Discursive Study on Racism and Discrimination in Korean Drama Itaewon Class (2020)

UNDERGRADUATE THESIS

Submitted to Fulfil the Requirements for Obtaining a bachelor's degree in Communication Studies at the Faculty of Psychology and Socio-Cultural Sciences, Universitas Islam Indonesia

Written by:
Ilham Syafe'i
20321270

COMMUNICATION SCIENCE INTERNATIONAL PROGRAM FACULTY OF PSYCHOLOGY AND SOCIAL-CULTURE SCIENCE UNIVERSITAS ISLAM INDONESIA
YOGYAKARTA 2024

AGREEMENT SHEET

THESIS

DISCURSIVE STUDY ON RACISM AND DISCRIMINATION IN KOREAN DRAMA ITAEWON CLASS (2020)

Written By:

Ilham Syafe'i

20321270

It has been permitted by the thesis supervisor to be tested and defended infront of the thesis examiner team.

Date: June 21st, 2024

Thesis Supervisor



Ida Nuraini Dewi K. N, S.I.Kom., M.A.

NIDN 0523098701

VALIDITY SHEET THESIS

Discursive Study on Racism and Discrimination in Korean Drama Itaewon Class (2020)

Written by:

Ilham Syafe'i

It has been defended and approved by the thesis examiner board of the Communication Science Program, Faculty of Psychology and Socio-Culture Science, Universitas Islam Indonesia

Date:

Examiner Board:

Headboard **: Ida Nuraini Dewi K. N, S.I.Kom., M.A.** **(.....)**

NIDN 0523098701

Member **: Holy Rafika Dhona, S.I.Kom.,M.A** **(.....)**

NIDN 0512048302

In accordance,

Head of Communication Studies Program, Faculty of Psychology and Socio-Culture, Universitas Islam Indonesia

Iwan Awaludin Yusuf, S.IP., M.Si., Ph.D

NIDN 0506038201

STATEMENT OF ACADEMIC ETHICS

Bismillahirrahmanirrahim

Undersigned, I henceforth:

Name : Ilham Syafe'i

Student Number : 20321270

In this letter, I at this moment state the following:

1. Throughout the completion of this thesis research, researchers upheld academic integrity by refraining from any form of academic misconduct, such as plagiarism, enlisting assistance from others in writing the thesis, or engaging in any other violations that contradict the esteemed academic ethics upheld by the Islamic University of Indonesia.

2. This thesis represents solely my scientific efforts as a student and researcher, without the involvement of any other individuals or parties.

3. After I graduated from the Communication Science Department in the Faculty of Psychology and Social-Cultural Sciences of the Islamic University of Indonesia, it was determined that this thesis shows clear evidence of plagiarism or academic fraud. I accept full responsibility for any ensuing consequences and academic sanctions imposed by the Islamic University of Indonesia.

Thus, I truly agree with this remark.

Yogyakarta, June 21th, 2024

Sincerely,



Ilham Syafe'i

MOTTO

“An eye for an eye only ends up making the whole world blind.”

“Live as if you were to die tomorrow. Learn as if you were to live forever.”

“The weak can never forgive. Forgiveness is the attribute of the strong.”

“The future depends on what we do in the present.”

“You must be the change you wish to see in the world.”

“Happiness is when what you think, what you say, and what you do are in harmony.”

-A commonplace of Mahatma Gandhi

DEDICATION

I dedicate this final thesis to my beloved parents and sisters who gave me unconditional love and support throughout the journey. Without them, I would not have been able to complete this.

FOREWORD

يـ حرلم نـ مـحرل هللا مـ سب

Assalamualaikum, Wr. Wb.

I want to express my most gratitude to the God Almighty, Allah SWT, for all the blessings, guidance, health, and grace so that I can complete this thesis. The thesis titled "Discursive Study on Racism and Discrimination in Korean Drama Itaewon Class (2020)" is a discourse analysis of the Korean drama Itaewon Class (2020). This thesis is submitted to obtain my bachelor's degree from the Communication Studies Department, Faculty of Psychology and Socio-Cultural Science, Universitas Islam Indonesia.

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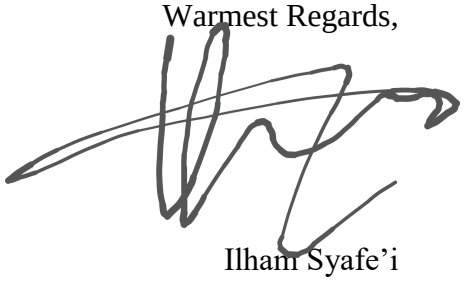
1. Mr. Iwan Awaluddin Yusuf, S.IP., M.Si., Ph.D., Chair of the Communication Studies Program at the Islamic University of Indonesia, and Mrs. Ida Nuraini Dewi Kodrat Ningsih, S.I.Kom., M.A., Academic Supervisor for lecture activities.
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9. All parties who cannot be mentioned individually but have helped me, the author, complete this final assignment.

Wassalamu'alaikum Warrahmatullahi Wabarakatuh

Warmest Regards,



Ilham Syafe'i

ABSTRACT

This study investigates the portrayal of societal issues in the South Korean television drama "Itaewon Class" using Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA). The research focuses on themes of discrimination, power dynamics, corruption, and social hierarchy as reflected in the drama's narrative. The objective is to explore how these societal norms are depicted and critiqued within the show. The research employs CDA methodology, specifically Norman Fairclough's framework, which encompasses three dimensions: textual analysis, discursive practices, and sociocultural practices. Textual analysis examines verbal and visual elements, discursive practices analyze the intentions and ideologies within the drama, and sociocultural practices explore the broader societal context.

The findings from the analysis of selected scenes highlight significant instances of racism and discrimination, illustrating the drama's potential to provoke global discussions about social justice. These findings suggest that "Itaewon Class" effectively uses media narratives to reflect and critique societal realities, thereby contributing to public discourse on an international scale. The types of discrimination represented include racial discrimination, social class discrimination, gender discrimination, and LGBTQ+ discrimination. The power relations impacting these forms of discrimination include institutional power, economic power, and social hierarchies. The factors that enable the drama to effectively deliver these messages of awareness are its relatable characters, compelling narratives, and cultural context. The conclusion emphasizes the drama's role in shaping societal attitudes and its potential for fostering social change.

Keywords: Itaewon Class, Critical Discourse Analysis, societal issues, discrimination, power dynamics, corruption, social hierarchy, racism, social class discrimination, gender discrimination, LGBTQ+ discrimination, media narratives, societal attitudes, social change.

