁹ For example, it was not until the dramas *Life Is Beautiful* (2010) and *Sunam Girls High School Detectives* (*SGHSD* (2015)) aired that Korean dramas featuring an explicit, serious (e.g., not for comic relief) depiction of a “same-sex couple” (i.e., *dongseong keopeul*) and an explicit, serious depiction of a kiss scene between a homosexual couple, respectively, were broadcast on television in Korea (Bong 2010; Gweon 2015; Jieun Nam 2016a). In response to SGHSD’s airing of this kiss scene the Korea Communications Standards Commission (KCSC), one of two organizations responsible in Korea for reviewing television programs and other broadcasts to check whether they conform to Korean broadcast regulations, penalized JTBC, the cable channel that SGHSD aired on (Minjeong Gim 2015; Seok Gim 2015). KCSC justified the penalty by claiming that SGHSD had violated broadcast regulations by showing a scene that had caused viewers to feel disgust and did not promote “wholesome” content to children and youth (S. Gim 2015). Furthermore, with regard to SGHSD’s same-sex kiss scene, the KCSC released statements implying that homosexuality is a “mental disability” and that homosexual kiss scenes are unethical and dangerous because they “could promote homosexuality among the youth” (Seungho Baek 2015; S. Gim 2015).

²⁰ For example, depictions of female-assigned people passing as men are significant narrative elements in Taiwanese television dramas such as *Hua Mu Lan* (1999), *Hua Yang Shao Nian Shao Nu* (2006-2007), *Boy and Girl* (2011), *Ti Amo Chocolate* (2012), *Fabulous Boys* (2013), and *Bromance* (2015-2016); Japanese dramas such as *Hanazakari No Kimitachi E* (2007), *Mendol* (2008), *Ouran High School Host Club* (2011), *Tempest* (2011), *Hanazakari No Kimitachi E* (2011), *Ikemen Desu Ne* (2011), *Ashi-girl* (2017); and Chinese dramas such as *Eternal Happiness* (2002), *My Bratty Princess* (2005), *Bold Beautiful Woman* (2007), *Butterfly Lovers* (2007), *Love at First Fight* (2007), *Iron Road* (2009, China-Canada), *My Bratty Princess* (2011), *Happy Michelin Kitchen* (2012), *Legend of*

Chinese dramas²¹ are adaptations of each other and/or adaptations of texts such as manhwa, manga, or novels. This is the case for *You're Beautiful* (2007, Korea) and its remakes *Ikemen Desu Ne* (2011, Japan) and *Fabulous Boys* (2013, Taiwan). It also the case for *Hua Yang Shao Nian Shao Nu* (2006-2007, Taiwan), *Hanazakari No Kimitachi E* (2007, Japan), *Hanazakari No Kimitachi E* (2011, Japan), *To The Beautiful You* (2012, Korea), and *Runaway Sweetheart* (2013, China), which are all based on Hisaya Nakajo's manga series *Hana-Kimi* (1996-2004). This suggests that the *namjang* drama trend in Korea and similar trends in Taiwan, Japan, and China are not isolated incidents but rather interrelated phenomena that may have been heavily influenced by non-television mediums such as manga.

These patterns raise several questions about the development of the *namjang* drama craze. What is the relation between the history of *namjang*(*yeoja*) themes in Korean media and the circulation of foreign media products in Korea? Is it merely a coincidence that the *namjang* drama trend has followed directly on the heels of (and perhaps from some perspectives neatly coincided with) a “same-sex” media boom in Korea (e.g., see Kim and Singer 2011; Kwon 2015; Kwon 2016)? Or are the *namjang* drama trend and the “same-sex” media trend intertwined with each other and animated by similar factors? Why hasn't the *namjang* drama trend been

Hua Mulan (2013), *Runaway Sweetheart* (2013), *Ten Miles of Peach Blossoms* (2017), *The Starry Night*, *The Starry Sea 2* (2017), and the upcoming *Coffee Prince* remake *Prince Coffee Lab* (TBA).

²¹ The group of dramas that I am referring to (e.g., see footnote 20) are shows that portray female-assigned people who pass as men. The shows being referred to do not include dramas that focus on performances of gender nonconformity, including cross-dressing, by women who do not pass as men (e.g., *Yae No Sakura* (2013, Japan), *Age of Youth 2* (2017, Korea), *Onna Joushu Naotora* (2017, Japan), etc.). They also do not include dramas that feature performances of gender nonconformity that are the result of a magical or non-magical “body swap”/“body switch” between characters of different genders. However, it should be noted that the list of dramas that portray “cross-gender spiritual possession” (Robert L. Cagle, personal correspondence) is extensive. A small sample of such shows includes *Boku To Kanojo No XXX* (2005, Japan), *Wagahai Wa Shufu De Aru* (2006, Japan), *Papa To Musume No Nanokakan* (2007, Japan), *Secret Garden* (2010-2011, Korea), *Ohlala Couple* (2012, Korea) *Yamada-kun To Nananin No Majo* (2013, Japan), *Go Princess Go* (2015, China), *My Runway* (2016, Korea), *Proud of Love* (2016, China), *Boku Wa Mari No Naka* (2017, Japan), *King Is Not Easy* (2017, China). In addition, the group of dramas that is being referred to does not include shows that focus on male-assigned characters who pass as women (e.g., *Ma Boy* (2012, Korea) and *Kakuu OL Nikki* (2017, Japan)). Also, shows that openly depict gender non-binary characters, such as intersex identified or identifying characters in *IS ~Otoko Demo Onna Demo Nai Sei~* (2011, Japan), are also being excluded from the group of dramas under discussion.

accompanied by a “*yeojang*” or “*yeojangnamja*” drama trend? These are all questions that need to be studied in order to deepen our understanding of the factors underlying the production and circulation of *namjang* dramas and the significance of (a lack of openly) queer readings of *namjang* dramas.

As the diverse examples discussed above illustrate, the pervasiveness of the normalization of Confucianism influenced heteronormative familism in Korea puts at risk the rights and quality of life of everyone. From poor people, to racialized people, to gender non-binary, gender nonconforming, intersex, and transgender people to unmarried women (e.g., “*mihon yeoseong*”), especially unmarried single, divorced, or widowed mothers, to foreign-born people, to pansexual, lesbian, asexual, bisexual, and gay identifying populations, to people with disabilities, to people who do not identify as heterosexual and/or gender conforming *and also* do not identify with any gender or sexuality labels, to unmarrying women (e.g., “*bihon yeoseong*”), women who choose not to marry by choice, no one can escape unscathed from the violently regulatory effects of heteronormative familism. Depending on their level of (dis)conformity to Confucian familism all households are susceptible to being included in (dis)advantaged populations and co-opted and controlled for government purposes (W. K. Sung 2012, 295; J. Cho 2017, 244). From this perspective it can be argued that Confucian familism operates as a weapon of the state that aims to “discipline the Korean population as both economically productive and biologically reproductive subjects through deploying the metonym of the patriarchal family as a nation” (J. Cho 2017, 244). The cyclical rhythms of this state machinery are to a large degree maintained by the normalization of everyday attitudes about familial relations. For instance, John Cho describes how “Korean queers – out of respect and empathy for their parents – self-govern themselves and their sexualities as national-familial subjects” (J. Cho 2017, 257). Positive or

assimilative attitudes towards Confucian familist values such as loyalty, obedience, and filial piety are the “glue” that typically holds familial relations together in Korea. As a result, the Korean administration is able to discipline its populations by relying on affections such as loyalty “to emotionally cathect the subjectivities of Korean children to those of their parents” (J. Cho 2017, 257).

In light of the violent manner in which Confucian familism helps create (dis)advantaged populations in Korea, many individuals, groups, and organizations have fought to resist gender and sexual discrimination and pushed to pass anti-discrimination bills that formally ban homophobia and transphobia (e.g., see Bong 2008; Kim and Cho 2011; H. Choi 2015, 97). Alongside these on-going movements there have been numerous social and legal changes that have helped improve the visibility of gender and sexual minorities in Korea. Many accounts credit the meteoric rise to fame in 2001 of the openly transgender, triple threat entertainer celebrity Harisu with propelling transgender people into a national spotlight and introducing the term transgender into popular discourse (G. Davies, M.E. Davies, and Y. Cho 2010; Hanguk Seongsosuja Yeonguhoe 2016; Wan Gim 2017). It is worth taking a moment to note that Harisu’s emergence onto a national stage sharply contrasted with the way that Seokcheon Hong’s career went up in flames after he came out as gay in 2000 and was subsequently fired from his job as the host of a children’s television show as a result. Seokcheon Hong’s firing, shunning, and eventual slow re-emergence in the entertainment (and business) industry is regularly touted by scholars as one of the most well-known examples of a Korean celebrity coming out as gay²² and the devastatingly violent material and social impacts that

²² It would also be remiss to not mention Jho Gwangsoo Kim, an openly gay film director who has been active in creating LGBTQ+ theme related media and is well known for how he and his partner held a public wedding ceremony in 2013 to protest marriage inequality. In addition, openly gay filmmaker Kyung-mook Kim drew

institutionalized homophobia can have on the lives of people in Korea (e.g., see Bong 2008, 92-93; Kim and Cho 2011, 217-218; Pil Ho Kim and C. Colin Singer 2011, 126; Kwon 2016, 1573). In contrast, Harisu’s celebrityhood did not *visibly* highlight the same issues related to heteronormativity that Seokcheon Hong’s career did and her celebrityhood has helped promote awareness about transgender people in Korea (G. Davies, M.E. Davies, and Y. Cho 2010). Although diverse definitions and usages of the term transgender²³ are in circulation in Korea, one understanding is that a transgender person is someone who identifies with “a gender that opposes their assigned gender or a gender that is neither male nor female” (Hanguk Seongsosuja Yeonguhoe 2016). Openly transgender South Korean YouTubers Pani and Gyeomu Ryu stress that having or not having certain surgeries does not determine whether one is a transgender person and that there is no standard for being transgender (Ryu 2016; Pani 2017).

Notably, the Korean government formalized its recognition of gender variant people when the Supreme Court of Korea ruled²⁴ in 2006 that people who have had sex reassignment surgery (*seongjeonhwan susul*) are allowed to change their assigned gender to the “opposite” sex in legal documents including their family register (Supreme Court of Korea 2006; International Commission of Jurists 2011; T. Na 2014, 362; Wan Gim 2017). However, critics have pointed out that requiring people who wish to change their legal gender to have sex reassignment surgery can impose a financial burden, reinforce normative gender and body ideals, and undercut the right for people to determine how they want their bodies to look (Dongu Sinyun 2002; T. Na

attention when he was more or less jailed for several years beginning in 2015 due to his being openly gay (e.g., see Ji-hye Lee 2015).

²³ This term is a relative of the American English word “transgender,” and it has an animated history of usages in South Korea. Sometimes the term is spelled out in roman letters as “transgender” and other times it is written in hangeul as “트랜스젠더” (“*teuraenseujendeo*”). The term is also sometimes indexed via shortened forms such as “*teuraenseu*” and “*teu*”.

²⁴ It should be noted that the Supreme Court does not use the term “*teuraenseujendeo*” or “transgender” anywhere in this ruling. The Supreme Court uses the term “*seongjeonhwanja*” which literally means “sex(*seong*)-change(*jeonhwan*)-people(*ja*)” and is often translated into English as “transsexual”.

2014, 362-363, 369). The financial burden that requiring sex reassignment surgery places on people who wish to change their gender cannot be overstated as currently “medical insurance does not cover such treatment, transgender people must personally bear the cost of tens of millions KRW, can exercise no real agency in choosing the medical services or raising objection even in cases of medical malpractice, and especially in cases of female-to-male genital reconstruction surgery, can expect nothing but entirely unsatisfactory results” (T. Na 2014, 363). Other requirements stipulated by the ruling have also drawn criticism, including the requirements of “proof of unmarried status,” “confirmation of having no minor child,” and “parental consent even when the applicant is an adult with full legal authority to make decisions on one’s behalf” (T. Na 2014, 360, 361). Tari Na asserts that these requirements demonstrate that “it is currently impossible to change one’s legal gender identity unless one’s physical appearance is deemed to conform to prevailing gender norms” and that “it is still one’s role within the family that determines who is a man or a woman, and who can be considered to be living as a man or a woman” (T. Na 2014, 363, 361). Consequently, the 2006 ruling has been *successfully* challenged in lower courts in Korea: in 2013 a Seoul district court recognized that transgender men could change their legal gender without undergoing surgery and in 2017 a district court in Cheongju ruled that transgender women could change their legal gender without receiving surgery (Hanguk Seongsosuja Yeonguhoe 2017; Wonjin Gim 2017).

