

***Boys Over Flowers:* Korean Soap Opera and the Blossoming of a New Masculinity**

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When it premiered on South Korean television in 2009, the Korean drama (or “K-drama”) *Boys Over Flowers* became a ratings sensation, mostly among females between their mid-teens to thirties (AGB Nielsen Media Research, n.d.). Originally a Japanese *manga* (comic book), the Korean television version became the third iteration of the story of teenage love and romance, following Taiwanese and Japanese television versions. *Boys Over Flowers* serves as one of the major starting influences of the *kkonminam* or “flower boy” craze (Jung, 2010). In its literal translation *kkot* means “flower,” while *minam* means “handsome man.” Merged together, these terms create “flower boy” (Maliangkay, 2010). Qualities of the *kkonminam* are frequently linked to characters in Japanese *manga* stories of teenage schoolgirls and their romantic relationships with their *bishonen* (“beautiful boy”) boyfriends (Jung, 2010). Extending beyond just Korea, one can find evidence of a strong reception of the “flower boy” craze globally via websites such as YouTube, ViiKii, and Dramabeans (Jung, 2010).

Set at the fictional prestigious Shinhwa High School, a sort of “Harvard” of South Korea for the country’s richest and most elite children, *Boys Over Flowers* follows the trials and tribulations a clique of boys who “rule the school” and the young working-class girl named Jan Di who becomes a transforming force in their lives. The narrative of *Boys Over Flowers* centers on the themes of love and friendship as experienced by Jan Di, her best friend, and the group of four Shinwa male students known as the “F4,” or Flower 4 (*Boys Over Flowers*, n.d.). Jung (2010) noted that *Boys Over Flowers* is a retelling of the classic fairy tale Cinderella, with the addition of a love triangle and emphasis on materialism.

Regarding the meaning of the phrase “boys over flowers,” the original Japanese title, *Hana Yori Dango*, literally translates as “dumplings rather than [over] flowers” (Jung, 2010), a Japanese proverb inspired by families going to festivals that celebrated *Hanami*, the viewing of cherry blossom flowers, when they enjoyed eating sweet dumplings more than viewing the blossoming of the cherry trees (Sosnoski, 1996). In a figurative sense, *hana yori dango* means that one should enjoy and aspire to attain tangible happiness rather

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than aesthetics (Jung, 2010). From this idea, the creator of the *manga* series replaced the literal meaning of the word *dango* from “dumplings” to mean “boy,” resulting in the adage that women should choose men for their character rather than for their looks (Jung, 2010).

This study investigates how the popular Korean version of *Boys Over Flowers* offers portrayals of both hegemonic and counterhegemonic masculinity, and how this particular mass media text treats and redefines culturally held notions of masculinity within the Korean culture (though still connected through a historically common original culture prior to the separation into north and south, “Korea” hereafter refers to South Korea). A textual analysis identifies overarching themes that appear in characters’ storylines and portrayals, which, taken together, evidences how this K-drama offers a new version of masculinity that challenges traditional masculinity and recasts the “ideal guy” for its mostly female audience.

Hegemonic Masculinity in Korean Culture

Garde (2003) suggests that Western hegemonic masculinity encompasses four dominant norms featuring masculinity: power, opposition toward femininity, domination and objectification of nature, and the avoidance of emotion. Major similarities emerge when comparing hegemonic masculinities of Western societies to South Korean society, especially regarding heteronormativity and patriarchal ideology. For example, Moon (2002) noted that Confucian tradition, militarization, and compressed industrialization serve as the bases for Korean notions of masculinity. The patriarchal ideologies of Confucianism can be traced to the *Sam-Kang-Oh-Ryun* (the three Fundamental and Five Moral Laws), which has influenced Korean socio-political society for most of the country’s history (Kim & Hahn, 2006); it maintains a patriarchal base of power for both the state and the family. Confucian patriarchy later transformed into modern industrialized patriarchy, which adopted the normative Western dichotomy of gender roles into its dominant gender ideology, with South Korea’s mandatory military service (due to the continued confrontation between North and South Korea), adding another element of Korean hegemonic masculinity, (Moon, 2002).