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Chapter 1
Introduction

A. Research Background

Audiovisual media, a dominant force in contemporary society, plays a critical role in shaping public discourse and influencing social attitudes. The multifaceted nature of this medium—encompassing films, television shows, and digital series—allows it to capture the attention of diverse audiences and convey complex messages with profound impact. As noted by Petrie and Boggs (2012), the unique combination of visual, auditory, and narrative elements inherent in audiovisual media makes it an exceptionally effective tool for education and persuasion. This capability has been harnessed by various social movements and organizations to advocate for change and to raise awareness about important issues. Within this context, television dramas, particularly those produced in South Korea, have emerged as a potent medium for addressing social concerns. These dramas, widely recognized for their emotional depth and cultural resonance, provide a platform through which important messages about social justice, discrimination, and equity can be communicated to a broad and diverse audience.

Korean dramas, in particular, have distinguished themselves as vehicles for social commentary, embedding messages that go beyond mere entertainment. These dramas often reflect the socio-political landscape of South Korea, addressing issues that are both timely and relevant to contemporary audiences. According to Wenzel (2014), Korean dramas have increasingly been used to support campaigns and movements that promote awareness of critical social issues, making them a significant cultural force. These dramas frequently incorporate themes related to law, justice, and social equity, which are central to the ongoing discourse in South Korea about the challenges and opportunities presented by a rapidly changing society. The ability of Korean dramas to engage with these topics in a way that is both accessible and emotionally resonant underscores their importance as a medium for social education and awareness.

The decision to focus on Korean dramas, particularly in the study of racism and discrimination, is informed by the unique socio-cultural context of South Korea. While issues of racism and discrimination are indeed global, manifesting in various forms across different countries, the South Korean context offers a distinctive perspective that is particularly valuable for scholarly analysis. South Korea, a nation characterized by its rapid modernization alongside deeply entrenched traditional values, faces significant challenges related to multiculturalism

and social integration. The media, including popular Korean dramas, has taken on a critical role in addressing these challenges by raising awareness and fostering dialogue within the public sphere. Watson (2010) highlights the complexities involved in promoting understanding and acceptance of diversity in a society that remains largely conservative in its outlook, yet acknowledges the significant efforts made by public and private entities to advance these goals through media representations.

The examination of South Korea and its media representations of racism and discrimination is further justified by the impactful portrayal of these issues in specific Korean dramas, such as Itaewon Class. This drama, which gained widespread acclaim in 2020, serves as a compelling case study for understanding how audiovisual media can both reflect and challenge societal norms. Itaewon Class is not just a story of personal struggle and perseverance; it is a narrative that delves deeply into the social fabric of South Korean society, exposing the power dynamics and systemic inequalities that perpetuate discrimination and marginalization. The drama's portrayal of characters from diverse racial, ethnic, and social backgrounds—including those of mixed race and members of the LGBTQ+ community—provides a nuanced exploration of the intersectionality of identity and the ways in which these identities are shaped by, and in turn shape, social structures. The relevance of Itaewon Class to the study of racism and discrimination extends beyond the South Korean context, offering insights that are applicable to other societies grappling with similar issues, including Indonesia.

The selection of Korean dramas, and specifically Itaewon Class, as the focus of this research is therefore strategic. While racism and discrimination are pervasive issues worldwide, the ways in which they are portrayed and addressed in South Korea's audiovisual media provide a unique and valuable lens for analysis. South Korea's societal context, marked by its complex interplay of traditional values and modern influences, offers a rich backdrop against which the nuances of these social issues can be explored. Moreover, the specific representation of marginalized communities in Itaewon Class resonates with similar experiences in other countries, such as Indonesia, where groups like the Papuans and Chinese-Indonesians face systemic discrimination and social exclusion. By focusing on the South Korean context, this research aims to contribute to a broader understanding of the mechanisms of discrimination and the potential of media to challenge or reinforce these structures.

In examining the portrayal of racism and discrimination in Itaewon Class, discourse analysis is identified as the most appropriate methodological approach. This method allows for a detailed and critical examination of how language, narrative, and communication within the drama contribute to the construction and representation of social realities. Discourse analysis,

as described by Muntigl and Turnbull (2018), is particularly well-suited for analyzing media content, which often contains implicit cultural values and meanings that may serve to reinforce or challenge dominant societal narratives. Through this method, the research seeks to uncover the discursive strategies employed by the characters in Itaewon Class to convey their attitudes towards issues of racism and discrimination, and to examine how these attitudes are situated within the broader social and political context of South Korea. Additionally, discourse analysis will allow for an exploration of how the drama represents the experiences of marginalized communities, highlighting both their struggles and their agency in the face of systemic discrimination.

Ultimately, this research seeks to explore how Korean dramas, and specifically Itaewon Class (2020), embed and convey meanings that inform and empower young audiences about critical social issues. By focusing on the themes of racism and discrimination within the context of South Korean society, the research aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of how media can serve as a tool for social education and change. This study will not only contribute to the academic discourse on media representations of discrimination but will also offer insights that are relevant to broader societal efforts to address and mitigate these issues in both South Korea and other countries facing similar challenges.

B. Problem Formulation

Based on the presented background, Korean drama is a common medium for conveying messages. Korean drama itself are widely consumed both nationally and internationally and are pioneers in raising awareness to several social issues that exist today, including racism and discrimination against certain people or ethnicities. Therefore the formulation of the problem in this research is:

1. How are racism and discrimination represented in a series that is shown to the general public?
2. How are the power relations of the discrimination and racism shown in the drama?

C. Research Objective

The objectives of conducting this research are:

1. To assess the effectiveness of the drama in addressing issues of racism and discrimination and promoting diversity and inclusion.

2. To identify the different types of racism and discrimination portrayed in the drama and analyze their social and cultural contexts.

D. Research Benefits

1. Academic Benefits

   This research can enhance to the existing body of knowledge on media representations of racism and discrimination and provide insights into the impact of media on social attitudes and behavior. It can also stimulate further research into the representation of racism and discrimination in media, leading to a better understanding of the complex relationship between media, culture, and society.

2. Practical Benefits

   This research can enhance cultural competence by helping viewers understand cultural differences, how power relations, and how these contribute to the formation of attitudes and behaviors towards marginalized groups.