Heteronormative familism’s embeddedness within contemporary Korean administrative practices and social structures demonstrates that “LGBTI inclusion within the existing social norms and legal systems is not the best or only possible strategy for changing public perception of the LGBTI community and advancing LGBTI rights” (T. Na 2014, 358). For the sake of everyone, but especially for gender, racial, poor, sexual, foreign-born, and disabled minorities in

Korea, radical changes to Korean social structures are necessary to address social injustices, including gender inequality: “Without challenging the foundations upon which national identities and citizenship models are produced and maintained, and without dismantling, reconstituting, and transforming these systems, LGBTI people will simply remain on the ‘outside’” (T. Na 2014, 358). This paper aims to participate in envisioning what can be done to support the social changes that Tari Na and other activists are calling for by questioning the role of transphobic heteronormative familism in maintaining the *namjang* drama trend. How can *not* claiming something as a representation of transgenderhood be harmful? Why have some of us chosen to accept our wanting to perform and reinforce non-transgenderhoods in our lives and our work (see David Valentine 2012)? In order to understand the stakes of applying (trans)gender ontologies to *namjang* dramas, first we must study authoritative spaces where discourses about *namjang* people are created and circulated by examining how *namjang* protagonists have been gendered by broadcasters and scholars.

**“SHE’S NOT; SHE’S A WOMAN.”: PRESCRIPTIVE GENDERINGS OF NAMJANG
CHARACTERS BY BROADCASTERS AND SCHOLARS**

“너 좋아해. 네가 남자건 외계인이건 이제 상관 안해.”
(I like you. Whether you’re a man or an alien, I don’t care anymore.)
– Hangeol, *The 1st Shop of Coffee Prince* (2007)

It is common practice among Korean broadcasters to create and publish websites for television dramas (Lee and Park 2015, 397). These official websites usually contain a character (*deungjanginmul*) page that shares profiles for each of the main characters and some of the supporting characters (Lee and Park 2015, 397). I examined official character profiles for the male-passing, female-assigned protagonists of the dramas *The 1st Shop of Coffee Prince* (*Coffee Prince*, 2007), *The Painter of the Wind* (2008), *You’re Beautiful* (2009), *Sungkyunkwan Scandal* (2010), *One Well-Raised Daughter* (2013-2014), and *Moonlight Drawn by Clouds* (2016). These dramas were selected because they enjoyed middling to high viewership ratings in Korea and are often cited as being representative of the *namjangyeoja* drama trend (Namhui Gim 2010; Nayeong Gim 2013; Sori Gim 2016; Seunghui Go 2016; Jieun Nam 2016b). All of the websites for these dramas have character profiles that consist of photo(s), a visually privileged (e.g., bolded, enlarged, differently colored, etc.) name in a header section at or near the top of profiles, and a biography describing the character’s background. There are two patterns that stand out about these profiles.

First, all of the *namjang* protagonists are gendered as “women” (e.g., “*yeoja*”) on their profiles. For example, the main character of *Moonlight Drawn by Clouds* is explicitly labeled as “female” (i.e., “*yeo*”) in their profile’s header section. Other protagonists are repeatedly classified as women via their biographies using feminine pronouns to describe them (e.g.,

“geunyeo” on *Sungkyunkwan Scandal*), referring to them as “women” (e.g., “yeoja” on *Coffee Prince*), and marking their gender as “women” through kinship terms (e.g., “yeodongsaeng” on *You’re Beautiful*; “ttal” on *One Well-Raised Daughter*). However, the biography for Yunbok, the protagonist of *The Painter of the Wind*, ambiguously describes Yunbok as someone who “because of [their] exceptional talent, even though [they] have a woman’s body [they] chose a man’s life”²⁵. Although this description of Yunbok’s gender implies that gender identities can be self-determined (i.e., “chose”), it also simultaneously undercuts this idea by affirming the view that people have immutable, innate characteristics that unilaterally dictate their “physical” gender. That is, the profile implies that even though Yunbok can choose to live as a man Yunbok cannot change their “biological” gender. As a result, similar to the other five *namjang* dramas discussed above, *The Painter of the Wind*’s website also sends the message that its *namjang* protagonist is “always” female.

Second, the fact that many of the characters have multiple named identities is deemphasized on their profiles. This is evident in the way that only one name is visually privileged on most profiles. Moreover, some profiles completely ignore one or more of their protagonists’ named identities: the name that is formally associated with their male gender identities is not stated anywhere on the profiles for the protagonists of *Sungkyunkwan Scandal* and *One Well-Raised Daughter*. This is a striking absence because the main character of *Sungkyunkwan Scandal* is referred to as Gim Yunsik, the formal name for their male identity, for the majority of the drama, including in the series’ final scenes. Similarly, the protagonist of *One Well-Raised Daughter* passes as a man named Jang Eunseong for over fifty of the drama’s 122 episodes. The importance of the identity Eunseong to the protagonist is emphasized in the drama

²⁵ There are no explicit pronouns in the original Korean text: “뛰어난 재능 때문에 여자의 몸을 지니고도 남자의 인생을 선택함.”

when they are depicted as choosing to continue to pass as a non-woman, dress in menswear, refuse to name their gender when asked, and be referred to as Eunseong *even after* they have been outed as a “woman” in work and familial spaces. Despite this, the official website for *One Well-Raised Daughter* does not mention the name “Eunseong” anywhere on the protagonist’s profile and ignores the complexity of its protagonist’s gender identities.

As a consequence of these two patterns the profiles of *namjang* dramas not only typically prescribe that their *namjang* protagonists identify as women but also usually send the message that their *namjang* characters’ gender identities are static and singular. To put it another way, these profiles signal that having fluid or multiple, simultaneous gender identities is an impossibility because one’s birth-assigned gender is always one’s “true” gender²⁶. As a result, the profiles for *namjang* characters reinforce the binary model of gender that hegemonically characterizes administrative practices and social norms in present-day Korea. Ironically, even though these profiles push the boundaries of what counts as “womanhood,” they also help establish a new category (i.e., *namjangyeoja*) with its own set of narrow rules. For example, collectively the profile pictures collaborate to instantiate a visually homogenous *namjangyeoja* look that is ageist, racist, and ableist in the way that it narrowly constructs itself by drawing on stereotypes of the “(tom)boyish” style (i.e., *(tom)boisi*) and “flower boy” (e.g., “*kkonminam*”) look that many young K-pop idols are considered to be icons of. Notably, none of the *namjang* characters resemble Korean, non-slender, *namjangyeoja* 80-year-olds such as Okseon Kim or boyish-look owning, Korean, non-pale skinned, racial minorities such as Michelle Lee (Miae Bak 2017; Gyumin No 2017). So far, it appears that official paratexts published by Korean

²⁶ Although some profiles have default photos that depict their protagonists wearing menswear, androgynous, or gender nonconforming styles, the juxtaposition of these photos with the biographies that characterize the protagonists as *women* encourages these photos to be read and consumed as images of gender nonconforming *women* (rather than as gender nonconforming men or gender non-binary people, etc.).

broadcasters have not only upheld the view that *namjang* characters are “women” but also (re)produced a *namjangyeoja* ideal that does not reflect the diverse experiences of real Koreans who are regarded as *namjangyeoja* and (tom)boyish women, let alone transgender and gender non-binary people.

Similarly, to date English language scholarship on Korean *namjang* dramas has also prescribed that *namjang* characters are “women”. This is exemplified in how scholars have affixed the labels “heterosexual” and “woman” to Eunchan, the protagonist of *Coffee Prince*, a drama that is widely regarded by journalists, actors, and TV crew members as being representative of and the catalyst for the *namjang* drama trend (e.g., see Seunghui Go 2016; TongTongTV 2016, 18:30-19:27, 21:26-22:39). For example, Sun Jung writes that Eunchan is “a perfect embodiment of *kkonminam* soft masculinity,” but also repeatedly makes light of the transgressiveness of Eunchan’s gender performances by claiming that Eunchan is just a “girl masquerading as a man” and that Eunchan and the male-assigned Hangyeol, Eunchan’s lover, are in a “pseudo-homosexual” relationship (Jung 2010).

Likewise, Jungmin Kwon includes *Coffee Prince* in her description of how since the late 2000s there have been “a handful of television dramas” that depict a “woman in masculine drag becom[ing] involved with a man who believes she is a man” (Kwon 2016, 1569). Kwon’s nuanced discussion about the production, circulation, and “prosumption” (see Kwon 2016) of same-sex media in Korea raises a number of questions about the relation between the *namjang* drama trend and the same-sex media trend in Korea. Despite the potential to explore and interpret these trends as overlapping and connected, Kwon signals that she does not read the romances depicted in *namjang* dramas as intelligible as “queer” or “same-sex”. For example, Kwon describes the leads of *namjang* dramas as “pseudo-queer” and claims that *namjang* dramas

follow the pattern of the main character's having "her physiological sex is unveiled, and thus their love becomes 'normal'—that is, heterosexual" (Kwon 2016, 1569). It may be the case that many *Coffee Prince* and *namjang* drama viewers may nod their heads in agreement with Kwon's reading of Eunchan and other *namjang* characters. However, there is also the possibility that some viewers may wonder what is "physiological sex" and what does it mean to be not "queer" enough to deserve the label "queer"? As evidence to support alternative queer readings, some viewers may point to the fact that Eunchan and Hangyeol are frequently portrayed as being culturally unintelligible as a heterosexual couple due to how Eunchan's gender nonconforming presentation makes it problematic for Eunchan to pass as a woman both before and after Eunchan is outed at work as a "woman." In light of this, some viewers may wonder how can we not apply the label "queer" to Eunchan and Hangyeol's relationship given that they are portrayed as lacking heterosexual privileges?

Similar to Kwon and Jung, Maud Lavin asserts that *namjang* protagonists are "female" and classifies various *namjang* dramas as "tomboy-protagonist TV dramas," "tomboy dramas," and "tomboy productions...[with]...gender bending plots" (Lavin 2015, 46, 50, 66). In addition to using feminine pronouns (e.g., "herself") and the label "female" to designate that *namjang* protagonists are "women" engaging in "disguising themselves as men," Lavin also repeatedly communicates her refusal to see Eunchan as anything but as a "woman"²⁷ who is a "heterosexual tomboy" (Lavin 2015, 46, 49-50, 62). Lavin's oversimplified gendering of *namjang* characters as "female" "tomboys" is surprising, especially in the case of Eunchan since Lavin herself acknowledges that Eunchan's gender "mixes feminine and masculine signifiers" and admits at

²⁷ Lavin succinctly summarizes her interpretation of Hangyeol and Eunchan's genders as follows: "Han Gyeol is a man. He thinks Eun Chan is a man. She's not; she's a woman." (Lavin 2015, 46).

one point that “Eun Chan can be read as someone beyond gender, and the love between Eun Chan and Han Gyeol as one transcending gender” (Lavin 2015, 51, 54).

It is hard to overstate the usefulness of appreciating Lavin’s reading of Eunchan’s sexuality as one that is “polymorphous” – that is as a sexuality that engages in “erotic play [that] involves many parts of the body and many senses” and does not necessarily prioritize being goal or “coitus” oriented (Lavin 2015, 47, 59-62). However, the manner in which Lavin reads femaleness and heterosexuality into Eunchan’s behaviors is unnecessary for making the argument that Eunchan’s sexuality is polymorphous. Despite this Lavin attempts to justify her reading of Eunchan’s sexuality as “heterosexual” by asserting that Eunchan is “heterosexual simply because her desires are explicitly heterosexual (early on, for instance, we see her getting turned on by a glimpse of Han Gyeol’s nearly naked legs)” (Lavin 2015, 62). However, being a female-assigned person who experiences sexual (or non-sexual) attraction to a male-assigned person does not mean that one can *only* identify as heterosexual, or that one cannot identify as pansexual, bisexual, homosexual, graysexual, or as non-heterosexual. Nevertheless, Lavin jumps to the conclusion that Eunchan is heterosexual and in doing so fails to interrogate one of the most basic assumptions of her paper – the concept of (hetero)sexuality and its troubled relation to gender. Similar to Kwon, Lavin reads Eunchan as a heterosexual woman, and there is the possibility that many *Coffee Prince* viewers may agree with this reading. However, some viewers, myself included, may be interested in exploring and appreciating the possibility for Eunchan to be read in other ways in addition to as a heterosexual woman. Some of these viewers who adopt this position might interpret the way that Lavin narrowly reads *namjang* protagonists as “female” “tomboys” as problematic because by doing so Lavin fails to seriously consider other possibilities, such as non-heterosexualities, non-binary genders, and gender fluidity.

