Unrealistic Weeds of Love and Romance: The Korean Drama and the "Flower Boy" Genre

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UNREALISTIC WEEDS OF LOVE AND ROMANCE:
THE KOREAN DRAMA AND THE “FLOWER BOY” GENRE

By

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Bachelor of Arts in Communication Studies and Sociology
University of Nevada, Las Vegas
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ABSTRACT

Unrealistic Weeds of Love and Romance:
The Korean Drama and the “Flower Boy” Genre

by

Colby Y. Miyose

Dr. Erika Engstrom, Examination Committee Chair
Professor of Communication Studies
University of Nevada, Las Vegas

The concept of love has intrigued many social critics, and has led them to accuse media of perpetuating unrealistic notions of romance that are unattainable for a healthy and satisfying relationship. Unrealistic expectations of love and romance are a primary cause of relationship dissatisfaction among real couples. It is imperative to critically analyze media sources in order to gain knowledge of how to counter unhealthy notions of romance. Korean dramas (K-dramas) typically present a scenario in which strong mutual love and desire between two people come into conflict with existing sociocultural values. The kkonminam (Flower Boy) genre in particular, caters to young women, and focuses mainly on the romantic lives of young adults, making it a prime genre to analyze Korean portrayals of modern romance. The current study uses Galician’s myths of hegemonic portrayals of love and romance to see if common themes of Westernized “status quo” love can be detected in Korean dramas. The current study examines how love and romance is portrayed in Korean dramas, particularly in the Flower Boy genre, and does so by examining two K-dramas, Boys Over Flowers and Flower Boy, Ramen Shop. This study adds to previous literature on hegemonic ideals of love and romance. Ultimately, this study examines ideas of romance in the media to learn what portrayals present
themselves in K-dramas, a form of mass media targeted at a younger audience whose views and expectations on romantic love are still forming, and may be influenced by media depictions.
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hands, but I have no doubt that you will surpass every obstacle in your graduate career. I look forward to hearing all of the accomplishments that you both achieve.

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DEDICATION

All of this could not have been possible if it were not for my amazing family, so I would like to dedicate this thesis to the Miyose Ohana. As Lilo and Stich would tell us, “Ohana is family…it means no one is left behind.” Though I may be more than a thousand miles away from you all, I’ve never felt disconnected from my family. To my siblings Brandy, Dane, and Bryson, though we may all have found our different paths in life that make us happy, we know they all converge at one point, home. Home is definitely where the heart is, where support thrives, and where love survives. To my nieces Kylee and Aubrey, who would have known that a boy from the small town of Hilo, Hawai‘i could have accomplished his dreams of getting a Master’s degree? I hope that this thesis inspires you to continually work at achieving your dreams, because anything is possible. As I learned from this journey, whatever you want to do with your life, the Miyose Ohana will have your back.

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Boys Over Flowers Characters

Jan Di
Ga Eul
Jun Pyo
Ji Hoo
Yi Jeong

Love Myths Portrayed in Boys Over Flowers

Myth # 1: Your perfect partner is cosmically predestined, so nothing/nobody can ultimately separate you.
Myth # 5: To attract and keep a man, a woman should look like a model or a centerfold.
Myth # 6: The man should not be shorter, weaker, younger, poorer, or less successful than the woman.
Myth # 7: The love of a good and faithful true woman can change a man from a beast into a “prince.”
Myth # 8: Bickering and fighting a lot means that a man and a woman really love each other passionately.
Myth # 9: All you really need is love, so it doesn’t matter if you and your lover have very different values.
Myth # 10: The right mate “completes you”—filling your needs and making your dreams come true.

Love Prescriptions in Boys Over Flowers

Prescription # 1: Consider countless candidates.
Prescription # 3: Communicate courageously.

Elements of the Romantic Utopia in Boys Over Flowers

Glamour and elegance are attributes of romance, such as buying jewelry, wearing fancy clothes, and buying gifts for each other.
Intimacy and romance are associated with participating in activities that involve spending money.

Additional Theme: Love is Sink or Swim

CHAPTER FIVE: Discussion

Portrayals of Love and Romance: Myths and Prescriptions

Myth # 1: Your perfect partner is cosmically predestined, so nothing/nobody can ultimately separate you.
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CHAPTER ONE: Introduction and Literature Review

Romantic love is complex. As Galician (2004) asserted, the concept of love has intrigued many social critics and relational therapists, and has led them to accuse the mass media of perpetuating unrealistic notions of romance that are unattainable for a healthy, successful, and satisfying relationship. Ignatieff (1988) suggested that romantic love has been taken prisoner by discourse and has become a dead artifact of an overwritten, over-interpreted culture. Others may beg to differ, suggesting that notions of love are heavily intertwined within societal ideology, to the point that the phrase “what is love?” was the most searched phrase on Google in 2012 (Al-Kalili, Perry, Baggini, Moyes, & Wybourne, 2012). Conceptualizations of romantic love are so pervasive in the media that it is argued that love itself is a new form of religion (Beck & Beck-Gernsheim, 1995; Illouz, 1997).

Romantic love is a multifaceted and intricate concept that has had a longstanding relationship with the mass media. This relationship, however, is hazardous to those who go well beyond mere enjoyment and believe the unrealistic notions as perpetuated on screen. Unrealistic expectations of sex, love, and romance are a primary cause of relationship dissatisfaction among real couples (Galician, 2004). It is important to view media artifacts in order to examine what the media propose as “true” love, and the scope in which it is portrayed. It is also imperative to critically analyze media sources in order to gain knowledge of how to counter unhealthy notions of romance.

Culture affects how people define love, how susceptible they are to love, with whom they fall in love, and how love within their relationships would be embraced (Fehr, 1993; Hatfield & Rapson, 1996). Past research suggests that individualistic cultures, such
as the United States, and collectivistic cultures, like South Korea, are contrasting examples of the importance people in each culture place on love. Whereas passionate love is highly emphasized in individualistic cultures, in collectivistic cultures, where strong kinship is greatly valued, passionate relationships are often viewed as negative because they may disrupt the tradition of family approved, arranged marriages (Nyrop, 1985; Skolnick, 1996).

In East Asian societies, such as Korea, where the Confucianist social order is seen as a deep-rooted social and cultural force, discussions of modernity and modernization have often revolved around the tension between the spread of individualism and liberalism that comes with modernization and contact with the West. Popular television dramas in these societies provide a public imaginary space where this tension is played out. Popular TV romance dramas in particular can serve as a window to the ways in which modern and, in particular, Western, hegemonic portrayals of love seem to overpower the traditional ideals of Confucian familialism (Lin, 2002). Yet, Western hegemonic notions of romance may be harmful to relational success and satisfaction (Galician, 2004).

Due to recent social changes, Koreans may now experience a more Westernized view of love. Korea has experienced very rapid social change in the last decade, resulting in a broad and rapid Westernization in thinking and behavior (Kim & Hatfield, 2004). This is especially true in terms of adoption of a more liberal attitude toward sexuality. The divorce rate in Korea is rising, a sharply increasing number of people are practicing premarital sex, and traditional arranged marriages are disappearing (Kim & Hatfield, 2004). As contended by Chuang and Lee (2013), in terms of Korean drama and culture,
there has been a large Western cultural influence. The Korean film industry adopted a “learning from Hollywood” model, but added its own characteristics to create a Western-Korean hybrid.

Korean dramas typically present a scenario in which strong mutual love and desire between two people come into conflict with existing sociocultural values (Lin, 2002). The kkonminam (Flower Boy) genre in particular caters to young women between the ages of 14-30, and focuses mainly on the romantic lives of young adults, making it a prime genre to analyze regarding Korean portrayals of modern love and romance (Jung, 2010). As Sternberg (1998) provides an overview of the history of romantic love, he uses Jung’s theory of universal archetypes. This theory asserts that beliefs and notions of sex, love, and romance seem to be universally identifiable. For example, the Cinderella folktale has variations worldwide. From the French version of Cinderella, to the Russian Vassilissa, to the Korean Kongjwi and Patjwi, all have different storylines, yet come to the same romantic conclusion: that love is predestined (Sternberg, 1998). Jung’s idea of collective unconsciousness suggested that archetypes are conceptual patterns that garner individuals’ beliefs. These patterns, though conceived individually, are universal in nature. Thus, people’s conceptions of myths and religions are all similar to each other (Sternberg, 1998). This offers the idea that different cultures’ conceptions of love are actually similar to one another, creating a universal understanding of love.

The current study uses Galician’s (2004) myths of hegemonic portrayals of love and romance, as perpetuated in the media, to see if common themes of Westernized “status quo” love can be detected in South Korean media, specifically in Korean dramas. Though Galician’s love myths are used to analyze United States (“American”) media, a
highly individualistic culture, research conducted by Kim and Hatfield (2004) suggests that the cultivation of love types in Korean culture, which is highly collectivistic, is similar to the cultivation of love typologies in Westernized countries. As explanation for such results, Kim and Hatfield (2004) suggested that modern Korean culture stems from its Westernization.

The current study proposes to examine how love and romance is portrayed in Korean dramas, particularly in the Flower Boy genre, and will do so by examining two Korean dramas, Boys Over Flowers and Flower Boy, Ramen Shop. The Flower Boy genre was chosen because its target audience is young adults between the ages of 15-30, with a majority of its audience girls between the ages of 15-25. Another reason why this particular genre was chosen to be the focus of this study is that the Flower Boy genre focuses on romantic relationships of young adults, who are exploring and discovering themselves in the process.

Through this study, I hope to add to the body of knowledge on hegemony within the media broadly, and to previous literature on hegemonic ideals of love and romance specifically. Also, I hope to add to the narrow literature on cross-cultural perceptions of love and romance, and whether or not love is truly a universal language that is either portrayed as mainly realistic or unrealistic, or a balance of the two. Ultimately, this study will examine ideas of romance in the media with the main objective to learn what unrealistic portrayals present themselves in the Korean drama, a form of mass media targeted at a younger audience whose views and expectations on love and romantic relationships are still forming, and to offer alternative depictions that show how to better attain relationship satisfaction and success.
The Weeds of Fantasy: Cultural Hegemony

The Italian Marxist philosopher Antonio Gramsci was profoundly interested in the relationship between culture and power under Italian capitalism (Lears, 1985). From his analysis, Gramsci concluded that culture industries reinforce capitalist ideals among the subaltern, or subcultures, through the subaltern’s implicit consent of these ideas within existing society, thereby establishing a socio-psychological basis for social integration (Kellner, 1989). Instead of persuading citizens through the use of fear and force, Italy’s citizens from 1900 to 1930 were exposed subliminally to the values of the dominating class through the consumption of materials and goods. Gramsci argued that capitalist societies sustained their domination and power not only through the coercive abilities of the state, but also through the cultural and ideological processes that engage and secure popular consent (Carragee, 1993). Through Gramsci’s extensive observations of Italian society, the seeds of hegemony theory were planted.

Though none of Gramsci’s translated writings contain a precise definition of hegemony, a few excerpts have come close. For example, from his Selections from the Prison Notebooks, characteristics of cultural hegemony are observed as “the spontaneous consent given by the great masses of the population to the general direction imposed on social life by the dominant fundamental group…caused by the prestige which the dominant group enjoys because of its position and function in the world of production” (Gramsci, 1971 translated by Hoare & Smith). From this, hegemony is viewed as the subordination of lower classes to a particular ideology, and is structured around political and cultural power (Lull, 1995). But the concept of hegemony is not as simple as evaluating a society based upon the “haves” and the “have-nots.” In particular, the study
of hegemony examines the method of gaining and maintaining power by a group of social and political elites (Lull, 1995).

According to Gramsci, the power elite and those within the working class are in constant struggle with one another, forming a dialectic between the dominant power and resistance to the dominant power. In this case, hegemonic portrayals are indefinite and evolve over time, incorporating opposing ideas from resisting groups (Carragee, 1993). Hegemony, then, is a process of continuous creation and re-creation. It cannot fully encapsulate what the status quo is, but is malleable in that it leaves room for counter expressions (Adamson, 1973). Hegemony results from competing ideologies that try to win over individuals holding counter-ideologies, as well as to secure its ideals as being common (Hall, 1977). Hall (1985) articulated that hegemony allows room for some variance of the dominant ideology: hegemony is open enough to adapt and take in opposing ideals to create an evolved dominant ideology. Ono and Sloop (1992) explained it as “two sides of the same coin…each maintains a separate space, is used at different times and for different purposes…freedom for one person is domination for another” (p. 50). As this quote suggests, domination and resistance should be considered as interrelated (Zompetti, 1997). Thus, hegemony should be viewed from a dialectical manner of domination and resistance (Mumby, 1997).

Hegemony is not a direct stimulation of thought or action, but instead a framing of all definitions of reality within the range of the dominant group’s domain. The existing power structure has the authority to set the limits of what is considered to be valuable (Hall, 1977). Hegemony undergoes consistent maintenance to ensure that its ideas continue to be the status quo. Because of this, hegemony embodies the idea of a
generalized common sense, which in turn shapes how people define their world (Carragee, 1993). According to Gramsci’s model of hegemony, producing and stabilizing ideas that are common sense occur on two levels, civil society and the political (Mumby, 1997). Civil society is where hegemony has the strongest potential to influence. Here, institutions such as religion, the mass media, the family, and the education system function as vessels of hegemony (Mumby, 1997). If dominant ideas are to be accepted as being taken-for-granted common sense, it must be reproduced in all activities within basic social units, such as the family, leisure, and the workplace (Lull, 1995). These ideas must be, therefore, intertwined not just within the culture industry, or any cultural vessel such as films, magazines, newspaper, leisure products, but within every facet of culture as a whole. How effective it is as the prevailing ideology depends on the extent to which people adhere to those ideas. This being the case, it is imperative that these ideas are meshed subliminally into every vehicle of cultural consumption (Williams, 1976). On the level of the state, its purpose is mainly to function as a medium of coercion for a system of beliefs, accomplished through the implementation of laws. These values are protected and enforced by well-trained groups such as the police, the army, and the judicial system (Mumby, 1997).

Gramsci (1973) argued that the link between the political state and civic state is not linear, but circular, in that each realm assists the other. On one hand, the state uses coercion to control the masses in conforming to the rules and regulations as created by that particular government. On the other hand, these rules and regulations are conveyed in civil society via schools, churches, and other social institutions (Gramsci, 1973). The constant reinforcement of the dominant ideology then reaffirms the power and authority
of the state. Each sphere renews and helps to reinforce the other. Control over language and discourse, therefore, is an imperative asset to those who control the state, being that language and discourse greatly aid in the understanding of a person’s world (Gramsci, 1971). The common themes that are perpetuated in civil society by the dominant groups help to frame an individual’s cultural understanding. Social institutions constantly embed notions of “common sense” values and beliefs into their structure and organizational patterns. Hegemony, then, implies that there is an implicit agreement by people to be governed by laws and regulations that they believe operate in their best interest, even though they might not (Lull, 1995).

Though hegemony seems all-encompassing, imposing an adverse cynical view of society, hegemony is fragile. In order to ensure the dominance of a set group of beliefs among citizens, it is in a constant process of renewal and reassertion. Hegemony is non-static, and what was the dominant ideology fifty years ago has evolved and adapted to the socio-historical contexts of today. Hall (1985) noted that because the nature of hegemony is not permanent, counter-ideologies regularly appear in the cracks and seams of dominant principles. Condit (1989) suggested that instead of messages being polysemous, people employ a level of polyvalence. This is a process where everyone receives the same message, but evaluates the meanings of those messages differently, based on their personal values. The preferred meaning of the message may be the dominant one, but if it does not align with the consumers’ own personal values, they will resist it. In viewing the audience member to have some sense of agency, hegemony presumes a possibility of resistance (Dow, 1996). Since ideology can never be definite, audience interpretations of media messages have the ability to silence hegemonic cultural myths. Counter-
hegemonic tendencies can be formulated from interpreting the dominant discourse and morphing it into discourse that runs against the grains of common culture (Lull, 1995).

The culture industry endorses and sustains hegemonic ideals, as well as makes a profit, by what Adorno (1977/1991) labeled as wish-fulfillment. Here, images within the media serve to fulfill the wishes of the people. This may sound like a pleasant action carried out by the culture industry, but one problem remains: people no longer know how to wish, or what they should wish for. Thus, the wishes that the media fulfill are colonized and corrupted (Cook, 1996). The media evoke the possibility of happiness through consumerism, yet this is all the happiness that is allowed, a spark of pseudo-liberation (Adorno, 1977/1991). Happiness is evoked and refused all at the same time. Wish-fulfillment provides a means of catharsis for people, but one that serves to keep people’s conformity to the current society (Cook, 1996).

The culture industry also serves as an instrument of social control, which entices people to accept and conform to the notions and ideas of existing society (Horkheimer & Adorno, 1944/1972). The power of the culture industry lies in the products that they sell, which encourage conformity and consensus. This in turn ensures obedience to authority and the stability of monopoly capitalism. Though profitable for the industry, the result can be detrimental to the individual, suggesting the decline of individual autonomy, and the manipulation of the mind by mass media sources (Kellner, 1989).

**Galician’s Love Myths**

Romantic love’s historical emergence and function has been widely contested within the social sciences and media studies, and it is difficult to clarify whether or not theorists refer to romantic love as a state of mind, social practice, narrative, or discursive
action (Brown, 2006). The historical emergence of the romantic narrative cannot be separated from the historical appearance and rise of the sense of self, because romantic love is an outcome of choice and self-definition (Brown, 2006). In modern cultures, love is viewed as an experience that has the ability to overcome any difficulty (Sternberg, 1998).

The idea of courtly love began around the 12th century and remnants are preserved through the media today. A popular understanding of courtly love is the idea of a knight’s loves for a noble but inaccessible lady (Brown, 2006). This is a love that cannot be gained, and thus facilitates an unrealistic ideology of what is wanted, but not expected. The key idea that love was viewed as an intense, passionate relationship that unites a man and a woman became the hegemonic standard, and continues even in today’s expectations (Hendricks & Hendricks, 1992). Courtly love eventually led to a movement in the late 18th and early 19th centuries labeled Romanticism. In many ways, romanticism was an extension of courtly love. Here romantic love further developed the concept of sexual love as an ideal for which all men and women were to strive for (Hendricks & Hendricks, 1992). The romantic love story of that time offers fantasy resolutions to present circumstances, and the consumption of it by today’s audience is an expressive outlet from the daily norm (Brown, 2006). Simply put, the romantic love story contains loosely drawn characters to allow its audiences to fill them up with their identifications and needs. These ambiguous ideas of love and romance give relationships false beliefs of what a healthy relationship really should be like. The mass media are regarded as an agent of primary socialization, alongside family, peers, and education (Galician, 2004). People, especially those younger in age, will learn by modeling their
behavior of mediated people or fictional characters, by imitating and identifying with them. Children can learn social roles and behaviors solely by watching fictional or real models that are conveyed through the media (Galician, 2004).

With the historical emergence of romantic love determined and explained, Galician (2004) offers twelve hegemonic love myths that are prevalent in the mass media portrayals of romantic relationships. Ten of Galician’s myths relate to the way romance is portrayed in mass media. First is the idea that one’s perfect partner is predestined, and nothing can hinder or change that connection between the two people (Galician, 2004). This myth originated in ancient times with the idea that somewhere in the world, a person has a missing half. As suggested by Whitehead and Popenoe’s (2001) study focusing on young adults’ opinions of marriage, an overwhelming 94% of never married singles held this view of partnerships. Further, most agreed that they intended to stay single until they met that perfect person (Whitehead & Popenoe, 2001). The second myth of romantic relationships, conveyed in the media, is the idea that there is such thing as love at first sight. Leaning off of the ideas of evolutionary psychology theory that primitive men needed to be visually oriented to be good hunters and protectors, this myth suggests that encountering love at first sight is a physical experience (Galician, 2004). This idea, though, relates more to the concept that people first sense lust and physical attraction in the other person, instead of love. A third myth is the idea that partners should be able to know what each other is thinking and feeling without telling each other (Galician, 2004). This idea of mind reading as an ability that all partners should acquire is irrational and dysfunctional. Instead, effective communication skills should be emphasized. The fourth myth contends that sex within a relationship should be easy and wonderful. This view of
sex is not really a concept of love, but one of perfection, an image of sex as unrelated to any negative consequence, such as pregnancy or venereal disease (Galician, 2004).

Galician’s fifth love myth suggests that in order to attract a man the woman needs to look highly attractive. Her sixth myth suggests that a man needs to be more powerful and dominating than the woman. These ideas provides a false dichotomy for both the male and the female in the sense that they are shown that in order to attract the opposite sex they need to abide by those gendered rules. If those rules are not followed the consequences can also be viewed in the media, by the example of being a “loser” or a “nobody” (Galician, 2004). As suggested by Wolf (1991), these rigid standards assist in the person’s own oppression by strictly adhering to these rituals, leaving a chasm between agency and alienation. Love and faith by the woman partner has the ability to change the male partner from mean and abusive to a kind and loving person is the seventh myth. This idea has led women to stay in continuously abusive relationships, thinking that if she just loved her man more, he will become better. This also applies to men who love abusive women. Unfortunately, the opposite occurs and the woman just gets abused on a constant basis, leaving her to think that it is her own fault that her partner is the way that he is (Galician, 2004).

Galician offers an eighth love myth that is seen in the media; it asserts that constant fighting means that each individual within that relationship really loves the other. Experts see constant conflict as a sign of danger that accurately predicts the high likelihood that the relationship will prove to be dissatisfying and result in failure (Galician, 2004). Myths nine and ten coincide with each other. Nine states, “all you need is love,” rather than anything else in common. Myth ten suggests that the right soulmate
will complete one’s life. Although optimistic in nature, these ideas are too superficial to garner real success in a relationship. They overlook the idea of homogamy (shared values and background) and compatibility, and suggest that the only reason to live is to have a relationship. Nothing else matters, such as having a career and family, or material needs (Galician, 2004).

To summarize, Galician (2004) poses 12 love myths about people’s beliefs of the media. Ten of the love myths directly focus on unrealistic notions of romance:

1. Your perfect partner is cosmically predestined, so nothing/nobody can ultimately separate you.
2. There’s such thing as love at first sight.
3. Your true soulmate should know what you’re thinking or feeling (without your having to tell).
4. If your partner is truly meant for you, sex is easy and wonderful.
5. To attract and keep a man, a woman should look like a model or a centerfold.
6. The man should not be shorter, weaker, younger, poorer, or less successful than the woman.
7. The love of a good and faithful true woman can change a man from a beast into a “prince.”
8. Bickering and fighting a lot means that a man and a woman really love each other passionately.
9. All you really need is love, so it doesn't matter if you and your lover have very different values.
The right mate “completes you” – filling your needs and making your dreams come true (Galician, 2004, pp. 55 & 225).

**Realistic Models of Love and Romance**

Romantic love in a realistic sense can be referred to as the expression of affection, both physical and emotional, that offers pleasure and satisfaction to its participants (Firestone, Firestone & Catlett, 2006). Furthermore, it is compassion and sensitivity to the needs of the other person, combined with shared activities and possessions. Lastly, it is the honest exchange of personal feelings that offers concern, comfort, and assistance for the other’s goals and aspirations.

Sternberg (2006) asserted that what best represents genuine love are qualities of intimacy, passion, and commitment or decision-making. These three concepts serve as the bases for Sternberg’s (1998) Triangular Theory of Love. Each component can be accumulated to varying degrees, but only the combination of all three proves to produce the most satisfying outcome. Intimacy refers to the feelings of closeness and connectedness in a relationship. Ten clusters of intimacy include: (a) the desire to promote the welfare of the other; (b) experiencing happiness with the other; (c) holding high regard for each person in the relationship; (d) being able to count on the other person in times of need; (e) mutual understanding; (f) sharing one’s possessions with the loved one; (g) receiving emotional support; (h) gaining emotional support; (i) intimate communication with each other; and (j) valuing the loved one (Sternberg, 2006). Passion refers to the drives and desires that leads to romance, physical attraction, and sexual consummation. Decision-making or commitment is the short-and long-term decision to be in that relationship, and the commitment to stay in the relationship. A mixed
combination of the three components gives the potential for eight different kinds of love: nonlove, liking, infatuation, empty love, romantic love, companionate love, fatuous love, and consummate love. Most important is having a balance of all three components to produce consummate love (Sternberg, 1998). It is the idea of sharing the feeling of emotional and physical connectedness, while at the same time showing long-term commitment to each other and each other’s goals.

Another realistic model focuses on the role of friendship and communication within the intimacy component. Gottman (1999) contends that communication, negotiation, and conflict resolution are keys to a successful romantic relationship. Couples who are very dissatisfied with their relationship usually engage in more negative discourses than positive. Thus, in order to gain satisfaction within one’s relationship, communication must be complementary to each individual (Gottman, 1999). The most important strategy to find relationship balance, and to avoid turbulence is to increase positive interactions. Seven principles can be used as guidelines. First, each person should take the time to get to know the likes, dislikes, and dreams of the other. Second, they should focus on the positive qualities and optimistic times with their partner instead of the negative. Next, each person within the relationship should interact frequently with each other, on more than superficial terms (Gottman, 1999). The remaining four principles are (1) communication, (2) negotiation, (3) conflict resolution guidelines, and (4) creating shared meanings. Each person should share power in the relationship. Next, they should solve problems as swiftly as possible. Third, each person needs to overcome gridlock by understanding each other’s feelings that are preventing the issue from being solved. Finally, both individuals should create common values, attitudes, and interests
(Gottman, 1999).