Moon (2002) further suggested that gender dichotomy in Korea can be traced to the idea of *seonbi* (the term for a Confucian scholar seeking wisdom) masculinity, from the Joseon dynasty of 1392-1910 CE. *Seonbi* masculinity dictates that men are not to engage in daily domestic labor, which, though absolutely necessary for the maintenance of society, is degrading and should be performed by women (Moon, 2002). Though blatantly sexist, *seonbi* masculinity is still regarded as an ideal model of Korean masculinity, because it represents traditional values such as virtue, faithfulness, and loyalty (Geum, 2000).

Counterhegemonic Masculinity: The Budding of the *Kkonminam*

Media depictions of masculinity may be reflecting the transforming gender norms that are occurring throughout various cultures, such as the introduction of the “new man” (Frederick, 2006). The “new man” persona forwards a revised masculinity that promotes traits such as being sensitive, expressive, and domestically savvy (Beyon, 2002). The metrosexual serves as another version of new masculinity; it refers to the image-conscious man who spends a considerable amount of time and resources on his appearance and lifestyle (Pompper, 2010). According to Aldrich (2004), the metrosexual is a heterosexual who is in touch with his feminine side, though others may consider him to be gay or bisexual. Merging these perspectives on masculine scripts together creates the overarching notion of “millennium masculinity,” whose major features include: (a) the pursuit of good health and appearance; (b) the absence of being a father; (c) the disassociation from violent behaviors; and (d) a personality consisting of vulnerability and incompetence (Beyon, 2002). The “new man” persona thus increasingly depends on matters of style and self-presentation, diverging from the traditional models of masculinity centered on reputation and work.

The characteristics of the “flower boy” reflect somewhat the “millennium masculinity” in Western societies. The requisite attributes of a *kkonminam* are: (a) girl-like pretty looks, (b) toned and hairless body, (c) a vulnerable heart, and (d) an inconsiderate and immature personality (Jung, 2010). The emergence of *kkonminam* parallels the changing socio-political atmosphere in South Korea following an economic downturn related to the International Monetary Fund (see Cho, 2013) and the subsequent loss of women in the Korean workforce due to layoffs. Decades of significant gender inequality in the workplace, combined with the patriarchal idea that women should be secondary to men, contributed to the emergence of a softer male image (Maliangkay, 2010). This counter-hegemonic version of masculinity forwards the image of a more androgynous male, and has the potential to make the opposite sex (women) look more powerful, bringing both sexes closer to a level of egalitarianism (Maliangkay, 2010).

The *kkonminam* image began its popularity in the Korean entertainment industry in the late 1990s, with television commercials, dramas, and billboard advertisements featuring pretty boys with smooth skin, silky hair, and a feminine demeanor (Jung, 2010). This new vision of masculinity soon began to displace the hegemonic notion of macho, aggressive masculinity, with the Korean “tough guy” look strongly contested by the “flower boy” trend (Jung, 2010). The *kkonminam* syndrome has developed not because of males having become more feminized, but as a consequence of deconstructing the male/female dichotomy (Kim, 2003). Thus, characteristics of the “flower boy” are able to satisfy both feminine and masculine qualities.

Textual Analysis of *Boys Over Flowers*

The present study used textual analysis to examine the representation of masculinity and male gender roles in the Korean drama *Boys Over Flowers*, available in serial form online at Netflix (<http://www.netflix.com/WiMovie/70213130?sod=search-autocomplete>). An initial viewing of the series allowed for familiarization with the show's characters and general plotlines; this was followed by a closer viewing in which specific aspects of the series were noted, with attention paid to visuals (physical appearance and costuming, settings, and activities), specific dialogue (interactions between the main characters, and main characters with peripheral characters), and overarching storylines. Evaluated here is the composite picture that emerges regarding the portrayals of the four major male characters within the F4 group, because they are the most prevalent male characters, and they are the most important characters that form the male image in the series. The text, in terms of dialogue, imagery, and scenes, is thus assessed using the aforementioned frameworks of: (a) hegemonic Korean masculinity (based on Moon, 2002), (b) millennial masculinity, and (3) the *kkonminam*/"flower boy" characteristics.