E. Literature Reviews

1. Previous Studies

a. Critical Discourse Analysis of Gender Representation of Male and Female Characters in the Animation Movie, FROZEN By Mohammad Yousef Alsaraireh, Manvender Kaur Sarjit Singh, & Hafizah Hajimia

The study titled "Critical Discourse Analysis of Gender Representation of Male and Female Characters in the Animation Movie, FROZEN" by Mohammad Yousef Alsaraireh, Manvender Kaur Sarjit Singh, and Hafizah Hajimia examines the representation of gender in the popular Disney animated film, Frozen. The study analyzes how male and female characters are represented in the film and how these representations may reinforce or challenge gender stereotypes. The study begins by providing a brief overview of critical discourse analysis (CDA) and its importance in analyzing social and cultural texts. Alsaraireh, Singh, & Hajimia then introduce the film Frozen, which is set in the kingdom of Arendelle and revolves around the relationship between two sisters, Elsa and Anna. They argue that Frozen has been praised

for its progressive portrayal of gender roles, but that a closer analysis is necessary to fully understand the film's messages about gender. They use CDA to analyze the language, images, and themes present in Frozen. They focus specifically on the representation of male and female characters, examining how they are portrayed in terms of their appearance, personality traits, and roles within the story. They argue that the film reinforces certain gender stereotypes, such as the idea that women are emotional and nurturing while men are rational and strong. However, they also note that the film challenges other stereotypes, such as the notion that women are passive and in need of rescue by men. One example of the film challenging gender stereotypes is the character of Anna, who is portrayed as brave and independent. They argue that Anna's character subverts the traditional damsel-in-distress trope, as she actively seeks to rescue her sister and take control of her own fate. Additionally, the film's portrayal of Elsa as a complex and multifaceted character who struggles with her own powers and identity challenges the stereotype that women are one-dimensional. However, Alsaraireh, Singh, & Hajimia also note that the film reinforces some gender stereotypes, particularly in its portrayal of male characters. For example, the character of Kristoff is portrayed as rugged and tough, embodying traditional masculine traits. They argue that this reinforces the stereotype that men must be physically strong and emotionally detached. They conclude by arguing that while Frozen challenges some gender stereotypes, it ultimately falls short of providing a truly progressive portrayal of gender. They suggest that future animated films should strive to challenge gender stereotypes more explicitly, by portraying characters who break free from traditional gender roles and stereotypes.

In conclusion, the study titled "Critical Discourse Analysis of Gender Representation of Male and Female Characters in the Animation Movie, FROZEN" offers a thorough analysis of gender representation in the popular Disney animated film. Through the lens of CDA, Alsaraireh, Singh, & Hajimia examine how the film both challenges and reinforces gender stereotypes, ultimately arguing that the film falls short of providing a truly progressive portrayal of gender. This study provides valuable insights into the representation of gender in popular media and highlights the importance of critically analyzing social and cultural texts.

b. *Migrant Racialization in South Korea: Class and Nationality as the Central Narrative by Sojin Yu*

This study offers a nuanced examination of how class and nationality intersect to influence the racialization of migrant groups in South Korea, providing an essential framework

for understanding the social dynamics depicted in the drama. The researcher notes that Yu's study delves into the mechanisms through which different migrant groups are racialized based on their economic status and country of origin. By drawing on ethnographic data from state-sponsored migrant integration centers and conducting in-depth interviews with both migrants and Korean staff, the study reveals the everyday practices and narratives that establish a hierarchy among migrant groups. This is particularly relevant for analyzing "Itaewon Class," where characters of mixed heritage or migrant backgrounds face discrimination. The study's insights into how these racialized hierarchies are formed and maintained in real life can help elucidate the drama's portrayal of similar themes. Further, the researcher observes that the study's focus on intersectionality—the way in which race, class, and nationality overlap to shape individual experiences—provides a critical lens through which to view the narrative of "Itaewon Class." The drama presents characters from diverse backgrounds who experience discrimination not just based on race, but also due to their perceived social and economic status. By applying the intersectional framework detailed in Yu's research, the researcher can critically assess how the drama reflects broader societal constructs and the multifaceted nature of discrimination in South Korea.

Additionally, the researcher finds that Yu's exploration of everyday narratives and social interactions among Koreans offers a valuable point of comparison with the micro-level interactions depicted in "Itaewon Class." The drama's dialogues and character interactions often mirror the broader societal attitudes towards race and nationality that Yu describes. This alignment suggests that the drama not only reflects but may also reinforce the societal biases and narratives prevalent in South Korean society. Moreover, the researcher recognizes the potential for using the ethnographic data presented in Yu's study as a comparative tool to analyze the fictional representations in "Itaewon Class." For example, the portrayal of social support systems for marginalized characters in the drama can be juxtaposed with the actual policies and social dynamics observed in the study. This comparative analysis could reveal both discrepancies and parallels between media representation and societal realities, offering a deeper understanding of how media narratives can shape and reflect public perceptions of race and integration. Finally, the researcher considers the study's examination of policy and integration narratives, particularly the insights into South Korea's multicultural family support policy. These insights provide a backdrop against which to understand the structural challenges faced by characters in "Itaewon Class." The drama critiques institutional racism and highlights the impacts of policy on individual lives, themes that resonate strongly with the findings in Yu's study. By integrating these real-world perspectives, the researcher can offer a more comprehensive analysis of the drama, exploring how it addresses and critiques the societal constructs of race, nationality, and belonging in contemporary South Korea.

In conclusion, the researcher concludes that "Migrant Racialization in South Korea: Class and Nationality as the Central Narrative" serves as a vital resource for analyzing "Itaewon Class." It provides a theoretical foundation and empirical evidence that enhances understanding of the drama's portrayal of discrimination and racism, situating it within the broader socio-political context of South Korean society.

c. *Representasi Gender Inequality dalam Film Kim Ji-Young, Born 1982 (Analisis Wacana Kritis Sara Mills) By Ira Kaestiningtyas, Anaziah Safitri & Ghina Fadhilah Amalia*

This research uses critical discourse analysis by Sara Mills to analyze the representation of gender inequality in the film "Kim Ji-Young, Born 1982" by Ira Kaestiningtyas, Anaziah Safitri & Ghina Fadhilah Amalia. They provide a brief summary of the film's plot, which revolves around a woman named Kim Ji-Young who faces discrimination and inequality in various aspects of her life. Through the analysis, Kaestiningtyas, Safitri, and Amalia identify several key themes related to gender inequality portrayed in the film. One of the main themes is workplace discrimination, where women are often paid less than men for the same job or are denied opportunities for career advancement due to their gender. The film also depicts societal expectations of women, such as the pressure to get married and have children, which can limit their choices and opportunities. Another important theme highlighted in the analysis is the objectification of women's bodies, where women are often portrayed as objects of desire for men rather than individuals with their own agency and autonomy. This is reflected in the film through scenes of sexual harassment and objectification of women's bodies.