Hendrix’s (1992) idea of imago suggests another realistic model for romantic relationships. The notion of unrealistic love is that people are looking for someone to complete them. They seek for the projection of their missing self, and expect the other person to fulfill that missing piece of their lives. This attempt to get what is missing through another rarely occurs, and just brings emptiness to that person (Hendrix, 1992). Instead, people must do the work to find their missing self on their own. Only they have the capacity to fulfill what is missing. Once this is gained, one may find another person, not as a missing piece, but as an extra positive addition. Once two individuals who are healthy and happy on their own find another who is at the same level, the relationship becomes productive and satisfying (Hendrix, 1992). These models are more realistic in terms of garnering a satisfactory romantic relationship, but are seldom portrayed in the media, over the more fantasy driven unrealistic models.

Galician’s (2004) prescriptions directly counter each of the aforementioned ten myths. Instead of believing in the idea that romantic partners are predestined, each person should adopt the idea that in order to find a compatible partner one should consider dating more than one person. Counter to the idea that “love at first sight” exists, instead of committing to the relationship right away each person should get to know the other more. People cannot read minds, so to believe that each person within a romantic relationship should know what each other thinks or feels is unreasonable. Instead, communicating what each person wants will directly tell the other what is expected. Opposite to the myth that a strong relationship means that “sex is easy and wonderful,” sex is not the only element of a successful relationship, but commitment and intimacy are
needed.

To oppose Galician’s love myths # 5 and # 6 (strong heteronormative gender roles such as women should just look attractive and men should be “better” than their female partner), prescriptions to these myths suggest that looks are not everything, and that equality should be sought more than difference (Galician, 2004). Instead of believing that one’s love can change the other person, a more healthy idea is that the only person that one can change is oneself. On those lines, if a couple fights continuously, it doesn’t mean real love; rather, it most likely indicates the partners are not compatible (Galician, 2004).

Myth # 9 states that love is the only thing that a relationship needs, but the prescription to this myth asserts that common values are also necessary for the relationship’s success. Myth # 10 persuades the audience that the right soulmate completes a person. However, the prescription to this myth argues that only you can complete yourself. To summarize, Galician’s (2004) love prescriptions are:

1. Consider Countless Candidates
2. Consult your Calendar and Count Carefully
3. Communicate Courageously
4. Concentrate on Commitment and Constancy
5. Cherish Completeness in Companions (not just the Cover)
6. Create Coequality; Cooperate
7. Cease Correcting and Controlling; you Can’t Change others (only yourself)
8. Courtesy Counts; Constant Conflicts Create Chaos
9. Crave Common Core-Values
The Romantic Utopia

Illouz (1997) suggested that people’s standards of romance appear within class struggles over the meanings of consumption, intimacy, and technologies of leisure. She further asserted that this intersection between the romantic standard and consumption is produced by two processes: the romanticization of commodities and the commodification of romance. The romanticization of commodities refers to the way in which commodities obtained a romantic characteristic in 21st century media. The commodification of romance concerns the ways in which romantic practices became defined as the consumption of leisure, through images created by the culture industry (Illouz, 1997).

Products bought for their romantic inspiration are consumed on two separate, but intertwined, levels. First, the product purchased is consumed for what it is, a product that was advertised. This is termed candid consumption (Illouz, 1997). This serves as a manifest function of capitalism, to consume the product as a product. The next level of consumption achieves a latent function of consumption of products from the culture industry. The activity in which a couple is engaged, which often occurs within the consumption of leisure, is never made explicit as a function of the culture industry. This is termed oblique consumption (Illouz, 1997). Most images in “romantic” media show well-dressed couples engaging in leisure activities, which presents an image that this is what it looks like to be intimate and “in love.” According to critical scholars, acts of oblique consumption fetishize romance, concealing the fact that consumption of the product is economic, while promoting that it is necessary for social relations (Illouz, 1997).

People are interested in consumption of products that convey a romantic notion
because the products contain attributes that define romance as something that is consumed. Thus, the media portray what is called a romantic utopia (Illouz, 1997). Kilbourne (1999) asserts that “advertising often sells a great deal more than products. It sells values, images, and concepts of love and sexuality, romance, success, and perhaps most important, normalcy” (p. 74). To a great extent romantic notions within the media tell the audience what love is.

Illouz (1997) argues that there are three attributes that are used to normalize and naturalize romantic activities presented for oblique consumption. First, products are shown to have a glamorous and elegant feeling when one is consuming them. Here the consumer is given the idea that luxury is essential to love. Second, images are usually associated with the idea that romance is intense and exciting, yet natural at the same time (Bachen & Illouz, 1996; Illouz, 1997). The audience sees images of couples taking a drive through the countryside, or enjoying a meal on a yacht, or even taking a hike on an exotic island. This aligns well with the first attribute of the romantic utopia, that, in order to enjoy the excitement of nature, spending money is required. The last attribution given to the oblique consumption of the romantic utopia is that it promotes the idea that intimacy and romance are associated with doing something together, where money needs to be spent (Bachen & Illouz, 1996; Illouz, 1997). Love is seen as going to the movies, dancing, going out to dinner or other consumer-based activities, but rarely is it portrayed as staying home and conversing with one another. These attributions suggest that love and romance are highly intertwined with leisure and free time.

To summarize, three major elements of Illouz’s romantic utopia are as followed:

(a) Glamour and elegance are attributes of romance, such as buying jewelry, wearing
fancy clothes, and buying gifts for each other.

(b) Romance involves intensity and excitement which are usually associated with nature and travel.

(c) Intimacy and romance are associated with participating in activities that involve spending money (Illouz, 1997 p. 68).

Literature examining unrealistic and realistic portrayals of love and romance in the media is deep and broad (Bachen & Illouz, 1996; Bramlett-Solomon, 2007; Busli & Ocana, 2007; Engstrom, 2007; Galloway, 2013; Natharius, 2007; Shelley, 2007).

Galloway’s (2013) study of the effects of romantic comedy viewership on audience perceptions of love and romance suggests that more frequent viewing of this genre of media tends to be positively correlated with holding more idealized conceptualizations of love. Bachen and Illouz’s (1996) study suggested that children and teenagers tend to ruminate about a romantic utopia that is shown in the romantic genre of television and within advertisements. Through these depictions children tend to think that romance should be wild and involve excitement, money, and extravagance (Bachen & Illouz, 1996). Johnson’s (2007) textual analysis of popular wedding films concluded that the media represent the wedding process as being completely stress-free as long as “love” is the focal point. As long as there is love, the media depict weddings to be everything that both the husband and wife could imagine, without having to hinder them financially (Johnson, 2007). Though abundant work focuses on how love and romance are depicted in the media, a search on EBSCO Host and Google Scholar using terms “K-drama,” “romance,” “love,” “Korean television,” and “hegemony” reveals no published studies on love and romance depicted in the Korean dramas. This study proposes to expand the
research on love and romance to the Flower Boy genre of the Korean drama.

**Korean Culture: Beliefs on Love and Marriage**

The traditional family in Korea reacts to the pressures of industrialization differently from Western countries, in that the family remains the core of a person’s life. Individuals, under the leadership of the patriarch, are protected from the weaknesses of national policy, as long as they stay loyal to the family (Kong, 2013). The *Sam-Kang-Oh-Ryun* (the three Fundamental Laws and Five Moral Laws) has influenced Korean socio-political society as the dominant ideology, for most of the country’s history (Kim & Hahn, 2006). It has also influenced the family system, philosophy, and lifestyles of its society. The Three Fundamental Laws and Five Moral Laws are:

- The king is the mainstay of the state
- The father is mainstay of the son
- The husband is the mainstay of the wife
- Between father and son, *chin* (friendship)
- Between king and courtier, *eui* (righteousness)
- Between husband and wife, *pyul* (deference)
- Between old and young, *saw* (degree)
- Between friends, *shin* (faith) (Kim & Hahn, 2006).

The *Sam-Kang-Oh-Ryun* as a whole shows a vertical relationship between men and women, creating a gender division between the two. The relationship between husband and wife is based on strict prejudice against women, resulting in their lowered status (Kong, 2013). According to Confucian teachings, a woman is required to obey her father, husband, and even son. Additionally, a woman is considered an outsider from her
biological family once she marries. Also, she is considered an outsider from her husband’s family, until she produces a son to keep the lineage (Kong, 2013). This creates a never-ending cycle of oppression for her, because by producing a son, she is then considered subordinate to that child.

Using Confucian beliefs, South Korean society is an extension of the family. There are concrete roles and statuses for men and women within the household and this idea extends into mainstream culture (Kim & Hahn, 2006). Confucian patriarchy later transformed into modern industrialized patriarchy, which adopted the normative Western dichotomy of gender roles into its dominant gender ideology (Moon, 2002). Men were expected to work outside of the home and be the household’s sole breadwinner, while women were expected to be domestic housewives. The practice of a man’s ability as the principal income-earner of the family validated his authority and power within the household, so that a man’s earnings became an indicator of his manliness.

Hahm (2003) writes of the decline of arranged marriages in favor of marriage for love as a growing value for Korea’s younger generation. The proportion of what she calls “love marriages” has increased from 36% to 55% in the late 20th century (Hahm, 2003). Based on this information, there is a contrast between traditional Korean marriages as a union of two families, and modern Korean marriage as a union of two individuals founded on love. In South Korea the transition from arranged marriage to love marriage resembles other narratives elsewhere (Ahearn, 2001; Giddens, 1990). In the case of Korea, changes in the economic system and open access to employment and education are seen as more important to status than traditional Confucian ideals of familial ties. Thus, individual choice, free from familial constraint, enables the formation of marriages
based on love rather than tradition (Kim, 1998). Such changes are similar to those in Western families, in that this trend is seen as a product of industrial capitalism (Hahm, 2003).

Giddens (1992) believes that in modernity the “self” is born out of romantic love. For Korea, the dominant narrative within Korean modernization is the slow decline of patriarchal inequalities of the traditional family, together with the traditional Confucian practices that enforced them (Kim, 1998). Women’s participation in the public sphere is seen as replicating that of Western countries within a briefer time frame (Kim, 1998). The arrival of global pressure, represented by the International Monetary Fund bailout in 1997, showed the magnitude of gender inequality within Korea. Women workers were quickly dismissed from the workforce, making popular a shift in the representation of IMF from the International Monetary Fund to “I Am Fired” (Cho, 2013). The hegemonic idea that males are to be the breadwinners, along with the IMF crisis, created a regression in gender relationships within Korean society. In almost all industries, rates of female layoffs were significantly higher than for males. For example, in large firms with over 500 employees, the layoff rate for women was almost 1.5 times higher than for men (Presidential Commission on Women’s Affairs, 1999).

Decades of significant gender inequality in the workplace, combined with the patriarchal idea that a woman’s position should be secondary to men, resulted in the notion of a softer male image (Maliangkay, 2010). Not only would this counter-hegemonic masculinity aid in creating a more androgynous male, it also has the potential to make the opposite sex look more powerful, bringing both sexes closer to a level of egalitarianism (Maliangkay, 2010).
Among the changing views on marriage is the attitude toward pre-marital sex. Although there is still some adherence to the traditional value that women should remain “pure” before marriage, more and more individuals within South Korea accept the idea that it is okay to have sex before marriage if it is with someone that they love (Hahm, 2003). By the 1990s more than twice as many people said that they approved of sex before marriage, noted Hahm (2003), who surveyed Korean citizens, asking when they first had sex. Although 45% stated that they had sex after getting married, a surprising 31.6% stated that they had sex before marriage. The survey also showed that the younger the respondents, the higher likelihood that they had sex before marriage, while older respondents reported that they were more likely to marry before having sex, suggesting what Hahm (2003) refers to as a Korean “sexual revolution.”

There also has been a notable weakening of biases against divorce, remarriage, and living together. Korean society traditionally took a negative view upon premarital cohabitation. Recently, however, attitudes over this idea have changed to the extent that six out of ten Korean university students see premarital cohabitation as a prerequisite for a successful marriage. Also, during the time of that survey, 5% of the college students reported that they lived with a member of the opposite sex (Hahm, 2003).

The IMF economic crisis in 1997 sparked criticism against the Confucian “family head” ideology, according to which the family head was responsible for the livelihood of the family (Cho, 2013). Since then, double-income families are gradually becoming the new norm. All these indications of change in the way Korean society views sex, family roles, and gender norms created a cultural moment ripe for a new contemporary view of love and romance.
The Soil of Cultivation: The Korean Drama and Hallyu

Previous research on Korean dramas has focused on the Hallyu, or “Korean Wave,” and its influence on East Asian transnationalism (Iwabuchi, 2013; Jung, 2011; Kavoori, 2013; Kuwahara, 2014; Nye & Kim, 2013), and how the Korean culture industry has become, and remains, a dominant force in East Asian capitalism and consumerism (Hirata, 2008; Ju, 2014; Lee, 2013; Shim, 2008). Research also has focused on gender in Korean television dramas, especially portrayals of femininity and feminist values depicted by women characters (Kim, 2005; Ma, 2007; Park, 2003). The Korean drama is a form of episodic television, which usually airs during primetime hours (Lee, 2014). Korean dramas include historical epics, mystery thrillers, and popular romantic comedies. A majority of the contemporary dramas occur in metropolitan settings, in or close to Seoul (Lee, 2014). In contrast to American soap operas, the Korean drama usually airs biweekly, for 30 minutes to one hour each, over several months before reaching a definitive ending (Lee, 2014).

The penetration of Korean TV dramas into East Asian markets in the late 1990s is partly due to the International Monetary Fund economic crisis. While the crisis hit hard in Korea, it also greatly affected other East Asian economies, resulting in the other countries looking for cheaper programs than more expensive Japanese dramas (Huat & Iwabuchi, 2008). This led to the rapid increase in Korea’s entertainment industry so that more dramas could be exported to neighboring countries, except for Japan, creating the so-called Hallyu, or “Korean Wave” (Huat & Iwabuchi, 2008). Korean dramas were not only cheap, but they were well made and easy to identify with by other East Asian countries such as Japan, China, and Thailand. Confucian values of strong family ties and
modest sexuality, such as hugs and soft kisses on the cheek, made television companies feel comfortable enough to continually buy dramas from Korea’s culture industry in other East Asian countries (Russell, 2008).

The *Hallyu* was regarded by the Korean government as a phenomenal success in the midst of an economic crisis. Motivated by the film industry’s ability to export its products, the government designated “cultural technology,” or technologies that produce TV dramas, films, and pop music, as one of the six key technologies that should drive the Korean economy into the 21st century (Shim, 2008). The government also pledged substantial financial investment and administrative support to Korean film companies, establishing the Korea Culture and Content Agency in 2001, with a budget of $90 million for that year (Ministry of Culture and Tourism, 2001). The Ministry of Culture and Tourism even hosts an annual international content market event that is reported to attract about 3,500 buyers, investors, and other media professionals from around the world. In 2005, domestic producers were estimated to have made about $15-million worth of sales during this four-day event (Shim, 2008).

The Korean wave reached its peak in 2004, with *Winter Sonata* (2002), a popular Korean melodrama. Following the 2002 FIFA World Cup, relations between Japan and South Korea were warmer than usual, and a dialogue of cultural exchange started (Russell, 2008). Japan first broadcast *Winter Sonata* in 2003, and has aired it four times due to its popularity (Kim, 2013). The show has been so successful in Japan that all four broadcasts gained a 20% increase in audience, landing it in the weekly top-ten viewed shows (Russell, 2008). Also, almost 40% of the entire Japanese population has seen the drama at least once (Kim, 2013). Thus, Korean TV dramas have been the major driving
force of the Korean wave, accounting for about 90% of the total TV exports, an estimated $252-million in 2011 (Ministry of Culture and Tourism, 2013). The number of TV dramas that have been exported has drastically increased from $5.5-million in 1995 to $28.8-million in 2002, and to $133-million in 2010 (Kim, 2013).

This is not to say that Korean dramas are not enjoyed within Korea itself. The television drama has been the focal point of television among Korean audiences. For example, on the annual lists of top-ten television programs with the highest audience ratings, usually five or six have been television dramas (Lee, 2005). Many Korean television dramas record ratings of more than a 30% share of the market, where the big three networks (SBS, MBC, & KBS) air as many as 30 television dramas per week (Shim, 2008). With such an overarching spread that Korean dramas have around the world, though predominantly in East Asia, they have the potential to shape perceptions of copious viewers.

**The Flower Boy (Kkonminam)**

Part of the allure of the Korean wave was an overabundance of media outlets, such as pop music, mainstream magazines, and Korean-dramas showing the ideas of the kkonminam, or “Flower Boy.” Aligning with recent trends in the late 21st century of a transforming masculinity within Western countries, South Korea has also seen a change in masculine gender norms, with the growing popularity of the Flower Boy. The literal translation of *kkonminam* is: *kkot*, meaning “flower,” and *minam*, meaning “handsome man.” Merged together the terms create “Flower Boy” (Maliangkay, 2010). The formula for a Flower Boy is as follows: (a) girl-like pretty looks, (b) toned and hairless body, (c) a vulnerable heart, and (d) an inconsiderate and immature personality (Jung, 2010).
The Flower Boy image began its popularity in the Korean entertainment industry in the late 1990s. Television commercials, dramas, and billboard advertisements praised pretty boys with smooth skin, silky hair, and a feminine demeanor (Jung, 2010). This new vision of masculinity soon replaced the hegemonic notion of macho, aggressive masculinity, as the Korean “tough guy” look was strongly contested by the Flower Boy trend (Jung, 2010). The Flower Boy has developed not because males have become more feminized, but as a consequence of the deconstructing male/female dichotomy (Kim, 2003). Characteristics of the Flower Boy satisfy both feminine and masculine qualities. Having a soft masculinity in the Flower Boy genre attracts younger viewers, especially women. The Flower Boy persona satisfies complex human desires because it possesses both feminine and masculine attributes (Jung, 2011). The Flower Boy persona also performs the idea of the “new man,” highlighting a caring and sensitive aspect of masculinity (Jung, 2011). The idea of an emotionally sensitive and empathetic masculinity exudes romantic notions that women generally identify with, leading to the Flower Boy’s popularity among young women (Kim, 2013).

This study will analyze two Korean dramas within the Flower Boy genre, *Boys Over Flowers* and *Flower Boy, Ramen Shop*. These two series were chosen based on their popularity. Both have the two highest ratings of all other Flower Boy Korean dramas (The Korean Movie and Drama Database, n.d.).

**Research Questions**

Based on the theory of cultural hegemony, Illouz’s romantic utopia, and Galician’s love myths and prescriptions, this study aims to examine how hegemony is reinforced, or resisted, in terms of the representation of love and romance in the Flower
Boy genre of Korean dramas. Specifically, portrayals of love and romance will be analyzed in the Korean dramas *Boys Over Flowers* and *Flower Boy, Ramen Shop*. The research questions explored are:

RQ1: How are hegemonic notions of love and romance, as defined by Galician’s (2004) ten love myths, presented through the physical appearance, personality, interactions, and actions of characters in the dramas?

RQ2: How are counter-hegemonic notions, or prescriptions, of love and romance, as defined by Galician (2004), presented through the physical appearance, personality, interactions, and actions of the characters in the dramas?

RQ3: How are characteristics of the romantic utopia, as defined by Illouz (1997), depicted in *Boys Over Flowers* and *Flower Boy, Ramen Shop*?

Based on these research questions, Chapter Two will discuss the method of analysis for this study, and how hegemony is operationalized by using Galician’s (2004) love myths and prescriptions, and Illouz’s (1997) romantic utopia.
CHAPTER TWO: Method

Introduction

The author was familiar with both texts as a casual viewer. For this study, a close reading of *Boys Over Flowers* and *Flower Boy, Ramen Shop* was conducted. The topic of most qualitative research is the making of meaning from a particular text (Pauly, 1991). Hegemony theory proposes that the media inundate audiences with a one-dimensional view of how the world operates, and viewers passively incorporate this view into their own conceptualization of the world (Bufkin & Eschholz, 2000). As Gramsci (1971) noted, the majority of the subaltern rarely question these dominant opinions; therefore, the media aid in reproducing and strengthening the status quo. The dominant ideology position asserts that the only means of resisting these powerful messages is to reject them and completely avoid popular media.

Some mass media scholars take a more interpretive approach toward hegemony theory, and argue that through the process of decoding messages within the media, individuals have the capability to use media messages for their personal use, and may even use deconstructed portrayals as a means of liberation from the status quo (Bufkin & Eschholz, 2000). Fiske (1986) contended that decoding messages can be entertaining and empowering for the audience member because this process has the potential to help the individual escape and resist hegemonic ideology and the dominant culture. One major criticism of this approach lies not within the theory per se, but in the amount of agency that the scholar assumes the audience has. In order for the viewer to gain empowerment, this paradigm asserts that audiences are actively decoding media messages to interpret them as they wish (Bufkin & Eschholz, 2000).
A third theoretical position combines the major arguments from the dominant ideology model and the interpretive reception model. This mixed approach acknowledges that not all audiences are equally equipped to decode and decipher texts to find meanings that oppose hegemonic notions (Carragee, 1990; Condit, 1989). Advocates of this position claim that a lack of alternative meanings can be increasingly problematic as the media play a gradually larger role in both entertainment and education within society. As the media’s role expands, production also becomes increasingly monopolized, giving the culture industry control of the political and leisure spheres (Bagdikian, 1997).

Though all three approaches differ in their opinions on human agency and the role of the culture industry, implicit in each of these three arguments is the notion that popular media portray a relatively uniform picture of society: a division of power based on class, race, and gender (Bufkin & Eschholz, 2000). Thus, the media serve as a dominant form of social control (Hedley, 1994). If popular media displayed several alternative depictions of powers in society, then the power of the media as a mechanism of social control would be lessened. Whereas the dominant ideology, interpretive reception, and mixed models suggest different views of audience participation, they all contend that the media manifests hegemonic messages.

The purpose of this study is not necessarily to test the strength of any of the three approaches, but to investigate hegemonic depictions of romance that reflect the appropriateness of all three models. Specifically, this project will explore the pervasiveness of hegemony by detecting the depiction of messages that perpetuate the status quo. Through evaluating the messages within these Korean dramas, the researcher could also discover the relative strength of any one of the three approaches. The focus of
this project is to observe what forms of messages reflect a hegemonic viewpoint. Also inspected is whether diverse, non-hegemonic depictions of sex, love, and romance are available to viewers in the popular Korean dramas under examination.

**Textual Analysis**

Bryman (2004) states that textual or content analysis is probably the most prevalent approach to the qualitative research of artifacts. A textual analysis is a flexible method that is used to analyze text data (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005). What is considered text data can range from verbal messages, written manuscripts, or media and electronic sources. The text data that a scholar decides to analyze depends on what is the best means for examining a particular phenomenon (Kondracki & Wellman, 2001). In this specific project, two texts will be analyzed: *Boys Over Flowers* and *Flower Boy, Ramen Shop*. Both texts are Korean dramas that belong to the Flower Boy genre, a romantic comedy category that portrays men as more empathetic, emotionally expressive, and caring, all of which are qualities normally viewed as feminine (Jung, 2010).

Textual analysis aims to acquire a condensed, broad description of a phenomenon; the outcome of an analysis should be a set of concepts to describe the phenomenon (Elo & Kyngas, 2007). As Bryman (2004) contended, a textual analysis is “an approach to documents that emphasizes the role of the investigator in the construction of the meaning of and in texts…there is an emphasis on allowing categories to emerge out of data and on recognizing the significance for understanding the meaning of the context in which the item being analyzed appeared” (p. 41). In short, textual content analysis is concerned with meanings, consequences, and context (Downe-Wamboldt, 1992). It comprises a searching-out of underlying themes in the materials analyzed.
The process of carrying out a qualitative content analysis follows a sequential model and puts forward three distinct procedures, which may be carried out either independently or in combination, depending on the research questions (Mayring, 2002). These three elements are: summary, explication, and structuring. Using summary as an analytical approach attempts to reduce the material in such a way that preserves the essential content through abstraction, while also succinctly describing the example without overexpansion (Mayring, 2002). To accomplish this, the text is paraphrased, generalized or abstracted, and reduced. Explication involves explaining, clarifying, and annotating the specific material that represents common themes throughout that text (Mayring, 2002). From a deductive approach, the researcher examines particular events that connect to each other. Then explicates or make sense of the findings.

Structuring corresponds to the procedures used in classical content analysis and is viewed as the most crucial technique of a textual analysis. The goal of this approach is to filter out a particular structure from the material being examined. This is the focus of the current study. To further aid this study, the researcher employed a three-step process of the structuring approach of a qualitative content analysis, as suggested by Elo and Kyngas (2007): (1) preparation, (2) organization, and (3) reporting. Also employed here is Hall and Hebert’s approach (2004): (1) preliminary soak, (2) in-depth analysis, and (3) deeper analysis.

In the current study I am interested in how love and romance is portrayed in Boys Over Flowers and Flower Boy, Ramen Shop. In order to answer the research questions stated previously, an analysis of all the main characters and any scenes that illustrate Galician’s (2004) love myths and prescriptions, or Illouz’s (1997) romantic utopia will be
evaluated. Based on Elo and Kyngas’s (2007) and Hall and Hebert’s (2004) phases of a qualitative textual analysis, I used the following three stages: (1) preparation, (2) organization/identification, and (3) reporting.