Coffee Prince does indeed contain scenes that suggest that Eunchan may identify as a woman *at times* (e.g., the closing scene of episode six). However, *Coffee Prince* also implicitly and explicitly underscores the idea that Eunchan identifies as a non-woman at times, and thereby embodies gender fluid and gender non-binary possibilities. For example, in episode two a “makeover” scene ends with Eunchan and Hangeol wearing near-identical, formal menswear outfits that consist of ties and black suits. Directly after this scene a fantasy interlude occurs where the matching suit-wearing Eunchan and Hangeol break out into synchronized movements that serve as the catalyst for magical events (e.g., the lights and windshield wipers of seemingly uninhabited cars turn on when they pass by, and the doors of these cars also pop open). This interlude stands out due to its supernatural elements, and thereby it not only foreshadows that Eunchan and Hangeol will become a romantic pair, but also emphasizes the potential for Eunchan and Hangeol to be read as an *ideal male-male (passing) couple*. This is demonstrated by how immediately after Eunchan and Hangeol transition to being male-passing people who are visually identical to each other they suddenly become able to move together in perfect and near-perfect synchrony and develop the ability to have a magical impact on the world through their harmonious presence. The fact that they perform (hyper)masculine gestures like pounding their chests and attract the gaze of a woman-passing passerby also stresses their desirability as a masculine male-male couple. Furthermore, the expressions of joy mirrored on Eunchan and Hangeol’s faces throughout this scene along with the instantaneity of the synchronization of their movements and attitudes symbolically underscores the idea that Eunchan and Hangeol find pleasure together in presenting as a masculine male-male (passing) couple. Additionally, the way that this interlude sometimes shows Eunchan actively choosing to adopt Hangeol’s movements also affirms the idea that Eunchan’s gender identity is gender fluid.

There is a variety of other evidence that corroborates the idea that Eunchan sometimes identifies as a non-woman. For instance, Sun Jung asserts that Eunchan “gives up her feminine image to work at [the Coffee Prince] café” which only hires male employees (Jung 2010). However, in contrast to Sun Jung’s claim, it is possible for viewers to observe that *Coffee Prince* depicts Eunchan as someone who primarily embraces masculinity and non-femininity and whose legibility as a woman is troubled both *before, during, and after* they purposefully pass as a man in order to work at the Coffee Prince café. This is evident in the manner that Eunchan is often gendered as male by other characters *before* they begin regularly passing as a man while working at Coffee Prince (e.g., the bathhouse delivery scene) and how Eunchan eschews “feminine” gender etiquette (e.g., Eunchan is a heavy, messy eater, athletic, and “bad” at wearing and styling themselves in (hyper)feminine makeup and clothing such as heels²⁸). Notably, a flashback scene to Eunchan’s childhood shows (a possibly elementary school aged) Eunchan sporting a short, cropped hair style while cheerfully running around in menswear (i.e., neckties and an oversized white collared shirt) – an outfit that markedly contrasts with the pink dress and longer hairstyle that their sister wears in this scene. Moreover, in episode ten Eunchan breaks down in tears while walking with a friend and shares that they feel that “I’m not a man or a woman. And I’m scared so I can’t tell [Hangyeol]”²⁹. In short, Eunchan is portrayed as performing masculine, gender nonconforming, gender fluid, and/or gender non-binary identities at various times throughout *Coffee Prince*.

²⁸ In addition to visual imagery that supports the idea that Eunchan does not identify with femininity (e.g., Eunchan frequently presents themselves as masculine, etc.), in episode five Eunchan explicitly verbalizes that they do not identify with certain aspects of normative femininity when they tell their friend that they feel that “skirts don’t suit me well” (i.e., “치마가 잘 안 어울려가지고”). Although this line should not be equated to *not* identifying with womanhood, the many scenes throughout *Coffee Prince* that show Eunchan rejecting performing normative feminine behaviors (or looking uncomfortable while doing so) strongly suggest that Eunchan does not identify with normative femininity for many, if not the majority, of *Coffee Prince*’s episodes.

²⁹ “나는 남자도 여자도 아니고 무서워서 말도 못하겠고”

In summary, *Coffee Prince* contains scenes that contradict the view that Eunchan always identifies as a woman. However, to date scholarship has one-sidedly reinforced the discourse that Eunchan “is” a “woman”. Similar to official paratexts, scholarship on *namjang* dramas has trivialized the ambiguity, fluidity, and multiplicity of *namjang* characters’ identities, taken for granted that “heterosexuality” is affirmed in *namjang* dramas, and reinforced the heteronormative discourse that gender is stable, singular, and assignable. As such, queer readings of *Coffee Prince* and other *namjang* dramas have been overlooked and neglected. That is, although it is possible to read Eunchan and other *namjang* characters as (heterosexual) women, I argue that alternative readings of the genders and sexualities of *namjang* characters are *also* possible and that these readings can be productive in the way that they encourage us to resist or critically reflect on heteronormative practices. In the following section I will present my reading of popular *namjang* drama texts in order to argue that reading *namjang* characters as gender nonconforming and gender fluid opens up pathways to exploring certain issues not yet centered in existing scholarship.

ILLEGIBLE LEGIBILITY: AMBIGUOUS REPRESENTATIONS OF GENDER
(NON)CONFORMITY IN NAMJANG DRAMAS

“나는 남자도 여자도 아니고 무서워서 말도 못하겠고”
(I’m not a man or a woman. And I’m scared so I can’t tell [Hangyeol])
– Eunchan, *The 1st Shop of Coffee Prince* (2007)

Despite *namjang* dramas’ diverse historical settings and their main characters’ diverse upbringings³⁰, to date *namjang* dramas have all typically portrayed their protagonists as choosing to pass as men primarily due to external pressures (e.g., patriarchal hierarchies) rather than internal desires (e.g., wearing menswear is enjoyable to them). For example, the protagonists of *Coffee Prince*, *The Painter of the Wind*, *Sungkyunkwan Scandal*, *To the Beautiful You*, *Nail Shop Paris*, *Goddess of Fire*, *One Well-Raised Daughter*, *Scholar Who Walks the Night*, and *Moonlight Drawn by Clouds* are depicted as choosing or being forced to pass as men in order to gain access to occupations or spaces that only admit or hire men. However, one important characteristic of these performances of manhood is that when they are overtly justified within dramas they are usually embedded in situations where *namjang* protagonists are coerced into “admitting” that they are women.

For instance, in *Sungkyunkwan Scandal* Yunsik does not choose to come out as a woman to their friends and teachers at Sungkyunkwan, an all-male educational institution. Instead, various circumstances lead to their involuntarily self-identifying as a woman (i.e., “*gyejip*”; “*yeoin*”). For example, in one scene a teacher confronts Yunsik about their gender and threatens to expel Yunsik and have them and their relatives killed for breaking Sungkyunkwan’s ban on women. In this scene, Yunsik confesses that they are a woman, begs for forgiveness, and

³⁰ For example, *Coffee Prince* is set in contemporary South Korea whereas *Scholar Who Walks the Night* is set on a vampire-terrorized, pre-modern Korean peninsula.

explains that they entered Sungkyunkwan in order to earn money for their widowed mom and sick brother. Yunsik also gives this same justification in episode 16 when their friend Lee Seonjun questions Yunsik about their gender after Seonjun rescues Yunsik during a near-drowning incident. Later, Seonjun attempts to pressure Yunsik into quitting Sungkyunkwan. However, Yunsik refuses and explains that they were given no say in their being a woman (i.e., “*gyejip*”), that it is their choice to defy the “nation’s laws”³¹ and “royal commands”³² by attending Sungkyunkwan, that they prefer working while passing as a man either inside or outside of Sungkyunkwan over conforming to the expectation that they marry, and that they want to “enjoy this moment now with all my heart...because these are times that won't be allowed again in my life”³³. Notably, the last episode’s final scenes show that even after Yunsik is widely outed as a “woman” they begin to wear women’s wear in private, but continue to wear menswear-appearing attire, work at Sungkyunkwan, and go by “Gim Yunsik,” the name associated with their male identity, in public. These scenes also imply that Yunsik is now married to the wealthy Seonjun, which leaves viewers wondering: why hasn’t Yunsik reclaimed their female-assigned identity as Yunhui if they no longer need to pass as a man in order to earn wages to support their family?

Likewise, *The Painter of the Wind*’s Yunbok is threatened over their gender and outed as a woman by various people (e.g., the King; Gim Jonyeon). Moreover, Gim Hongdo, Yunbok’s teacher, “learns” for the first time that Yunbok is a “woman” when a doctor who provided medical attention to Yunbok tells Hongdo that Yunbok is a “woman” in episode 17. However, Yunbok stands out among other *namjang* characters for the way that they both *explicitly* and *implicitly* express that they are in love with Jeong Hyang, a female-assigned character who

³¹ “국법”

³² “어명”

³³ “난 지금 이 순간 행복하게 지내고 싶어, 마음껏...다시는 내 인생에 허락되지 않을 시간들이니까.”

reciprocates Yunbok's love (e.g., see episodes 16 and 20). These love confessions, along with Yunbok's self-identifications as a woman, demonstrate that Yunbok can be read as embodying homosexuality, bisexuality, or pansexuality. Therefore, they expose how prior scholarship's categorization of *namjang* characters as "heterosexual" and "pseudo-queer" has ignored non-heteronormative depictions in *namjang* dramas. Conspicuously, it remains ambiguous whether womanhood is an identity that Yunbok always embraced or connected with. For example, in the final episode Yunbok tells Hyang that "I resented the fact that I am a woman. But there was something that I realized too late. The truth is that it's because I was a woman that I was attracted to you."³⁴ The series' ending depicts Yunbok departing solo on a boat while wearing menswear and thereby leaves viewers with more questions than answers: Has Yunbok chosen to continue passing as a man, and will Yunbok and Hyang be reunited?

Similar to depictions of female-assigned, male-passing protagonists in other *namjang* dramas, in *Coffee Prince* Eunchan is also coerced into "admitting" that they are a "woman." For instance, in *Coffee Prince* Eunchan does not choose to come out as a woman to other characters such as their coworkers at Coffee Prince, the café that Eunchan works at that is purportedly only staffed by men. As illustration, in one scene in episode five Eunchan's coworker Minyeop witnesses Eunchan exiting from a bathhouse entrance/exit that is reserved for customers who are women. A shocked Minyeop labels Eunchan a woman and secretly begins to refer to Eunchan by the kinship term "*nuna*" (i.e., literally "older sister") from this point on when Eunchan and Minyeop are alone together. In episode six Eunchan is again unwillingly outed as a "woman" when Yuju, Hangeol's friend, spots Eunchan wearing only a towel at a mutual friend's house and (presumably based on the majoritarian discourse that certain anatomical attributes

³⁴ "내가 여인이라는 것이 원망스러웠소. 허나 뒤늦게 알게 된 사실이 있소. 내가 여인이었기에 그대에게 이끌렸단 사실 말이지요."