In conclusion, The study identifies several themes related to gender inequality, including workplace discrimination, societal expectations of women, and the objectification of women's bodies through the use of critical discourse analysis. They argue that the film's portrayal of these issues is significant because it reflects the realities of women's experiences in society and can be used as a tool for raising awareness and promoting gender equality. Overall, the research highlights the importance of media in promoting social change and advocating for gender equality in society.

d. *Analisis Wacana Kritis Film Parasite: Kesenjangan Sosial dalam Budaya Modern By Anindra Sekar Wardhani*

The study titled "Analisis Wacana Kritis Film Parasite: Kesenjangan Sosial dalam Budaya Modern" by Anindra Sekar Wardhani analyzes the critically acclaimed Korean film "Parasite" through the lens of critical discourse analysis, with a focus on the portrayal of social inequality in modern society. Wardhani begins the study by providing some background information on the film and its director, Bong Joon-ho. "Parasite" is a black comedy thriller that won the Palme d'Or at the 2019 Cannes Film Festival and became the first Korean film to

win the Academy Award for Best Picture in 2020. The film follows the lives of two families from different socioeconomic backgrounds, highlighting the stark contrast between their living conditions and the struggles they face in their daily lives. Wardhani uses critical discourse analysis to examine the film's representation of social inequality, particularly in relation to the class divide. He argues that the film's portrayal of social inequality reflects the reality of modern society, where the wealthy and the poor live in vastly different worlds and rarely interact with each other.

Through the analysis, he identifies several discourses that are present in the film, such as the discourse of meritocracy, the discourse of aspiration, and the discourse of guilt. One of the discourses that he focuses on is the discourse of meritocracy. The film portrays the idea that success is based on merit and that those who work hard will be rewarded. However, he argues that the film also shows the limitations of this idea, as the characters in the film who are born into poverty struggle to improve their lives despite their hard work. He suggests that the film is critiquing the notion of meritocracy, which can be used to justify social inequality and the lack of social mobility. The discourse of aspiration is another theme that he explores in the study. The film shows the characters from the poor family aspiring to achieve a better life by infiltrating the lives of the wealthy family. Wardhani argues that this discourse reinforces the idea that success is attainable for anyone, regardless of their background, through hard work and determination. However, he also notes that the film highlights the harsh reality of social inequality, where access to education and opportunities are often limited for those who come from lower socioeconomic backgrounds. Finally, Wardhani analyzes the discourse of guilt, which is present in the film through the actions and reactions of the characters. He suggests that the film is portrays a sense of guilt and unease that the wealthy characters feel about their privileged lives and their awareness of the struggles faced by those less fortunate. He argues that this discourse is important in highlighting the need for empathy and understanding in modern society. Overall, the study provides a thorough analysis of the discourses present in "Parasite" and their relationship to social inequality in modern society. His use of critical discourse analysis provides a valuable lens through which to examine the film's portrayal of class divide, and the themes explored in the study are relevant not only to Korean society but to societies worldwide. The study's conclusion calls for a deeper understanding of the causes and effects of social inequality and a rethinking of the societal structures that perpetuate it.

e. *Sisi Lain Sistem Pendidikan Korea Selatan dalam Drama Sky Castle By Diah Ridani Harahap*

The study titled "Sisi Lain Sistem Pendidikan Korea Selatan dalam Drama Sky Castle" by Diah Ridani Harahap discusses the portrayal of the South Korean education system in the popular Korean drama Sky Castle. The study analyzes the themes and messages presented in the drama, particularly in relation to the pressure and competition that exists within the education system in South Korea. She begins by providing an overview of the South Korean education system, which is known for its high standards and competitiveness. The system places a strong emphasis on academic achievement, and students are expected to perform well on exams in order to gain admission to prestigious universities. She notes that this pressure can be particularly intense for students in wealthy families, who are often expected to attend the best schools and achieve top grades.

The drama Sky Castle centers around the lives of several families living in a wealthy residential area in South Korea. The families are all connected through their children, who attend the same elite high school and are all competing for spots at prestigious universities. She notes that the drama highlights the extreme measures that some families will take in order to ensure their children's success, including hiring private tutors and consultants, falsifying test scores, and manipulating the college admissions process. Harahap argues that the drama is a commentary on the negative aspects of the South Korean education system, particularly the pressure that students and families feel to succeed at all costs. She notes that the drama portrays the system as unfair and corrupt, with wealthy families having an unfair advantage over others. The study also suggests that the drama critiques the emphasis on grades and test scores, arguing that this narrow focus can be detrimental to students' overall well-being. Another theme explored in the drama is the relationship between parents and children in South Korea. The study notes that the drama portrays a generation gap between parents and their children, with the parents often pressuring their children to succeed in ways that may not be in their best interests. The study argues that the drama highlights the need for parents to listen to their children and consider their individual needs and desires.

Overall, the study suggests that the drama Sky Castle provides a nuanced portrayal of the South Korean education system and the pressures that exist within it. Through it, Harahap argues that the drama critiques the system's narrow focus on grades and test scores, as well as how wealthy families are able to game the system. She also suggests that the drama highlights the need for parents to consider their children's well-being and individual desires. In conclusion,

the study provides a thoughtful analysis of the themes and messages presented in the Korean drama Sky Castle. It highlights the pressures and competition that exist within the South Korean education system, particularly for wealthy families, and argues that the drama critiques the system's narrow focus on grades and test scores. The study also emphasizes the need for parents to consider their children's individual needs and desires. Overall, the study provides valuable insights into the South Korean education system and the challenges that students and families face within it.

2. Theoretical Framework

a. Discourses and Powers

Discourse is not merely a reflection of social reality but an active force in shaping and constructing that reality. As Fairclough (2001) stated, Language is not only a reflection of social reality, but it also has a constitutive function in shaping social reality. In this sense, discourse operates as a form of social action that influences and reinforces social norms, identities, and power relations. Discourse is central to the creation and perpetuation of power dynamics in society. It functions as a tool through which social identities, relationships, and hierarchies are constructed, maintained, and sometimes challenged. According to Van Dijk (1998), discourse is not only a way of representing social reality but also a way of constructing and changing it. It is a critical medium through which power is institutionalized and reproduced, making it essential to examine how discourse shapes and reflects power relations in society.

The study of discourse involves analyzing how language is used to establish, maintain, and contest social identities and power relations. This includes examining how certain discourses become dominant and how they shape people's beliefs, attitudes, and behaviors. The exploration of discourse is thus key to understanding how social structures and inequalities are both maintained and resisted. In the context of this study, discourse analysis will focus on how language is used to construct and maintain power relations related to racism and discrimination in the drama. This involves examining how characters in the drama express discriminatory attitudes or behaviors and how other characters resist or challenge these attitudes and behaviors. Through this analysis, the study aims to uncover the ways in which discourse contributes to the perpetuation or disruption of social inequalities, particularly in the context of race and discrimination.