I prepared for this textual analysis by identifying the inclusion criteria, or specific components that will be focused on, which are Galician’s (2004) love myths and prescriptions and Illouz’s (1997) elements of the romantic utopia. These criteria, or units, will be explained further in this chapter. In the course of the preliminary soak, or the first appraisal of the material, I marked the data locations of scenes, and in subsequent appraisals of the text data, I processed and extracted notable codes of love and romance using in-depth notes (Hall & Hebert, 2004). After this first stage, the organization/identification stage will create definitions and key elements with rules for coding in separate categories (Mayring, 2002). After I determine adequate information has been gathered to build arguments, in the final stage of the structuring approach I report my findings.

**Text Defined and Inclusionary Criteria**

The object or text of a qualitative textual analysis can be any sort of recorded communication, such as transcripts of interviews/discourses, protocols of observation, videotapes, or written documents (Mayring, 2002). By studying a particular object or text, the scholar is using an empirical approach to analyze texts within their context of communication (Mayring, 2000). In choosing texts to interpret, qualitative researchers face a couple of major problems. Mainly, qualitative scholars need to make meaning of what they are investigating. Each individual study displays the same symbolic process but at a different site, with a new script, cast of characters, set, props, and audience
(Pauly, 1991). Because of this, instead of adopting a mathematical approach to analyzing a text, descriptive scholars treat sampling as a narrative dilemma in which they focus on a symbolically significant person, place, or event where a narrative interpretation can be created. Qualitative researchers justify this method by noting that humans’ sense of “the typical” is literary rather than mathematical. In other words, people use narratives to condense and communicate their sense of the world, rather than the quantity of communicative occurrences (Pauly, 1991).

Another task that qualitative scholars must accomplish is matching the evidence gathered in their investigation with the questions being asked. For example, questions about media stories as narrative products require literary and rhetorical techniques of textual interpretation (Pauly, 1991). Choosing inappropriate criteria of evidence can lead to errors of interpretations. Thus, the criteria of what is to be examined should be grounded in some sort of theoretical paradigm. In this particular study, the following elements within Boys Over Flowers and Flower Boy, Ramen Shop are analyzed as they pertain to Galician’s (2004) love myths and prescriptions and Illouz’s (1997) romantic utopia: (a) characters, (b) scene/happening, (c) storyline/narrative, and (d) dialogue/language. These are defined and operationalized in the following sections.

**Characters**

Past literature has alluded to similarities of characters from different television dramas (Fiske, 1987; Propp, 1968). Fiske (1987) contended that there are eight character roles or archetypes that a cast member can embrace within each drama: the hero, villain, donor, dispatcher, false hero, helper, the princess, or the father. Throughout the organization/identification phase of the study I focused heavily on the main characters
and their gender roles and personae. Characteristics such as the way each character carries their demeanor to the other, the way that each character expresses love in conjuncture to their normative gender role, and the way each character dresses, are all facets that will be focused on. For example, if a male character has an angry personality in the beginning of the drama, but slowly transforms to having a friendlier, caring, temperament because of a love interest, this may show signs of the “changing from a beast into a prince” myth. Also, the activities that each character participated in were noted. For example, if a male character bakes, and babysits kids, these activities are normally seen as feminine actions, so I would code this under the “create cooperation” prescription. Lastly, and in conjuncture to the character’s gender role, their personality was also examined.

**Scene/Happening/Kernel**

Like other forms of television media and literature, the television drama, such as the Korean drama, are highly formulaic. Porter, Larson, Deborah, Harthcock, and Nellis’ (2002) demonstrate this formula in their Scene Function Model. Within this Scene Function Model, five separate storylines, classify scenes and narratives into a hierarchy. At the top is the “A,” or most significant, down to the “E,” or most marginal. A storyline’s position on this spectrum is determined by how many kernel scenes it receives in the episode, with the most important storylines consuming more episode minutes than lesser ones (Porter et al., 2002). Porter et al. (2002) divided narrative events into kernels and satellites, and the scene function model identified specific narrative functions within a scene to reveal more precisely how these operate in the narrative structure of a one-hour, or similar increment, drama series episode (Porter, Larson, Deborah, Harthcock, &
Nellis, 2002). Each kernel builds to the next scene to create a miniature narrative within
the one episode, and also a part of a larger narrative of that particular character
throughout the series. Porter et al. (2002) explained how a hierarchy of different
storylines is characteristic of an individual drama series. Television industries use several
kernels in a series to fulfill various demands by the audience, at numerous levels. I will
be analyzing connecting kernels/scenes that produce an overall narrative or theme of how
love, romance, and sex is conceptualized within both Boys Over Flowers and Flower
Boy, Ramen Shop.

To get a better understanding of how romance is portrayed within both Korean
dramas, the narratives of each character need to be noted and assessed. More importantly,
as described above, a narrative is made when various kernels are connected to each other
to create an overall storyline. In order to fully understand the “big picture” of how love,
sex, and romance is portrayed within Boys Over Flowers and Flower Boy, Ramen Shop,
each kernel pertaining to romance and dating was examined. For example, when a man
and a woman are together holding hands or embracing each other in public or in private,
this would constitute a scene that alludes to the potential that this couple is in a more than
platonic relationship. Another example of how kernels help to create a larger picture of
romance is if there are numerous kernels of the same two male and female characters
together throughout the series. If the beginning kernels are short and casual, then as the
drama progresses kernels are longer and the characters are now participating in activities
such as playing card games or watching television with each other, this could be
perceived that their relationship has progressed throughout the drama.
Narrative/Storyline

Todorov (1977) identified a five-part structured narrative, whose ability to override distinctions of form or genre, as well as of medium and cultural context, is evident in its broad influence on contemporary narrative theory. Todorov’s (1977) model encapsulates the progression of most TV stories and formats, and is as follows:

1. A state of equilibrium at the outset;
2. A disruption of the equilibrium by some action;
3. A recognition that there has been a disruption;
4. An attempt to repair the disruption;
5. A reinstatement of the equilibrium.

This narrative model emphasizes a basic three-part movement from equilibrium, to disequilibrium, and finally to a restoration of equilibrium. Fiske (1987) notes that this restoration of equilibrium, while it does not need to be a totally new restoration, should at least be enhanced from the older stage. For this study, the way in which the state of unrest is solved is important. For example, if the participants in a romantic relationship are at odds with each other because they are from different backgrounds, do they breakup or do they change themselves to stay together? Also, if both people in the relationship are young and have not discovered who they are, do they try to find themselves before looking for a partner, or do they believe that all they need for fulfillment is a relationship? These sorts of narratives will be focused on to show how the drama projects the meaning of love.

Though the characters and the settings may be different, Propp (1968) suggested that all storylines are similar to others. Also, as Todorov (1977) asserted, most narratives
follow the process laid out in his five-stage plan. This study looked at the major plot points within *Boys Over Flowers* and *Flower Boy, Ramen Shop* to assess if the stages and sequence of events align with each other. If there are similarities this will help the researcher decipher if the messages within each drama perpetuate sex, love, and romance as hegemonic or counter-hegemonic. Series’ narratives include the denouement of each character, to gauge whether each resolution ending, or reinstatement of equilibrium, could be considered as a realistic or unrealistic ending.

**Dialogue and Language**

Discourse theory argues that there are a number of different discourses at work within society at any one time, actively constructing the people’s conception of the world, and reproducing reality with fixed meanings (Creeber, 2006). As asserted by hegemony theory, discourse that is used in media and in popular culture are dominant ideals, produced and sustained by the power elite. Evaluating what characters talk about, and how they talk about the subject on the screen is a useful way to uncover the implicit power relations, and particularly the means by which social identities are reflected and articulated on the small screen (Creeber, 2006).

Media and mass communication scholars view language as a window of culture (Carley, 1994). The language used within the media source displays the meanings embedded in that particular culture; thus, it reflects what that culture believes in (Carley, 1994). Not only are the characters, the scenes, and their overall storylines important, but what the characters say and how they say it can also reflect their overall belief pertaining to the topics of love and romance. The researcher also examined and took note of how each of the main characters described romance, how they showed romance, and their
beliefs and thoughts about love. Direct quotes were noted that even describe one or two of the love myths close to verbatim. Dialogue in which characters uttered the words “love,” “I love you,” “soulmate,” and “romantic” were particularly noted, being that they directly related to love myths, prescriptions, and the romantic utopia.

**Evidence of Love Myths**

I will use Galician’s (2004) love myths as categories for identifying hegemonic notions of love within the texts, *Boys Over Flowers* and *Flower Boy, Ramen Shop*. Each myth reflects hegemonic love, in that they portray the dominant cultural norms (Galician, 2004). The culture industry does not only sell entertainment, but they also endorse a way of life. As Galician (2004) stated, “entertainment programs reinforce the status quo by romanticizing the established order and those who run it…media rarely seriously challenge the social order even when they question aspects of it” (p. 77). Thus, one can view Galician’s (2004) love myths as operationalizing hegemonic, that is, unquestioned, most-often expected portrayals of the way “love” is supposed to look in romantic relationships. Romance is often shown as being simplistic, highly fantasized, and unrealistic (Galician, 2004). As Galician (2004) noted, the love myths and prescriptions can be interrelated, so one single scene, character, or narrative can be categorized into more than one myth or prescription (Galician, 2004). Each year Galician (2015) offers media examples from songs, television, and movies that depict each love myth and prescription. The following are examples of each love myth from Galician (2015) herself.

1. Your perfect partner is cosmically predestined, so nothing/nobody can ultimately separate you.

   An example of this is the motion picture *The Lucky One* (2012), starring Zac Efron and
Taylor Schilling. In this romantic myth-laden Nicholas Sparks novel movie adaption, a marine’s (Zac Efron) life is saved in combat when a bomb misses him because he moves a few feet to pick up a photo of a beautiful woman (Taylor Schilling) that instantly becomes his good luck charm. After his discharge, he miraculously tracks her down and finds her. This also alludes to the notion that love is predestined. They fall in love, and along with her mother and child, they all become a happy family (Galician, 2015).

2. There’s such thing as love at first sight.

An example of this is the Disney animation adaptation of *Romeo and Juliet* (2011), *Gnomeo and Juliet*. This film follows the same general plot as the original *Romeo and Juliet*, except that it drastically changes the ending. Here, Gnomeo and Juliet stay alive but still give into the myth that there is such thing as love at first sight. As Gnomeo tells a speaking statue of the Bard: “There’s gotta be a better ending than that!” Instead of having both Gnomeo and Juliet get to know each other as friends, they both jump directly into a relationship with each other based on pure attraction (Galician, 2015).

3. Your true soulmate should know what you’re thinking or feeling (without your having to tell).

An example of this is Natasha Bedingfield’s song “Soulmate” (2007). Not only is there the word soulmate in its own title, the songs normalizes Myth # 3 by assuming, “Who doesn’t long for someone to hold…Who knows how to love you without being told?” The lyrics outright show conformity to the myth, that one should know what their partner is thinking without being told.

4. If your partner is truly meant for you, sex is easy and wonderful.

The motion picture *No Strings Attached* (2011), starring Ashton Kutcher and Natalie
Portman, is an exemplar of this myth. In this movie, two close friends decide to have a strictly sexual and non-intimate relationship with each other and end up having sexual intercourse frequently throughout the movie. The motion picture concludes by the two wanting more than just sex in their relationship and end up becoming a romantic couple (Galician, 2015). Though ending up together may seem to be more of a prescription, the myth is observed while they just see their relationship as being strictly sexual.

5. To attract and keep a man, a woman should look like a model or a centerfold.

Justin Bieber’s song “Beauty and a Beat” (2012) portrays this myth. As he explains in his lyrics: “All I need is a beauty and a beat.” In this case he is saying that he wants a beauty, an attractive girl, and a beat, or music. The lyrics further conform to this myth: “I wanna show you off tonight” because “what you got a billion could’ve never bought.” This is pertaining to showcasing his beautiful girl, because he has her and no one else does. This also supports the heteronormative belief that women are just seen as objects to men.

6. The man should not be shorter, weaker, younger, poorer, or less successful than the woman.

The Wolverine (2013), an extension movie of the X-Men movie series, focuses on the life of the X-Man Wolverine (Hugh Jackman), and showcases this myth well. Here the Wolverine instantly and willingly becomes a protector, or knight in shining armor, to the beautiful damsel-in-distress Mariko, with whom he has fallen in love. He protects her from ninja assassins whom are hired by her father and grandfather to capture her. This movie shows that women need men for protection, and that the man should be stronger.
than his woman (Galician, 2015).

7. The love of a good and faithful true woman can change a man from a beast into a “prince.”

The film Beastly (2011) is an example of this myth. This modern day Beauty and the Beast variation is set in a Manhattan high school filled with rich and beautiful students. A girl who goes to the same school, but is not as successful or “attractive” as the other girls in that school turns out to be the “good and faithful true woman.” She stays with Kyle Kingson (Alex Pettyfyer), the beast, at his house to keep him company, because he fears going out with his beastly looks. As the movie progresses, he falls for her, and it is the love that they have for each other that ultimately breaks his curse. Here, the viewer is taught that love has the ability to change others (Galician, 2015).

8. Bickering and fighting a lot means that a man and a woman really love each other passionately.

The motion picture The Bounty Hunter (2010) is an example of this myth in action. This movie showcases two ill-matched, divorced, non-stop brutal battlers (Jennifer Aniston and Gerard Butler) who mistake fighting for passion. Though there are moments where they show care for the other, there are scenes where, not only do they get into verbal altercations, but they actually get physical with one another. They don’t know that love is about peace, not war, but ultimately decide to be with each other again at the end scene of the movie.

9. All you really need is love, so it doesn’t matter if you and your lover have very different values.

The film We’re the Millers (2013) is an exemplar of this next myth. The values held by
the individuals in this fake romantic couple, a drug smuggling duo, are obviously polar opposites. It makes a lot of sense why they spend the entire film bickering and fighting. Even more confusing than why they are a team is how they suddenly wind up together and fall in love with each other at the end of the movie. The viewer is shown that equal values do not make the relationship, but pure attraction does, and, that love can bring two people together (Galician, 2015).

10. The right mate “completes you” – filling your needs and making your dreams come true (Galician, 2004, pp. 55 & 225).

Justin Timberlake’s song “Mirrors” (2013) portrays this myth. In the lyrics of the song the singer presents himself and his love as only half a person each, for example: “’Cause I don't wanna lose you now. I'm lookin' right at the other half of me. The vacancy that sat in my heart is a space that now you hold.” The lyrics clearly point out that half of his heart belongs to the other person, and he is empty without that other half.

**Evidence of Love Prescriptions**

Along with the love myths, Galician (2004) also provides prescriptions to the myths that can present evidence of counter-hegemonic love and romance. Mass media are powerful sources of socialization from which people learn and model behaviors from, both unhealthy and healthy (Galician, 2004). As Galician (2004) noted, though the culture industry profusely portrays notions of the status quo, media rarely challenges hegemonic norms. Unlike unhealthy stereotypes that love myths depict, prescriptions are counter to love myths because they offer more realistic views about what is needed for healthy romantic relationships. The prescriptions and examples of each are as follows:

1. Consider Countless Candidates
An example of this prescription is Carrie Underwood’s song “Good in Goodbye.” This musical narrative is about a woman who unexpectedly sees a former love with his daughter, and the lyrics describe the woman who broke-up with the man being happy. As the lyrics state: the woman “didn’t get what I thought I deserved” even though she doesn’t regret and won’t forget her earlier relationship with this man, which made them both strong. Now “we both ended up where we belong…and yeah I’m happy: I found somebody too who makes me happy.” After going through the process of dating other people, the woman found someone that was compatible to her (Galician, 2015).

2. Consult your Calendar and Count Carefully

_The Five-Year Engagement_ (2012) is an exemplar of this prescription. The title is self-explanatory of the prescription. The couple in this movie, starring Emily Blunt and Jason Segel, takes time to get to know each other. They constantly postpone their wedding in order to accomplish their own self-ambitions, focusing on the idea that they should complete themselves before finding a partner (Galician, 2015).

3. Communicate Courageously

_The Five-Year Engagement_ (2012) is also an exemplar of this prescription. Although both individuals within the relationship care for one another and want to be with each other, they also respect the idea of each other accomplishing their own goals in life. In order for them to achieve this, they use open and honest communication with one another to discuss things (Galician, 2015).

4. Concentrate on Commitment and Constancy

The 2011 movie _Hall Pass_ is an example of this prescription. This motion picture focuses on the adventures of a couple of buddies (Owen Wilson and Jason Sudeikis) whose wives
give them a one-week break from their marriage vows, during which Wilson (and his wife) cannot bring themselves to actually stray, showing their commitment to one another (Galician, 2015).

5. Cherish Completeness in Companions (not just the Cover)
An example of this prescription is the television show *Mike & Molly*. This sitcom revolves around two plus-sized married individuals. What is apparent is that they care for each other, more than just physical looks, but for the values that each believes in. The show frequently showcases them being happy with their marriage to each other (Galician, 2015).

6. Create Coequality; Cooperate
Avoiding sexist stereotypes that hurt men as well as women, the 2012 film *Mirror Mirror* centers on a peer couple who equitably share power in healthy sex, love, and romance based on 21st Century thinking. Also, this movie shows how people of different age, race, and size have the ability to help the community in one way or another. Lastly, the leading role of this movie belongs to a woman, who does not necessarily need a man to save her, but shares the responsibility with men (Galician, 2015).

7. Cease Correcting and Controlling; You Can’t Change others (only yourself)
Counter to most Disney movies, the 2013 animated motion picture *Frozen* showcases the prescription that you cannot control anyone but you. The “love expert” trolls brilliantly explain the nuance of this prescription as they state: “We aren’t saying you can change him, Cause people don’t really change, We’re only saying that love’s a force that’s powerful and strange…throw a little love their way, and you'll bring out their best.” Though love may help, love cannot change people (Galician, 2015).
8. Courtesy Counts; Constant Conflicts Create Chaos

Though most Taylor Swift songs tend to go against the grain of healthy notions of romance, her 2012 song “We Are Never Ever Getting Back Together” is an example of this prescription. The lyrics in this song show that Taylor Swift realizes that constant conflict within her past relationship was more harmful to the relationship than anything else. For example, sarcasm can be seen as she sings: “I’m really gonna miss you picking fights, and me falling for it screaming that I’m right.” This shows that she understands that constant conflicts can be a sign of major differences in terms of each other’s values, and may warrant warning (Galician, 2015).

9. Crave Common Core-Values

In the film The Blind Side (2009), the long-married Leigh Ann and Sean Tuohy demonstrate the benefits of shared values. This includes their devotion to their alma mater’s football team, their constant effort to make time for their children, their commitment to the same religious and political values, and sharing their blessings with those who are less fortunate. The homogamy between the two helps to create a healthy relationship (Galician, 2015).


An example for this prescription is the animated Disney film Frozen (2013). This prescription is about being able to be independent and to focus on your own growth and personal goals. Queen Elsa had a difficult childhood and a big job as the ruling queen of her area. In order to achieve her goals, she concentrates on finding and completing herself, rather than a romantic partner (Galician, 2015).
Evidence of the Romantic Utopia

The last set of categories that I used to examine portrayals of love and romance is Illouz’s (1997) romantic utopia. As Illouz (1997) stated, the standard romantic formula, as codified by the culture industry, required the consumption of luxury goods that are associated with an affluent lifestyle. Based on this, the romantic utopia consists of the following components:

(a) Glamour and elegance are attributes of romance, such as buying jewelry, wearing fancy clothes, and buying gifts for each other. An example of what would be considered evidence of this characteristic of the romantic utopia is from the Korean drama Flower Boy, Ramen Shop. In this scene there was a couple (Eun Bi and Chi Soo) on a date and Chi Soo (the man) buys Eun Bi (the woman) a box of chocolates along with flowers. From this scene the viewer can see that romance is defined as gift giving.

(b) Romance involves intensity and excitement which are usually associated with nature and travel. An example of this element of the romantic utopia is from the Korean drama Boys Over Flowers. In this scene Jun Pyo (the man) pays for Jan Di’s (the woman) travel expenses so that they can both go on a vacation to a tropical island resort. Then, for dinner, Jun Pyo makes her an extravagant meal of lobster, crab, steak, and other delicacies. This event would illustrate how traveling and exploring nature is an attribute of what it means to be romantic.

(c) Intimacy and romance are associated with participating in activities that involve spending money (Illouz, 1997 p. 68).
Using the same dating scene from *Flower Boy, Ramen Shop* as an example for this element of the romantic utopia, Eun Bi and Chi Soo go out for dinner and a movie, in which Chi Soo pays for everything; this would be coded under the category that love means spending money or participating in activities that requires money.

**Overall Themes**

A confluence of scenes and storylines of characters have the possibility to create overarching themes about love and romance. As a major theme within Westernized romantic comedies, scholars have found that romantic love has been portrayed as powerful, magical, and transformative, with characters frequently defying their culture and or parents to embrace “love” (Lippman, Ward, & Seabrook, 2014). These portrayals create an idealized view of romantic relationships as being exciting, passionate, and, most importantly, easy to establish and maintain (Lippman et al., 2014). Based on this, a major goal of this study is to examine if overall themes of love and romance detected in *Boys Over Flowers* and *Flower Boy, Ramen Shop* are hegemonic, or if they offer counter hegemonic depictions of love.

During the organization/identification stage of this study, the researcher categorized the (a) characters, (b) scene/happening, (c) storyline/narrative, (d) dialogue/language (e) overall themes into either Galician’s (2004) love myths and prescriptions or Illouz’s (1997) elements of the romantic utopia.

**Textual Analysis Process**

Based on Elo and Kyngas’s (2007) stages of qualitative textual analysis (preparation, organization, and reporting), along with Hall and Hebert’s (2004) steps
(preliminary soak, in-depth analysis, and deeper analysis), my textual analysis is a multi-tiered process that included three stages:

(1) Preparation of research analysis with multiple soaks;

(2) The organization/identification of elements and categories that would be evaluated using in-depth analysis of Galician’s (2004) loves myths and prescriptions, and Illouz’s (1997) romantic utopia;

(3) A reporting stage where a deeper analysis will help to produce major themes in each drama series and overall themes within the Flower Boy genre as a whole.

**Preparation**

Before commencing with the project, I was a casual viewer of both *Boys Over Flowers* and *Flower Boy, Ramen Shop*, having seen both dramas at least two times prior to this study about two years ago. Familiarity with both dramas aided during the initial steps within the textual analysis process. Specifically, it assisted in conceptualizing the particular elements of the drama. Having some casual knowledge about the storyline and characters of the drama, the first step within my textual analysis process was the preparation stage. In the first part within this stage I conducted a preliminary soak, or initial viewing of both dramas, after having casual knowledge of both dramas. During the preliminary soak, dramas were viewed in the evenings for several hours during the week, and midday during the weekend for several hours. They were observed daily until both dramas were watched in their entirety. The procedure took approximately several days. After watching both dramas for more familiarity, I created notes using a word processing program on my laptop. Here, I documented potential elements and scenes to observe
more specifically, such as particular characters and relationships. This procedure took a few days.

To help create a more unified idea of codes that will be evaluated throughout both dramas, another soak was conducted in late 2014 and early 2015. During this step, both *Boys Over Flowers* and *Flower Boy, Ramen Shop* were viewed a second time for several hours daily, until both series were fully observed. While watching the Korean dramas, I took notes via computer, within a single Word document. Each episode was labeled and summaries were created of potential scenes that showed signs of both hegemonic and counter-hegemonic notions of love and romance, based on my previous knowledge of Galician’s (2004) love myths and prescriptions. Also, potential evaluative elements such as the scene, character’s persona, and language were jotted down. This second step within the preparation stage took several days. After becoming closely familiar with both dramas’ narratives, characters, and scenes, I proceeded to the organization/identification stage of my textual analysis process.

**Organization/Identification**

The first step in the organization/identification stage was to create codes of the elements that would be specifically observed in both Korean dramas. Notes that were documented from both the preliminary soak and the second soak, along with past literature on content analysis methods (Mayring, 2000; Pauly, 1991) help to determine the following inclusionary criteria: (a) characters, (b) scene/happening/kernel, (c) storyline/narrative, (d) dialogue/language (e) overall themes. I decided to observe how these elements portray hegemonic and counter-hegemonic notions of love, sex, and romance, using Galician’s (2004) love myths and prescriptions, and Illouz’s (1997)
romantic utopia as guides. I created a coding rubric using a word processing program. The rubric was used for each of the hour long episodes and lists out the ten loves myths, ten love prescriptions, three tenets of the romantic utopia, and an “other” category to note other notable traits of hegemonic and realistic romance that do not fit into the love myths, prescriptions, and elements of the romantic utopia (See Appendix A). An example of what would qualify as “other” would be if a couple stays home and studies together instead of going out and spending money.

After inclusionary criteria and initial codes using the love myths, prescriptions, and elements of the romantic utopia were deciphered and made into a rubric for each episode to take notes on, I proceeded to the first identification step within the organization/identification stage. The identification of codes that would later be turned into categories used deductive methods. As Charmaz (2006) explained, instead of starting with specific clauses to create a broader truth, deductive methods use broader claims and throughout the research process attempt to create specific examples. Each episode was watched intently, and notes were taken on a coding rubric. Dramas were viewed daily for several hours with intermittent 15-30 minute breaks between each episode. Boys Over Flowers was viewed on Netflix and Flower Boy, Ramen Shop was watched on Hulu Plus. Both Internet video streaming services have the ability to pause, fast forward, rewind, and provided translated subtitles to help insure correct accuracy of identifying hegemonic and counter-hegemonic portrayals of sex, love, and romance.