“unilaterally” determine one’s gender) immediately appears to jump to the conclusion that Eunchan must be a “woman”. Yuju then questions Eunchan about their action of presenting as a man and Eunchan is forced to justify their gender nonconforming behaviors to Yuju. In episode eight Eunchan is again involuntarily outed as a woman when Minyeop tells Seongi, another of Eunchan’s coworkers, without Eunchan’s permission that Eunchan is a “woman”. While Minyeop speaks to Seongi he emphasizes his description of Eunchan’s gender by tapping his breasts and making a gesture with his hands that resembles an hourglass shape. Later in episode ten Eunchan is once again outed as a “woman” against their will when Seongi tells Harim, another of Eunchan’s coworkers, that Eunchan is a “woman” without Eunchan’s permission. In the one scene when Eunchan appears to be about to voluntarily come out as a non-man to Hangyeol, Harim interrupts and outs Eunchan as a “woman” to Hangyeol. In summary, *Coffee Prince* conforms to the pattern of Eunchan being unwillingly outed as a “woman” and coerced into confessing that they are a “woman” and forced to justify their choosing to pass as a man (e.g., Yuju’s questioning of Eunchan in episode six).

As the above examples demonstrate, many of *Coffee Prince*’s depictions of passing can be read as embodying Amy Robinson’s conceptualization of passing as a performance that invokes a triangular relationship between a passer, a dupe, and in-group clairvoyant. This relationship enables “a hostile encounter between two ways of reading,” the dupe’s hegemonic reading of the passer, and the clairvoyant’s in-group reading of the passer (Robinson 1994, 715-716). That is, Hangyeol is constructed as a dupe from the perspective of the characters who forcibly out Eunchan and thereby become in the know about Eunchan’s assigned female identity. For example, Robinson’s claim that “a study of passing thus poses the question of identity as a matter of competing discourses of recognition” is often illustrated in scenes with Hangyeol,

Eunchan, and Minyeop: Hangyeol, a character who is not in the know about Eunchan's assigned female gender, functions as a dupe, while Minyeop, a character who becomes in the know about Eunchan's assigned gender, is positioned as a clairvoyant and Eunchan is marked as a passer (Robinson 1994, 728-729). The process of constructing Eunchan as a passer, Hangyeol as a dupe, and other characters as clairvoyants is often made possible by the way that characters privilege reading practices that use *visual* techniques and discourses about *visual* evidence (e.g., see Robinson 1994). For example, Minyeop uses *seeing* Eunchan exiting a bathhouse with a bra strap showing to read Eunchan as a woman; Yuju uses *seeing* Eunchan wearing only a towel to read Eunchan as a woman, etc.

Some of the most physically violent cases of coercion take place in *One Well-Raised Daughter*, a *namjang* drama that is set in contemporary South Korea. There are multiple scenes in the drama where Rahui, Eunseong's older step-sister, harasses Eunseong about their gender and sexuality and demands that Eunseong admit that they are a woman (i.e., "*yeoja*"). In each of these scenes Eunseong refuses to say that they are a woman and explicitly tells Rahui that they are a "man" (i.e., "*namja*"). Rahui then concocts a plan to help her "confirm" ("*hwagin*") Eunseong's gender: she requests that Eunseong meet her at a park and kidnaps them. When Eunseong shows up at the park Rahui uses two men that she hired to beat Eunseong and drag Eunseong to a different location. While Eunseong is immobilized due to their hands and feet being bound with rope, Rahui then precedes to physically undress Eunseong against their will while Eunseong repeatedly demands that Rahui stop. Upon "confirming" that Eunseong is a "woman" (i.e., Rahui sees a portion of Eunseong's bound chest after Rahui unbuttons and opens Eunseong's shirt), a shocked Rahui ironically reinforces the idea that Eunseong's performances of manhood are authentic and intelligible as male by shouting at Eunseong: "For near twenty

years you've lived as a man – is that [even] possible? How could you deceive [us] so perfectly like this?!...Did you take some drugs or something?!”³⁵. As was the case in past scenes Eunseong refuses to identify themselves as a “woman,” replies to Rahui’s questioning with “I have nothing to say”³⁶, and then tries to leave. Throughout this scene Eunseong never explicitly states what gender they identify with. However, based on the fact that they continue to use kinship terms that mark them as male (i.e., “*nuna*”) it is implied that they identify as a man. Despite the way that Eunseong refuses to gender themselves as a “woman” and gives no indication to Rahui that they agree with Rahui’s accusation that they are a “woman,” from this point on Rahui acts as though the idea that Eunseong “is” a “woman” is true³⁷.

³⁵ “20년 가까이 남자로 살아 – 그게 가능해? 어떻게 이렇게 완벽하게 속여?!...약이라도 먹은 거야?!”

³⁶ “할말 없음”

³⁷ This scene from *One Well-Raised Daughter* along with the “confession” scenes in *Sungkyunkwan Scandal* and *Coffee Prince* as well as the scene in *The Painter of the Wind* where a doctor “reveals” that Yunbok is a “woman” suggest that dominant understandings of gender invoke corporeal, anatomical discourses about gender. The naturalization of these discourses is such that it is implied that the *bodies* of female-assigned, male-passing protagonists “confess” their assigned gender identities for them. That is, in a sense, the naturalization of these discourses makes it appear as if our bodies speak for ourselves and elides the constructed nature of definitions of what counts as normatively gendered bodies and the agency that we have to choose whether to use these definitions to read and construct what counts as a legible performance of a gender identity. This is especially highlighted by how even though Eunseong refuses to agree with their step-sister Rahui’s accusation that Eunseong is a “woman,” Rahui treats Eunseong’s chosen gender presentation as a man and Eunseong’s choice to not identify as a woman as irrelevant in light of the visual bodily “evidence” that is understood to operate as proof from Rahui’s/the majoritarian perspective that Eunseong “is” a “woman.” I.e., Rahui saw Eunseong’s chest area and breast bindings and understood this as visual evidence that Eunseong “is” a “woman”. This pattern in *namjang* dramas whereby visual physical and anatomical attributes are taken for granted as “common sense” proof for determining gender suggests that dominant understandings of gender in Korea privilege the idea that gender is unilaterally determined by one’s visual and bodily conformity to normative gender ideals that are based on corporeal understandings of gender. Under this rubric where gender is treated as being defined by corporeal attributes, the possibility for female-assigned people to practice diverse gender identities and behaviors is negated via reading practices that define certain bodily features as being “undeniable” markers of female-ness. Additionally, in this mode of understanding the individual characteristics of female-assigned people, including their individual personalities, thoughts, desires, and free will, are reduced to being irrelevant to their gender identities. Also, the naturalization of this rubric for understanding how the legibility of gender identities is constructed helps to elide the idea that corporeal and anatomical understandings of gender *must be performed* and *can be changed* at will (e.g., one’s environment and one’s access to resources impacts one’s physical health and appearance and some people choose to shape and alter their body through diet, exercise, surgery, etc.; e.g., see David Valentine 2012). This suggests that cultural understandings of gender identities that construct gender as being corporeally determined have connections to the understanding that chastity is reducible to vaginal chastity (e.g., see previous discussions in this paper about Korean sexual assault related legislation and how administrative definitions of chastity as vaginal chastity operate within legislative spaces).

Similarly, when Ragong, Eunseong's step-brother, learns from Rahui that Eunseong "is" a "woman" he tracks Eunseong down to a café, physically assaults them, and threatens to kill Eunseong for deceiving their family. When Ragong is arrested for his actions at the café and brought to a police station, he calls Eunseong a "swindler" (i.e., "*sagikkun*") and continuously shouts at Eunseong things like "You know you're not a man...Hey! You say it through your mouth. You're a woman and you know it!"³⁸. Again, throughout these scenes Eunseong refuses to gender themselves as a woman. After the physical altercations at the café and police station, Eunseong returns home and explicitly genders themselves when they tell their mom and sister that Ragong knows that they are a "woman" (i.e., "*yeoja*").

However, it is ambiguous whether this scene is meant to demonstrate that Eunseong self-identifies as a "woman" or whether its aim is to show that Eunseong and their mom and sister are now all in the know that Eunseong's step-siblings are aware that Eunseong was assigned female at birth. For instance, there are numerous scenes that subvert the idea that Eunseong identifies as a woman. For example, later scenes show that even after being fired from their job and chased out of their familial home as a result of their being widely outed as a "woman," Eunseong continues to go by the name Eunseong and wear masculine clothing and hair styles. Most importantly, Eunseong refuses to explicitly gender themselves when their new co-workers repeatedly harass them about their gender and ask whether they are a "man" (i.e., "*chonggak*"; "*namja*") or a "woman" (i.e., "*cheonyeo*"; "*yeoja*"). In addition, Eunseong's mom and sister, people who could now potentially refer to Eunseong in private or in public by Eunseong's assigned name that is associated with Eunseong's birth-assigned-female identity or by other names without facing any repercussions, also choose to continue to refer to them as Eunseong. It's not until Eunseong explicitly verbalizes that they want to claim their assigned birth name

³⁸ "너 남자 아니잖아....야! 네 입으로 말해. 너 여자잖아!"

“Hana” and their assigned female gender and applies for and receives a new ID card that reflects their decision to become Hana that Eunseong’s family and other characters begin to refer to Eunseong as Hana. These scenes imply that at least for part of their life Hana who became Eunseong who became Hana *chose* to identify as a man or as a non-binary person, and these scenes also challenge the idea that Hana’s gendered passing was simply a “disguise” or non-agentive reaction to structural misogyny. In fact, the understanding that for part of their life Hana did *not* identify as a woman is explicitly confirmed in episode 64 when Hana discloses their new name and gender identity to another character:

“Not just in name, I really want to become a woman. I dislike [being] a half-woman. When I was living as a man I was a half-man who was neither a man nor a woman. Right now it’s also the same. The time that I lived as a man was so long even though I have returned to being a woman I am a half-woman....When I have appeared in front of people, I want to be Jang Hana who is not Jang Eunseong. [I want to be] the woman Jang Hana who is not a man.”³⁹

Hana’s explanation about their past, current, and desired future selves demonstrates that they see their gender identity as non-static and that they are grappling with negotiating idealized, majoritarian understandings of personhood, womanhood, and manhood. Moreover, Hana’s statements affirm the anti-heteronormative stance that gender is a time and effort-intensive, self-determinable, consciously learn(ed)/(able), *fluid* process.

³⁹ “이름뿐 아니라 정말 여자가 되고 싶어요. 반쪽짜리 여자는 싫어요. 남자로 사는 동안 남자도 아니고 여자도 아닌 반쪽짜리 남자였어요. 지금도 마찬가지예요. 남자로 산 세월이 너무 길어 여자로 돌아왔어도 반쪽짜리 여자예요...사람들 앞에 나타났을 때 난 장은성이 아닌 장하나이고 싶어요. 남자가 아닌 여자 장하나요.”

As Erica Rand (2005) has pointed out it is problematic to accept gender identifications and explanations that are given under duress. For example, Rand turns a critical eye towards American media accounts applying female gender-designating words such as “miss,” “Mary Johnson,” and “she” to Frank Woodhull, a man who was “forced to admit” that he was a “woman” while going through immigration checks at Ellis Island in 1908 (2005, 68, 82). Rand argues that the fact that Woodhull reportedly said “I am a woman” to state authorities in America should not be taken at face-value but rather viewed as a strategic response to the power difference between Woodhull and his interlocutors that weighed the possibility of facing repercussions for not conforming to gender expectations (Rand 2005, 82). Rand uses her case study of media accounts about Woodhull to argue that gendering Woodhull as a woman or “passing woman” is problematic because doing so requires siding with American administrative systems that violently enforce the idea that gender is immutable and ignores Woodhull’s chosen name and gender presentation (Rand 2005, 83).

I suggest that we take a similar stance towards *namjang* dramas. Dramas usually overtly affirm broadcasters’ paratextual gendering of *namjang* characters as “women,” but we must remain critical of what these explicit confessions to being a woman and the explanations that accompany them mean since they typically occur in contexts where *namjang* characters are under duress and can face violent consequences for transgressing gender norms. Even if characters do openly identify as women at certain points in their lives why should we accept that this means that they have always *only* identified as women? Shouldn’t we consider the possibility that they might identify with multiple genders or with non-state-sanctioned genders? That is, if a character/person does not state (or communicate through some other means) that they have always *only* identified with one gender, then we should take seriously the possibility

that a character/person may have identified with different genders at different points in their life or may identify with multiple genders simultaneously⁴⁰. Referring to *namjang* protagonists as women forestalls recognition of the necessity to question the assumption that people are women simply because they've been forcefully assigned and socialized as women for part of their lives or because they "confess" to being women when threatened. As I have illustrated, some *namjang* characters – from Eunchan, to Yunbok, to Yunsik, to Eunseong/Hana – can be read as non-women, gender non-binary, and/or gender fluid. How then should we refer to the transgressive gender practices of *namjang* characters?