The analysis of discourse in this study will help to answer the research questions by revealing how language functions as a tool for both maintaining and challenging power relations. This understanding is crucial for achieving the research objective of uncovering the ways in which discourse shapes and is shaped by social power dynamics.

b. Racism & Discrimination

The theories for this research are rooted in Critical Race Theory (CRT), Intersectionality Theory, & Critical Cultural Studies Approach to Media. CRT posits that racism is a pervasive and ingrained feature of society that operates through both individual and systemic mechanisms and is reproduced through social, legal, and political institutions. Intersectionality theory, on the other hand, recognizes that social categories such as race, gender, class, and sexuality intersect and interact to create complex systems of privilege and oppression.

As Bell (1992) writes in his seminal work on CRT:

> "Racism is an ingrained feature of the American social system, a key factor in the creation and maintenance of the American identity. It is pervasive, institutional, and deeply ingrained in the fabric of our social institutions, both public and private. Racism operates at both the individual and institutional levels, and is expressed in both overt and covert ways."

This quotation emphasizes the importance of understanding the systemic and institutional nature of racism, and how it operates on both individual and collective levels. The intersectionality framework recognizes that experiences of discrimination and oppression are shaped by multiple, intersecting factors and that these factors cannot be understood in isolation from one another.

In Intersectionality Theory, Crenshaw (1991) noted that:

> "Because the intersectional experience is greater than the sum of racism and sexism, any analysis that does not take intersectionality into account cannot sufficiently address the particular manner in which Black women are subordinated."

This quotation highlights the central idea of intersectionality theory, that analyzing multiple forms of oppression together is necessary to fully understand the experiences of those who belong to multiple marginalized groups. It also emphasizes the importance of considering the unique ways in which different forms of oppression intersect and interact with each other.

In his influential work on media representations, Stuart Hall (1980) argues:

> "Representation is not a mere reflection or mirror of the world, but rather an active process of making meaning that involves the production and circulation of cultural images, symbols, and narratives. Media representations are shaped by dominant ideologies and power relations, and serve to naturalize certain ways of seeing and understanding the world while marginalizing or erasing others."

This quotation highlights the importance of analyzing media representations of social issues as active processes that construct meaning and shape public understanding. Media representations are not neutral or objective but are shaped by dominant ideologies and power relations. Therefore, analyzing media representations of social issues requires an understanding of the social, cultural, and economic contexts in which they are produced and circulated.

To implement this approach effectively in the research, it is important to establish clear definitions of what constitutes discrimination and racism before analyzing the discourse in Itaewon Class. This ensures that the research remains focused and avoids confusing racism with discrimination. Discrimination is defined as the unjust or prejudicial treatment of individuals or groups based on their race, ethnicity, gender, sexuality, or other characteristics. Racism is defined as a system of social, economic, and political power that perpetuates and reinforces discriminatory practices based on race. Therefore, through this classification, it can be noted that racism is a belief system that leads to unequal treatment and opportunities for people based on their race or ethnicity, while discrimination is the act of treating someone unfairly or differently based on their perceived characteristics.

This research aims to explore how discrimination and racism are experienced and perpetuated in contemporary society. The analysis will focus on the ways in which race, gender, class, and other social categories intersect to shape experiences of discrimination and marginalization. This research will center on the experiences and perspectives of marginalized individuals, aiming to deepen understanding of the impact of discrimination and racism on both individuals and communities, and to identify strategies for promoting equity and social justice.

F. Research Methods

1. Research Types and Approaches

Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) examines how power is misused or how domination and injustice are perpetuated through written or spoken language within a particular social setting (Eriyanto, 2001). This research will apply a critical qualitative approach using Norman

Fairclough's Critical Discourse Analysis Method. This research aims to observe how discrimination and racism are represented in the Korean drama "Itaewon Class" and to analyze how the power relations depicted in the drama mirror reality. The Fairclough discourse analysis model combines discourse analysis rooted in linguistic disciplines with socio-political perspectives that primarily aim for societal transformation (Eriyanto, 2001). This approach employs text analysis stages that Fairclough perceives as encompassing multiple levels, as a text not only reveals how an object is portrayed but also how the interconnections between objects are delineated.

The paradigm used in this research will be the critical theory paradigm. Critical theory is a critical research approach that focuses on understanding and challenging power dynamics, ideologies, and systemic issues within society. It goes beyond merely analyzing structures by critically examining how these structures perpetuate inequality and injustice and advocating for social change. In the context of discourse research on discrimination and racism in the Korean drama "Itaewon Class," critical theory can be applied to understand the underlying structures and power relations at play. The researcher would analyze the social systems depicted in the drama, such as the hierarchy of positions and levels of power, and examine how discrimination and racism are perpetuated within these systems.

By employing a critical theory lens, the researcher would focus on mapping out and critically analyzing the relations and interplay between the characters, social groups, and institutions in the drama. This analysis would aim to uncover the hidden patterns and mechanisms that contribute to discriminatory practices and racial biases. The critical theory approach would also highlight the role of power in shaping the dynamics of discrimination. It would examine how power is distributed and exercised within the social structures depicted in the drama, revealing how discrimination and racism are maintained and reinforced.

Through this research, a critical theory analysis of "Itaewon Class" would shed light on the broader social issues of discrimination and racism in South Korean society. It would provide insights into the systemic factors that contribute to these forms of oppression and help in understanding how power relations and structures influence the experiences of marginalized groups within the narrative of the drama.

2. Data Collection Methods

The data collection method will involve descriptive and textual analysis of the film dialogue and monologue. This is in line with Merriam's (2002) statement about how qualitative research is one of the research approaches that try to explain and give context to a socially constructed world that is shaped by individuals' interaction and behavior. This is why Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) is used because it is an in-depth study that seeks to uncover activities, views, and identities based on the language used in discourse.

The data collection in this research will be involve in-depth observation and documentation of the dialogue and monologue in the Korean drama, Itaewon Class. This observation will focus on selected scenes from the Korean drama, Itaewon Class. Selected scenes will feature the main characters and their interactions within the portrayal of oppressive aspects of Korean society. The selection focus will be on scenes depicting discrimination and racism, rather than other social issues.

3. Research Object

According to Merriam (2002), the research object refers to the central focus of the problem that will be investigated. This research will examine how discrimination and racism are represented in the Korean drama, Itaewon Class. Therefore, the object of the research that is used in this research will be several scenes that showcase how racism and discrimination were displayed in the Korean drama.

This research examines Itaewon Class, a drama addressing social issues, specifically focusing on discrimination and racism. The object of research in this study includes pictures or visuals accompanied by relevant conversations and audio in the Korean drama, Itaewon Class. From the selected scenes, the researcher believes that in the pictures and conversations from the Korean drama, Itaewon Class, there are representations of discrimination and racism.