Each episode was viewed in its entirety. While observing each episode, characters, scene/kernels, connecting narratives, and particular dialogues/language that correlated with love myths, prescriptions, and the romantic utopia were documented on
the coding rubric. In numerous cases, a single scene, narrative, dialogue, or character persona portrayed more than one of the organizational categories, suggesting that each code relates with other codes. When noting the particular instance into a code, the time frame within the episode was jotted, along with an in-depth description of the event. For instance, if a particular dialogue fitted into one of the love myths, I would quote the dialogue verbatim and describe the setting and context of the scene. Also during this identification process, moments in both of the drama series that appeared to relate to prescriptions or seemed counter to the norm were documented in the “other” category in the rubric. Lastly, related to Charmaz’s (2006) memoing, below each episode’s coding rubric notes were taken about my personal thoughts concerning the development of what may be overall themes within the series and the Flower Boy genre, as well as my opinions that justify my coding process.

After intently watching both *Boys Over Flowers* and *Flower Boy, Ramen Shop* all 41 rubrics were read over and assessed to condense each series’ overall themes. This procedure was conducted within a few days, and an additional three days were used to further reflect on the organizational process. After this procedure, I moved to a final identification. Here, I would go back to the scenes that were documented within my notes. Kernels within each episode were viewed on their respective video-streaming site. The reassessment of the scenes was observed for several hours, daily, until evaluation was completed. While watching these specific scenes, the same rubric was used and new notes that further discussed the relationship between the scene, character, narrative, and dialogue and their alignment with the love myths, prescriptions, and elements of the romantic utopia were marked in blue text.
After completion of this final viewing of both Korean dramas, final notes were reread to help develop overall themes of how love, romance, and sex were projected in each drama. Connecting themes from each drama will then be placed into overall themes of love and romance within the Flower Boy genre as a whole.

**Reporting**

In the next two chapters, one chapter for each drama, with a deeper analysis of the data documented, I present my findings thusly:

1. A synopsis of the series;
2. A description of each character’s personality, fashion style, gender role, and narrative;
3. Love myths that were portrayed and identified throughout the drama;
4. Love prescriptions that were observed and identified in the series;
5. Elements and counter-elements of the romantic utopia;
6. Overall themes of how love, romance, and sex is portrayed throughout the series.

In Chapter Five the overall themes and portrayals of love and romance within the Flower Boy genre, based on my textual analysis of *Boys Over Flowers* and *Flower Boy, Ramen Shop* is provided.
CHAPTER THREE: Flower Boy, Ramen Shop

*Flower Boy Ramen Shop (Kkotminam Ramyeongage)* is a 16-episode series broadcast from October 31 to December 20, 2011, on the Korean cable channel tvN (Flower Boy, Ramen Shop, n.d.). This Korean drama is about four Flower Boys who operate a ramen shop with a female college student. It was the first installment of tvN’s “Oh! Boy,” a sequence of three Flower Boy programming series targeted at the teenage girl demographic. This series was followed by *Shut Up! Flower Boy Band* in 2012, and *Flower Boys Next Door* in 2013. According to AGB Nielsen Media (n.d.), the November 7, 2011 episode of *Flower Boy, Ramen Shop* received a viewership rating of 2.07%, the highest rating in its timeslot, making it the most-watched cable program in Korea for two successive weeks. AGB Nielsen Media (n.d.) also reported that it was the most-viewed show among Korean women in their teens to thirties, as well as among Korean men in their teens to twenties. The series was so popular that one in three teenage girls in Korea watched it, culminating in a 30% audience share. At its peak, the series scored viewership ratings in the 4% range, the highest ratings amongst its cable competitors in the same timeslot for eight weeks (Flower Boy, Ramen Shop, n.d.).

*Flower Boy, Ramen Shop* is a contemporary adaptation of the *Snow White* fairy tale. Instead of a young, beautiful princess living in a house with dwarves, an average-looking tomboy lives in a house and works at a Ramen Shop with four beautiful “Flower Boys.” Interestingly, the shop is named Flower Boy, Ramen Shop, rather than Eun Bi and the Four Boys.
Flower Boy, Ramen Shop Characters

Eun Bi

Yang Eun Bi is a 25-year-old college student studying for her civil service exam to become a teacher. Eun Bi is in complete study mode, from her clothes to her disdain of people who publicly exhibit affection in her study area. Nevertheless, Eun Bi is still on the lookout for a potential boyfriend with the economic stability of a 30-year-old, and who drives a cool car to work while wearing a suit. Instead of a 30-year-old, she is stuck with 19-year-old Cha Chi Soo.

Eun Bi first meets Chi Soo under peculiar circumstances; he follows her into a bathroom stall and unbeknownst to her, attempts to “hookup” with Eun Bi. Eun Bi mistakes him for a stalker that has been attacking girls on campus, but Chi Soo is just trying to hide from his father’s guards who are after him. After the initial moment of flirtation is over, Eun Bi mistakes him for the man of her dreams, since he is wearing a suit, looks older, and drives a nice car (Episode 1). When Eun Bi follows him to her workplace, at Cha Sung High School, she realizes that he is actually wearing a school uniform. She was attracted to him before she finds out that he is only a high school senior, making her six years older than he. To make things worse, she not only works at the high school that Chi Soo’s family owns, but she also has Chi Soo as a student in her class (Episode 2). During the time she spends at the school, Eun Bi grows to dislike him for his arrogance and lack of empathy. Eun Bi wants a more serious relationship after being dumped by a cheating ex-boyfriend, after waiting for him to complete his mandatory, two-year military service. After losing her student-teaching assignment because of continuous conflict with Chi Soo, she ends up working at Kang Hyuk’s,
formerly her dad’s, ramen shop. Kang Hyuk is a Korean-Japanese young man who is the son of Eun Bi’s father’s best friend. Eun Bi’s father also mentored him.

Personality wise, Eun Bi is portrayed as having both feminine and masculine attributes. She is oftentimes referred to as a “tomboy,” a girl with masculine attributes, such as dressing masculine-like or doing activities that would be considered “manly.” For example, while hanging out with her friends from high school, she is seen drinking copious amounts of soju, a Korean rice wine, and playing videos games that measure the person’s strength, such as the punching bag game (Episode 2). In terms of how she dresses, Eun Bi mostly dresses comfortably, wearing outfits such as tracksuits, and jeans and shorts, with little to no makeup. Though it may seem like she does not care about what others think of her personal style, there are times when she attempts to dress in a more feminine style. For example, in the short time that she was an assistant teacher at the all-boys high school, she would wear skirts with a blouse, or even slim-fitted dresses with more makeup than she would usually wear. Eun Bi’s personality is displayed as being nurturing and caring for the men that live in the same household as her, but at the same time aggressive to those to treat her, or her friends, with disrespect. An example of this can be seen in Episode 4. Eun Bi goes back to the high school the day after the funeral of her father. She runs into Chi Soo in the hallway, and Chi Soo gives her an envelope of money as condolence, but as he gives it to her he tells her, “Think of this as employee’s benefit.” Insulted by this, Eun Bi grabs the envelope full of money and slaps it in Chi Soo’s face, in front of everybody (Episode 4).

Chi Soo

Chi Soo is the arrogant heir to the biggest food conglomerate in South Korea.
Newly home after a failed attempt to attend school in New York City, he captivates women with his good looks and easy charm. He becomes fascinated with Eun Bi, because she is outspoken, athletic, and tomboyish, unlike the other women he is used to going out with. Yet, at first, he does not interpret this fascination as romantic interest, since he knows that she is out of his league and he usually dates girls with a more feminine persona. Not sure what to make out of his over-enchantment with Eun Bi, Chi Soo decides to work at Kang Hyuk’s ramen restaurant in order to get over his growing obsession with her (Episode 7). Adding more intrigue to the storyline, Kang Hyuk knows that he and Chi Soo actually have the same mother, but allows him to join the shop out of concern for Chi Soo’s well-being.

While working at Flower Boy, Ramen Shop, Chi Soo, after many misunderstandings, finally realizes that his obsession with Eun Bi is actually attraction. He competes for Eun Bi’s affection with his half-brother, Kang Hyuk. Adding another layer in this Korean melodrama, Chi Soo’s father’s company plans to redevelop the area where the ramen shop is located. Chi Soo’s father avidly disapproves of Eun Bi and his son’s relationship, because of his past experience with Chi Soo’s mother, who had a similar status to Eun Bi and left him for Kang Hyuk’s father. Because of this, Chi Soo’s father tries to use the possible destruction of the ramen shop as leverage to keep Eun Bi and Chi Soo apart. Though his father threatens to cut him off from the family inheritance, Chi Soo insists on staying with Eun Bi. Chi Soo’s father, a businessman of his word, disinherits Chi Soo and has his U.S. citizenship revoked, so that Chi Soo is now subject to the South Korean military draft. Eun Bi and Chi Soo’s relationship is halted as Chi Soo serves his military time. This feeling is something that Eun Bi is familiar with, as she
waited for her ex-boyfriend to complete his duty. The show ends with Chi Soo visiting Eun Bi after he has completed his two-year service in the South Korean Army, alluding to the idea that they are still together (Episode 16).

Chi Soo’s personality is portrayed as being arrogant and immature, like a spoiled rich kid. He exudes the characteristics of a Flower Boy, having a feminine-like and elegant fashion sense, expressive emotions, and an immature attitude. In terms of the way that he dresses, Chi Soo has a “Beau Brummel” style: dressing elegantly, and using accessories to showcase that he may belong to an upper, more luxurious class. He often wears peacoats, button-down shirts with vests, and the classic suit and tie (Crawford, 2006). Being part of one of Korea’s most renowned food company, Chi Soo usually drives around in either luxury vehicles or sports cars. Having an affluent lifestyle, Chi Soo is a playboy who uses his charm, good looks, and money to attract women. An example of this appears in Episode 3. While playing basketball in the gym, Chi Soo and his friends talk about how to “pick up” girls. He then tells them his way of seducing women: “Call her pretty, there is always something that looks pretty…after that she will be quiet for five seconds, lay a kiss on her forehead, that should keep her quite for a week” (Episode 3). He is seen participating in mostly masculine activities, such as playing basketball with his friends, going to the clubs to pick up women, and driving his car around aggressively.

**Kang Hyuk**

After Eun Bi’s father’s passing, in the early parts of the drama, Eun Bi is surprised to find that her father left his ramen restaurant to Kang Hyuk, the son of a close friend from Tokyo (Episode 4). Eun Bi’s father had helped Kang Hyuk grow up, because
Kang Hyuk’s father passed away while Kang Hyuk was 12, making him grow up fatherless, living the life of a troubled youth. It is soon revealed that Eun Bi’s father gave Kang Hyuk the restaurant with the hope that he and Eun Bi would marry. Kang Hyuk quickly develops feelings for Eun Bi, often calling her “wifey.” Even though Eun Bi develops romantic feelings for Kang Hyuk, at times calling him her “pillar,” not only because of his tall height, but because of the fact that he is always there for her, she finds herself more attracted to Chi Soo. In the last episode of the drama, the ramen shop is forced to close because Chi Soo’s father wants to redevelop that property, but its workers accept this without complaint, leaving Kang Hyuk homeless and unemployed (Episode 16). Forced to close down the business, Kang Hyuk is seen as the protagonist in this drama, having to lose his ramen shop and his love, all for the sake of Eun Bi and Chi Soo’s relationship.

Kang Hyuk’s personality also matches the attributes of a Flower Boy; he has a toned and smooth body, he has an elegant-like fashion sense, and although he is the boss of the ramen shop, he can have an immature attitude at times. His immature attitude can be seen when he must deal with obstacles that he doesn’t want to face. For example, when preparing to reopen the ramen shop, though everyone else is cleaning and repainting the interior of the shop, Kang Hyuk acts as though he is sleeping, because he does not want to clean (Episode 7). He often “falls” asleep whenever he doesn’t want to do something, whether it be cleaning, running errands, or talking to people that “annoy” him. Kang Hyuk is mostly seen participating in masculine activities. Because he cares about his looks, he goes running and to the gym a lot of the time. He often goes to the bar with the other men in the house to eat Korean barbeque.
Other Notable Characters

Throughout the drama, there are minor narratives with minor characters, which also add to the drama’s overall themes of love and romance. First, Dong Joo and Kko Chi will be discussed, and then the romance narrative of Ba Wool and So Yi will be described.

Dong Joo is Eun Bi’s best friend from high school. They both played on their high school volleyball team, and in the first two episodes they were roommates. Dong Joo is a teacher at Cha Sung High School, the school that Chi Soo’s family owns, and where Eun Bi is doing her internship as an assistant teacher. When Dong Joo was in high school, she was a tomboy, but as she grew up to be a teacher, while getting a few cosmetic surgeries along the way, she has become a more feminine woman. She oftentimes goes out on blind dates with men who are well established in their profession, with the hopes that she would one day marry one of them and live a happier life.

A co-worker at Cha Sung High School, Kko Chi is a physical education teacher. Interestingly, when Kko Chi was starting his coaching career, he was Dong Joo and Eun Bi’s high school volleyball coach. His personality is mainly masculine. He doesn't care much about his looks, he usually wears tracksuits, and he loves to participate in masculine activities such as playing sports and drinking copious amounts of soju.

The blooming relationship between Dong Joo and Kko Chi is like a modern day The Little Mermaid. Though Dong Joo is about to marry a highly respectable businessman, she spends a lot of time with Kko Chi. She even takes him shopping to buy him a tuxedo to wear at her wedding (Episode 15). While she is getting ready for her
wedding ceremony, Kko Chi walks into her room and doesn’t say a single word. Instead, he stands there with signs that read:

- **Sign one:** Kang Dong Joo…even though everyone thinks you’re the best potential bride
- **Sign two:** But I know of the plastic surgery that you got 5 years ago
- **Sign three:** Before plastic surgery (shows a picture of her in a volleyball uniform from high school)
- **Sign four:** But you were already from this point…
- **Sign five:** The perfect woman for me
- **Sign six:** Be happy (gives her a thumbs up) (Episode 16)

As Kko Chi walks out of the room, Dong Joo chases him out and kisses him in front of everyone, signaling that she will not be getting married, and instead will be in a relationship with him.

Similar to *The Lady and the Tramp, Flower Boy, Ramen Shop* shows another minor love narrative in the form of Ba Wool and So Yi’s romance. So Yi is Chi Soo’s ex-girlfriend whom he is using as a placeholder until Eun Bi will agree to be with him. So Yi uses Chi Soo to make Ba Wool jealous, so she doesn’t mind the fact Chi Soo is not as interested in her. Ba Wool is one of the runaways that Eun Bi’s father took care of at the ramen shop. Eun Bi’s father’s ramen shop is located outside the high school that Ba Wool attends. However, most of its customers are underprivileged kids who need free meals and guidance. Thus, Ba Wool is like a younger brother to Eun Bi, and he agrees to help at the ramen shop after the death of Eun Bi’s father. Ba Wool is overprotective of Eun Bi and is unhappy about Eun Bi and Chi Soo’s relationship. Ba Wool’s unhappiness is
aggravated by the fact that So Yi is still dating Chi Soo at the same time that he and So Yi are dating. Ironically, So Yi also gets frustrated with Ba Wool for frequently hanging out with Eun Bi. In Episode 15, both So Yi and Ba Wool meet at a church and apologize to each other about seeing other people. From that point on they no longer use other people to make the other person jealous, but they just focus on their own relationship.

Often referred to as the “White Swan,” So Yi is an extremely feminine person. The attire that she wears consists of skirts and dresses, and she usually wears makeup to accompany her outfits. The activities that she participates in are mostly feminine as well. She is an exceptional ballet dancer, she uses her looks to get men to buy her gifts and food, and she often “plays dumb” so that guys flirt with her. Referred to as the “Rooster,” Ba Wool counterbalances So Yi in terms of gender roles. He has a mohawk, and dresses in rugged clothes that look dirty and patched up. He is the leader of a youth gang, and often gets into fights with his peers at school for being an outsider.

**Love Myths Portrayed in *Flower Boy, Ramen Shop***

Of the Galician’s (2004) ten love myths that were used as categories for this study’s coding rubric, six were prevalent throughout *Flower Boy, Ramen Shop*:

Myth # 1: Your perfect partner is cosmically predestined, so nothing/nobody can ultimately separate you.

Myth # 5: To attract and keep a man, a woman should look like a model or a centerfold.

Myth # 6: The man should not be shorter, weaker, younger, poorer, or less successful than the woman.

Myth # 7: The love of a good and faithful true woman can change a man
from a beast into a “prince.”

Myth # 8: Bickering and fighting a lot means that a man and a woman really love each other passionately.

Myth # 9: All you really need is love, so it doesn't matter if you and your lover have very different values.

The following are descriptions of characters, kernels, or narratives that exemplify love myths portrayed in *Flower Boy, Ramen Shop*.

**Myth # 1: Your perfect partner is cosmically predestined, so nothing/nobody can ultimately separate you.**

According to this myth, love and destiny are intertwined (Galician, 2004). In the world that we live in, there is someone out there for you, and fate will cosmically bring the two of you together. Aligning with this myth is the idea of barriers and tribulations between two lovers. In *Flower Boy, Ramen Shop* this idea of predestined love is perpetuated frequently through the major narrative of Eun Bi and Chi Soo. In the very first episode, within the first six minutes, the idea of love as destiny is shown. Taking a break from studying for her civil service exam to become a schoolteacher, Eun Bi goes to a fortuneteller. Using tarot cards, the fortuneteller flips the “ringing bell card,” a card with a woman and a man kissing under a ringing bell. This card is also known as the card of destiny. The fortuneteller then tells her that when she meets the person that she is destined to be with, she will hear a ringing sound. Later that day, while she is in the women’s restroom, she hears a cellphone go off with ringing noises, then out of nowhere Chi Soo runs into the restroom, right into Eun Bi. This “sign” hints at the notion that Eun Bi and Chi Soo are soulmates (Episode 1).
Throughout their off-and-on relationship, Eun Bi and Chi Soo face various obstacles that threaten their relationship. One is the fact that Eun Bi is a 25-year-old woman, who is an assistant teacher at Cha Sung High School, and Chi Soo is a high school senior, AND a student of Eun Bi. Though they were not in a relationship during the time that Eun Bi worked at the high school, because of the constant conflict that Eun Bi and Chi Soo had, Eun Bi was forced to quit her job (Episode 4).

Another barrier in the narrative or Eun Bi and Chi Soo’s relationship is their differing statuses. Eun Bi was born and raised in a working class family. Her dad owned a ramen shop that catered to at-risk youth and the underprivileged. Chi Soo is the heir to Korea’s most renowned food industry. His wealth allows him to buy whatever he wants, be it high-end clothes, fine dining, or even cars. The difference between Eun Bi and Chi Soo’s lifestyles can be seen throughout the times that they tried to be together. For example, while Chi Soo took Eun Bi to an upper-class restaurant, they have a discussion about whether each other would be able to give up their lifestyles to adopt the other’s lifestyle.

Eun Bi: “Chi Soo, if I were to tell you to leave Cha Sung and move into my house…do you think you can do it?”
Chi Soo: “Me? Why would I?”
Eun Bi: “But then why are you asking me to leave?”
Chi Soo: “I want to make things better for you”
Eun Bi: (her hand on his heart) “You have a nice heart. I didn’t see it and just kept getting angry. I’m sure we’ll keep being this way…to let go of everything else, and just see your heart…I’m too vulgar for that…You're a
lion, stop eating grass, if you keep that up you’ll get indigestion” (walks away) (Episode 13).

From this scene on they frequently argue over the idea that they are two very different people, from two diverging backgrounds, also reflecting Myth # 9 (All you really need is love, so it doesn't matter if you and your lover have very different values), which will be further discussed in its respective section.

Chi Soo’s father can be seen as another barrier in the major narrative of Eun Bi and Chi Soo’s relationship. From the outset, Chi Soo’s father adamantly objected to the romantic relationship between his son and Eun Bi. Chi Soo’s mother was from a working class family, she married Chi Soo’s father, but eventually ran off to Tokyo to be with a working class man. After having that happen to him, Chi Soo’s father does not want the same experience to happen to Chi Soo. One night, when Chi Soo comes home from spending time with Eun Bi, his father goes up to him and tells him that he is like caviar and she is like rice: “When you mix the two together the caviar becomes a laughing stock.” Chi Soo’s father continues by saying, “A woman that smells like rice doesn’t like a man that smells like money…at some point eventually, she’s bound to go back to her own home” (Episode 10). Threatened of being disinherited from Cha Sung, the family business, Chi Soo and Eun Bi overcome the barrier of status and the objections of Chi Soo’s father by deciding to be together in the last episode. While Eun Bi runs up the stairs to the top floor of the Cha Sung Corporation building, where Chi Soo lives, she barges in and asks Chi Soo to be with her. Chi Soo’s father is also there, and warns them about what will happen if Eun Bi and Chi Soo stay together.

Eun Bi: “If I keep dating Cha Chi Soo, will you get rid of my shop?”
Chi Soo’s Father: “That's right I’m going to destroy it.”

Eun Bi: “And you’ll kick Cha Chi Soo out of Cha Sung?”

Chi Soo’s Father: “I’m not going to give him a dime, and kick him out in his bare body.”

Eun Bi: (looks at Chi Soo and asks him a question) “Can you live on without eating ramen, without seeing me?” (Episode 16)

Chi Soo decides to be with Eun Bi, and because of this he loses all of his status and wealth.

Having no parent to keep him out of the military, Chi Soo is forced to serve his two years in the South Korean Military, creating yet another barrier for the narrative of Chi Soo and Eun Bi’s romantic relationship. After failing the civil service exam for the third time, the ending scene shows Eun Bi studying, once again, for the upcoming exam. All of a sudden, she gets a call from Chi Soo saying that he finished his two-year term and that he is waiting outside for her. She meets him outside and they kiss, ending the entire drama (Episode 16).

Though there are constant barriers to their love, they end up finding a way to overcome them, proving the first scene with the fortuneteller to be true; that Eun Bi and Chi Soo’s love for each other was predestined. This myth was mainly supported by the major narrative between Eun Bi and Chi Soo, as well as in both Eun Bi and Chi Soo’s romantic beliefs. Being that they are the main characters in the drama, this love myth was portrayed throughout the entire series. Also, because their narrative is the main narrative in *Flower Boy, Ramen Shop* this love myth is a major theme of love and romance in this drama.
Myth # 5: To attract and keep a man, a woman should look like a model or a centerfold.

This myth can be seen in the minor female characters So Yi and Dong Joo. Often referred to as a “White Swan,” So Yi is a beautiful high school student, who uses her looks to get men, or things from men. Ba Wool describes her as “more than pretty, she’s like a rare swan,” a testimony to So Yi’s remarkable beauty (Episode 1). Whenever she talks, she is shown saying short phrases. Even at times when she wants to say more, she is asked not to. For example, while driving around the city with Chi Soo, So Yi was about to say something, but Chi Soo puts his finger over her mouth, symbolizing that she should be quiet, and tells her, “You are prettiest when you are quiet” (Episode 3).

Dong Joo, a teacher at Cha Sung High School and Eun Bi’s best friend, also displays this love myth. From the beginning of the series till its end, Dong Joo is obsessed with using her looks to attract a husband who is well established in his profession. In Episode 1, she mentions how she has had as many of seven male suitors offering to marry her, but none were established enough for her. Also aiding in portraying this love myth is the fact that Dong Joo has had multiple cosmetic surgeries to make herself look more “beautiful.”

Despite the fact that she has mostly tomboyish attributes, Eun Bi also displays this love myth. For example, while talking to Ba Wool, they go through her old yearbooks and look through pictures of her in her volleyball outfit. Then, Ba Wool mentions how weird it is to see her wearing a dress and being a teacher at the high school. In reply to this statement Eun Bi yells to Ba Wool, “Can’t I wear nice clothes with heels, look pretty, meet a normal guy, and live like everyone else does?” (Episode 5). This incident shows
that even though it may seem that Eun Bi doesn’t care about her looks, she does. Stating
that she wants to live like everyone else shows the hegemonic standard for women is
“beauty as perfection,” and how pervasive this idea is in Korean society (Galician, 2004).

This myth was portrayed in all three female characters of Flower Boy, Ramen
Shop, displaying the prevalence of this belief. No scene in the drama showed counter
ideas of this love myth, and none of the female characters attempted to resist the ideas
suggested in this myth. Even the male characters supported the reinforcement of this
myth. In no scene did a male character compliment any of the female characters on their
characteristics besides the woman’s physical appearance.

Myth # 6: The man should not be shorter, weaker, younger, poorer, or less
successful than the woman.