The Girls and Boys of *Boys Over Flowers*

Jan Di is a teenager who throughout the series works at multiple jobs to help her working class family to make ends meet. During Episode 1, she goes to deliver laundry to a Shinhwa student, and finds him standing on the rooftop of a building, battered and bloodied, ready to jump. This student had been tormented by the F4 for being a lower status than everyone else. As he attempts to jump, Jan Di reaches out and grabs him, ultimately saving his life. Her own life is changed dramatically when she is offered a scholarship to Shinhwa for her actions. Though the relationship between her and F4 starts out contested, she later becomes close friends with them. A love triangle develops between herself and two of the F4 members, Jun Pyo and Ji Hoo.

Ga Eul is Jan Di's best friend who aspires to become an elementary school teacher. After getting over her relationship with her cheating boyfriend, she soon falls for an F4 member, Yi Jeong, but the feeling is not reciprocated. In the concluding 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 not shown onscreen, their becoming a couple is alluded to, hinting at a happily ever after for them. 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, she has a strong influence on the "blossoming" of the object of her affection, as Yi Jeong transforms from a playboy to a more egalitarian man.

The “Flower Boys”: The F4

The most prominent male character of *Boys Over Flowers* is the leader of F4, Jun Pyo, who is the heir to the Shinhwa Group, the most successful corporation in South Korea. Jun Pyo’s grandfather established the Shinhwa schools so that Jun Pyo had a safe environment in which to grow up and receive a high quality education from the world’s leading scholars. Jun Pyo’s physical attributes combine macho masculinity with *kkonminam* traits. Oftentimes he is 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. However, counter to his clotheshorse image, Jun Pyo plays rugby, drives race cars, and participates in sword fighting at a martial arts studio. Jun Pyo appears to be high maintenance, pretentious, immature, and stuck-up in the beginning of the series, but as his relationship with female main character Jan Di progresses, his attitude slowly becomes more compassionate and caring.

Ji Hoo is another member of the F4; he is grandson to the former president of South Korea, who became a physician after his term. When he was four years old, Ji Hoo’s parents were killed in a car accident he himself instigated when he playfully covered his father’s eyes while his father was driving. Physically, Ji Hoo shows strong “flower boy” characteristics: he has long, straight, shiny orange-dyed hair, 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 pastimes and hobbies include both masculine and feminine-typed activities. For example, when he hangs out 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 oftentimes seen nurturing her, displaying a somewhat feminine-typed persona, such as cooking an elaborate breakfast to cheer her up. At first, Ji Hoo shows compassion because he pitied Jan Di, but he 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.

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 picking up (or “hooking up” with) beautiful girls. His family owns the most prestigious art museum in 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. 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 so than feminine activities, such as boxing, race car driving, and air riflery. Though quite 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 (Jan Di’s best friend), and begins to view women less as objects or targets with whom to have romantic flings and more as equals.

Woo Bin is also a playboy, but instead of being a smooth talker, he is known as the “macho man.” Woo Bin’s family runs a very successful construction company, which also has ties to gang-related activities. In terms of physical appearance, Woo Bin is shown to be the most overtly masculine member of F4, usually wearing dark colors and button-down shirts that reveal parts of his chest. He is often seen hanging out with Yi Jeong more than any of the other F4 members, and the pair regular play sports such as soccer or hockey, or attempting to pick up women at dance clubs. His role in the series is more limited than the other male characters. In terms of personality and behavior, Woo Bin appears tough and fearless. As described by Jan Di in the concluding episode, Woo Bin is the “backbone” of F4 who uses his physical strength to protect all of its members, as well as Jan Di.