4. Data Analysis

The analysis of the Korean drama "Itaewon Class" with a specific focus on racism and discrimination involves interpreting the various scenes, dialogues, and monologues delivered by the characters. This research utilizes a critical discourse analysis approach, drawing inspiration from the framework developed by Norman Fairclough, which encompasses two primary stages: communicative events and the order of discourse. The analysis of the text will

be conducted by applying three fundamental functions: representation, relation, and identification (Fairclough, 1995).

Data analysis, as described by Kim and Lee (2019), involves the manipulation and examination of research data to gain valuable insights. Its purpose is to address research questions and facilitate the interpretation of findings. Following data collection, the acquired data will undergo a descriptive analysis using Norman Fairclough's critical discourse analysis framework. Fairclough's framework encompasses three essential dimensions: textual analysis, discursive practices, and sociocultural practices (Eriyanto, 2001). During the textual analysis stage, the researcher will examine the verbal and visual elements within the drama, including intertextuality, to provide a formal interpretation of the discourse. This interpretative process focuses on the formal aspects of the text. The verbal text encompasses the drama's vocabulary and grammar, while the visual text incorporates various elements such as illustrations, typography, layout, color, shape, and design principles that contribute to the overall impact of the drama.

The analysis will specifically explore the representation, relation, and identity aspects of the discourse. In this study, discourse refers to the social practices conveyed through symbolic interactions, including conversations, written text, images, and diagrams that encompass the verbal and visual components within the drama. The primary objective of the textual analysis stage is to examine how the drama "Itaewon Class" portrays racism and discrimination, as well as how the identities of the characters are constructed and discussed within the context of these issues. The subsequent stage involves analyzing the discursive practices to gain a deeper understanding of the sociocultural factors that shape the discourse within the drama. Discursive practices involve examining the intentions, identities, ideologies, and knowledge embedded within the text. Lastly, in the third stage, the analysis will explore the broader sociocultural practices depicted within the drama, considering various levels such as institutional, situational, and societal. This stage explains and explores the relationship between social contexts, social interaction processes, and their broader social implications. The identified discursive practices will be connected to the wider social fabric, including aspects such as cultural education and communication ethics within the digital realm.

Throughout the analysis process, the researcher will specifically focus on selected scenes within the drama that highlight instances of racism and discrimination, as well as the characters' interactions and discussions concerning these issues. The selected scenes will be described and interpreted within the research.

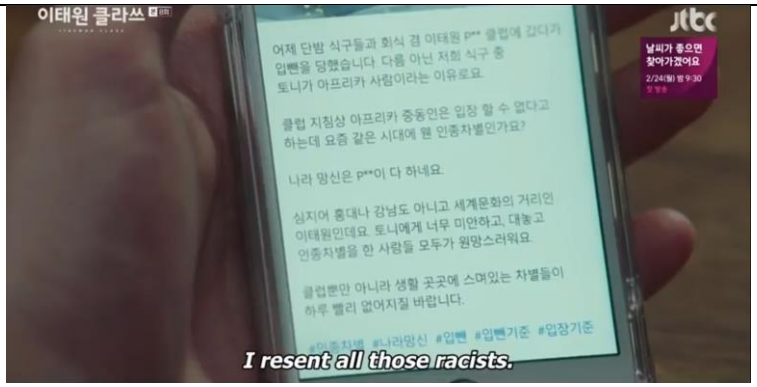
5. Unit of Analysis

The unit of analysis of this research consists of a collection of images, visuals, and conversations from scenes extracted from the Korean drama, Itaewon Class. Through the examination of these selected scenes, the researcher contends that there are notable instances of discrimination and racism conveyed through the stills imagery and conversation within Itaewon Class. Below is the table detailing the scene that I will use in this research.

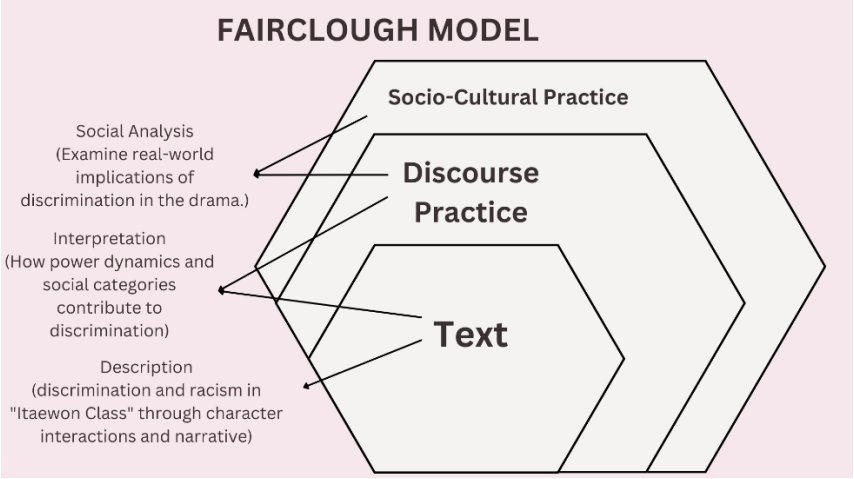
No:	Scene:	Episode:	Timestamp:
1.	 *1.5.1. Scene 1* In this scene, one of the characters with blond hair Jang Geun-Won is bullying another student and the main character, Park Sae-Ro-Yi decides to intervene.	01	24:30 – 25:35
2.	 *1.5.2. Scene 2* In this scene, Jang Dae-Hee confronts and threatens Park-Sae-Ro-Yi to relent and do his bidding by exerting his economic power that could affect the law.	01	44:35 – 46:05

3.	 *1.5.3. Scene 3* In this scene, Jang Dae-Hee is confronting and threatening Park-Sae-Ro-Yi to relent and do his bidding by exerting his economic power that could affect the law.	02	13:20 – 14:50
4.	 *1.5.4. Scene 4* In this scene, the head inspector of the police department is threatening his subordinates to drop the case since someone in the higher-ups told them to do so by implying how money can control his situation and his work status.	02	26:38 – 27:30
5.	 *1.5.5. Scene 5*	03	10:45 – 11:30

	In this scene, the teacher yells at Jo Yi-Seo, one of the main characters, because she retaliated against a bully who came from a rich family.		
6.	 *1.5.6. Scene 6* In this scene, the police officer releases the perpetrator of underage drinking due to being a sibling of a rich person. Furthermore, the case that is supposed to be under investigation is resolved without any further inspection by the police officer since it involves a big company.	03	56:25 – 57:50
7.	 *1.5.7. Scene 7* In this scene, the group of the main characters who work in DanBam are trying to enter a club. However, To-Ni, one of them is prevented from entering due to being of a different skin color.	08	26:55 – 27:30