This myth is mainly displayed in the narrative of Chi Soo and Eun Bi’s
relationship. Throughout their whole relationship, Chi Soo was shown to be richer, better
looking, and more successful than Eun Bi. The only advantage that Eun Bi had over Chi
Soo was her age. This drama frequently shows that he is “better” than Eun Bi, but he still
falls for her. Even though he himself realizes that she is not the same status as him, he
still wants her. For instance, in Episode 11, Chi Soo attempts to confess his feelings to
Eun Bi, but the confession comes across as narcissistic and self-serving:

You keep appearing in front of my eyes. When I’m walking around, or
eating, or even when I go to the club full of hotties, dressed in that tacky
volleyball uniform…you keep spiking your ball into my chest. Your ball is
all tied up all weird, and you’re always dressed in these tacky clothes.
Your mole looks like black bean sauce splatter on your face, which you
forgot to wipe off. And look wise, you’re not as good-looking as me. But you keep appearing in front of my eyes. So…always stand beside me. Until I can get my sanity back. (Episode 11)

Even in the ending of the series, when Chi Soo is disowned by his father and has nothing to his name, he is still shown to be “better” than Eun Bi. He successfully finishes his two years of service in the South Korean Military and has his own income from serving in the military. On the other hand, Eun Bi is on her fourth attempt at passing the civil service exams to become a schoolteacher (Episode 16). No matter how much she tries, from the beginning of the series till the end, she is always struggling to find herself and accomplish her dreams. Opposite to this idea, no matter what Chi Soo does, he is successful at it. Even when he faces barriers, he has the ability to independently overcome them, and still be successful. The drama portrays Chi Soo as being competent and Eun Bi as incompetent. This could be a larger symbol for gender in general, as men are believed to be “better” than women in all respects.

**Myth # 7: The love of a good and faithful true woman can change a man from a beast into a “prince.”**

Although people have the ability to change, they only do so when they themselves choose to (Galician, 2004). This myth glorifies codependency, creating a dangerous portrayal that love has the ability to change a self-centered, narcissistic, and abusive person to a caring, empathetic, and loving person (Galician, 2004). Throughout *Flower Boy, Ramen Shop*, a transformation can be seen in the main character Chi Soo, who goes from having an egocentric personality to becoming someone who considers the people that he works with at the ramen shop as part of his own family. In the first few episodes,
Chi Soo uses his status to get what he wants, and to demean people that are lower in status than him. For instance, Ba Wool confronts Chi Soo about him dating So Yi while Ba Wool was also seeing So Yi. Chi Soo tells Ba Wool that So Yi is too good for him, and that she deserves him instead because she is rich. He later tells Ba Wool, “The rich get richer and the poor get poorer, that’s how life supposed to be” (Episode 2). Chi Soo’s arrogance is shown when he belittles Ba Wool’s status.

Toward the end of the series, through his continued relationship with Eun Bi, Cha Soo becomes a more caring individual. For example, in Episode 15, Chi Soo is faced with an ultimatum from his father. He can either decide to break up with Eun Bi and everything would go back to normal, or he could continue to date Eun Bi and his father will buy the property that the ramen shop is located on and redevelop the property for a new restaurant, leaving all of the Flower Boy, Ramen Shop family jobless and homeless. Before changing his mind in Episode 16, his initial choice is to break up with Eun Bi for the sake of his ramen shop family.

As the relationship between Chi Soo and Eun Bi progresses, Eun Bi’s caring and loving personality rubs off onto Chi Soo. He slowly transforms his concern for himself to a concern for his family and friends. Without Eun Bi, Chi Soo would still have his old personality and values, but it is because of Eun Bi that Chi Soo changes from a “beast” to a “prince.” She draws out the good in Chi Soo.

**Myth # 8: Bickering and fighting a lot means that a man and a woman really love each other passionately.**

An exemplar of this myth is the overall narrative of Chi Soo and Eun Bi’s relationship. Throughout the series these two argue regularly. The main cause for most of
this conflict is usually the fact that Eun Bi and Chi Soo are from different spheres. Even though they seem to have almost nothing in common, they overcome their conflict and still love each other. For example, in Episode 12, returning to the ramen shop after talking to Chi Soo’s father about not being with Chi Soo, Eun Bi sees that Chi Soo has made her ramen, but she refuses to eat it, because she fears that she would enjoy it and fall for Chi Soo more:

Chi Soo: “You, why are you avoiding this? It’s not because you’re too full to eat right now…but you’re too afraid to eat…let’s make sure right now, whether you’re a lame duck, or a woman right now. Come with me.”

As she refuses to go, she walks into her house. Chi Soo chases her into the house as well and continues to confront her.

Chi Soo: “Why are you such a coward?… Where did the angry Eun Bi go that I used to know? If you eat that ramen, you may realize that I may be real ramen, instead of just Cup ramen. That’s why you can’t eat it. Because if I’m real, you’re afraid that I may make your heart boil over!”

Eun Bi: “Fine, I’m scared to death! You said you were feeling queasy and nauseous for the first time? But not me, as you've already seen, I’ve already felt my heart boil. Just how insanely hot that can be…how dangerous that is, I already know. And…I know myself very well. Because I’m like a shallow pan, I boil faster and hotter than others. That's why I want to be a thick earthenware instead of being a shallow pan. Just like my age, I’m trying to date more slowly, safely, and less strenuously… But you keep turning me into the shallow pan. You’re really about to
make me boil over. That's why I’m afraid. I’m scared to death!”

Chi Soo: (Chi Soo embraces Eun Bi while she is crying) “Okay, I’m saying I understand, so just stand still. When you are angry my insides start to boil over. Because you look so strangely pretty like that.” (Episode 12)

Though they got into a very heated argument over their differences, in the end they seemingly fall for each other even more. Though they argue frequently throughout the drama, resulting in a total of nine kernels in the span of 16 episodes, mostly over their differences, they seem to love each other more after each argument.

Myth # 9: All you really need is love, so it doesn't matter if you and your lover have very different values.

Correlating with Myth #1, this myth states that no matter how different two individuals may be, or how many barriers they may face, love cures all (Galician, 2004). It is possible for narratives and characters to overlap between more than one love myth (Galician, 2004). In Flower Boy, Ramen Shop this myth overlaps with Myth #1, and the examples of Myth #1 could be used as examples for this myth.

Other examples, based on the overall narrative of Chi Soo and Eun Bi’s relationship, can be seen as well. One example of this myth is the final scene of the entire show, in Episode 16. During this kernel, all characters are shown two years after the ramen shop closed down, displaying a “where are they now” moment. While this is occurring, Eun Bi’s voice is narrating about how different people are like ramen. She explains that although there may be different types of people, ranging from those who were jilted by love to those who are newly feeling what love is, it doesn’t matter who you
are or the difference that you may have with your romantic partner. All that matters is the
love that you have for each other, because it is this love that will keep you together. As
long as the relationship has love, anything is possible (Episode 16). From the ending
scene, the final message that *Flower Boy, Ramen Shop* presents is the status quo idea that
when two people love each other, nothing else matters.

**Love Prescriptions in *Flower Boy, Ramen Shop***

Throughout the series, displays of love myths were far more apparent than love
prescriptions. Though portrayals of love prescriptions are scarce in *Flower Boy, Ramen
Shop*, I detected glimpses of two prescriptions:

**Prescription # 1: Consider Countless Candidates.**

**Prescription # 3: Communicate Courageously.**

The following are descriptions of characters, kernels, or narratives that are exemplars of
each of the frequent love prescriptions within *Flower Boy, Ramen Shop*.

**Prescription # 1: Consider countless candidates.**

Instead of believing that the first person in one’s life is his/her soulmate, Galician
(2004) suggests going on multiple dates with various people, until a suitable person could
be found. Only one kernel can be seen in *Flower Boy, Ramen Shop* that showcases this
idea. While concerned that both Kang Hyuk and Chi Soo want to be with her, Eun Bi
asks her best friend Dong Joo for advice. Dong Joo tells Eun Bi: “Love is like shopping.
You have to try it on to see if you can tell if it’s meant for you or not. If you go on
trusting your heart like you like to do, do you want to have another relationship where a
man cheats on you before he enlists?” (Episode 13). Instead of just being with the first
person that Eun Bi “feels” is the right one, Dong Joo suggests that she should date both Chi Soo and Kang Hyuk to see which one she has more in common with.

**Prescription # 3: Communicate courageously.**

This counters the love myth that states that a person’s true soulmate should know what they are thinking without even asking them. In order to understand exactly where both individuals are coming from in the relationship, each person should communicate exactly what they want the other to know (Galician, 2004). I found only one kernel in this drama that displays this idea. Although this example was also categorized as illustrating the “bickering and fighting” love myth (Myth #8), it also showcases this prescription. When coming back to the shop after talking to Chi Soo’s father about the possibility of her and Chi Soo breaking up, Eun Bi sees that Chi has made her ramen. Chi Soo wants her to try it, but she is hesitant to do so and she courageously communicates to him that she wants to take their relationship slow, because she has been hurt by former partners prior to Chi Soo. Eun Bi courageously tells Chi Soo that when she was younger she used to dive into love headfirst. This time, however, she states that she doesn’t want to rush into her relationship with Chi Soo because she doesn’t want to get hurt anymore. In return, Chi Soo communicates to her that he understands where she is coming from (Episode 12).

**Elements of the Romantic Utopia in Flower Boy, Ramen Shop**

Illouz (1997) argued that the culture industry romanticizes commodification and consumption of products that are “necessary” for a successful relationship. Romance is glamorized to be wholly materialistic. In Flower Boy, Ramen Shop, I detected seven
instances of the elements of the romantic utopia. In particular, I found two elements of the romantic utopia in the following kernels:

(1) Glamour and elegance are attributes of romance, such as buying jewelry, wearing fancy clothes, and buying gifts for each other.

(2) Intimacy and romance are associated with participating in activities that involve spending money.

**Glamour and elegance are attributes of romance, such as buying jewelry, wearing fancy clothes, and buying gifts for each other.**

This element of the romantic utopia emphasizes the materialistic side of romance, where gift giving shows the extent of love that one has for the other (Illouz, 1997). This was portrayed in the following kernel: Chi Soo is trying to find a way to show Eun Bi that he really cares about her. For advice he goes to his father’s chief secretary. The chief secretary tells him that to win someone over you need to buy them twice as much as you would an ordinary girl, and then get them the best and most expense flower arrangement. Later in the episode Chi Soo offers Eun Bi an envelope of money and a bouquet of flowers (Episode 4). Through this depiction the viewer sees that in order to woo someone, buying expensive gifts is essential.

**Intimacy and romance are associated with participating in activities that involve spending money.**

This tenet of the romantic utopia focuses on the need to constantly participate in activities in public to keep a relationship intimate and exciting (Illouz, 1997). An example of this is a dating kernel in Episode 10 with Kang Hyuk and Eun Bi. To start the date, Kang Hyuk takes Eun Bi to an ice cream parlor and buys them both ice cream. They
then head to the mall where they play games in the arcade. Then, they both browse mall, and the scene shows Eun Bi looking at a hair bow. Kang Hyuk takes the hair bow that Eun Bi was looking at and buys it for her. After going shopping, they go to a movie, where they share a large bucket of popcorn, but they have their own drinks. To finish the date, Kang Hyuk takes Eun Bi to a restaurant to eat supper (Episode 10). Not only should dating be exciting, but money needs to be spent in order to have a good time.

**Additional Themes: Love as Ramen**

Throughout *Flower Boy, Ramen Shop*, love and romance is related to ramen; the process of making ramen, who makes the ramen, what kind of ramen a person is like, and who an individual eats ramen with. Equating love with ramen portrays the hegemonic belief that love only matters if you have someone to share it with. For example while eating with Eun Bi at a street vendor, Chi Soo asks if Eun Bi if she was interested in dating Kang Hyuk. From this conversation the viewer gets a better understanding of how love is portrayed in the Korean drama:

Chi Soo: “Do you want to date…oppa” (*oppa* means older male person, and is referring to Kang Hyuk)

Eun Bi: “Well I guess I could.”

Chi Soo: (laughing at her, he points to his heart) “Love is known through this…”

Eun Bi: “I’m going to do it…love. (points to her heart) As always with this, I will no longer put my heart on the line and wait. If there’s someone who makes me put my heart on the line, I’m going to approach them first.”
I don’t want to sit alone eating cup ramen by myself at the store. Ramen actually tastes better to make and eat with another person.” (Episode 10)

Correlating love with ramen, this kernel showcases the idea that everyone has a soulmate. Life is not a complete life without someone to love and be with.

As Chi Soo and Eun Bi’s relationship progresses, the metaphor of ramen is used to describe their relationship. For example, while at a fine dining restaurant Eun Bi and Chi Soo have an argument over the differences in values that they have:

Chi Soo: “During the time you date me, you’ll get to eat even more unbelievable things from now on.”

Eun Bi: “I’m not interested in dating a high school student, to you a relationship is a revolving door, a public auction, or cup ramen, but I’m past that now. I no longer want to eat cup ramen. Now I’m only going to eat the type of ramen that a man has made just for me. So...whatever we have going on…let’s end it here.”

Chi Soo: “Why all of a sudden are you acting so lame? I came here to meet Yang Eun Bi the woman.”

Eun Bi: “I don’t want to admit it…but I’m already lame. Just because my hand was held once…and I was kissed once, it doesn’t get my heart tangled up. So let’s not waste time.”

Chi Soo: “Wasting time? But I’m not wasting time. I’m not. Do you think I’ve only kissed once or twice? Because of you…for the first time, I’m all weird inside! Fine, just like you said, I don’t know my heart was tangling
up. But I felt queasy and shaky. I am saying this to you with all of my sincerity.”

Eun Bi: “Have you ever once asked me something about myself? Have you asked me how I felt? Your confession that stated you don’t know why you like a girl who’s uglier than you, yes, that’s exactly your true feelings. It’s curiosity that’s driving you.”

Chi Soo: “Then what exactly is your problem?”

Eun Bi: “Don’t you know how to make ramen, a man who can’t even make ramen, how do you think you can make my heart race?” (Episode 11)

From this dialogue, the audience can once again see the correlation between love and ramen. The argument between Eun Bi and Chi Soo points out the differences between the two, displaying Myth #9: All you really need is love, so it doesn’t matter if you and your lover have very different values. In this particular case, Eun Bi is pointing out to Chi Soo that he is young and immature when it comes to his social and relationship skills. In Eun Bi’s last statement, if the word “ramen” was replaced with “love” it still shows what she wishes to tell Chi Soo, “Don’t you know how to ‘love’, a man who can’t even ‘love’, how do you think you can make my heart race?” For Eun Bi, it is not the fact that Chi Soo is younger than she is, or even that he is extremely different from her. She really just wants Chi Soo to slightly change his immature ways in order to become a more suitable partner. This perpetuates the “changing a beast into a prince myth” (Myth #7). This myth is brought to fruition when Chi Soo does learn how to make ramen, trying to show that he can be on the same level as Eun Bi. One night Chi Soo makes ramen for Eun Bi but she is
hesitant to eat it. This kernel shows how Chi Soo has changed from an immature, self-conceited boy, to a caring “ramen,” or man (Myth #7). He makes Eun Bi ramen to show her that he can empathize with her, but Eun Bi also reveals her feelings as well. She courageously tells him that she doesn’t want to rush into the relationship, because she doesn’t want to get hurt again from a romantic relationship.

The ramen metaphor also displays that love is really all that anyone needs, nothing else matters. For example, while trying to tell Kang Hyuk that she does not want to be with him and wants to be with Chi Soo instead, she emotionally shows how she cannot live without Chi Soo.

Eun Bi: “Kang Hyuk, you were always a man to me. You had me fluttered. That’s how I really felt. But…Chi Soo was like magma. Even when we just touch hands, it’s so hot…so I’m nervous because I don’t know when I’ll explode. It was obvious that it would be difficult. I said to myself…that I’d never be with a man like this. But I can’t help it. I must be Cha Chi Soo’s shallow pan. Even when I cool it down…and cool it down again…I boil over again.” (Episode 15)

Through Eun Bi’s words the audience has an opportunity to see the hegemonic idea that love is a panacea. As much as she tries, Eun Bi cannot live without Chi Soo. She cannot think of anything else but having him in her life.

The use of ramen as a metaphor for love comes full circle in the final episode of the series, when Eun Bi narrates about different types of ramen:

“There are many different kinds of ramen in the world. Bland ramen for not figuring out the amount of ramen right (referring Dong Joo and Kko
Chi). Salty ramen with the broth reduced because the flames were too high (referring to Ba Wool and So Yi). Ramen that was made a long time ago, and that's all soggy and swollen (referring to Chi Soo’s father). And…cup ramen that's eaten alone (referring to Kang Hyuk). The important thing isn’t about what kind of ramen you eat. The most important thing when you eat ramen is…timing. This moment. If your heart is starting to boil up because of someone…that moment…is the best moment. Other things…aren’t very important. It's the most delicious to eat ramen…when it starts to boil over.” (Episode 16)

From the process of making ramen, to eating ramen, and even the fact that there are different types of ramen, *Flower Boy, Ramen Shop* argues that love is ramen.
CHAPTER FOUR: Boys Over Flowers

*Boys Over Flowers* aired in South Korea from January 5, 2009 to March 31, 2009 (Boys Over Flowers, n.d.). It is based on the Japanese manga comic *Hana Yori Dango* (“Boys Over Flowers”). It is the third variation of the original manga, following the Taiwanese adaption, *Meteor Garden*, and the Japanese television version (Jung, 2010). Of the three variations, the Korean *Boys Over Flowers* is the most widely received. Audience reception both nationally and globally reached record highs in 2009. For example, according to AGB Neilsen Media Research (n.d) in Korea, *Boys Over Flowers* had acquired an average of 28% of the audience share. From its first broadcast day in January 2009, viewership ratings sharply increased until they reached a high the week of March 9th, 2009, when *Boys Over Flowers* had amassed a 32.9% share of the viewership audience for that timeslot (Boys Over Flowers, n.d.). Of those who viewed *Boys Over Flowers*, 66.7% of its audience was female, the majority being in their mid-teens to thirties: teens 18.4%; twenties 12.7%; and thirties 15.3% (AGB Neilsen Media Research, n.d.).

*Boys Over Flowers* is argued to be one of the major starting influences of the Flower Boy craze, better known as the “Flower Boy syndrome” (Jung, 2010). During its first broadcast in Korea, news articles ranged from discussions of the leading male characters’ ideal type of girl, their favorite meals, and fan-made parodies of the male characters in new, “what if” situations (Jung, 2010). The Flower Boy syndrome is also evident outside of Korea. Jung (2010) argues that indications of a strong reception of the Flower Boy craze globally can be viewed by commenters’ responses on websites such as YouTube, ViiKii, and Dramabean. Out of all the renditions of *Hana Yori Dango*, the
pretty boy images of the male characters in the Korean version seems to resonate more with viewers that have read the original manga, and seen all television adaptations (Jung, 2010). The Korean rendition of *Boys Over Flowers* is said to be the starting point of the Flower Boy public (Jung, 2010).

**Boys Over Flowers Characters**

*Boys Over Flowers* centers around six main characters: four extremely wealthy, beautiful, and somewhat spoiled boys that name themselves “F4,” short for the “flower four”; and an ordinary high school girl and her best friend (Boys Over Flowers, n.d.). This melodrama focuses on the themes of love and friendship. It follows the archetype of a romantic comedy, where two heterogeneous individuals, who have some sort of irritation with the other, turn their disgust for each other to “love.” Jung (2010) noted that *Boys Over Flowers* is a spinoff of the Cinderella fantasy, with the addition of a love triangle and encouraged materialism. The following are personality and gender role descriptions of each of the main characters.

**Jan Di**

A daughter of working class parents, Jan Di is a teenager who throughout the series has multiple jobs to help her family to make ends meet. During Episode 1, a glimpse of her personality is shown when she goes to deliver laundry to a Shinhwa student. As she reaches Shinhwa High School, she looks everywhere for the customer, and finally finds him standing on the rooftop of a building, battered and bruised, ready to jump to the concrete floor to take his life. This student had been tormented for being an “outsider.” As he attempted to jump, Jan Di reaches out and grabs him, and ultimately saves his life. Her life is changed when she is offered a swimming scholarship to
Shinhwa High School for saving the student’s life. Though the relationship between her and F4 starts out contentiously, she later becomes close friends with them. A love triangle is even formed between herself and two of the F4 members, Jun Pyo and Ji Hoo.

Personality wise, Jan Di is shown to be more tomboyish than feminine. She oftentimes wear clothes more for her comfort than for her physical looks. She is not afraid to put her pride on the line, and stand up for those who are being unjustly picked on. Jan Di participates in mainly gender-neutral activities, her favorite being swimming. She is portrayed as being a loyal friend and an empathetic person. She is so caring that Jun Pyo’s mother’s chief secretary asked Jan Di to visit a friend of his who was in a comma (Jun Pyo’s father that everyone thinks is dead), hoping that her warmth would help the person feel loved (Episode 23).

Ga Eul

Jan Di’s best friend who works with her at a porridge shop, Ga Eul aspires to become an elementary school teacher. After getting over her relationship with her cheating ex-boyfriend, she soon falls for an F4 member, Yi Jeong, but the feeling is not reciprocated. After countless attempts at getting Yi Jeong to date her, and countless moments of rejection, Yi Jeong finally admits his love for Ga Eul in the final episode, but in a somber way. He tells her, “I’m leaving to Sweden for four to five years…if you think about it, it’s not such bad news. When I come back you’ll be the first one I look for… if by that time you haven’t found a soulmate” (Episode 25). In the ending scenes of the series, four years have gone by and Yi Jeong returns to Korea and visits Ga Eul at the elementary school where she teaches. Though the episode does not directly say that they became a couple, it alludes to that idea.
Throughout the series, Ga Eul is shown to be caring, a loyal friend to Jan Di, and a strong believer in notions of romantic love. As the drama progresses, we see that she has a strong influence on the “blossoming” of Yi Jeong from a playboy to a more egalitarian man. She has a feminine demeanor, but does not wear expensive clothes because she cannot afford it. Usually, her feminine side is shown through the words that she says. She often fantasizes about going shopping and dating cute guys.

**Jun Pyo**

The most prominent male character of *BOF* is the leader of F4. Jun Pyo is the heir to the Shinhwa Group, the most successful corporation in South Korea. Shinhwa has a foothold on a spectrum of industries, from owning hotel resorts all across East Asia to running their own elementary, secondary, and postsecondary institutions. Jun Pyo’s grandfather established the Shinhwa schools so that Jun Pyo had a safe environment to be raised in and receive a high quality education from the world’s leading scholars.

Jun Pyo’s physical attributes reflect a Flower Boy. He is often shown shirtless, with a slim body, six-pack abs, and smooth skin. He wears clothing that would be considered in the “Beau Brummel” style: dressing elegantly, and using accessories to showcase that a person may belong to an upper, more luxurious class (Crawford, 2006). Jun Pyo displays this type of fashion by wearing flower-print button down shirts, scarves, peacoats, and tight pants, all in pastel colors. Counter to the fashionable image he conveys, Jun Pyo is shown doing mostly masculine activities. For example, in Episode 2, after Jan Di calls Jun Pyo annoying and immature, he goes to a field and aggressively plays rugby with people that he hired. In another episode, Jun Pyo is shown shooting guns at a shooting range, driving a race car on a race track, and practicing his sword
wielding in a *dojo* (martial arts training studio).

Jun Pyo appears to be high maintenance, pretentious, immature, and stuck-up in the beginning of the series, but as his relationship with Jan Di progresses, his attitude slowly becomes more compassionate and caring. For example, the first time that we hear him speak in Episode 1, he makes his entrance into the school building for the start of the school day. There were students crowding by the entrance to greet Jun Pyo and the rest of the F4. A girl offers him a cake that she made herself. Instead of accepting the cake, Jun Pyo grabs it and shoves it in her face, causing the girl to run away in tears. Jun Pyo’s bully-like personality changes as the series progresses.

**Ji Hoo**

Ji Hoo is the grandson to the former president of South Korea, who became a physician after his term. When Ji Hoo was four years old, while riding at night in the back seat of the car that his parents were driving, Ji Hoo covers the face of his father with his hands while he was driving, resulting in the car flipping over and Ji Hoo’s parents’ death in the subsequent crash. Directly after the end of his parents’ funeral, his grandfather walks off hastily while Ji Hoo attempts to chase him, but Ji Hoo ends up on the ground crying for his grandfather to come back. From that moment on, Ji Hoo had no guardian to watch over him while he grew up.

Physically, Ji Hoo shows strong Flower Boy characteristics: he has straight, shiny, orange-dyed hair, is groomed very well, and often wears vests, sweaters, scarves, and earrings, all in light pastel colors that are nearly transparent at times. Ji Hoo’s hobbies include both masculine and feminine-typed activities. For example, when he hangs outs with his F4 friends, he tends to do what they do, and has a masculine-like competitive
mentality while he partakes in those activities. However, when Ji Hoo hangs out with Jan Di, he is often seen nurturing her, displaying a somewhat feminine-typed persona. For example, one night when Jan Di was feeling down about not being able to swim because of an injury to her shoulder, Ji Hoo takes her to his house and cooks her some pancakes to eat, complete with whipped cream and maple syrup. As he makes the pancakes, he says to Jan Di, “This is the best cure when you’re on the verge of crying” (Episode 12). At first, Ji Hoo shows compassion because he pitied Jan Di, but later falls in love with her, creating the love triangle between him, Jan Di, and Jun Pyo. Ji Hoo’s personality is portrayed as being sincere and empathetic, qualities that first attracted Jan Di to him, but their relationship ultimately results in a close friendship instead of a romance.

Yi Jeong

Known as the “Casanova” of F4, Yi Jeong is skilled in all areas of the fine arts, especially pottery, and uses these skills as a tactic for “hooking up” with beautiful girls. His family owns the most prestigious art museum in all of South Korea. In terms of physical appearance, Yi Jeong wears very dark colors and a lot of tight clothing. His hair is well groomed and straightened quite frequently. Though he is a playboy, his sense of fashion also reflects a Beau Brummel style. He often wears scarves and ascots, along with lavish-looking button-down vests. His body figure is shown to be femininely slim-like, but muscular at the same time, conveying a sense that men are to be fit, but still have muscles to be considered masculine.