⁴⁰ Similar to how compulsory heterosexuality naturalizes the bias to assume that anyone who has not said that they do not identify as heterosexual "is" a "heterosexual", I am arguing that institutionalized transphobia naturalizes the bias to assume that someone's assigned or chosen gender identity (or chosen gender presentation) at a particular time is their only gender identity. This attachment to the practice of reading people's gender as fixed and singular violently neglects gender fluid possibilities. Therefore, in order to resist such biases, we should take seriously the possibility for people to experience and perform gender fluidity.

CONCLUSION: THE STAKES OF TRANSGENDER ONTOLOGIES FOR *NAMJANG* DRAMAS

“내가 남성이라고 말하든 여성이라고 말하든 여성과 남성 모두라고 말하든... 불이익을 받지 않는 사회가 왔으면 좋겠어요.”

(I hope that a society where I am not discriminated against for whether I call myself a man, a woman, or both a man and a woman...I hope that such a society will arrive.)

– Hangeol Lee, *PD Notebook* (“Seongsosuja Ingwon, Najungeun Eoptda,” 2017)

In light of the way that gender and sexuality representations in *namjang* dramas can be read as calling into question broadcasters and scholars’ gendering of *namjang* protagonists as (heterosexual) women, I suggest that we consider using the term transgender to describe the gender performances of *namjang* characters. The pioneering transgender studies scholar Susan Stryker applies the term transgender to behaviors that involve “movement across a socially imposed boundary away from an unchosen starting place” (Stryker 2008, 1). Stryker explains that her usage of the term transgender is meant to encompass all “imaginable” forms of gender nonconformity, including people who “identify with a gender other than the one they were assigned to at birth” and “people who seek to resist their birth-assigned gender without abandoning it” (Stryker 2008, 19).

However, if our goal is to collaboratively imagine and work towards realizing a gender-violence free world, then we must be clear that not all performances of gender nonconformity are equally effective for helping us realize this goal. That is, subsuming all gender nonconforming behaviors under the umbrella term transgender forestalls recognition of how choosing to reject one’s assigned gender is an action that implicitly questions the normalization of administrative, medical, legal, and social practices that designate genders at birth and enforce this designation throughout one’s life. Gender nonconforming people who oppose their assigned genders choose

to stand in opposition to gender norms and their interlocking, co-constitutive relationship with social inequality reproducing administrative systems. On the other hand, gender nonconforming people who accept the medico-juridical gender they were assigned at birth choose to assimilate within pre-established gender systems. In doing so, they decide to hold onto certain privileges that can put them less at risk for violence and make them more likely to be able to access some of the spaces that they prefer in a gender-segregated society: “It is hard to overstate how dramatically sex/gender congruence, legibility, and consistency within a binary gender system buy a privileged pass to social existence, particularly when accompanied by the appearance of normative race, class, ability, and nationality” (A. Finn Enke 2012, 64). Consequently, performances of this type of gender nonconformity are ineffective for ending systematic gender violence because they can help expand existing gender categories, and as scholars and activists such as Tari Na and Dean Spade have pointed out “freedom from gender norms is impossible unless we dismantle everything that co-constitutes gender systems” (Spade 2013).

Therefore, I argue that differentiating between gender nonconforming people who choose to reject their birth-assigned genders and gender-nonconforming people who choose to accept their birth-assigned genders by referring to the former as transgender people and the latter as gender-nonconforming non-transgender people is productive. First, doing so allows us to recognize that gender nonconformity is possible on all bodies, but that there is no universal type of gender nonconformity that inherently works towards the same goal. To put it another way, transgender people and gender nonconforming non-transgender people do not put in to practice the same strategies of survival and resistance. The former is attentive to how gender systems are inherently violent and therefore must be rejected whereas the latter is not and is therefore useful as a coping strategy for an individual but limited in its efficacy for resisting and abolishing

administrative practices that are harmful for populations. By introducing this revision to Stryker's definition of transgender, I am encouraging those of us who identify as non-transgender to critically reflect on our choice to pursue and perform non-transgenderhood and imagine how we can work towards a day where we can abandon non-transgenderhood or transform it beyond recognition so that we no longer think that accepting the practice of assigning genders is a necessity. I am also arguing that recognizing the applicability of these definitions of transgenderhood and gender nonconformity to the behaviors of some *namjang* characters is vital for nurturing an antithesis for violent social orders: tolerance for change, disconformity, and ambiguity (see Jessica McCall 2017).

Furthermore, reading *namjang* protagonists' rejections of their assigned confinements to womanhood as performances of transgenderhood allows us to prioritize concentrating on how *namjang* characters' actions identify administrative norms as a root cause of social inequality. In other words, when we acknowledge how the behaviors of *namjang* characters embody transgenderhood then we look beyond how specific *namjang* characters use gendered passing as a tool to deal with their individual problems and widen our gaze to contemplate how the (re)production of discrimination and disadvantaged populations is sustained by the normalization of deployments of gender categories in administrative practices (see Dean Spade 2015). In doing so, analyses of *namjang* dramas can contribute to political interventions in sociohistorical structures that currently shape our material realities by illuminating parallels between administrative spaces that serve as sites for the reproduction of social inequality in the fictional communities depicted in *namjang* dramas and past and present communities in Korea.

For example, Tari Na explains that the manner in which resident registration numbers (RRNs) currently encode "one's birthdate, gender, and place of origin" enables systematic

discrimination on the basis of gender (as well as age and nationality) in Korea (T. Na 2014, 363). For people whose gender presentation is not legible as their legal gender or whose chosen gender identity is not a state-recognized gender the likelihood for discrimination is severe: “many transgender people experience considerable constraint in everyday life because their identification number...betrays their gender identity” (T. Na 2014, 364). Explicit references to administrative tools such as RRNs and opportunities to reflect on the role that they play in creating disadvantaged populations are on prominent display in *namjang* dramas. As illustration, in episode two of *Coffee Prince* Eunchan’s RRN almost outs Eunchan as a female-assigned person and puts Eunchan’s eligibility for a job that Hangyeol is considering hiring them for at risk. When Hangyeol asks Eunchan for their RRN (i.e., “*juminbeonho*”), Eunchan automatically replies “840805-2371292” and consequently reveals their assigned-female gender identity. Hangyeol immediately corrects Eunchan and tells them that the second section of their RRN should begin with “1” for Korean male citizen instead of “2” for Korean female citizen and then rhetorically exclaims “you don’t even know whether you’re a man or a woman!?”⁴¹. Eunchan chooses to affirm Hangyeol’s presumption and restates their RRN as “1371292”. Moments later when Hangyeol asks to see Eunchan’s ID card to confirm that Eunchan gave Hangyeol their real name and RRN, Eunchan pretends that they forgot their ID card at home.

This scene invites us to question the expectation that congruency between one’s gender presentation and one’s (assigned) legal gender is compulsory. It also highlights the way that RRNs and ID cards are purposefully made to reinforce a binary gender system and divulge one’s (assigned) gender. Contemplating how Eunchan’s actions violate administrative and social norms directs our attention to how employers who discriminate by selectively hiring men or paying men more for certain jobs are only a symptom of a much larger problem: one of the root

⁴¹ “남잔지 여잔지도 몰라!?”

causes of gender discrimination and inequality is the manner in which administrative and social practices mandatorily sort people into the stereotyped categories of “female”/“women” and “male”/“men” (and “foreign” vs “non-foreign”) and thereby make it possible to marginalize populations by denying them access to resources and opportunities on the basis of their assignments to (and their ability to legibly perform) these *constructed* administrative categories.

Likewise, in *One Well-Raised Daughter* there are also numerous scenes that underscore how administrative tools facilitate gender discrimination. For example, when Eunseong has a medical emergency they refuse to go to the hospital out of fear of being outed as a female-assigned person. However, ultimately the severity of their injury forces them to seek medical attention. In order to not arouse suspicion from the medical staff – presumably because of incongruities between Eunseong’s gender presentation as a man and institutionalized gender definitions that medical staff use to categorize bodies – Eunseong takes on their older sister’s identity in order to pass as female at the hospital. Ultimately, injury complications and the trail of prescription bills, medical records, and witnesses resulting from this hospital visit are what serve as the catalyst for Eunseong being outed as a “woman” to some people in their surroundings. Watching these scenes while considering how Eunseong embodies transgenderhood attunes us to how, similar to work spaces, medical spaces are fraught with danger for gender minorities due to how they reproduce administrative norms that reinforce transphobic heteronormativity. In summary, giving serious consideration to how *namjang* dramas portray transgender representations encourages us to ask as Yunsik does in *Sungkyunkwan Scandal* “what if [men and women] weren’t different from each other?”⁴². What if we chose *not* to forcibly assign people to gender categories? What can be done at an individual level (e.g., gendered passing) and

⁴² “(남녀가 유별하기 때문입니까?...허면,) 다르지 않다면 어찌 됩니까?”

population level (e.g., change administrative practices) to address how social inequality is institutionalized?

Given that during the past two decades awareness about transgender people and transphobia has increased in certain media spaces, such as news and documentary television programs⁴³, we might expect “transgender” to be used in some media spaces to describe *namjang* characters. However, despite examining a variety of official paratexts (e.g., drama websites, DVDs, cast and crew interviews at drama release press conferences) I was unable to find explicit usages of the word “transgender” being used to describe *namjang* protagonists. Instead, I observed the pattern of protagonists being explicitly gendered as “*namjang(yeoja)*” and as “women” (e.g., “*yeoja*”)⁴⁴. Through personal communication with Jaeseung and Taegyeong, FTM transgender identifying, South Korean young adults, this pattern was further confirmed. Collectively, Taegyeong and Jaeseung had watched or heard of various *namjang* dramas, including *Coffee Prince*, *Sungkyunkwan Scandal*, and *One Well-Raised Daughter*. However, both Jaeseung and Taegyeong shared that they had zero recollections of observing *namjang* protagonists being labelled as “transgender” or “genderqueer”. In contrast, they both had heard the term “*namjangyeoja*” used to describe the protagonists of *namjang* dramas, and Taegyeong shared that they had observed the phrase “*namjangyeoja*” being used to describe *namjang*

⁴³ E.g., see *PD Notebook*'s May 30th 2017 broadcast.

⁴⁴ It should be noted though that an interesting exception to this pattern took place at a drama release press conference for *The Painter of the Wind*. In general, cast and staff members, including Director Tae-yoo Jang and Geun-young Moon, the actress who plays Yunbok, repeatedly explicitly classified Yunbok as a “*namjangyeoja*” and as a woman (e.g., “*yeoja*”) (SBS 2008; Inyeong Lee 2008; Jinhyeon Tak 2008). However, in addition to these attempts to box the character Yunbok into the category “woman,” there were also moments of ambiguity regarding Yunbok’s gender. For instance, at one point in the conference Geun-young emphasized that Yunbok was not a “simple *namjangyeoja*...[but] a person who had lived their life as a man”⁴⁴ (SBS 2008). Moreover, Geun-young shared that the director had ordered her to “think of yourself as a man and not as a woman pretending to be a man”⁴⁴ (Hanguk Gyeongje 2008). In contrast Seung-ryong Ryu, the actor who plays Yunbok’s adoptive father in the drama, said “if you read the novel [that *The Painter of the Wind* is adapted from], then logically, in a very rational way of thinking, you can come to the conclusion that ‘Sin Yunbok can’t be anything but a woman!’⁴⁴ (Cine21 2016).

protagonists in news articles, on Facebook, and in chat about dramas by people from their surroundings.