8.	 *1.5.8. Scene 8* In this scene, the DanBam group is reading comments about racism and discrimination, many of which support the To-Ni case.	08	51:37 – 52:00
9.	 *1.5.9. Scene 9* In this scene, Jo Yi-Seo manipulates Jang Geun-Won into spilling all of his misconduct by using his power to avoid the law through his family's financial and influence power.	09	1:00:25 – 1:01:50

6. Conceptual Framework



1.6. Fairclough Model Construction

This research will be conducted using the Fairclough model of critical discourse analysis as the guideline framework of how the research will be conducted. There will be 3 dimensions of analysis within the Fairclough model of critical discourse analysis with 3 stages of analysis. The dimension includes the dimension of textual analysis, the dimension of discourse practice, and the dimension of socio-cultural practice. The dimension of textual analysis will be the dimension where the researcher needs to conduct an analysis of the textual narratives of the research object. This will include the dialogue, character interaction, and overall narratives. The next dimension is the dimension of discourse practice which will explore the production, reception, and promotion of the drama. This dimension will analyze the intentions of the writers, directors, and producers regarding racial representation. Within this dimension, the researcher will investigate how the drama's portrayal of race and discrimination aligns with societal discourses on these topics and consider the role of media institutions in shaping the narrative and discourse around race. The last dimension is the dimension of socio-cultural practice where the researcher will situate the drama within the broader socio-cultural context of South Korea. This will include examining historical and contemporary racial dynamics in the country and how they might influence the drama's themes and representations. Additionally, the analysis will consider how South Korea's cultural norms and values intersect with race and identity, as well as how global media trends impact the portrayal of race in Korean dramas.

The analysis will be structured into three stages: description, interpretation, and the stages of social analysis. The description stage focus on textual analysis. In this stage, the researcher provides a detailed account of the instances of racism and discrimination present in the drama, citing specific examples from the text. This stage will involve describing the

characters, their backgrounds, and how their racial identities are constructed within the storyline. It will focus mostly on the language, dialogue, character interaction, and overall narratives. Within this stage, critical discourse analysis and intersectionality theory will both be used respectively. Using CRT in the description stage allows for the examination of how racial ideologies, stereotypes, and power dynamics are reflected in the textual content of the drama. Intersectionality theory, on the other hand, enables a deeper analysis of how intersecting identities (such as race, gender, class, etc.) influence the experiences of racism and discrimination for different characters in the drama. The second stage will be the interpretation stage which will analyze how power relations, racial stereotypes, and prejudices are perpetuated or challenged. It considers how intersecting identities, such as gender, social class, and nationality, influence the experiences of racism and discrimination for different characters. CRT would be primarily used to uncover the underlying racial ideologies, power dynamics, and societal structures reflected in the Korean drama "Itaewon Class." The analysis would delve into how the drama portrays and perpetuates racial hierarchies, stereotypes, and prejudices. CRT would help in understanding how the power dynamics between racial groups are represented and how characters' actions and decisions are influenced by their racial identities. Additionally, CRT would aid in critiquing the ways in which the drama may challenge or reproduce racial norms and assumptions. The analysis would explore whether the drama presents opportunities for resistance against racism and discrimination or whether it reinforces dominant racial ideologies. The final stage, social analysis, will connect the findings to broader issues of racism and discrimination in South Korean society and media. This stage will examine how the drama reinforces or challenges racial hierarchies and systemic inequalities. Additionally, this stage will consider the impact of the drama's representation of race on viewers' perceptions and attitudes. Intersectionality theory would be utilized to explore the broader societal implications of racism and discrimination portrayed in "Itaewon Class." This section will examine how race intersects with other social categories, such as gender, class, and nationality, to shape characters' experiences and the narrative's overall portrayal of discrimination. Intersectionality would help in understanding how characters with different intersecting identities may experience racism differently and how these intersections compound their experiences of privilege or marginalization. The analysis would consider how power structures based on race and other social dimensions are interconnected and influence the distribution of resources and opportunities within the drama's society. Moreover, the "Social Analysis" section will explore how the drama's depiction of racism aligns with real-world racial dynamics in South Korea and beyond. Intersectionality theory would help in

recognizing the complexity and interconnectedness of various systems of oppression, shedding light on how societal structures and norms influence and are influenced by the representation of race in media.

By incorporating CRT and Intersectionality within Fairclough's CDA model, the researcher will provide a robust and multi-dimensional analysis of racism and discrimination in "Itaewon Class." This approach allows for a critical examination of the drama's textual content, the discursive practices surrounding its production and reception, and its broader socio-cultural implications concerning race and identity in South Korea.

Chapter 2
Overview of the Research Object

A. Racism & Discrimination

Racism and Discrimination have been a social issue that rooted back to the ages of ancient societies. It is marked exponentially by the word 'Barbarian' which was used to describe people outside of Greece. It can also be dated back to the ages of ancient India when a caste system was enacted and used to differentiate between people using caste class; resulting in discrimination and social hierarchy based on birth. This concept of differentiation evolved and grew further into the Renaissance and Reformation era, where it became very distinct and prevalent in shaping societal norms and structures. However, it is crucial to acknowledge that the terms 'racism' and 'discrimination' are often used interchangeably, and their definitions can vary depending on the context and perspective.

In the upcoming sections, the researcher will delve into a more nuanced understanding of these terms. The researcher will explore the differences between racism and discrimination, dissect the root causes that fuel these social issues, examine the various forms and manifestations they have taken on across different societies and historical periods, and scrutinize specific case studies that exemplify the complex nature of these phenomena.

By unraveling the intricacies of racism and discrimination, the researcher hopes to shed light on the multifaceted challenges they pose to societies worldwide and contribute to a deeper comprehension of the efforts required to combat them effectively.

1. Distinction Between Racism and Discrimination

    Racism and discrimination are distinct yet interconnected social phenomena. Racism can be defined as a deeply ingrained belief system or ideology that asserts the inherent superiority of one racial group over another, often resulting in unequal treatment and systemic disadvantages for marginalized groups. This assertion is supported by the work of scholars like Bonilla-Silva (2003), who argues that modern racism is often subtle and hidden, taking on covert forms that perpetuate inequality. Discrimination, on the other hand, refers to the actions or behaviors that stem from racist beliefs, leading to unequal treatment or harm directed at individuals or groups based on their race. The interconnectedness between racism and discrimination is

evident in how racial prejudice can manifest as discriminatory actions, contributing to the perpetuation of racial disparities in areas such as employment, education, and criminal justice.