Yi Jeong has the tendency to participate in masculine activities more than feminine activities, including boxing, racecar driving, and air riflery. Though he is quite skilled at feminine-typed activities, Yi Jeong uses these skills to charm beautiful women.
For example, in Episode 1, all members of the F4 are seen eating at a five-star restaurant that Yi Jeong got them into. The other members of F4 ask him how he was able to get them into the restaurant and Yi Jeong tells them that he ran into the restaurant’s head female chef at a fine china store, and told her that he is a potter himself. He said that he told her about what would be proper dishes for a “beautiful woman like you.” Though he is skilled at feminine-typed activities such as pottery and dancing, Yi Jeong uses these skills to get what he wants from girls, instead of getting to know them. Though he starts off being a “playboy,” as the series progresses he slowly transforms to a person who wants to be in a committed relationship with Ga Eul.

Love Myths Portrayed in *Boys Over Flowers*

Of the ten of Galician’s (2004) love myths that were used as categories in this study’s coding rubric, seven were prevalent throughout this series:

Myth # 1: Your perfect partner is cosmically predestined, so nothing/nobody can ultimately separate you.

Myth # 5: To attract and keep a man, a woman should look like a model or a centerfold.

Myth # 6: The man should not be shorter, weaker, younger, poorer, or less successful than the woman.

Myth # 7: The love of a good and faithful true woman can change a man from a beast into a “prince.”

Myth # 8: Bickering and fighting a lot means that a man and a woman really love each other passionately.

Myth # 9: All you really need is love, so it doesn't matter if you and your
lover have very different values.

Myth # 10: The right mate “completes you”—filling your needs and making your dreams come true.

The following are examples of characters, kernels, or narratives of each love myth portrayed in *Boys Over Flowers*.

**Myth # 1: Your perfect partner is cosmically predestined, so nothing/nobody can ultimately separate you.**

This myth focuses on the idea that each person has one and only one soulmate. This myth was prevalent in all romantic relationships shown, but none more than the narrative of Ga Eul and Yi Jeong’s relationship. Throughout their relationship, the term “soulmate” was uttered 13 times in the span of 25 episodes. While on a vacation to New Caledonia with the rest of F4 and Jan Di, Ga Eul and Yi Jeong would often spend time with each other away from the group. One day they went out to beach and paddled in a rowboat together. While on the water they converse about Jan Di and Jun Pyo’s relationship, but then diverge and talk about Ga Eul’s beliefs on love:

Yi Jeong: “Is it true that Jan Di likes another guy? Who is it? It’s probably some low life, I know a little about women and Jan Di’s type is attracted to bad boys. Guys like that like to leech on to strong women like Jan Di and suck everything out of them.”

Ga Eul: “Nonsense! That guy might be Jan Di’s soulmate.”

Yi Jeong: “Soulmate? Do you actually believe in such a thing?”

Ga Eul: “Of course! Definitely! Playboys like you won’t understand, but that one person does exist in this universe.”
Yi Jeong: “So have you met yours, Ga Eul? Your soulmate?”

Ga Eul: “Not yet, but if he appears, I’m not letting him go. Because if you lose that person, you will eternally regret it.” (Episode 6)

From this first example the viewer sees that Ga Eul believes in a predestined partner. Though Yi Jeong seems hesitant to believe in a soulmate, the viewers learn later in the series that Yi Jeong actually did believe in the soulmate concept. When he approached the first person that he ever loved, Eun Jae, Yi Jeong expresses to her that he cared for her, but out of nowhere she left him. The following is the kernel in Episode 20 of the conversation that Yi Jeong has with Eun Jae at a pottery museum, discussing why Eun Jae left Yi Jeong:

Yi Jeong: “How could you do that all of the sudden? Without a warning…how could you disappear like that? Do you know how I felt? I felt suffocated as though the air I breathed was all gone. Can you imagine how I felt? How could you have done that to me?”

Eun Jae: “I wasn’t the air…I…wasn’t your air…Yi Jeong. I was a breeze that you mistook for air. I thought of myself the same way. I thought if I wanted to, I could stay at your side forever. But, Yi Jeong…a breeze…once it passes by, it can’t come back to the same place.” (Episode 20)

From this passage the viewer sees that Yi Jeong did believe in having a soulmate. In fact, he thought that Eun Jae was his soulmate, but in Eun Jae’s mind, she was not special to Yi Jeong. Ironically, Eun Jae decides to marry Yi Jeong’s brother, thinking that they are really a predestined couple.
Even Yi Jeong’s father teaches him that a soulmate does exist. In Episode 17, one night at Yi Joeng’s house, his dad is crying and drinking wine. Yi Jeong’s father is depressed over the recent divorce that he was going through with Yi Jeong’s mother. While crying he turns to Yi Jeong and tells him: “The woman who makes me want to live right…came only once in my entire life. If you lose a woman like that, every other woman is the same. It’s just all meaningless repetition.”

Eventually, Yi Jeong accepts that Eun Jae was not his soulmate, but realizes that Ga Eul maybe his “one and only.” Though he may want to be with her, he is also about to embark on a four-year trip to Sweden to hone his craft as a potter. In Episode 25, he goes to hang out with Ge Eul to tell her the news in front a pottery kiln:

Ga Eul: “They look happy…the pottery that’s in there. Instead of suffering from the heat, they rather look happy. Because if they endure it, once they come out, they will be loved….they hold that hope.”

Yi Jeong: “That’s so Ga Eul. I’m leaving…if you think about it, that might not be such bad news for you. To Sweden for probably 4-5 years…when I come back…you’ll be the first one I look for. I mean, that’s only if by that time, you still haven’t found your soulmate.”

As four years pass by, the audience is shown a scene where Ga Eul is a teacher in a class full of preschoolers. All of a sudden, Yi Jeong walks into the room. As he walks in, a little girl asks him if went to Sweden, and he answers yes. Then all of the kids yell “That’s teacher’s boyfriend,” alluding to the idea that both Ga Eul and Yi Jeong are a couple (Episode 25). Though it took over five years, their love was meant to be. They were predestined to be each other’s soulmate.
Myth # 5: To attract and keep a man, a woman should look like a model or a centerfold.

According to this myth, beauty for a woman means an unattainable standard of perfection (Galician, 2004). Throughout Boys Over Flowers, this myth is perpetuated by several kernel conversations that Jan Di has with her family. For example, in Episode 1, Jan Di just got word that she has been offered a scholarship to Shinhwa High School, for rescuing a student from committing suicide. While eating supper that night, Jan Di’s mother goes and hits her for eating too much. Her mom then yells at her: “You must be crazy! Everyone is dying to lose weight, but…what are you doing?...Hey! You need to diet and at least have a killer body so the rich boys will look at you! Really! We’re not rich, we don’t have a good family background and you are not smart! Hey, even this day and age, even swimmers must be skinny to become stars” (Episode 1). This kernel shows how Jan Di’s mother is trying to teach her that being physically attractive is the most important thing for a teenage girl in high school, so that she may attract a wealthy male suitor.

In another kernel, Jan Di is about to go out on a date with Ji Hoo, but before she steps out of the house, her family scrutinizes how she looks:

Jan Di’s Brother: “Noona (noona means sister), isn’t that dress too long? Can’t you make it more sexier?”

Jan Di’s Father: “Jan Di, your lips are too dry. Why don’t you lick your lips like this?” (shows her how to do it).

Jan Di’s Mother: “Ew. You smell disgusting, Jan Di. How a woman smells is very important. You know, irresistible fragrance of temptation!”
From this kernel, the audience is shown that, once again, beauty and physical looks are the status quo standards for women.

At one point, even Jun Pyo, when he first wanted to date Jan Di, cared about how Jan Di looked. One day, while Jan Di was at school some of Jun Pyo’s guards pick Jan Di up and take her back to Jun Pyo’s house. While there, Jan Di gets a manicure and pedicure, her hair styled, a makeover, and she is given an elegant golden dress to wear. When she is finished, she meets up with Jun Pyo and he tells her: “The ugly duckling can transform into an egret with money” (Episode 2). Though Jun Pyo thinks he is doing Jan Di a favor by giving her a complete makeover, he actually changes her to what he wants her to look like, supporting the hegemonic idea that a woman needs to look beautiful in order to attract a man.

**Myth # 6: The man should not be shorter, weaker, younger, poorer, or less successful than the woman.**

This myth states that in a relationship, the man should always be “better” than the woman (Galician, 2004). This myth is showcased in the narrative of the relationship that Jan Di has with Jun Pyo, as well as the relationship that she has with Ji Hoo. Jan Di is a working class girl, who works multiple part-time jobs in order to help her family make ends meet. She is portrayed as average looking and only street smart. Yet, she is offered the only scholarship to the most prestigious high school in Korea. All the while, Jun Pyo is the heir of the wealthiest corporation in Korea. While other students are dropped off by car to school, he is dropped off by helicopter. When stepping into Jan Di’s house for the first time, he laughed, describing it as “smaller than the size of his restroom” (Episode
12). Ji Hoo is the grandson of the former president of Korea. He lives by himself in an extravagant house. While flying with Jan Di from Macau back to South Korea, he hands her a first class ticket. Out of surprise, she goes to the front desk and replaces it for a coach seat. Jan Di asks Ji Hoo to sit with him, but he replies that he rather have the leg room in first class, thus keeping his first class ticket.

Through the composite of Jan Di, Jun Pyo and Ji Hoo’s narratives, the differences between Jan Di and the two boys are quite obvious. She is portrayed throughout the series as being younger, poorer, and dumber than Jun Pyo and Ji Hoo. In Episode 25, the series fast-forwards four years. Within those four years Jun Pyo left to go to the United States to help his family’s company, and he comes back to South Korea, where he is one of the most successful businessmen in the country. While Jun Pyo was away, both Jan Di and Ji Hoo go to medical school. Ji Hoo is in his final year at medical school, and is about to reopen his grandfather’s clinic. On the other hand, after failing her civil service exam twice, Jan Di is in the process of taking her third civil service exam to become a doctor (Episode 25). During the four years that all three characters had to accomplish their goals, only Jun Pyo and Ji Hoo are successful, while Jan Di is still in the process of trying to accomplish her goals. From the beginning of the series till the end, both Jun Pyo and Ji Hoo are portrayed as better and more successful than Jan Di.

Myth # 7: The love of a good and faithful true woman can change a man from a beast into a “prince.”

According to this myth, no matter how abusive, self-centered, or rude a man is, as long as he has a girl who loves him, he has the potential to become better (Galician, 2004). The main narrative of Jun Pyo and Jan Di is an exemplar of this myth in Boys
Over Flowers. In the beginning of the series, Jun Pyo is a spoiled and narcissistic “rich kid.” For example, in Episode 1, while making his entrance into Shinhwa, Jun Pyo notices that another male student is wearing the same button-down shirt as him. He then grabs a carton of orange juice and pours it all over the other student’s shirt (Episode 1).

As his relationship with Jan Di progresses, so does his personality. Though Jun Pyo is a violent person, he rarely uses violence to protect others. But when he goes out on a double date with Jan Di, and Ga Eul and her boyfriend, he uses violence to protect the integrity of both Jan Di and Ga Eul. At the skating rink, Jun Pyo and Ga Eul’s boyfriend at that time go to get everyone warm drinks. While at the snack stand, the other guy gets a call from another girl asking him if he wants to go to the club with him, and he replies yes. After the phone call, Ga Eul’s “boyfriend” tells Jun Pyo that he could do better than “that thing” Jan Di. In response to this, Jun Pyo punches him in the face, and continues punching him until Jan Di pulls him off (Episode 9). In this scenario, Jun Pyo doesn’t attack the person just for himself, but does so to protect the reputation of both Jan Di and Ga Eul.

Even the people that Jun Pyo is closest to see the change that has occurred because of Jan Di. For example, the head maid of Jun Pyo’s mansion, often referred to as “grandma” by Jun Pyo as a sign of respect, tells Jan Di what she thinks about her. The grandma maid used to be worried that Jun Pyo would one day become callused because he lived in a big house by himself. She says, “Master Jun Pyo is different now, and I think it is because of you. I have a great debt to this household. I believe that the last thing I have to do before I die is to make sure that Master Jun Pyo will lead his life the right way. I prided myself on my talent in judging people, so I’m going to trust myself
again (thinking that Jan Di can help Jun Pyo become a kinder, less abrasive person)” (Episode 21). From the grandma maid’s perspective, she can see that Jan Di’s love changed Jun Pyo’s personality.

**Myth # 8: Bickering and fighting a lot means that a man and a woman really love each other passionately.**

As perpetuated by this myth, constant conflict in a romantic relationship suggests that the individuals in that relationship love each other (Galician, 2004). In *Boys Over Flowers*, this myth is shown through the narrative of Jan Di and Jun Pyo’s relationship. In fact, it was his initial conflict with Jan Di that made Jun Pyo fall for her, displaying the idea of “hate at first sight.” During their lunch break at Shinhwa High School, Jan Di and her friend eat ice cream together. Jun Pyo, and the other members of the F4 walk by them and Jan Di’s friend accidentally drops her ice cream on Jun Pyo’s handcrafted, one-of-a-kind, shoes. In anger, Jun Pyo tells Jan Di’s friend to lick the ice cream off of his shoes. Jan Di steps in and tells Jun Pyo that an apology is enough. In response they have an argument over the incident:

**Jun Pyo:** “Let’s see that great friendship you speak about…lick it (talking to Jan Di). I’ll forget all about it if you lick it.”

**Jan Di:** (instead of licking the ice cream from Jun Pyo’s shoes, Jan Di shoves her ice cream in his face) “Does she have more money than you? Did you yourself earn all of that money? What? It is my concept to be nosy? It’s my concept not to overlook bastards who act out just by trusting what their rich parents have. Why!” (then she throws money at him.) “At our place, it’s $2.50, but I calculated it my *Gangnam* standards (referring
to upscale, highbrow standards), okay? If the stain doesn’t come out, then bring it by.” (Episode 1)

From this initial conflict, Jun Pyo strangely starts to develop feelings for Jan Di, but shows his feelings to her by pulling pranks on her. For example, he would fill the pool that Jan Di swam at with ducks, or even trash (Episode 2). He would also remove her desk from the classroom and put it in the hallway (Episode 2).

Jan Di puts up with a lot of Jun Pyo’s pranks until she yells at him again, starting another conflict (Episode 2). While playing volleyball for physical education class, Jan Di gets hit in the face with the volleyball, and her nose starts to bleed. Crying, she goes to the outdoor sink to clean her nose. Jun Pyo comes to her and offers her a handkerchief to try to help her. Jan Di rejects his help, and a conflict arises:

Jun Pyo: “Don’t cry, it doesn't suit you.”

Jan Di: “Mind your own business. Now I have to get your permission to cry? And aren’t you the happiest person whenever I’m crying or sad?”

Jun Pyo: “Is that the only way you can talk to someone who ran over here to help you?”

Jan Di: “Even if you were the last person on earth, I wouldn’t ask you for help. I’d rather die of a nose bleed than ask for your help!”

Jun Pyo: “Why do you dislike me so much? Good looking, tall, smart, rich. What is there not to like about Goo Jun Pyo? Are you an idiot?”

Jan Di: “You must not realize it, but your whole self and personality are unattractive! That greasy mouth, your arrogant walk, and your curly hair! It’s all very annoying. It annoys me that you guys are the only ones that
don’t wear a school uniform. And there’s the red card deal, with which you bully the weak people and just giggle about it like it’s nothing. That's the worst!” (Episode 2)

From this incident, their relationship changes yet again. Instead of showing his emotions to Jan Di through pranking, he does so by taking her out on extravagant dates, buying her things, and by trying to protect her from others.

Oddly, though the structure of Jan Di and Jun Pyo’s relationship changes, they still end up having constant conflicts. In an incident when Jan Di was kidnapped and held hostage in a warehouse by a bunch of thugs, Jun Pyo goes to save her, but gets brutally beaten. While he is bruised and battered on the ground, one of the thugs grabs a chair and is about to hit him over the back. Jan Di jumps over Jun Pyo, breaking the chair in half over her instead of Jun Pyo. The rest of F4 come in time to save them from any further harm (Episode 12). After this incident, in the hospital, Jun Pyo and Jan Di have an argument over why she jumped over him to take the hit from the chair:

Jan Di: “Why did you just let them hit you like that? Didn’t you say you could beat up everyone even if it was ten-to-one?”

Jun Pyo: “You idiot, two digit IQ, slow minded…you were kidnapped at the time, how could I do that? I’d rather get the crap kicked out of me than see them hurt even one of your fingers. But… because of that I was getting beaten to death on purpose, so why did you interfere? What if something really bad happened?” (Episode 12)

Though they are no longer arguing about each how they have different values, they are still arguing with each other, showcasing the idea that constant conflict is necessary for a
passionate relationship. These kernels from Episodes 1, 2, and 12 add up to a consistent theme that reaffirms this myth throughout the series.

**Myth # 9: All you really need is love, so it doesn't matter if you and your lover have very different values.**

According to this myth, love is so strong that it has the ability to overcome any obstacle or barrier a relationship may face. The narrative of Jan Di and Jun Pyo’s relationship portrays this idea. Like the classic *Romeo and Juliet*, Jan Di and Jun Pyo are from two totally separate worlds. Where Jan Di is poor and average, Jun Pyo is one of the wealthiest men in Korea, and a highly sought-after bachelor. Though they realize that they live on opposing sides of a spectrum, their love for each other overcomes the copious hindrances that they face throughout their relationship, such as having different values, status, and lifestyles; being physically distant; and going through physical illness.

One of the most notable barriers that they overcome is Jun Pyo’s mother. From the time that she learned word of Jun Pyo’s involvement with the commoner Jan Di, she adamantly rejected their relationship. One attempt at trying to separate the two of them was by offering Jan Di’s family money. One evening she goes to Jan Di’s house and has the following conversation with Jan Di and her family:

Jun Pyo’s Mother: “I believe that when people are born, they have their own separate worlds they must carry out. Jun Pyo is a child that must carry out not just Korea or Asia, but the entire world…and I will do everything as his mother to help him fulfill that role…do you know what is needed to grow good grass? It’s pulling out the weeds. The most important thing is to pull out the weeds that do harm to the grass.
(referring to Jan Di) typically they kill the weed with poisonous spray. But this time…” (offers Jan Di’s family a briefcase of money with a contract)

Jan Di’s Mother then grabs salt and pours it all over Jun Pyo’s mother and asks her to leave. (Episode 10)

From this kernel, the audience sees just how much Jun Pyo’s mother disapproves of Jan Di and Jun Pyo’s relationship. She even points out that both of them are from two totally different.

Jun Pyo’s mother tries various other attempts at separating Jan Di and Jun Pyo. She tries to hire thugs to kidnap Jan Di for ransom and an agreement that Jun Pyo would never see her again, but this plot fails. She also has him fly to Macau to supervise a project by telling him that if he doesn’t agree to do the job, many employees would be jobless. As a result, Jun Pyo and Jan Di had to separate, and Jun Pyo feels the stress of being responsible for all Shinhwa’s employees and not being able to see Jan Di, as he has a conversation with the rest of F4, in Macau:

Jun Pyo: “That kid has nothing more to do with me whether it was on purpose or not, I don't have time to think about things like that. We finally meet and all you guys want to talk about are childish things like that? (referring to Jan Di)...700,000, in Shinwa, those families I have to take responsibility for are about 700,000, try having 700,000 families lives resting on your shoulders. And see if you don’t change.” (Episode 14)

Jun Pyo just graduated high school, and is pressured into spearheading the development of a resort hotel in Macau. He feels the pressure of being responsible for 700,000 people, and he is also torn that he cannot see Jan Di.
Since trying to separate Jan Di and Jun Pyo’s relationship directly failed four consecutive times, in Episode 23 Jun Pyo’s mother tries an alternative plan. She attacks Jan Di’s closet friends. She has Ga Eul’s father fired, and she buys the property where Ji Hoo’s Art Foundation resides and threatens to demolish the building. Due to this, Jan Di agrees to move away where she will never see Jun Pyo again, with the stipulation that she gets one last date with him. Their final date was the best that they had so far. They go to the beach to have a picnic. While driving back, Jan Di has Jun Pyo stop the car. She gets out, and they have a conversation about breaking up:

Jan Di: “This time I realized that you and I live in two separate worlds. Even though we met like in a dream, but…now…it’s time to return to our separate worlds...no matter how much you struggle, you’re still Shinhwa group, Goo Jun Pyo. I never forgot that, not even for a single moment.”

She then gets on a bus, and as the bus drives away she thinks to herself:

“Ever since I liked you, I’ve always wished for it…that you were a normal guy that had nothing to do with Shinhwa or being a plutocrat.” She turns back to look at him. “Sorry, Jun Pyo, for not being able to keep our promise. I’m really sorry” (starts crying). (Episode 23)

Again, this kernel shows that Jan Di acknowledges that both Jun Pyo and herself are from two separate worlds, yet she still wants to be with him.

Eventually, Jan Di and Jun Pyo reunite in the final episode, only to face yet another obstacle. Jun Pyo tells Jan Di that he will be traveling to the United States for four years, in order to help Shinhwa Group get back on its feet. He asks Jan Di to marry him and go with him to the States, but she tells him no. They then agree that when he
comes back to Korea, that he will seek her out again. In the final minutes of the episode, four years have passed and Jun Pyo meets Jan Di on the shore of a beach. There, in front of the sunset, he gets down on one knee and asks her to marry him, and she replies with a “yes” (Episode 25). After hurdling over a four-year separation from each other, the two are reunited, and once again overcome a barrier to their love.

A succinct overview of how this hegemonic myth is portrayed in Jan Di and Jun Pyo’s relationship is the following conversation between the two of them:

Jan Di: “Why me? I’m not pretty, I don’t have money, or anything. Why do you even like me?”

Jun Pyo: “Because I have everything. Because I have money, status, and looks. I have all that. I don’t need anything. Jan Di all you need to be is Jan Di.” (Episode 22)

Though they both realize that they have completely different backgrounds and interests, they still love each other for being different. Thus, the myth is perpetuated throughout the entire narrative of their relationship.

**Myth # 10: The right mate “completes you”—filling your needs and making your dreams come true.**

Based on this myth, love is an all-consuming feeling (Galician, 2004). An individual’s life is complete only if one finds someone to be with for the rest of one’s life. When a person finds his or her “one and only,” one is complete. In *Boys Over Flowers* we see this myth played out through Ji Hoo’s and Jun Pyo’s characters, in relation to Jan Di. When Jan Di leaves Jun Pyo and Ji Hoo in order to live with her family in a fishing village, neither Jun Pyo nor Ji Hoo can focus on anything else, making them realize that
they cannot live without Jan Di. For Jun Pyo, he tries to get over Jan Di by going to the club to drink and meet other women. As much as he tries, he can never forget Jan Di. While driving home from the club one night, he sees an arcade game that he used to play with Jan Di. He steps out of the car and starts to kick and punch the machine, until the police arrest him for destroying property (Episode 24). Jan Di completed Jun Pyo’s life; without her he can’t even think straight, and digresses back to his old ways.

Ji Hoo is more outspoken about the way he feels about Jan Di. Ji Hoo discovers where Jan Di went, and travels to the fishing village to see her. When they meet, Ji Hoo confesses to Jan Di about how he cannot live without her:

Ji Hoo: “The emergency bell (referring to Jan Di)...I was tossing and turning thinking that I would never hear it again.” (he grabs her, gets down to her level and presents her with a ring) “I don’t know when I started to feel like this. But...I can’t live without you.” (Episode 24)

Ji Hoo earnestly tells Jan Di that his life is nothing without her in it, but Jan Di does not accept Ji Hoo’s proposal. Instead, she too displays this myth. She pulls out the necklace that was given to her by Jun Pyo and tells Ji Hoo: “I can’t seem to forget this...I just can’t seem to let it go. I can’t separate Jun Pyo from me” (Episode 24). Jun Pyo and Ji Hoo cannot live without Jan Di, and Jan Di cannot live without Jun Pyo. The prevalence of this myth is revealed through these kernels from Episode 24.

**Love Prescriptions in Boys Over Flowers**

Though love myths are dominant throughout *Boys Over Flowers*, I did detect one love prescription. The only prescription that I found was Prescription #1: Consider countless candidates. In an attempt to counter the idea of having a predestined partner,
this prescription suggests that people should date multiple people to find a person that is compatible to them. This prescription was seen in Jan Di’s love triangle with Ji Hoo and Jun Pyo, as well as Ga Eul and Yi Jeong’s relationship. Though the idea of a love triangle may seem melodramatic, it does display the idea that love is something that needs to be tested out, and is not predestined. Jan Di does not just date Jun Pyo, but also gives Ji Hoo a chance. She realizes that she may have more compatible values with one of the boys over the other.