The Blossoming of the “New Korean Man”

Character depictions and development as well as story arcs in *Boys Over Flowers* combine to suggest to viewers that the main male characters in the F4 transform from displaying characteristics associated with hegemonic Korean masculinity to exuding a more counterhegemonic masculinity that reflects aspects of the new millennial man and the “flower boy” persona depicted in the *kkonminam* subgenre of the Korean soap opera. Results of this textual analysis of the major storylines of the male characters who get the most airtime and narrative emphasis point to three themes that characterize the “new man” in *Boys Over Flowers*: (a) men as egalitarian, (b) men as expressive best friends to women, and (c) men as protectors of women. With the exception of F4 member Woo Bin, each theme corresponds with a male character’s transformation over the course of the series. In a sense, the F4 grow from boys who reflected aspects of hegemonic masculinity into men who reflect a new version of the desired and desirable “Korean man.”

The New Korean Man as Egalitarian

The transformation of a traditional version of Korean hegemonic masculinity to a more egalitarian-like male was found in Yi Jeong’s storyline,

through his progressively growing relationship with Ga Eul. A dismissive attitude toward women that marks the traditional masculinity of Korean culture is illustrated by the F4 in Episode 1, when three of its members, Jun Pyo, Woo Bin, and Yi Jeong, are watching Jan Di getting harassed by other students on a television. While they are watching this, Woo Bin and Yi Jeong make a bet with each other to see how long she could endure the poor treatment. If Woo Bin wins, then Yi Jeong has to give one of his handcrafted bowls to a girl that Woo Bin had been trying to “hook-up” with. If Yi Jeong wins, Woo Bin needs to give him the numbers of girls that he names the “super” girls. This scene shows Yi Jeong’s initial feelings about women as being mere prizes.

Another example of Yi Jeong’s patriarchal and dismissive attitude toward women occurs in Episode 4. While talking with Ga Eul at his house, Yi Jeong tells Ga Eul that it would be best that Jan Di breaks-up with Jun Pyo, because their relationship is impossible. Ga Eul then leaves Yi Jeong’s house angrily. Woo Bin then arrives at Yi Jeong’s house and sees Ga Eul angry and asks Yi Jeong if she was mad because Yi Jeong tried to “hit” on her. Yi Jeong smiles and says, “She is not my genre. I really don’t like tacky things” (referring to Ga Eul). This scene shows Yi Jeong’s tendency to typify girls as objects of sexual desire who exist to please men.

As the series continues, however, Yi Jeong’s view of women slowly shifts. After seeing his divorced, professor dad kissing yet another beautiful, younger girl student, he drives off ferociously. While driving around the city, Yi Jeong sees Ga Eul sitting on stairs on the sidewalk in tears, sobbing over the fact that her boyfriend cheated on her. Yi Jeong pulls over, picks her up, and brings her back to his house. He grabs one of his hand-crafted cups and drops it, but it doesn’t break. He tells her, “To become strong this is what you have to go through, just like what you went through today” (Episode 9). This scene shows that Yi Jeong is starting to see women as more than objects, and, indeed, shows his capacity for empathy and nurturance. In Episode 18, a flashback memory reveals Yi Jeong’s previous attitudes toward women. In the flashback, he remembers a past relationship with a girl; “A girl is like a math problem. I figure it out if I study it a bit more,” he tells her. This flashback characterizes that Yi Jeong used to think that women are just objects or problems waiting to be solved.

The denouement of Yi Jeong’s journey toward the new man persona occurs in Episode 23, when Ga Eul goes to visit Yi Jeong at his house. Yi Jeong is stepping on clay, when he apologizes to her for his actions when they went to meet his father. Then he asks Ga Eul if she wants to try and step on the clay with him, and she does. This simple image encapsulates Yi Jeong’s main storyline: he no longer believes in women as objects, but as equals to men as they step on the clay together, symbolizing his new egalitarian beliefs.