I suggest that we orient to this pervasive willingness to categorize gender nonconforming female-assigned characters as “*namjangyeoja*” but not as transgender as an indicator of the embeddedness of transphobic forms of heteronormativity in contemporary Korea and Korean studies communities. When we use the term “*namjangyeoja*” we participate in (violently) designating the directionality, temporality, and hierarchal organization of people’s gender identities: the way that “*namjang*” modifies “*yeoja*” imposes the idea that someone’s identity as a “woman” is always stable and primordial to other gender behaviors. In my personal correspondence with Taegyong and Jaeseung it was emphasized to me that the expression “*namjangyeoja*” can be a “violent” (i.e., “*pongnyeokjeok*”) transphobic appellation, especially in the case of FTM and gender non-binary people. Taegyong stressed that “*namjangyeoja*” is used to harass and torment gender nonconforming female-assigned people and imply that their gender nonconformity is just a “phase”: Taegyong explained that “because of the existence called ‘*namjangyeoja*’ when I went to school I heard violent speech such as ‘later you will grow out your hair and style it prettily’”⁴⁵. Although Jaeseung and Taegyong both stated that they dislike *namjang* dramas, Jaeseung described that one good outcome of *namjang* dramas’ popularity in Korea is that “it can give people an opportunity to think about diverse gender identities”⁴⁶, but that *namjang* dramas could also have an adverse effect because “[if viewers] end up simply accepting [the content of] a drama uncritically, then it could also be dangerous because stereotypes about gender minorities could form”⁴⁷. On the other hand, Taegyong did *not* think it

⁴⁵ “‘남장여자’라는 존재때문에 학교를 다니며 ‘너는 나중에 머리를 기르고 예쁘게 하고 다닐거야.’라는 폭력적인 말을 들었고”

⁴⁶ “사람들이 다양한 성 정체성을 생각해볼 기회를 준다는 것입니다.”

⁴⁷ “드라마를 비판없이 받아들여지게 되면 성 소수자에대한 고정관념이 생기기 때문에 위험하기도 합니다.”

is good that *namjang* dramas are popular in Korea because *namjang* dramas “exclude FTM, non-binary, and genderqueer people”⁴⁸. In short, Jaeseung and Taegyeong’s views on *namjang* dramas demonstrate that both the usage of the term “*namjangyeoja*” and the *namjang* drama trend are read as transphobic by some transgender identifying South Koreans.

Therefore, I argue that that we must consciously choose to critique and apply *both* the terms “*namjangyeoja*” and “transgender” in analyses of *namjang* dramas. Using these terms alongside each other can help us orient to transgender representations in *namjang* dramas *and* also help us explore how the dislocation of the term “transgender” from within drama texts set in contemporary Korea and the current practice of categorizing fictional and real gender nonconforming female-assigned people as “*namjangyeoja*” are anxiety-filled responses to transgender populations and imagined Others in present-day Korea. When we take into consideration that gender categories are neither neutral nor apolitical but rather instrumental to the operation of systems of power, then this constant dislocation of transgender-ness from broadcasters and scholars’ discussions about *namjang* dramas can be understood as nefariously systemic and systematically nefarious.

By giving serious consideration to how *namjang* protagonists embody transgender possibilities we can better appreciate how *namjang* dramas are overflowing with scenes that refute the idea that womanhood is synonymous with or reducible to femininity and manhood is synonymous with or reducible to masculinity – and in some cases, that personhood is reducible to manhood and womanhood. Moreover, we can enjoy glimpses of diverse, imaginative, fluid, and non-binary gender behaviors that we can adopt and innovate upon as strategies for coping with and resisting heteronormative familism and the hegemonic reading practices that fortify it. Future research should examine the *namjang* drama trend’s relation to the marked absence of

⁴⁸ “Ftm과 논바이너리, 젠더퀴어를 배제합니다”

openly “*yeojangnamja*”⁴⁹ (see Sori Gim 2016) and transgender⁵⁰ protagonists in Korean dramas and the popularity of same-sex media in contemporary South Korea and the influence its fandoms have received from Korean manhwa, fanfiction, and Japanese manga communities (see Sun Jung 2010 and Jungmin Kwon 2016)⁵¹. Additionally, future studies should explore the sociolinguistic import of usages of American English influenced South Korean gender ontologies (e.g., “transgender”) and how such practices intersect with American imperialism.

I hope that by discussing gender ontologies in this paper and reflecting on them in future studies about *namjang* dramas we can help increase visibility and tolerance for gender nonconforming people, especially transgender people who are “not a man or a woman,” “half-man,” and/or “half-woman”. Reflecting on the ontologies that we box *namjang* characters into is necessary because it nurtures our sensitivity to what is at the heart of *namjang* drama narratives – the recognition that gender classifications are inherently violent because they are central to constructions of normalcy and legibility. When we resist heteronormative reading practices a plurality of questions become audible in *namjang* dramas, including: Can we interpret the practice of naming gender nonconforming, female-assigned people as “*namjangyeoja*,” “tomboys,” and as “women” as attempts to restrain transgressiveness and corral it into pre-existing categories that block our view of non-binary, non-static gender possibilities? Can we consider how our choice to affirm certain ontologies (e.g., “*namjangyeoja*”) over others (e.g., “transgender”) enacts epistemological forms of violence that support larger, institutionalized projects of death by exclusion and illegibility? And most importantly, can we envision a gender

⁴⁹ To the best of my knowledge, to date *Ma Boy* (2012) has been the only “*yeojangnamja deurama*”.

⁵⁰ The drama series *It's Okay, That's Love* (2014) depicts a supporting character that some viewers may read as a transgender character. I.e., the drama features a male-assigned character who presents and identifies as a woman. However, I have not had the opportunity to study this drama series, and I do not know whether this character is depicted as openly labeling themselves as “transgender” or whether this character is openly referred to as “transgender” by other characters in the series.

⁵¹ Notably, many *namjang* dramas are adaptations of webtoons, manhwa, manga, or novels.

violence free world where our current “realities” become fiction and our past and imagined “fictions” become reality?

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Ahmed, Sara. 2016. "An Affinity of Hammers." *TSQ* 3 (1-2): 22-34.
- Amber Liu. 2017. "WHERE IS MY CHEST? (Responding to Hate Comments)." YouTube video, 6:54, October 16. <https://youtu.be/SHgbU1938SE>
- Atkins, E. Taylor. 2010. *Primitive Selves: Koreana in the Japanese Colonial Gaze, 1910–1945*. University of California Press. Kindle Edition.
- Bae, Juhwan. 2014. "Apeurika 'Yesulga' Chobinghae Noko...Noye Gateun Daeu." *Naver News*, February 10. <http://news.naver.com/main/read.nhn?mode=LS2D&mid=sec&sid1=102&sid2=257&oid=214&aid=0000342945&viewType=pc>
- Baek, Seungho. 2015. "Sekseuneun Doego Kiseuneun An Dwae? Isanghan Bangsimwiui Jatdae." *Heopingeonposeuteu Korja*, May 26. www.huffingtonpost.kr/seungho-baek/story_b_6945440.html.
- Bak, Miae. 2017. "Lee Michelle, 'Seksiboda Boisi Deo Jasinisseo'." *Edaily*, February 4. http://www.edaily.co.kr/news/news_detail.asp?newsId=01092246615827240&mediaCodeNo=258
- Baker-Sperry, Lori, and Liz Grauerholz. 2003. "The Pervasiveness and Persistence of the Feminine Beauty Ideal in Children's Fairy Tales." *Gender & Society* 15 (5): 711-726.
- BBC News. 2006. "S Koreans Offered Cash for No Sex ." December 26. <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/asia-pacific/6209549.stm>
- BBC News Korea. 2017. "Han Hyeonmin, Rabi, Jonadani Malhaneun 'Hangukeseo Geomeun Piburo Salagagi' ." December 1. <https://www.bbc.com/korean/news-42192351>

- Beauchamp, Toby. 2009. "Artful Concealment and Strategic Visibility: Transgender Bodies and U.S. State Surveillance After 9/11." *Surveillance and Society* 6 (4): 356-366.
- Benshoff, Harry M., and Sean Griffin. 2006. "Introduction: What is Queer Film History?." *Queer Images: A History of Gay and Lesbian Film*, 1-18. Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield.
- Block B Intl. 2016. "[7ONTHEBLOCK] Match Up Returns Ep 5 [3/4]." YouTube video, 13:38, January 28. <https://youtu.be/NpeygUmiZKQ>
- Block Raw 3. 2012. "121115 MTV Match Up : Block B Returns ep 5." YouTube video, 49:28, November 15. https://youtu.be/2rHS-bL_5-k
- Block Raw 3. 2013. "[ENG] BLOCK B World Camp DVD2." YouTube video, 9:57, February 28. <https://youtu.be/k-N91aMvJTU>
- Bong, Junyeong. 2010. "'Insaengeun' Songchangui-Isangu Keopeul, Gyeolhon Ganeunghalkka?." *OSEN*, July 12. osen.mt.co.kr/article/G1007120127.
- Bong, Youngshik D. 2008. "The Gay Rights Movement in Democratizing Korea." *Korean Studies* 32: 86-103.
- Boroff, David. 2014. "Signs Outside South Korean Pub Ban Africans Due To Fears Of Ebola Virus." *New York Daily News*, August 18. <http://www.nydailynews.com/life-style/signs-s-korean-pub-bans-africans-article-1.1907500>
- Chae, Huiseon. 2015. "'Heugin Jigwoneun Bueokeman...' Natbukkeureoun Jahwasang." *SBS News*, February 5. http://news.sbs.co.kr/news/endPage.do?news_id=N1002823014&plink=SEARCH&cooper=SBSNEWSSEARCH&plink=COPYPASTE&cooper=SBSNEWSSEND

- Cine21. 2016. "Moon Geun-young, Park Shin-yang Hwagaro Hwansaeng! SBS <Baramui Hwawon> Jejakbalpyohoe." YouTube video, 5:54, August 23.
www.youtube.com/watch?v=Hm7XdurLxYU
- Cho, John (Song Pae). 2009. "The Wedding Banquet Revisited: 'Contract Marriages' Between Korean Gays and Lesbians." *Anthropological Quarterly* 82 (2): 401-421.
- Cho, John (Song Pae). 2017. "'Deferred Futures': The diverse imaginaries of gay retirement in post-IMF South Korea." *Culture, Theory & Critique* 58 (2): 243-259.
- Choe, Sang-Hun. 2017. "South Korea Military Is Accused of Cracking Down on Gay Soldiers." *The New York Times*, April 26. <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/04/26/world/asia/south-korea-military-anti-gay-campaign.html>
- Choi, Hyaewool. 2009. "'Wise Mother, Good Wife': A Transcultural Discursive Construct in Modern Korea." *The Journal Of Korean Studies* 14 (1): 1-33.
- Choi, Hyaewool. 2015. "Constructions of Marriage and Sexuality in Modern Korea." In *Routledge Handbook of Sexuality Studies in East Asia*, edited by Mark McLelland and Vera Mackie, 87–100. Routledge.
- Cohen, Cathy. 1997. "Punks, Bulldaggers, and Welfare Queens: The Radical Potential of Queer Politics?." *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies* 3 (4): 437-465.
- Davies, Gloria, M.E. Davies, and Young-A Cho. 2010. "Hallyu Ballyhoo and Harisu: Marketing and Representing the Transgendered in South Korea." In *Complicated Currents: Media Flows, Soft Power and East Asia*, edited by Daniel Black, Stephen Epstein, and Alison Tokita. Melbourne: Monash University ePress.
- Deungjanginmul (Go Eunchan). *The 1st Shop of Coffee Prince*, MBC.
http://www.imbc.com/broad/tv/drama/coffeeprince/cast/index_p02.html

Deungjanginmul (Gim Yunhui). *Sungkyunkwan Scandal*, KBS.

http://www.kbs.co.kr/end_program/drama/scandal/about/cast/index.html

Deungjanginmul (Go Minam/Go Minyeo). *You're Beautiful*, SBS.

http://program.sbs.co.kr/builder/programSubCharacter.do?pgm_id=00000339966&pgm_build_id=131&pgm_mnu_id=1151

Deungjanginmul (Hong Raon). *Moonlight Drawn by Clouds*, KBS.

<http://www.kbs.co.kr/drama/gurumi/about/cast/index.html>

Deungjanginmul (Jang Hana). *One Well-Raised Daughter*, SBS.

http://wizard2.sbs.co.kr/sw11/template/swtpl_iframetype.jsp?vVodId=V2000000825&vProgid=1000939&vMenuId=1019943

Deungjanginmul (Sin Yunbok). *The Painter of the Wind*, SBS.

http://program.sbs.co.kr/builder/programSubCharacter.do?pgm_id=00000334298&pgm_build_id=24121&pgm_mnu_id=49744

Enke, A. Finn. 2012. "The Education of Little Cis: Cisgender and the Discipline of Opposing Bodies." In *Transfeminist Perspectives In and Beyond Transgender and Gender Studies*, 60-77. Philadelphia: Temple University Press.