In the beginning of Ga Eul and Yi Jeong’s relationship, where Ga Eul firmly believes that everyone has a soulmate, Yi Jeong is hesitant. Known for being a playboy, Yi Jeong has no problem dating more than one woman. While driving around Seoul, Yi Jeong notices Ga Eul on the sidewalk crying. He approaches her and takes her back to his house to talk. He finds out that Ga Eul is crying because her now ex-boyfriend cheated on her with an older, more attractive woman. Then Yi Jeong offers Ga Eul some advice:

Yi Jeong: (holding a teacup that he crafted himself) “This thing looks pretty weak?…It’s stronger than it looks. (He then drops the tea cup on the ground and it doesn’t shatter). “Do you know how long it took to become like that? Sorted, stepped on, cut, then burned at 1,300 degrees. That’s not the end, if after all that, it’s still not right, it has to be thrown out. Like this (he breaks the teacup with a hammer)… to become strong, this is what you have to go through. Just like what you went through today.” (Episode 9)

This kernel succinctly showcases this prescription. Using the metaphor of pottery, Yi Jeong explains to Ga Eul that in order to find love, she needs to work at it. Thus, she needs to “consider countless candidates.”
Elements of the Romantic Utopia in *Boys Over Flowers*

All three elements of Illouz’s (1997) romantic utopia were projected frequently in *Boys Over Flowers*. The following examples of characters, kernels, or narratives exemplify each element.

**Glamour and elegance are attributes of romance, such as buying jewelry, wearing fancy clothes, and buying gifts for each other**

According to Illouz (1997), the standard theme of romance is that it is not cheap. Historically, dating was associated with an affluent lifestyle. In order to be considered romantic, a date requires the constant consumption of romantic products, such as jewelry, chocolates, and flowers for the woman (Illouz, 1997). Throughout the dating scenes of *Boys Over Flowers*, this element of the romantic utopia was most common. For example, while on a trip to the skiing lodge, Jan Di and Jun Pyo go out on the porch to look at the stars. Because it is so cold, Jun Pyo takes his coat off and wraps it around Jan Di. Jan Di puts her hands in the pockets of the coat and pulls out a necklace of a moon within a star. Jun Pyo tells her: “This is me, and the one inside is you. Because the moon, Jan Di, can never leave the star, Jun Pyo. No matter what happens I’ll never let go of this moon” (Episode 12). Jun Pyo buys Jan Di a one-of-a-kind necklace to show his love for her, going along with the idea that love is only measured in the amount of expensive gifts given to the woman.

In another kernel, while in Macau to visit Jun Pyo, Ji Hoo and Jan Di go window-shopping at a high-end mall. They go to a shoe store where Jan Di sees a pair of sparkling black shoes. As they leave the shoe store Ji Hoo buys them for her, without her knowing. The next day, as they prepare to leave Macau to go back to Korea, Ji Hoo sits Jan Di
down and puts the shoes that he bought for her on her feet, as if it was Prince Charming putting on Cinderella’s glass slipper (Episode 16). Along with these two examples, there are four other kernels throughout the series where a male character gives an extravagant and expensive gift to their female partner. In Episode 5, Jun Pyo gave Jan Di new school supplies, clothes, and a bike; in Episode 6 Jun Pyo gave Jan Di a bejeweled ankle bracelet; in Episode 13 Jun Pyo gave Jan Di swimming goggles autographed by an Olympic gold medalist swimmer; and in Episode 19 Yi Jeong gave Ga Eul a designer dress with accessories to accompany it.

**Romance involves intensity and excitement which are usually associated with nature and travel.**

Another standard for the contemporary dating script is the idea that travel and nature add excitement to a relationship. This too is abundant throughout this Korean drama, with the wealthy male paying for the expenses for the female. One night Jun Pyo asks Jan Di to meet him at a park. When she gets there she notices that Jun Pyo has the whole parks lit with Christmas lights. They spend the whole night at the park, sliding down the slide and riding on the swings. At the end of their night, while Jan Di is on the swing, Jun Pyo kneels down to her and they kiss for the first time (Episode 9).

In another episode, Jun Pyo buys tickets for Jan Di and Ga Eul to fly to New Caledonia. He also pays for brand new outfits, their food, and hotel suites. One day Jun Pyo takes Jan Di out on a date to explore the island. They go horseback riding on the beach shore, have lunch on a private island, and see the sights in a helicopter. While taking the helicopter tour, Jun Pyo tells Jan Di to look down, and shows her a naturally formed heart within the coral reef. He tells her: “If I found a girl that I liked, I decided to
bring her here. Do you see it? My heart?” At night, Jun Pyo has an elaborate dinner made for Jan Di, including lobster, steak, and other gourmet food. After supper, Jun Pyo takes Jan Di to the pool and has a fireworks show arranged for her (Episode 6). In this episode travel is seen to be mandatory in romance, with expensive activities illustrating “love.”

**Intimacy and romance are associated with participating in activities that involve spending money.**

This element of the romantic utopia argues that money is necessary for love. According to this standard, men are expected to pay for transportation, entertainment, and food (Illouz, 1997). Not only that, what a person wears to a date is also important. This implies that both before the date (grooming and clothes) and during the date (entertainment, food, transportation) acts of consumption were seen as normal and an imperative element of the dating script (Illouz, 1997). The previous example shows this well. But there are other instances that reflect this requirement for romance.

One particular kernel that is an exemplar of this element of the romantic utopia can be viewed in Episode 8. Jun Pyo takes Jan Di to buy her new golfing attire and equipment. They then go to the country club to golf. After golfing Jun Pyo takes Jan Di to a Japanese restaurant. The chef of the restaurant brings out a whole tuna, and cuts it up in front of them. They enjoy eating raw fish and sushi, then make their way to a private drive-in movie theater. While watching the movie, both of their hands touch the bucket of popcorn at the same time. They then hold hands, and kiss each other (Episode 8). From this example, the audience can see that spending money and participating in activities that costs money is an essential part of the hegemonic dating script. All 17 dating scenes in *Boys Over Flowers* reflect at least one element of the romantic utopia, but most scenes
showcased more than one element (see Appendix B).

**Additional Theme: Love is Sink or Swim**

Throughout *Boys Over Flowers*, Jan Di and Jun Pyo are seen repeatedly as literally drowning in water, needing to be rescued by the other. This idea leads to an over-encompassing theme that their love for each other is either “sink or swim.” They either flourish together and float the “seas of love,” or they individually drown without the other.

The sink/swim metaphor was first portrayed in Episode 3. Angry that Ji Hoo and Jan Di are dancing together at the school’s dance, Jun Pyo goes outside to vent. He goes by the pool and starts throwing chairs and kicking tables. All of a sudden a bee buzzes around Jun Pyo. Because he is highly allergic to bees, he tries frantically to swipe the bee away, but ultimately falls into the pool. When he was younger he was kidnapped and driven into a river by the kidnapper. From that moment on, Jun Pyo has been deathly afraid of the water, and never learned how to swim. Jan Di dives in with her ball gown on, and saves Jun Pyo’s life (Episode 3). From this beginning kernel, the symbolism of Jan Di saving Jun Pyo’s life signifies that Jan Di will be the person that rescues Jun Pyo from his violent, narcissistic ways, further exemplifying the “beast into a prince” myth (Myth #7).

As Jan Di and Jun Pyo’s relationship blossoms, the tensions of a love triangle can also be seen between Jan Di, Jun Pyo, and Ji Hoo through a drowning scene. While Ga Eul and F4 are on the beach, Jan Di is swimming in the water. All of a sudden, Jan Di gets a cramp in her leg and starts to drown. She calls for help and everyone notices her drowning. Jun Pyo’s face is full of concern. He wants to rescue her, but still does not
know how to swim. Instead, Ji Hoo dives into the water and saves Jan Di. When Jun Pyo gets back to his suite, he is disgusted that he could not save Jan Di. Worse, he is angry that the person who did save her was Ji Hoo (Episode 6). This scene shows the tension that love can produce between people. Though Jan Di is swimming, Jun Pyo is “sinking” in his regret for not saving her. This kernel shows how romance presents barriers that need to be overcome in order to be with the person you love.

Frustrated that he could not rescue Jan Di, Jun Pyo overcomes his fear of the water and learns how to swim. He has an opportunity to use his newly learned skill in an incident on a yacht. While on a yacht that has set sail for Jeju Island with Jan Di and Ji Hoo (they are a couple during this time), and Jun Pyo and his fiancé Jae Kyung (an arranged partner by Jun Pyo’s mother), Jan Di loses her one-of-a-kind necklace that was given to her by Jun Pyo. She goes to the pool, and notices that it is at the bottom of the pool. Because she was injured from being hit over the back with a chair, she no longer has the ability to swim. Instead, she attempts to get the necklace by using a net. Unfortunately, she falls into the pool and struggles to stay afloat. All of a sudden, Jun Pyo dives into the water and rescues her (Episode 17). This time it is he who rescues Jan Di, not Ji Hoo, but this feeling is bittersweet, being that he has a fiancé that he is being forced to marry. Another barrier sets the stage here. Though Jun Pyo is now a changed man, he is being forced to marry another girl, hence he cannot be with Jan Di, the person he really loves.

The sink or swim metaphor reaches fruition in the last episode of the show. After being critically hit head-on by a car, Jun Pyo gains consciousness in the hospital. His long-term memory works fine, and he remembers his friends in F4. His short-term
memory, however, is lost, and he does not remember who Jan Di is. To try to help Jun Pyo bring back his memory, Jan Di reenacts all of the major events that had occurred in their relationship. Try as she might, nothing brings back Jun Pyo’s memory. In desperation, Jan Di tries for a last ditch effort. One night at a pool party, Jan Di and Jun Pyo talk by the pool:

Jan Di: “Do you remember this? (shows him the necklace that he gave her). You don’t remember the names on this? I’ll return it, take it back. (she then throws it into the pool). Jun Pyo, I’ll ask just once more, just one more question. Do you know how to swim?” (he thinks that he doesn’t due to his memory lost, but he actually learned so that he could save Jan Di)

Jun Pyo: “No!”

Jan Di: “You do know how to swim. You don’t fear anything in the world, but you’re so scared of bugs. You’re the idiot who would rather his ribs all bust apart than see one finger on his woman hurt. You’re the idiot who doesn’t know the difference between ‘privacy’ and ‘pride’…Who insists like a train that swallowed its heart that the 38th strategy^2 is running away. You freak out when it comes to kids, but…you want to be a devoted father who will go out and look at the stars with his son. You’re a lonely but loving guy. That’s who you are, Jun Pyo. You call out my name.”

(Episode 25)

Jan Di leans over the pool, and falls into it with her back facing the pool. As she sinks to the bottom of the pool, she grabs the necklace. As she is about the pass out, Jun Pyo suddenly remembers who Jan Di is. He dives into the pool, rescues Jan Di, and gives her
mouth-to-mouth resuscitation. Jan Di wakes up and asks him, “Do you remember now?” Jun Pyo replies: “Geum Jan Di…You scare me like that one more time and you’re dead! I’m sorry…I’m sorry.” They embrace and kiss each other (Episode 25).

Throughout their relationship they are constantly put into situations where their love for each is put to the test. Though they look like they are “sinking” in the face of obstacles that they face, they somehow stay afloat. Thus, they do not let their love sink them, but they swim together. From the sink or swim metaphor, the audience has the ability to see how love is portrayed in Boys Over Flowers. In this drama, romance is filled with barriers to overcome. In this case, Jan Di and Jun Pyo are forced to either sink or swim. This metaphor is an exemplar of the hegemonic idea that love is all that a relationship needs (Myth #1: Your perfect partner is cosmically predestined, so nothing/nobody can ultimately separate you; and Myth #9: All you really need is love, so it doesn't matter if you and your lover have very different values). It portrays the idea that love has the ability to overcome anything.
CHAPTER FIVE: Discussion

The mass media have a stake in political, social, and economic structures, as they rarely challenge the established order (Galician, 2004). Thus, the media is hegemonic because it reinforces the status quo, created and maintained by the dominant group’s ideas (Galician, 2004). Hegemonic notions of love and romance are a set of expectations for how a model relationship should form, develop, function and be maintained (Hefner & Wilson, 2013). These beliefs develop and are reinforced by cultural institutions such as schools, churches, and especially the media (Hefner & Wison, 2013).

This study aimed to evaluate the portrayals of love and romance in the Flower Boy genre, while also exploring cultural hegemony theory. Textual analysis of *Flower Boy, Ramen Shop* and *Boys Over Flowers* provided a composite of the overall picture of love and romance in the Flower Boy genre.

This discussion section will review the love myths and prescriptions found in *Flower Boy, Ramen Shop* and *Boys Over Flowers*, followed by the components of the romantic utopia that were observed, then a summary of hegemonic and counterhegemonic gender portrayals and romantic roles in the Flower Boy genre will be described. In the conclusion, limitations of this study will be examined, as well as suggestions for future research.

**Portrayals of Love and Romance: Myths and Prescriptions**

Using Galician’s (2004) love myths and prescriptions, the following hegemonic overall themes of love and romance were found in both *Flower Boy, Ramen Shop* and *Boys Over Flowers*:

Myth # 1: Your perfect partner is cosmically predestined, so
nothing/nobody can ultimately separate you.

Myth # 7: The love of a good and faithful true woman can change a man from a beast into a “prince.”

Myth # 9: All you really need is love, so it doesn't matter if you and your lover have very different values.

These themes will be described further in-depth.

Myth # 1: Your perfect partner is cosmically predestined, so nothing/nobody can ultimately separate you.

This desire is not just for a mate, but also for a perfect partner who is the one-and-only “other half” of ourselves (Galician, 2004). This idea is a spiritual longing as well, because the perfection of the soul can only come from your other half, your soulmate (Galician, 2004). This soulmate is cosmically destined. Throughout Boys Over Flowers and Flower Boy, Ramen Shop, the idea that love is predestined is frequently shown through female characters and the narratives of the major character’s romantic relationship. From the very beginning, Flower Boy, Ramen Shop, a kernel portrays this myth. Eun Bi, the main female character, goes to a fortuneteller where the fortuneteller foresees that Eun Bi will have a predestined soulmate. In Boys Over Flowers one of the female characters, Ga Eul, explicitly utters the word “soulmate” 13 times in the span of 25 episodes. Being that her narrative with Yi Jeong is minor, getting predominantly less airtime than the major love triangle of Jan Di, Ji Hoo, and Jun Pyo, to verbally say “soulmate” 13 times is notable. Both dramas’ set of main characters also display their belief in a soulmate; both individuals within the relationship may be extremely different, but their love for each other is predestined, and their relationship seems to flourish.
To believe that destiny plays a role in romance implies that potential romantic partners might be meant for each other based on predestined factors (Franiuk, Cohen, & Pomerantz, 2002). Embedded in this belief is the notion that relational happiness will be instantly achieved and maintained if that special person can be found. Also within this belief is the idea that long-term relationship success might not be attainable with anyone else except for that one “true” person (Franiuk, Cohen, & Pomerantz, 2002).

This theme is also evident in previous literature. Tanner, Haddock, Zimmerman, and Lund (2003), in analyzing romantic relationships in 26 Disney animated movies, found that a majority of the movies analyzed (18 of 26) portrayed couples falling in love spontaneously, getting married, and living “happily ever after.” In a content analysis of popular movies targeted to teenagers, Signorielli (1997) found that about one-third of female characters were motivated by a strong desire to find the “right one.” In these movies, love just happens magically, then the couple marries and that’s when mundane life begins (Pardun, 2002).

**Myth # 7: The love of a good and faithful true woman can change a man from a beast into a “prince.”**

Love has the ability to tame a beast. This myth often showcases a male testing a female, who must prove that she is virtuous by liking a man that has a horrible personality, but becomes “better” because of her virtuous love (Galician, 2004). In both Korean dramas analyzed here, the main female character uses her love for the main male character to change his attitudes. Jun Pyo, from *Boys Over Flowers*, and Chi Soo, from *Flower Boy, Ramen Shop*, are obnoxious, spoiled, and self-absorbed. They both come from extremely wealthy families, and are used to having anything they want. They often
see others as being lower than them, and will treat them like that as well. On the other hand, *Boys Over Flowers*’ Jan Di and *Flower Boy, Ramen Shop*’s Eun Bi are average girls from working class families. They both are courageous, empathetic, and, most importantly, loving. Though both Jun Pyo and Jan Di’s and Chi Soo and Eun Bi’s relationship start off rough because of the extremely condescending attitudes of the male characters, the love of the women transforms the men to become more “tamed.”

As Galician (2004) contended, one of the most hazardous aspects of this theme is that it simplifies conflict. The idea that the love of a good person can change the other person overlooks the complexity and awfulness of domestic abuse. As Karpman (1968) suggested, if the good person doesn’t change the bad person for the better, the irrational view is that it must be because the good person isn’t good enough, or didn’t love the other enough. In addition to promoting women to stay in abusive relationships, this theme also suggests that the beast is always depicted as being particularly mean and abusive, but needs to be loved because there’s a tiny morsel of goodness within him that needs to be teased out (Galician, 2004). This puts the burden on the good person (women) instead of the bad person (men) to change his personality.

In *Flower Boy, Ramen Shop*, this can be seen from the utterances of the main character Chi Soo, as he describes that he feels a “sick” feeling in his stomach because of Eun Bi, and needs to be with her in order to figure out what is wrong himself. In *Boys Over Flowers*, Jun Pyo is an abusive person, whose morsel of goodness can be brought out by Jan Di. This is noticed by other characters, who see Jun Pyo’s changing attitude. For instance, grandma maid directly says that she supported Jan Di and Jun Pyo being together because Jan Di is making Jun Pyo less calloused. Jun Pyo’s sister also makes
this distinction, as she says that Jun Pyo is changing the more he spends time with Jan Di.

**Myth # 9: All you really need is love, so it doesn't matter if you and your lover have very different values.**

A popular metaphor is that love is a magnetic force, as in there is a “magnet” pulling the two individuals together (Illouz, 1997). In this major theme in the Flower Boy genre, all couples evaluated in the two dramas are extremely incompatible with each other, either having differing statuses, values, or a combination of both. Though each individual in the romantic relationship in both dramas are very dissimilar to their partner, the relationships all seem to stay intact. As Illouz (1997) asserted, media sources convey love as an autonomous agent, acting with a force of its own, independent of the will or control of the lover. As Galician (2004) contended, although short-term flings with people who are very incompatible maybe exciting, long-term relationships usually flourish when similarity rather than dissimilarity triumphs. This idea, however, is not displayed in these texts.

In most cases, movies and television shows portray two people with vastly different values and lifestyles easily functioning as a couple. Rarely does the audience see these couples getting past the courtship stage, living their life together (Galician, 2004). When romantic partners share values and mutual respect for each other, the relationship grows. On the other hand, when they do not, an influx of conflict tends to ensue (Galician, 2004). Though homogamy, or common values, is a stable for a successful relationship, it is rather unexciting to view in the media. Thus, romantic movies and television shows sparsely depict realistic couples with compatible beliefs and values (Galician, 2004).
In *Boys Over Flowers*, the couple of Jun Pyo and Jan Di are polar opposites. Both characters are aware of this fact, but still they are determined to be with each other. Jun Pyo understands that he is more attractive than Jan Di, has a higher status, is smarter, and has his future set up for him, but yet, he tells Jan Di that he likes her because she is totally different from him. Because he has everything, Jun Pyo is attracted to the girl who has nothing. The same can be seen with the relationship between Eun Bi and Chi Soo in *Flower Boy, Ramen Shop*. The dichotomy between the two characters is easily observed. As Chi Soo’s father described it, Chi Soo is like caviar and Eun Bi is like rice. When mixing the two together, the meal is ruined. Chi Soo and Eun Bi are also aware of the major differences between the two, but they still want to be with each other.

Merging with Myth #1, along with the idea that love overlooks differences, this myth argues that love can overcome barriers. Obstacles that test the love between two individuals are frequent in fairytales, and the romantic script (Galician, 2004). Coined the “Romeo and Juliet Effect,” Fisher (1992) argued that in its purest sense, love is always portrayed as conquering every barrier, and, in some cases, even death.

Aligned with fairytales such as *Cinderella* and *Snow White*, the Flower Boy genre encapsulates this idea that love has the ability to overcome even the biggest of hurdles. In all romantic relationships in *Boys Over Flowers* and *Flower Boy, Ramen Shop*, though each couple seemed incompatible with each other, their love for each other seemingly cemented their bond. When faced with unprecedented odds, such as illness, physical injury, physical distance, or even parental disapproval, the love that they have for one another miraculously keeps them together. The implication of this myth becomes important when considering the way modern society operates today. The
depersonalization, or the break down of individuality, in the mass media might lead to unrealistically high expectations for a close relationship, in which an individual’s partner will satisfy their every need, and overcome any hindrance (Galician, 2004). Instead of believing that a romantic partner is needed to complete your life, and that you need someone to accomplish your goals, you need to believe that you can complete yourself, which is encapsulated in Galician’s (2004) Prescription #10, cultivate your own completeness.

**Love Prescriptions Portrayed**

Love prescriptions throughout *Boys Over Flowers* and *Flower Boy, Ramen Shop* were sparse. No narratives showcased love prescriptions, but only three kernels, out of 41 total episodes between the two series, contained love prescriptions. The major prescription that was alluded to in both dramas is the idea that dating is needed to find someone that is compatible with you, instead of believing that the first person that you meet would be your soulmate for life (Prescription #1: Consider countless candidates). In *Flower Boy, Ramen Shop* Eun Bi’s best friend Dong Soo offers advice that love is like shopping, and that Eun Bi needs to shop around to find the right person for her. In *Boys Over Flowers*, Yi Jeong explains to Ga Eul that to find the “right” partner, she would need to continue to date people. Ironically, for Dong Soo in *Flower Boy, Ramen Shop*, and *Boys Over Flowers*’ Yi Jeong, they both end up with their supposed soulmates, rendering the prescription an afterthought.

**Love in the Big Picture**

The overall picture of love and romance presented by these two texts offers viewers the notions that love has the ability to find your one and only, that love has the
ability to overlook flaws and overcome obstacles, and that love has the power to
transform individuals in the relationship. Both *Boys Over Flowers* and *Flower Boy*,
*Ramen Shop* offers a general picture that everyone has a predestined soulmate. Since your
partner is predestined, one should not actively look for someone to be with, because their
soulmate will mystically appear in front of them in the right moment. This theme also
implies that relationships that last are meant to last for a reason, and individuals in
relationships that do separate were really not destined for each other, overlooking the idea
that conflict management is a main component of a successful relationship (Gottman,
1999).

Aligning with the theme that love is mystical and has the potential to find a
soulmate is the theme that love has the ability to overlook flaws and overcome obstacles.
The Flower Boy genre promotes the idea that love is meant to be spontaneous, exciting,
and unconventional. If two people are really meant to be together, then differences and
flaws of the other are aspects that add spark to the relationship. Also, the Flower Boy
genre suggests that relationships are supposed to face immense obstacles, because it helps
to create a strong relationship, no matter how prevalent or large the obstacles are: Love is
the ultimate binder for these relationships.

Another major theme depicted in the Flower Boy genre is the idea that love has
the ability to transform the individuals in the relationship. Most importantly, it suggests
that it is okay that the individuals in the relationship are totally different from each other,
because their love for each other will be the thing that changes each other. This overlooks
the idea that people should find a partner with compatible goals and values, what
Galician (2004) prescribes as “crave common core values.” What is also discouraging is
the expectation that people need to change in order for a relationship to work. Not only that, but in *Boys Over Flowers* and *Flower Boy Ramen Shop*, the theme of love suggests that men are supposed to be abusive and egotistical, but will transform to be more caring as the relationship develops.

In addition to detecting Galician’s (2004) love myths described here, I found the additional love myth or portrayal of love equating to money. Here, if you love someone you would spend an inordinate amount of money on them. The measure of love is money. Also, although love at first sight was not found, the romantic trope found in romantic comedies of “hate at first sight” was found (Galician, 2004).

**The Romantic Utopia: Love Equals Money, Luxury, and Travel**

The theme of romance has become increasingly associated with consumption. In what Illouz (1997) terms the “romanticization of consumption,” romance is linked to the activities that a couple engages in, which often consists of the consumption of leisure. In the media, images show couples well dressed and expensively bejeweled. Also, the couples are engaged in leisure activities that are presented as being equivalent to intimacy and romance (Illouz, 1997). Some of these activities include dancing at a club or dance hall, eating dinner at an elegant restaurant or drinking at a sophisticated bar or cocktail lounge, riding in an upper-class vehicle, picnicking outdoors, traveling and taking vacations, and going to the movies. These images associate themes of leisure, nature, authenticity, and luxury with the consumption of tourism, the food industry, hotels, and media industries (Bachen & Illouz, 1996). This is termed by Bachen and Illouz (1996), as well as Illouz (1997), as the romantic utopia. The association of powerful cultural themes with the free/capitalistic market contributes to the construction of a romantic utopia,
encapsulated in two main elements: one presenting a couple in a natural and secluded setting, and the other a setting of luxury and pleasure-seeking (Bachen & Illouz, 1996).

The romantic utopia thus revolves around a pastoral fantasy of nature or wildness, and an imaginative dreamland of affluence and elegance. Both of these settings rest on practices of consumption (Bachen & Illouz, 1996). Three main sets of attributes that are used to “naturalize” romantic activities are: (a) glamour and elegance accompany the presentation of luxurious commodities; (b) intensity and excitement are usually associated with nature in the form of travel; and (c) intimacy and romance are associated with movie going, dancing, or fancy dinners (Illouz, 1997).