Men as Best Friends to Women

Another part of Korean hegemonic masculinity is a strong belief in traditional Confucian teachings regarding gender inequality and the inappropriateness of male-female friendships. This idea is debunked through Ji Hoo's narrative, as he becomes transformed from a person who holds strong friendships with his fellow male members of F4 exclusively to a person who has a close friendship with a female. His platonic friendship with Jan Di shows that men can have close relationships with women. In Episode 1, when Jan Di is the victim of a mean prank by a group of students and covered in eggs and flour, she runs to a stairway to scream and cry. As she screams at the top of her lungs, Ji Hoo comes out and tells her that she needs to be quiet because she woke him up from his nap. Noticing Jan Di is in distress, he wipes off the mess with his handkerchief. This scene introduces the viewer to Ji Hoo's calm and passionate personality. In Episode 2, as Jan Di comes out of Shinhwa High School's swimming pool, a group of men were about to harm her when Ji Hoo walks in, telling them to stop. As Jan Di thanks Ji Hoo, he tells her, "I wasn't helping you, this kind of stuff just annoys me." Though he rescues her from harm, he still does not respect her, but just helps her out of pity.

Ji Hoo and Jan Di's relationship grows closer as the series progresses. In Episode 9, Jan Di was avoiding Jun Pyo because she felt uncomfortable that they were completely different from each other in terms of financial status and interests. Ji Hoo runs into Jan Di after she had finished swimming, and asked her if he could give her some advice about Jun Pyo. Ji Hoo then tells her not to avoid him, but to give him a chance: "There is no such thing as Jun Pyo's world or Jan Di's world. Just like you and I are from the same world. If it is a burden, you can drag him to yours." Ji Hoo and Jan Di are now at the point that they are comfortable with each other so that they can offer each other advice, to the point that Ji Hoo sees them as coming from the "same world," which shows how Ji Hoo realizes that a girl can be a best friend. An additional example of Ji Hoo's view appears in Episode 13, when he notices that Jan Di was struggling when she was swimming. After visiting a doctor and learning she will never be able to swim competitively again, they go back to the pool, where Jan Di breaks down in tears and says, "I don't know what I'm supposed to do now." Though she is depressed and lost, Ji Hoo embraces her and tells her, "I'll help you. I'll help you. Let's find it together!" Ji Hoo's close friendship with Jan Di is solidified in the final episode, when the series fast-forwards to four years into the future. Jan Di and Ji Hoo both go to the same medical school where they are trying to become doctors. Ji Hoo's journey to "new manhood" involves letting go of strong patriarchal Confucian ideals to embracing the notion that men can be best friends with women and vice-versa.

Violence Repurposed

A third component of Korean hegemonic masculinity is overt militarization. Moon (2002) asserted that through the mandatory two-year service in the South Korean military for men, Korean men are exposed to and are socialized to be overtly violent. This notion of violence as a form of masculinity becomes redirected in *Boys Over Flowers* in terms of the reasons for using violence rather than its requirement as an inherent aspect of masculinity. Here, this aspect of masculinity is reformed from men using violence to get what they want and to show off their might to using violence to protect women's rights. Rather than part of the masculine identity within a patriarchy that maintains gender inequality and the lower status of women, violence as used by the new Korean man becomes symbolic of the need for men to help women, and—taken to its logical conclusion—become participants in the transformation of a traditionally male-dominated society to one that promotes egalitarianism.

This transformation is seen through the narrative of F4 member Jun Pyo. Since Jun Pyo is the main male character throughout the whole series, this may be the most pertinent of all major themes observed. The first form of violence that the viewers are introduced to is the very first scene in Episode 1: Jun Pyo is the aggressor who has been chasing and bullying the male student whom Jan Di eventually rescues from jumping off of a building. The first incident of aggression and violence that Jun Pyo exerts on Jan Di herself is in the last scenes of Episode 1. As Jan Di and her new friend are hanging out and eating ice cream outside, the F4 walk by and Jan Di's friend accidentally spills her ice cream on Jun Pyo's shoe. Even though she apologizes, Jun Pyo tells her to lick the ice cream off of his shoes. Jan Di then stands up for her friend, but Jun Pyo just tells her that if she really was her friend then she should lick off the ice cream for her. Instead, Jan Di grabs her ice cream and shoves it in Jun Pyo's face. Ironically, the rivalry between the aggressive bully Jun Pyo and strong-willed Jan Di—who refuses to accept poor treatment from Jun Pyo—results in Jun Pyo's less violent yet continued and immature ill-treatment of her. As the series progresses, their relationship turns from a rivalry to a romance.