Gim, Minjeong. 2015. "Bangtongsimuiwi, 'Seonamyego' Dongseongae Kisinin Gyeongjo." *Seutanyuseu*, April 23. star.mt.co.kr/stview.php?no=2015042318135261868&outlink=1&ref=.

Gim, Namhui. 2010. "'Namja Yeongihaneun Yeoja'eseo Yeoseongseong Sumgijianneun Ingan'euro". *Yeoseongsinmun*, October 8. <http://www.womennews.co.kr/news/view.asp?num=47003>

- Gim, Nayeong. 2013. "Aseulaseul Dugeundugeun...Deurama Sok 'Namjangyeoja' Dolpung Dasi Buna." *MBN*, November 28.
<http://star.mbn.co.kr/view.php?no=1200006&year=2013>
- Gim, Seok. 2015. "Bangtongsimuiwiwondeul, Ije Geuman Daesseuyo." *Pidijeoneol*, December 22. www.pdjournal.com/news/articleView.html?idxno=57297.
- Gim, Sori. 2016. "'Yun Eunhyebuteo Gim Yujeongkkaji...' Namjangyeoja Deurama Heunghaengbulpae Gongsik." *Iryosinmun*, October 21.
http://ilyo.co.kr/?ac=article_view&entry_id=209347
- Gim, Wan. 2017. "'Najunge'kkaji Naneun Eoptda." *Hangyeore*, April 25.
http://h21.hani.co.kr/arti/cover/cover_general/43430.html
- Gim, Wonjin. 2017. "Seonggi Jegeo An Haedo 'Nam→Yeo' Seongbyeol Jeongjeong Cheot Heoga." *The Kyunghyang Shinmun*. February 16. http://news.khan.co.kr/kh_news/khan_art_view.html?artid=201704241652001&code=940100#csidx11932f96e08c13486454755cfd10cb7
- Go, Seunghui. 2016. "Seutorineun Ppeonhande...'Namjangyeoja' Deurama, Isanghage Kkeulline..." *Hereoldeugyeongje*, September 12. <http://news.heraldcorp.com/view.php?ud=20160912000380>
- Goedde, Patricia. 2011. "Lawyers for a Democratic Society (Minbyun): The Evolution of its Legal Mobilization Process Since 1988." In *South Korean Social Movements: From Democracy to Civil Society*, edited by Gi-Wook Shin and Paul Y. Chang, 224-244. Abingdon: Routledge.

- Gweon, Suntaek. 2015. “‘Ingweon’ Anin ‘Inseub’ e Geungeohan Bangtongsimuiwiramyeon, Eobnneun Pyeoni Natda.” *Midieoseu*, May 4. www.mediaus.co.kr/news/articleView.html?idxno=48205.
- Gwon, Jiyun. 2015. “Nampyeon Seongpokhaenghan Anae...Bubugangganjoe Yeoseong Cheot Jeogyong.” *SBS News*, October 23, http://news.sbs.co.kr/news/endPage.do?news_id=N1003230474
- Hanguk Gyeongje. 2008. “Moon Geun-young ‘Sin Yunbok Yeongineunyo?...Namjaincheok Haneun Yeoja Anin Namjaro....” September 18. <http://news.hankyung.com/article/2008091809887?nv=o>
- Hanguk Seongsosuja Yeonguhoe. 2016. “[Seongsosujae Daehan 12 Gaji Jilmun] 2. Teuraenseujendeoneun Nuguingayo? | Jendeoui Dayangseong.” *Huffington Post Korea*, June 13. http://www.huffingtonpost.kr/lgbtstudies-kr/story_b_10231488.html
- Hanguk Seongsosuja Yeonguhoe. 2017. “[Seongsosujae Daehan 12 Gaji Jilmun] 8. Teuraenseujendeoneun Wae Beopjeogeuro Seongbyeoleul Byeongyeongharyeogo Hanayo? | Beop Apui Injeong.” *Huffington Post Korea*, June 8. http://www.huffingtonpost.kr/lgbtstudies-kr/story_b_10329858.html
- Herman, Tamar. 2018. “‘Heart Attack’ Video by Loona's Chuu Praised for Depicting an Apparent Same-Sex Crush.” *Billboard*, January 5. <https://www.billboard.com/articles/columns/k-town/8092901/heart-attack-loona-chuu-video>
- hooks, bell. 1992. “The Oppositional Gaze: Black Female Spectators.” In *Black Looks: Race and Representation*, 115-131. Boston: South End Press.
- IATFB. 2018. “Dreamcatcher’s Yoohyeon Did Photoshoot for First Korean Concert Wearing Transgender Symbol Pin.” *Asianjunkie*, March 13. <http://www.asianjunkie.com/>

- 2018/03/13/dreamcatchers-yoohyeon-did-photoshoot-for-first-concert-wearing-transgender-symbol-pin/
- Jeong, G. 2013. "SHINee's Jonghyun Changes Twitter Profile Image in Support of Transgender Student." *Soompi*, December 15. <https://www.soompi.com/2013/12/15/SHINees-jonghyun-changes-twitter-profile-image-in-support-of-transgender-student/>
- Jeong, G. 2016. "Amber of F(x) Reminds Us to be Open-Minded And fight Discrimination." *Soompi*, April 19. <https://www.soompi.com/2016/04/19/amber-of-fx-reminds-us-to-be-open-minded-and-fight-discrimination/>
- jeongin's braces. 2017. "ToppDogg Hansol comes out as Asexual." YouTube video, 0:32, August 19. <https://youtu.be/Qn8i7eGZXr0>
- Jun, R. 2017a. "Park Yoochun's Accuser Receives Prison Sentence For False Accusation And Blackmail." *Soompi*, January 17. <https://www.soompi.com/2017/01/16/park-yoochuns-accuser-receives-prison-sentence-false-accusation-blackmail/>
- Jun, R. 2017b. "Prosecution Appeals Not Guilty Ruling Of Park Yoochun's Accuser, Claims 'Rape Cannot Happen In A Small Bathroom'." *Soompi*, September 5. <https://www.soompi.com/2017/09/05/prosecution-appeals-not-guilty-ruling-park-yoochuns-accuser-claims-rape-cannot-happen-small-bathroom/>
- Jun, R. 2017c. "Park Yoochun's Accuser Deemed Not Guilty Of False Accusation." *Soompi*, September 21. <https://www.soompi.com/2017/09/21/park-yoochuns-accuser-deemed-not-guilty-false-accusation/>
- Jung, Sun. 2010. "Chogukjeok Pan-East Asian Soft Masculinity: Reading Boys Over Flowers, Coffee Prince and Shinhwa Fan Fiction." In *Complicated Currents: Media Flows, Soft*

- Power and East Asia*, edited by Daniel Black, Stephen Epstein, and Alison Tokita.
Melbourne: Monash University ePress.
- Kang, E. 2018. "Watch: First Openly Gay Idol Holland Makes Monumental Debut With 'Neverland' + Trends Worldwide." *Soompi*, January 21.
<https://www.soompi.com/2018/01/21/watch-first-openly-gay-idol-holland-makes-monumental-debut-neverland-trends-worldwide/>
- Kang, Juwon. 2013. "Korean Law on Rape." *KLawGuru*, June 14.
<https://klawguru.com/2013/06/14/korean-law-on-rape/>
- Kim, Eunjeong and King Davis. 2003. "Conceptualizing Unmarried Motherhood in South Korea: The Role of Patriarchy and Confucianism in the Lives of Women." *Journal of Social Work Research & Evaluation* 4 (1): 107-120.
- Kim, Hyun-young Kwon, and John (Song Pae) Cho. 2011. "The Korean Gay and Lesbian Movement 1993-2008: From 'Identity' and 'Community' to 'Human Rights'." In *South Korean Social Movements: From Democracy to Civil Society*, edited by Gi-Wook Shin and Paul Y. Chang, 206-223. Abingdon: Routledge.
- Kim, Pil Ho and C. Colin Singer. 2011. "Three Periods of Korean Queer Cinema: Invisible, Camouflage, and Blockbuster." *Acta Koreana* 14 (1): 117-136.
- Kim, Soojin. 2014. "Vacillating Images of Shin Saimdang: The Invention of a Historical Heroine in Colonial Korea." *Inter-Asia Cultural Studies* 15 (2): 274-290.
- Kim, Suk-Young. 2013 "For the Eyes of North Koreans?: Politics of Money and Class in *Boys Over Flowers*." In *The Korean Wave: Korean Media Go Global*, edited by Youna Kim, 93-105. Abingdon: Routledge.

- Kim, Youna. 2005. *Women, Television and Everyday Life: Journeys of Hope*. Abingdon: Routledge.
- KPOPLE. 2017. "Nate Pann: Kang Dongho and Choi Minki's Level of Gender Awareness." June 28. <https://kpople.com/kang-dongho-choi-minki-gender-awareness/>
- Kwateng-Clark, Danielle. 2017. "Outrage After Beauty Supply Store Owner Strangles Black Woman in Disturbing Video." *ESSENCE*, March 14. <https://www.essence.com/news/black-woman-strangled-nc-korean-beauty-store>
- Kwon, Jungmin. 2015. "Queering Stars: Fan play and capital appropriation in the age of digital media." *The Journal of Fandom Studies* 3 (1): 95-108.
- Kwon, Jungmin. 2016. "Co-mmodifying the Gay Body: Globalization, the Film Industry, and Female Prosumers in the Contemporary Korean Mediascape." *International Journal of Communication* 10: 1563-1580.
- Lavin, Maud. 2015. "Tomboy in Love: Korean and U.S. Views of Heterosexual Eroticism in the K-Drama First Shop of Coffee Prince." *Situations: Cultural Studies in the Asian Context* 8 (1): 45-69.
- Lee, Alvin. 2010. "Assessing the Korean Military's Gay Sex Ban in the International Context." *Law & Sexuality: A Review Of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual & Transgender Legal Issues* 19: 67-94.
- Lee, Claire. 2015 "Korea's Rape Laws Self-contradict." *The Korea Herald*, April 27. <http://www.koreaherald.com/view.php?ud=20150427001282>
- Lee, Ingyeong. 2008. "'Baramui Hwawon' Moon Geun-young 'Sarangeun Namjageon Yeojageon Sanggwaneoptda'." *JoongAng Daily*, September 17. <http://news.joins.com/article/3301258>

- Lee, Ji-hye. 2015. "Indie Filmmaker Rejects Mandatory Military Service." *The Korea Times*, January 30. http://www.koreatimes.co.kr/www/news/nation/2015/01/116_172462.html
- Lee, Jiyeun and Sung-Yeon Park. 2015. "Women's Employment and Professional Empowerment in South Korean Dramas: A 10-Year Analysis." *Asian Journal of Communication* 25 (4): 393-407.
- Lee, Joohee, Jinseok Kim, and Hyunsung Lim. 2010. "Rape Myth Acceptance Among Korean College Students: The Roles of Gender, Attitudes Toward Women, and Sexual Double Standard." *Journal of Interpersonal Violence* 25 (7): 1200-1223.
- Lee, Jooran. 2000. "Remembered Branches: Towards a Future of Korean Homosexual Film." *Journal of Homosexuality* 39 (3/4): 273.
- Lee, Yujeong. 2015. "Yeoseong Cheot Gangganjoe Jeogyong Giso." *JoongAng Daily*, April 3. <http://news.joins.com/article/17504983>
- Lee, Yujin. 2006. "'Bangji' Andoen Yeoseongbu Seongmaemaebangji 'Poktangwanggo'." *Hangyeore*, December 29. <http://www.hani.co.kr/arti/society/women/180931.html>
- Lizzie. 2015. "Why Amber's Reaction to Rumours About Dating Girls is So Refreshing." *Beyond Hallyu*, February 20. <http://beyondhallyu.com/k-pop/ambers-reaction-rumours-dating-girls-refreshing/>
- McCall, Jessica. 2017. "Close Reading: The Theory Which is Not One." *Early Modern Culture* 12: 54-70.
- melkimx. 2015. "Twitter Reacts to Choi Siwon's Stance on Gay Marriage." *Soompi*, September 11. <https://www.soompi.com/2015/09/11/twitter-reacts-to-choi-siwons-stance-on-gay-marriage/>