In the Flower Boy genre, romance is synonymous with spending an inordinate amount of money. These representations of love create the romantic utopia, a fantasized setting that utilizes powerful emotional symbols, metaphors, and stories that create an imagination that promotes social order (Illouz, 1997). The Flower Boy genre abundantly displays the romantic utopia. Of the 28 dating kernels, in this sample of 41 episodes, all kernels showcased at least one of the three elements of the romantic utopia (see Appendix B). Throughout Boys Over Flowers and Flower Boy, Ramen Shop dates involved activities that required the spending of money, such as eating at fine dining restaurants, traveling out of Korea, going to the movies, or going shopping. No kernel displayed a couple staying at home, just spending time together, or, most importantly, not spending money. In these two dramas, the overall picture of how lovers are supposed to interact reflects the romantic utopia, but in a much larger way. This is enhanced especially when the male love interest is a billionaire, and heir to a financial conglomerate. In sum, the Flower Boy genre promotes the idea that falling in love in Korean society is not cheap.
To woo someone over, the male needs to buy his way into the girl’s heart, reinforcing the idea that you can buy someone’s love.

**Gender Portrayals and Romantic Roles:**

**The Flower Boy Genre as Counterhegemonic and Hegemonic**

As mentioned in Chapter 1, The Flower Boy image is an attempt to resist Korean hegemonic masculinity. Moon (2002) argued that there are three elements of Korean hegemonic masculinity: Confucian traditionalism, militarization, and compressed industrialization. Using Confucian beliefs, which state that the husband is the mainstay of the household, South Korean society is an extension of the family. Thus, Korean society is enforced by a patriarchy. Being that there are concrete gender roles (high statuses for men and domestic statuses for women), this idea extends into mainstream Korean culture (Kim & Hahn, 2006). Confucian patriarchy was later transformed into modern industrialized patriarchy, which adopted the normative Western dichotomy of gender roles into its dominant gender ideology (Moon, 2002). Because men are the supposed principal income-earner of the family, this validated his authority and power within the household and society (Moon, 2002).

Korea’s mandatory two-year military service creates another element of Korean hegemonic masculinity. Due to the confrontation between North and South Korea, South Korea’s mandatory, two-year military service subjects men to brutal physical and mental challenges, and teaches men to be disciplined in a stringent hierarchical system. This process teaches men that a “real man” does not show emotions, does what he is told, and shows stern aggression to showcase their dominance. Violence is an element that measures the level of masculinity in a man, which creates a society that is prone to
violence as a form of authority and domination (Park, 2001).

Lastly, South Korean hegemonic masculinity is enforced and influenced through compressed industrialization, or the segregation of gender roles. Men are expected to work in the economy while women are expected to tend to the domestic responsibilities. This notion of compressed industrialization creates a larger mandate that society should be strictly dichotomized between masculine and feminine tasks, such as active and physical activities as masculine, and domestic activities like cooking or cleaning as feminine (Moon, 2002). It also aids in reinforcing the idea of patriarchy, stating that authority should be given to the gender that has the ability to financially take care of the family. In accordance with this idea, doing domestic work emasculates a person (Moon, 2002).

The Flower Boy persona is a form of counterhegemonic masculinity. Directly opposed to the Korean “tough guy” look, the Flower Boy image deconstructs the male/female dichotomy (Kim, 2003). Characteristics of the Flower Boy are able to satisfy both feminine and masculine qualities. The formula for a Flower Boy is as follows: (a) girl-like pretty looks; (b) toned and hairless body; (c) a vulnerable heart; and (d) an inconsiderate and immature personality (Jung, 2010). Showing that men can have the ability to be more feminine in nature, it resists the idea of hypermasculinity, or having a highly masculine persona. This idea expands the identity of masculinity, and has the potential to expand the identity of femininity, which could possibly create more egalitarian gender roles (Miyose & Engstrom, 2015).

Characteristic of the Flower Boy identity, the Flower Boy genre of Korean dramas attempts to expand masculine identity, as well as break down the strict feminine
script. As Jung (2010) contended, the Flower Boy persona presents a complex cultural deconstruction of male and female. The growing popularity of the Flower Boy syndrome in popular culture seems to reflect a desire to break with earlier traditional hypermasculine and hyperfeminine roles (Holliday & Elfving-Hwang, 2012).

Though the Flower Boy genre may seem to be counterhegemonic, in terms of gender, within the context of all the love myths and aspects of the romantic utopia found, the current study finds the Flower Boy genre is still hegemonic. According to Carragee (1993), hegemonic portrayals are indefinite and evolve over time. Hegemony, then, is a process of continuous creation and re-creation. It cannot fully encapsulate what the status quo is, but is malleable in that it leaves room for counter expressions (Adamson, 1973). Resistive ideals are then taken and incorporated into the established order. Hall (1985) articulated that hegemony allows room for some variance of the dominant ideology; it is open enough to adapt and take in opposing ideals to create a reformed dominant ideology. This textual analysis of *Boys Over Flowers* found six out of ten love myths, and all aspects of the romantic utopia present in its text. In *Flower Boy, Ramen Shop*, five out of the ten love myths were found, along with two elements of the romantic utopia. Overall, three love myths were prevalent in the Flower Boy genre (Myths #1, 7, and 9). Because hegemony is malleable, it is able to take in counter ideas such as the Flower Boy persona, to make it a part of the new hegemonic status quo.

Another aspect the findings of this analysis points to is the conformity to hegemonic gender roles. The Flower Boy genre is heteronormative. Heteronormative standards for what is deemed normal situates men and women in a hierarchal relationship that portrays masculinity as active and powerful, while femininity is illustrated as being
subordinate to male sexuality (Jackson, 2006). Like gender, heteronormativity creates opposing structures of femininity and masculinity that support men’s greater power and status (Mahoney & Knudson-Martin, 2009). It reaffirms that all romantic relationships are supposed to be heterosexual, where the man loves and courts the woman. Though the Flower Boy genre expands men’s capabilities, such as being more emotionally expressive and caring more about their personal appearance, it disappointingly restricts the female identity. This idea goes against the grain of the initial reason why the Flower Boy persona was created. The emergence of the Flower Boy image originated in the changing socio-political atmosphere in South Korea. Due to the International Monetary Fund’s crash in 1997, Korea began an era of economic depression and social dislocation (Kim, 2000). Women workers were quickly dismissed from the workforce. In almost all industries, rates of female layoffs were significantly higher than for males (Kim, 2000). The desire for a different masculine portrayal arose out of the anger many women felt over being the first to be laid off after the IMF crisis.

In both *Boys Over Flowers* and *Flower Boy, Ramen Shop*, the main male characters had everything. Before they met their romantic partners, Jun Pyo and Chi Soo were rich, extremely attractive, and smart. Then, when they both meet their counterparts, they have it all: looks, brains, money, and a girlfriend. No matter what they do, not only are they successful, but they also go well beyond expectations. In *Boys Over Flowers*, Jun Pyo successfully graduates high school, heads the development of a resort hotel in Macau, and goes to the United States and successfully saves the integrity of Shinwa Group. In *Flower Boy, Ramen Shop*, Chi Soo graduates from high school and returns safely from his two-year service in the Korean military.
The opposite can be said about the women in both dramas. Both Jan Di and Eun Bi have no money, are not smart, and are not attractive. Whenever they get into trouble, their partner uses his abilities to rescue them, suggesting that women cannot do anything by themselves, and always need a man to come to their rescue. While their male counterparts are away, Jan Di and Eun Bi struggle to get by, and seem lost. In *Boys Over Flowers*, while Jun Pyo was in the United States for four years, Jan Di was studying for her civil service exam to become a doctor, after failing it twice before. In *Flower Boy, Ramen Shop*, while Chi Soo is serving in the military for two years, Eun Bi is studying for her civil service exam to become a schoolteacher after failing it three times. Though the male characters get to be successful at whatever they decide to do, the female characters are constantly struggling to just make a living. Though the male character does not need anyone to help him achieve his goals, without the help from the male character the female cannot succeed.

Another equally discouraging hegemonic theme found within the Flower Boy genre is how the woman transforms. Although throughout the process of the relationship, both Chi Soo and Jun Pyo change to become “better” men because of the love of their women counterparts, Eun Bi and Jan Di also change as their relationships progress. Before being in a relationship, Eun Bi and Jan Di were independent, strong, and caring women. When they do get into a relationship, they slowly change from being independent and strong to totally being reliant on their boyfriend.

Although evaluating images that are displayed in the media is important in understanding how hegemony is reinforced, examining what is *not* shown is also imperative (Natharius, 2004). As McKerrow (1989) argued, “absence is as important as
presence in understanding and evaluating symbolic action” (p.107). In terms of gender roles within the Flower Boy genre, all the male characters start off successful and as the drama progresses, they become even more successful at whatever they do. The main female characters are rarely shown being successful on their own accord; they are successful only when they get aid from their romantic partner. Thus, while the Flower Boy genre expands the identity and capabilities of men, it supports the hegemonic idea that women are to be inferior to men in every way possible. This reinforces Myth #6: The man should not be shorter, weaker, younger, poorer, or less successful than the woman (Galician, 2004).

**Conclusion**

Based on my reading of these two texts from the Flower Boy genre, the viewer is presented with three main ideas. First, money can buy absolutely anything, even love. Throughout both texts, money was the central key in the dating script. What was considered romantic had something to do with spending money, such as going out to the movies or to eat at a restaurant. The standard norm is that the man pays for everything, once again reaffirming the notion that men are to be better than women in a romantic relationship. Also related to this main theme is the idea that the amount of money being spent gauges the amount of love that the man has for the woman. With this in mind, gift giving was not just about giving homemade things to the other, but was about giving things that are one-of-a-kind. It is almost as if the woman was an object to be adorned with accessories, where the more the man spent on the woman, the more he staked claim to her.

A second main idea is that love is a panacea, or cure-all. Out of ten loves myths
used, six were found in each one of the dramas, and three were found in both dramas. The love that each individual in a romantic relationship had for his/her partner proved to cure all woes. In *Boys Over Flowers*, Jun Pyo and Jan Di faced seemingly unbeatable odds, from parental disapproval, violent fights with gangsters, physical illness, and long distance, but their love overcame it all. The same can be seen in *Flower Boy, Ramen Shop*’s Eun Bi and Chi Soo. Though they are completely different, face almost unbearable odds, and have constant conflicts, their love for each other was stronger. These texts uphold Myth #1: Your perfect partner is cosmically predestined, so nothing/nobody can ultimately separate you; and Myth #9: All you really need is love, so it doesn’t matter if you and your lover have very different values (Galician, 2004).

A last main idea garnered from this textual analysis is that the Flower Boy genre supports patriarchy. Though the meaning of *Boys Over Flowers* actually follows a traditional Asian mantra stating that people should enjoy the Flower Boy for who he is and not what he looks like or his status, the dramas analyzed here suggest that people should care about *men over women*. The same can be said about *Flower Boy, Ramen Shop*. As the title suggests, the show focuses on Flower Boys working together at a ramen shop, and their interactions with an average girl who slowly transforms them to be “better” men. Even though Eun Bi, a female, is the main character, the show does not center on her, but focuses on how she influences the boys. The Flower Boy genre is all about the boy. The girl’s role is really just to showcase the abilities of the Flower Boy.

**Limitations**

One of the limitations of this study is that only two series within the Flower Boy genre were analyzed, with 41 episodes in all. Other Flower Boy dramas could be
analyzed to help create a fuller view of the Flower Boy genre, such as *Flower Boy Next Door*, and *Shut Up! Flower Boy Band*. Regarding the method, this was a qualitative textual analysis, with one observer. Though memoing was used as a method to help regulate accurate interpretations, having another observer would help with intercoder reliability. Concerning the culture being observed, only one culture/country was observed, South Korea. Other East Asian, and Westernized nations have gone through a reformation of masculinity and could be analyzed to see if similar findings are observed.

Lastly, in regards to the media, *Boys Over Flowers* and *Flower Boy, Ramen Shop* are Korean dramas that originally aired between 2009 and 2011 to a Korean audience, even though it is available to view online for others currently. The time frame of their original airing may be indicative to particular cultural trends during that particular time.

**Suggestions for Future Research**

One of the themes found regarding gender roles was the expectation for women to look beautiful. This involved the mention of plastic surgery. South Koreans have an alleged obsession with cosmetic surgery (Holliday & Elfving-Hwang, 2012). The most recent official statistics, offered by the South Korean Health Department in 2008, suggests that about 20% of the Korean population have undergone cosmetic surgery (approximately 9,800,000) (Yang, 2007). The actual number is likely to be considerably higher, because only a fraction of surgeries are actually recorded (Holliday & Elfving-Hwang, 2012). While plastic surgery is generally assumed to be a feminine practice, Korean men are also having aesthetic surgery, and it’s significantly increasing yearly. The Korean Association for plastic surgeons estimates that about 15% of men in 2010 has had cosmetic surgery (Kang & Cho, 2009). Also, in a 2009 survey, conducted by social
scientists Kang and Cho (2009), 44% of male college students polled stated that they contemplated having some sort of aesthetic surgery. Currently, young men in their twenties seek a “softer” image. The Flower Boy syndrome epitomizes this softer look. Such components include: having a less angular jaw, double eyelids, and a prominent nose tip, and augmenting pectoral bicep muscles to give their bodies “definition” (Holliday & Elfving-Hwang, 2012). The aim is therefore to create a muscular but smooth (hairless) body with boyish facial features (Holliday & Elfving-Hwang, 2012). Cosmetic surgery, then, is a significant social issue in Korea.

Though cosmetic surgery for women is seen as a conformist attitude to Korean patriarchy, for men it is seen as a way of expanding masculine identity. The growing popularity of the Flower Boy in popular culture reflects a desire to break traditional militarized masculinity (Jung, 2010). Young men appear more open to accept more feminine qualities and not “hard” masculinity. Jung (2010) contended that women’s increasing economic self-sufficiency and reluctance to marry early, as well as a skewed gender ratio within Korea, perhaps make women more selective of their partner. Since the Flower Boy image is thought to satisfy complex feminine and masculine human desires, women are attracted to this persona, while men are encouraged to have this type of identity (Jung, 2010). Being that the Flower Boy genre displays the ideas of the Flower Boy persona, future research should evaluate how the Flower Boy genre portrays values pertaining to cosmetic surgery for both men and women.

Reception theory suggests that messages are not just in the text but also in its receivers who interpret the messages and negotiate its meaning (Galician, 2004). Media are primarily driven by the bottom line, making a profit. The media also has embedded
values and points-of-view, because it is constructed and carries a subtext of what is important (Galician, 2004). Media are storytellers, telling a story that chooses the characters’ age, gender, and race, mixed in with particular lifestyles, attitudes and behaviors that portray certain values. It is important to learn how to read various media messages in order to discover the points-of-view that are embedded in them (Galician, 2004). Audiences are more likely to be receptive to the embedded values when they are just using media for enjoyment. While some embedded values might be worthy of adoption, it should be the viewer’s decision to decipher whether or not messages are realistic or not (Galician, 2004). The viewer, however, needs to be able to discern, using media literacy, whether or not messages are hegemonic, realistic, or unrealistic. Future research should observe how media literacy skills might affect the way in which viewers interpret messages of love, romance, and gender in the Flower Boy genre.

A large majority of young people report that they turn to the media to learn about romantic relationships (Bachen & Illouz, 1996). Bachen and Illouz (1996) found that 90% of young people in their study looked to movies and 94% to television for information about love, while only 33% turned to their mother and 17% to their father. More recently, a survey of high school students, conducted by Rivadeneyra and Lebo (2008), found that heavy viewers of romantic television were more likely than light viewers to hold traditional dating roles (such as the man should be in charge). Yet, the general topic of romance and the media remains severely under explored (Holmes, 2007). Thus, future research should examine the effects that viewing dramas in the Flower Boy genre could have on an individual’s perceptions of romance, and on relationship satisfaction.
Although the Flower Boy genre heavily shows the lives of Flower Boys, and the scope of this study was to analyze how love and romance is portrayed within this genre, future research should focus on how femininity is portrayed. If the Flower Boy genre expands the identity of masculinity, upcoming studies should look at if the identity of femininity is also expanded. Also, how gender roles are projected within the genre could be evaluated to observe if the Flower Boy genre presents a more egalitarian view than other types of Korean dramas.

Regarding the popular and most-perpetuated ideal of romantic love as requiring another to complete oneself, the author Antoine de Saint-Exupery offered a quote that more realistically portrays real love: “Life has taught us that love does not consist of gazing at each other, but in looking outward together in the same direction” (p. 203). Love is not just about the initial passion of meeting someone, but involves two individuals with separate identities who work together on common life goals, while still maintaining their own selves. When someone cultivates and finds his or her own self, and finds someone else who has done the same, synergy occurs (Hendrix, 1992). Their relationship becomes happy and healthy: Love starts with loving oneself.
APPENDIX A: Notes

1 The author acknowledges the distinction between South Korea and North Korea as separate nations, though still connected through a historically common original culture prior to the separation into two countries. For reference purposes here, the term “Korea” refers to South Korea.

2 In reference to Sun Tzu’s *The Art of War*, Jun Pyo thinks that the 36th strategy is the 38th strategy, but there are only 36 strategies of war provided by Sun Tzu. The 36th strategy states, “If all else fails, retreat.”
# APPENDIX B: Dating scenes in Boys Over Flowers and Flower Boy, Ramen Shop

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Episode</th>
<th>Couple</th>
<th>Activities</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Episode 3</td>
<td>Jun Pyo and Jan Di</td>
<td>Jun Pyo rents an elegant/cosmopolitan bar for the evening with Jan Di. They drink mixed drinks with each other.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Episode 4</td>
<td>Jun Pyo and Jan Di</td>
<td>Jun Pyo and Jan Di go to a park in the afternoon, then to the top of a skyscraper at night to see the city of Seoul all lighted up.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Episode 5 &amp; 6</td>
<td>Jun Pyo and Jan Di</td>
<td>Along with F4 and Ga Eul, Jun Pyo goes on a vacation to New Caledonia with Jan Di. Throughout this episode they go horseback riding, swimming, have lunch on a private beach, view fireworks, and take a helicopter tour of the island.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Episode 6</td>
<td>Yi Jeong and Ga Eul</td>
<td>Also on New Caledonia, they go kayaking together, they hike together, and they go swimming together.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Episode 8</td>
<td>Ji Hoo and Jan Di</td>
<td>They go on a date and they go horseback riding at a park, they go to a gourmet restaurant, and they ride on a motorcycle around the city of Seoul.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Episode 9</td>
<td>Jun Pyo and Jan Di</td>
<td>They go on a double date with Ga Eul and another guy. They go to the arcade to play games, then they eat at a street restaurant, and lastly they go ice-skating at an outdoor ice-skating rink.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Episode 12</td>
<td>Jun Pyo and Jan Di</td>
<td>Along with F4 and Ga Eul, they go to a ski lodge up the mountain to snowboard/ski. At night Jun Pyo and Jan Di go out on the balcony to look at the stars, there Jun Pyo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Episode 14</td>
<td>Ji Hoo and Jan Di</td>
<td>On their first day visiting Jun Pyo in Macau, Ji Hoo and Jan Di go to the swap meat and buy some snacks, they go back to their hotel and ride the gondola, and then eat dinner at a fancy restaurant.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Episode 15</td>
<td>Ji Hoo and Jan Di</td>
<td>On day two of their trip to Macau, Ji Hoo and Jan Di go to historical sites and tour the city, they watch street performances, then go to see an acrobatics show.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Episode 16</td>
<td>Yi Jeong and Ga Eul</td>
<td>They go on a date. First they go shopping at a mall, then they go to the movies, and lastly they go to the ice-skating rink to skate.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Episode 18</td>
<td>Ji Hoo and Jan Di</td>
<td>They go on a cruise with Jun Pyo and his fiancée. On the ship they eat gourmet food, and swim in the pool.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Episode 19</td>
<td>Ji Hoo and Jan Di</td>
<td>The next day of their cruise they go to visit a temple, and see the sights of the island.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Episode 20</td>
<td>Ji Hoo and Jan Di</td>
<td>They go to a museum where they look at sculptures and paintings. Then, they go and have lunch at a porridge shop.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Episode 21</td>
<td>Ji Hoo and Jan Di</td>
<td>Along with F4 and Ga Eul, they go to Jeju Island for Jun Pyo’s wedding. The day before the wedding they go to the beach and have dinner at an elegant restaurant.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Episode 22</td>
<td>Jun Pyo and Jan Di</td>
<td>After cancelling the wedding with an arranged partner, Jun Pyo and Jan Di celebrate by having dinner on a yacht, getting foot massages, and go stargazing.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Episode 23</td>
<td>Jun Pyo and Jan Di</td>
<td>They go out for a picnic on the beach. They also go bike</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Episode 25</td>
<td>Jun Pyo and Jan Di</td>
<td>They go to the park to view the lights in the park and to go on the swings. Then, like their first date, they go and see the view of the city from a skyscraper.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Flower Boy, Ramen Shop**

| Episode 1 | Chi Soo and So Yi | After coming back from the United States, Chi Soo meets up with So Yi. They go to eat at an elegant restaurant. They then go driving around in Chi Soo’s car. | Chi Soo and So Yi |

| Episode 3 | Ba Wool and So Yi | Ba Wool meets So Yi at her dance studio to take her to get something to eat. They go to a restaurant to eat lunch, and then they go to a café to have drinks. | Ba Wool and So Yi |

| Episode 4 | Chi Soo and Eun Bi | While at school, Chi Soo gives Eun Bi an envelope of money and flowers. | Chi Soo and Eun Bi |

| Episode 6 | Chi Soo and So Yi | They go to a private movie theater to watch a movie; they later go driving around the city in Chi Soo’s sports car. | Chi Soo and So Yi |

| Episode 8 | Chi Soo and So Yi | Chi Soo takes So Yi shopping, and buys her clothes. | Chi Soo and So Yi |

| Episode 10 | Kang Hyuk and Eun Bi | They go to get ice cream, then to the arcade to play games, then to the mall to go shopping, then the movies, and lastly to a restaurant to eat supper. | Kang Hyuk and Eun Bi |

| Episode 11 | Chi Soo and Eun Bi | Chi Soo takes Eun Bi on a date to an extravagant restaurant where Eun Bi tries caviar for the first time. | Kang Hyuk and Eun Bi |

<p>| Episode 13 | Kang Hyuk and Eun Bi | Kang Hyuk and Eun Bi go out on a lunch date to a ramen shop, where Kang | Kang Hyuk and Eun Bi |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Episode 13</th>
<th>Chi Soo and Eun Bi</th>
<th>After the date with Kang Hyuk, Eun Bi goes on a night date with Chi Soo. They eat at a fancy restaurant in a hotel. The hotel is on the top floor, and has an elaborate view of the city.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Episode 16</td>
<td>Ba Wool and So Yi</td>
<td>Ba Wool and So Yi go out on Valentine’s Day to a restaurant to eat. There Ba Wool gives So Yi chocolates and a large teddy bear.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Episode 16</td>
<td>Chi Soo and Eun Bi</td>
<td>Meeting Eun Bi for the first time in two years, and after serving in the military, Chi Soo takes her to the top of a building and they kiss.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## APPENDIX C: Coding Rubric

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Episode</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Love Myths</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Your perfect partner is cosmically predestined, so nothing/nobody can ultimately separate you.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. There’s such thing as love at first sight.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Your true soulmate should know what you’re thinking or feeling (without your having to tell).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. If your partner is truly meant for you, sex is easy and wonderful.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. To attract and keep a man, a woman should look like a model or a centerfold.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. The man should not be shorter, weaker, younger, poorer, or less successful than the woman.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. The love of a good and faithful true woman can change a man from a beast into a “prince.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Bickering and fighting a lot means that a man and a woman really love each other passionately.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. All you really need is love, so it doesn’t matter if you and your lover have very different values.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. The right mate “completes you” – filling your needs and making your dreams come true</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Love Prescriptions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Consider Countless Candidates</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Consult your Calendar and Count</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>---</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carefully</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Communicate Courageously</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Concentrate on Commitment and Constancy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Cherish Completeness in Companions (not just the Cover)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Create Coequality; Cooperate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Cease Correcting and Controlling; you Can’t Change others (only yourself)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Courtesy Counts; Constant Conflicts Create Chaos</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Crave Common Core-Values</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Cultivate your own Completeness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Romantic Utopia</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(a) Glamour and elegance are attributes of romance, such as buying jewelry, wearing fancy clothes, and buying gifts for each other</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(b) Romance involves intensity and excitement which are usually associated with nature and travel</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(c) Intimacy and romance are associated with participating in activities that involve spending money</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Other Aspects:</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Memos and Notes:</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
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  Fall 2013- Spring 2015
- 4.0 Honors
  Spring 2013
- 4.0 Honors
  Fall 2012
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  2012
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- 4.0 Honors
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- Unrealistic Weeds of Love and Romance: Korean Drama and The Flower Boy Genre
  Presentation at the UNLV Graduate and Professional Student Association Symposium, Honorable Mention, **March 2015**

- Boys Over Flowers: Korean Soap Opera and the Blossoming of a New Masculinity, Coauthored with Erika Engstrom
  Presentation at Western States Communication Association, Media Studies Interest Group, **February 2015** (refereed)

- Ascending Toward the Divine: Plato’s Views on Rhetoric
  Presentation at National Communication Association, Religious Communication Association Preconference, **November 2014** (refereed)

- Restoring the American Dream: Ronald Reagan’s “A Vision for America”
  Presentation at Western States Communication Association Undergraduate Scholars Conference, **February 2013** (refereed)

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- Alpha Kappa Delta- Sociology Honor Society
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- Western States Communication Association (Student Membership)
- Religious Communication Association (Student Membership)