Jun Pyo himself reforms from a man who uses violence to display his power to a man who uses violence to protect Jan Di. For example, Jan Di and Jun Pyo go ice skating on a double date with Ga Eul and her older boyfriend. Ga Eul's boyfriend and Jun Pyo go to get coffee, when Ga Eul's boyfriend gets a phone call. He then tells Jun Pyo that he was going to the club later that night, and that they should go to the club together to get "better" girls. Ga Eul's boyfriend then indirectly insults Jan Di by telling Jun Pyo that he could do better than her. Jun Pyo then beats him up. Though Jun Pyo still uses violence, he uses it to essentially teach the cheating boyfriend—and, by default, the viewer—a lesson about the consequences of treating women badly.

In Episode 12, Jun Pyo's evolution from selfish bully to selfless rescuer becomes complete. A gang of men kidnapped Jan Di, and it is Jun Pyo who goes to the abandoned warehouse where Jan Di is being held. The kidnappers ambush him, and tell him that the only way that he will walk out of the warehouse alive is if he says that he would give up on Jan Di and his relationship with her. Jun Pyo refuses. Then one of the men grabs a chair and as he is about to break it over Jun Pyo, Jan Di jumps over him and the chair breaks over her instead. Jun Pyo does not attempt to save Jan Di for his own self interests, but takes physical abuse from the men so that Jan Di doesn't have to. Though Jun Pyo and Jan Di both end up getting brutally hurt, and the chair ultimately breaks on Jan Di's back, it was Jun Pyo's initial decision to risk his life and use violence to save another.

Conclusion: *Boys Over Flowers* and the Making of the "New Man"

This paper examined hegemonic masculinity and counterhegemonic masculinity as depicted in the K-drama *Boys Over Flowers*. The transformation stories of three of its main male characters provide a composite of the "flower boy" version of the new man, a persona achieved by these males' interactions with the two principal female characters. The self-centered F4 members evolve into young men who come to view women as equals rather than objects, suggesting that men have the capacity to be more egalitarian within a culture that has experienced compressed industrialization; learn how to be trustworthy and expressive best friends with females, debunking the hegemonic ideal that men are to be dominant, while women are to be submissive; and use violence not to exert status but to protect others.

Although *Boys Over Flowers* provides evidence that the "new man" image may be taking hold in Korean mass media, especially texts that target a younger audience, the issue of violence remains part of a man's identity. Though Jun Pyo uses violence to protect others, he still uses violence rather than other means. Additionally, the character of Woo Bin poses a complication to the image of the *totally* new man, in that although his presence remains constant as a member of the F4, the series doesn't give this character much screen time and he doesn't even make an appearance in some episodes. However, his role as the group's "muscle" can be read as keeping this element of masculinity as part of the "flower boy" image: he looks good, cares about his appearance, can be "just friends" with girls, but can still pack a punch.

The findings from this textual analysis are similar to recent literature on the transformation of masculinity as portrayed in Western media. Examples include Gillam and Wooden's (2008) examination of the new man who demonstrates feminine-typed traits in Disney Pixar movies, and blogger Asher-Perrin's (2013) observations regarding the transformation of Dean Winchester

in the CW's *Supernatural* from “macho man” to a more sensitive, vulnerable and multifaceted character. These portrayals of the progression of masculinity provide a new definition of what it means to be a “man” in the 21st century, at least in certain media.

Boys Over Flowers offers a culturally based text that illustrates transformation of young men who initially display attitudes that reflect the “old way” of performing the male role in Korean society to ones who appear to be able to develop egalitarian views. Even though a new, more “feminine” masculinity presents a redefined character type in the K-drama, an accompanying “new woman” persona that similarly redefines femininity would enhance the potential for this media form to offer viewers a picture of what gender equity might look like. This in itself indicates the need for future inquiry into the pervasiveness of gender difference as reflected in mass media texts regarding love, romance, and gender roles across cultures and popular media texts.

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