- MineMuses. 2017. "BOY GROUP MEMBER WHO CAME OUT." *OneHallyu*, March 24.
<https://onehallyu.com/topic/493333-boy-group-member-who-came-out>
- mssylee. 2015. "Amber Talks About Her Ideal Type and Getting Asked Out by Lesbians on 'Radio Star'." AllKPop, March 4. <https://www.allkpop.com/article/2015/03/amber-talks-about-her-ideal-type-and-getting-asked-out-by-lesbians-on-radio-star>
- Muñoz, José Esteban. 1999. *Disidentifications: Queers of Color and the Performance of Politics*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
- Na, Tari Young-Jung. 2014. "The South Korean Gender System: LGBTI in the Contexts of Family, Legal Identity, and the Military." *Journal of Korean Studies* 19 (2): 357-377.
- Nam, Jieun. 2016a. "TV Sok Mujigaepit Sarang, Jomdeo Jinhaejeonne." *Hangyeore*, July 22.
www.hani.co.kr/arti/culture/entertainment/753458.html.
- Nam, Jieun. 2016b. "Kkotgil Geonneun 'Namjangdeurama' Sok Seulpeun Yeoseongsaho." *Hangyeore*, September 30. <http://www.hani.co.kr/arti/culture/entertainment/763546.html#csidx2cfe2b4849cd7209137fe956e228a77>
- Nick. 2014. "BTS Suga's Ideal Type: Gender Is Not Important." *Seoulbeats*, December 21.
<http://seoulbeats.com/2014/12/bts-suga-ideal-type-gender-not-important/>
- No, Gyumin. 2017. "Lee Michelle, 4nyeonmane Teojin Poten! 'Yoon Mirae Yeonghyang'." *GanGee*, February 17. <http://www.gangee.co.kr/news/articleView.html?idxno=574>
- Oak, Jessica. 2017. "MRSHLL Opens Up on the Pressure & Struggle of Being K-Pop's First Openly Gay Artist." *Billboard*, July 21. <https://www.billboard.com/articles/columns/k-town/7873405/mrshll-gay-artist-korea-kpop>

- Officially KMusic. 2014. "Could It Be True? Suga Reportedly Doesn't Care Where He Gets His 'Suga'." *KMusic*, December 14. <http://officiallykmusic.com/could-it-be-true-suga-reportedly-doesnt-care-where-he-gets-his-suga/>
- Oh, Chuyun and David C. Oh. 2017. "Unmasking Queerness: Blurring and Solidifying Queer Lines through K-Pop Cross-Dressing." *Journal of Popular Culture* 50 (1): 9-29.
- Oh, S. 2017. "ToppDogg's Hansol Comes Out As Asexual." *Soompi*, August 20. <https://www.soompi.com/2017/08/20/toppdoggs-hansol-comes-asexual/>
- Pani. 2017. "(ENG, KOR) Why She Is Transgender? | Pani." Pani, YouTube video, 4:21, June 6. <https://youtu.be/EL7gCXVMTEQ>
- Park, Si-soo. 2009. "Park Court Acknowledges Rape of Transsexual." *The Korea Times*, February 18. http://www.koreatimes.co.kr/www/news/nation/2009/02/113_39834.html
- Park-Kim, Soo Jin, Soo Youn Lee-Kim, and Eun Jung Kwon-Lee. 2006. "The Lesbian Rights Movement and Feminism in South Korea." *Journal of Lesbian Studies* 10 (3/4): 161-190.
- Parsons, Linda T. 2004. "Ella Evolving: Cinderella Stories and the Construction of Gender-Appropriate Behavior." *Children's Literature in Education* 35 (2): 135-154.
- PD Notebook* (MBC). 2017. "Seongsosuja Ingwon, Najungeun Eoptda." *OnDemandKorea*, May 30. <http://www.ondemandkorea.com/the-producers-notes-e1129.html>
- Percy, Benjamin. "An Orphan's Odyssey: From South Korea to Minnesota and Back Again." *Men's Journal*. www.mensjournal.com/features/an-orphans-odyssey-from-south-korea-to-minnesota-and-back-again-w504990
- Pyo Hyemi. 2017. "he just denied his sexuality and it's not a bait." *OneHallyu*, February 6. <https://onehallyu.com/topic/467602-he-just-denied-his-sexuality-and-its-not-a-bait/>

- Rand, Erica. 2005. "Getting Dressed Up: The Displays of Frank Woodhull and the Policing of Gender." *The Ellis Island Snow Globe*, 67-106. Durham: Duke University Press.
- Ren (ChoiGoRen). 2016. *Twitter*, May 6.
<https://twitter.com/ChoiGoRen/status/728783856699068416>
- Reuters. 2006. "South Korea Offers Prizes for Prostitute-Free New Year." *The Washington Post*, December 25. <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2006/12/25/AR2006122500553.html>
- Rich, Adrienne. (1993 (1980)). "Compulsory Heterosexuality and Lesbian Existence." In *The Lesbian and Gay Studies Reader*, edited by Henry Abelove, et al., 227-254. New York: Routledge.
- Robinson, Amy. 1994. "It Takes One to Know One: Passing and Communities of Common Interest." *Critical Inquiry* 20 (4): 715-36.
- Robinson, Michael E. 2007. *Korea's Twentieth-Century Odyssey: A Short History*. University of Hawaii Press.
- ROMEO – Romio (Romeo). 2015. "Mwolhaedo Doel Romio _ EP.02 Romioege Muleobwa (Kangminpyeon)." YouTube video, August 27.
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dnD4_X8SOkY&list=PLX2zrZRI-12tdQVS2bBtr7COX0c74-L6f&index=9
- Ryu, Gyeomu. 2016. "Wanjeonhan Teuraenseujendeo?." Byeontaehaneunryugyeomu, YouTube video, 4:08, June 26. <https://youtu.be/8HSQM6lwbMo>
- Sapong, Emma. 2017. "Roots of Tension: Race, Hair, Competition and Black Beauty Stores." *MPR*, April 25. <https://www.mprnews.org/story/2017/04/25/black-beauty-shops-korean-suppliers-roots-of-tension-mn>

- Sastry, Anjuli and Karen Grigsby Bates. 2017. "When LA Erupted in Anger: A Look Back at the Rodney King Riots." *NPR*, April 26. <https://www.npr.org/2017/04/26/524744989/when-la-erupted-in-anger-a-look-back-at-the-rodney-king-riots>
- SBS. 2003. "8hoe Siljesanghwang! Toyoil." December 27.
<http://allvod.sbs.co.kr/allvod/vodEndPage.do?mdaId=22000025786&btn=free>
- SBS. 2008. "Moon Geun-young Chunggyeokgobaek? 'Jeomjeom Namjaga Doeneun Geot Gatda'." September 17. http://news.sbs.co.kr/news/endPage.do?news_id=N1000472566
- Schober, Elisabeth. 2014. "Itaewon's Suspense: Masculinities, Place-Making and the US Armed Forces in a Seoul Entertainment District." *Social Anthropology/Anthropologie Sociale* 22 (1): 36-51.
- Seth, Michael J. 2006. *A Concise History of Korea: From the Neolithic Period through the Nineteenth Century*. Rowman & Littlefield Publishers.
- Shin, Jeeyoung. 2013. "Male Homosexuality in the King and the Clown: Hybrid Construction and Contested Meanings." *Journal of Korean Studies* 18 (1): 89-114.
- Sinyun, Dongu. 2002. "Harisuui Beotdeul 'Naegedo 2reul'." *Hangyeore*, December 24.
<http://news.naver.com/main/read.nhn?mode=LSD&mid=sec&sid1=114&oid=036&aid=000000714>
- Song, Jae Jung. 2011. "English as an Official Language in South Korea Global English or Social Malady?." *Language Problems & Language Planning* 35 (1): 35-55.
- Song, Jesook. 2008. "The Making of 'Undeserving' Homeless Women: A Gendered Analysis of Homeless Policy in South Korea from 1997 to 2001." *Feminist Review* 89 (1): 87-101.

- Song, Jesook. 2010. “‘A Room of One’s Own’: The Meaning of Spatial Autonomy for Unmarried Women in Neoliberal South Korea.” *Gender, Place & Culture: A Journal of Feminist Geography* 17 (2): 131-149.
- Spade, Dean. 2013. “Dean Spade: Impossibility Now.” *BCRWideos*, YouTube video, 9:16, August 12. <https://youtu.be/OU8D343qpDE>
- Spade, Dean. 2015. *Normal Life: Administrative Violence, Critical Trans Politics, and the Limits of Law*. Durham: Duke University Press.
- Stryker, Susan. 2008. “An Introduction to Transgender Terms and Concepts.” *Transgender History*, 1-29. Berkeley: Seal Press.
- Suh, Chan S., Eun Sil Oh, and Yoon S. Choi. 2011. “The Institutionalization of the Women’s Movement and Gender Legislation.” In *South Korean Social Movements: From Democracy to Civil Society*, edited by Gi-Wook Shin and Paul Y. Chang, 151-170. Abingdon: Routledge.
- Sung, Woong Kyu. 2012. “Abortion in South Korea: The Law and the Reality.” *International Journal Of Law, Policy & The Family* 26 (3): 278-305.
- Tak, Jinhyeon. 2008. “Deurama ‘Baramui Hwawon’ Jejakbalpyohoe Hyeonjang.” *Segye Ilbo*, September 19. <http://www.segye.com/newsView/20080918003218>
- The Black Trans and Gender Non-Conforming Collective (The BTGNC Collective). 2017. “We Must Keep Fighting For Kiwi Herring.” *The Black Trans And Gender Non-Conforming Collective*, September 6. <https://btgnccollective.wordpress.com/2017/09/06/we-must-keep-fighting-for-kiwi-herring/>
- The Hankyoreh. 2005. “[Editorial] System Replacing Hojuje Must be Democcratic.” February 4. http://english.hani.co.kr/arti/english_edition/e_editorial/8890.html

- The Korea Herald. 2015. "Bomcheol Mannan Bangsongga 'Jjakjitgi' Peurogeuraemdeul." May 3. <http://www.koreaherald.com/view.php?ud=20150503000083>
- TongTongTV. 2016. "[Pulyeongsang] Park Bo-gum·Kim Yoo-jung 'Gureumi Geurin Dalbit' Jejakbalpyohoe Hyeonjang (Moonlight Drawn by Clouds, Park BoGum, Kim YouJung) [Tongtongyeongsang]." YouTube video, 41:58, August 18. <https://youtu.be/5IkJA4rJ-cl>
- Valentine, David. 2012. "Sue E. Generous: Toward a Theory of Non-Transsexuality." *Feminist Studies* 38 (1): 185-211.
- Weinberg, Jonathan. 1996. "Things are Queer". *Art Journal* 55 (4): 11-14.
- Yeoseonggajokbu. "Yeonhyeok." http://www.mogef.go.kr/mi/amo/mi_amo_f003.do
- Young, Danielle. 2017. "Watch: Black Trans Women Are Dying." *The Root*, April 7. <https://www.theroot.com/watch-black-trans-women-are-dying-1794127340>
- Yu, Dongju. 2018. "[Paekteuchekeu] 男男-女女···Dongseong Ganggan'do Cheobeol Badeulkka." *Meonitudei*, February 8. <http://news.mt.co.kr/mtview.php?no=2018020713418285548>
- Yu, Seulki. 2013. "SHINee's Jong Hyun Under Attack for His Support of the Sexual Minority." *DramaFever*, December 17. <https://www.dramafever.com/news/SHINees-jong-hyun-under-attack-for-his-support-of-the-sexual-minority/>
- Z., K. 2016. "NU'EST's Ren Is Shattering Gender Stereotypes In VIP Shop Ad." *Soompi*, May 8. <https://www.soompi.com/2016/05/08/nuests-ren-is-shattering-gender-stereotypes-in-vip-shop-ad/>