A critical aspect of understanding the link between racism and discrimination lies in recognizing that discrimination is often a tangible manifestation of racism. For instance, a study by Pager and Shepherd (2008) found that African American job applicants with identical qualifications as their white counterparts were significantly less likely to receive callbacks from potential employers, demonstrating how racial discrimination can be a result of deeply embedded racial biases. Discrimination, therefore, serves as the practical expression of racist beliefs and attitudes. However, it is important to note that while discrimination is a direct outcome of racism, it can also operate independently, perpetuating inequalities even in the absence of explicitly racist beliefs. This underscores the complexity of their relationship, where discrimination can persist as a self-perpetuating cycle even when overt expressions of racism decline.

2. Determinant Factors of Racism and Discrimination

Cultural factors play a significant role in perpetuating racism and discrimination. Cultural beliefs and norms can reinforce racial stereotypes and bias, which then translate into discriminatory actions. These cultural influences can shape an individual's worldview and influence how they perceive and interact with people from different racial backgrounds. For example, ethnographic studies have shown how cultural narratives and media representations can perpetuate harmful stereotypes about certain racial groups, reinforcing bias and discrimination (Hall, 1997; Entman, 1994).

Economic factors can also exacerbate racism and discrimination. Economic disparities that align with racial divisions can lead to increased tensions between racial groups. This competition for limited economic resources can be driven by perceived threats to one's economic well-being, especially during periods of economic downturn. Research by Massey and Denton (1993) on residential segregation in the United States illustrates how economic disparities contribute to racial divisions and discrimination, with minority communities often facing unequal access to quality housing and educational resources.

Furthermore, political factors can contribute to racism and discrimination. Political ideologies and policies that promote racial hierarchies or exclusionary

practices can institutionalize discrimination. These policies may disproportionately affect marginalized racial groups, perpetuating inequalities and reinforcing prejudiced attitudes. For instance, the implementation of racially biased policing practices and the War on Drugs campaign in the United States has led to the disproportionate incarceration of Black individuals, highlighting the role of political decisions in perpetuating racial discrimination (Alexander, 2010).

3. Variation of Racism and Discrimination

Racism and discrimination exist in multifaceted forms within societies around the world. At the individual level, racism takes shape when individuals hold prejudiced beliefs or perpetuate discriminatory actions against others based on their race, ethnicity, or nationality. In contrast, institutional racism and discrimination represent systemic inequalities deeply rooted within various societal structures, such as government, education, or the criminal justice system. These systemic biases result in unequal treatment and limited opportunities for certain racial or ethnic groups, often perpetuating historical injustices. Recognizing these diverse manifestations of racism and discrimination is essential for developing strategies to combat these deeply ingrained societal issues and strive for a more equitable and inclusive world.

Individual racism and discrimination manifest when individuals harbor prejudiced beliefs or engage in discriminatory actions against others based on their race, ethnicity, or nationality. This form of bias often occurs on a personal level and can result in overt acts of racism, such as racial slurs or hate crimes. It can also take more subtle forms, like microaggressions, which are brief, everyday interactions that communicate derogatory messages to marginalized groups (Sue et al., 2007). Individual racism and discrimination can have a profound impact on the mental and emotional well-being of those targeted, perpetuating a cycle of inequality.

Institutional racism and discrimination refer to systematic and structural biases embedded within various societal institutions, including government, education, healthcare, and criminal justice systems. These systems often perpetuate racial disparities by disproportionately affecting certain racial or ethnic groups. For example, the school-to-prison pipeline in the United States reflects an institutionalized pattern where students of color, particularly Black students, face harsher disciplinary measures and are more likely to be involved in the criminal justice system due to school policies

and practices (Losen & Martinez, 2013). This form of racism and discrimination is deeply rooted and requires structural changes to address underlying inequalities.

Intersectional discrimination acknowledges that individuals may experience discrimination based on multiple aspects of their identity, such as race, gender, sexual orientation, or disability. This approach recognizes that these identities intersect and influence one another, resulting in unique forms of discrimination. For instance, research has shown that Black women often face discrimination that combines racial and gender biases, leading to challenges in areas such as employment and healthcare access (Crenshaw, 1989). Understanding intersectionality is crucial for addressing the layered and complex nature of discrimination and racism faced by individuals with intersecting identities.

These various forms and variations of racism and discrimination highlight the need for comprehensive efforts to combat inequality, address systemic biases, and promote social justice.

4. Study Cases of Racism and Discrimination

One highly publicized case of racism and discrimination revolves around the infamous "Stop and Frisk" policy implemented by the New York City Police Department (NYPD) during the early 2000s. This policy allowed officers to stop and search individuals they deemed suspicious, disproportionately affecting people of color, particularly Black and Latino residents. The case garnered significant attention due to its apparent racial profiling and the violation of civil liberties.

The "Stop and Frisk" policy, officially known as Operation Clean Halls, was implemented by the NYPD as a means to reduce crime, particularly in public housing areas. However, it disproportionately targeted racial minorities. According to a report by the New York Civil Liberties Union (NYCLU) in 2012, 87% of those stopped and frisked were Black or Latino, while the majority of these stops yielded no illegal weapons or contraband. These findings raised concerns about racial profiling and the violation of Fourth Amendment rights against unreasonable searches and seizures.

The "Stop and Frisk" policy faced numerous legal challenges and public protests. In 2013, a federal judge ruled that the policy was unconstitutional and ordered reforms to address racial bias and excessive stops (Floyd v. City of New York, 2013). This case highlights the significant impact of racial profiling and discriminatory policing

practices on marginalized communities and underscores the ongoing need for police reform to ensure equal treatment and protection of civil rights.

Another case that garnered international attention involves the racial discrimination faced by the Rohingya ethnic minority in Myanmar. The Rohingya, primarily Muslims, have long been subjected to systemic discrimination, violence, and forced displacement in a predominantly Buddhist country. The situation escalated in 2017, leading to a massive humanitarian crisis.

The Rohingya crisis involves decades of discrimination, exclusion, and violence. Myanmar's government has denied Rohingya citizenship, rendering them stateless and vulnerable to persecution. In August 2017, a violent military crackdown resulted in the displacement of over 700,000 Rohingya to neighboring Bangladesh (United Nations, 2018). Human rights organizations and the United Nations have documented widespread human rights abuses, including mass killings, sexual violence, and the burning of Rohingya villages (Amnesty International, 2019).

The Rohingya crisis serves as a stark example of ethnic and religious discrimination leading to a humanitarian catastrophe. It has prompted international condemnation and calls for accountability. While some efforts have been made to address the crisis, the situation remains dire for many Rohingya refugees in overcrowded camps in Bangladesh. This case underscores the urgent need for international intervention, accountability for human rights violations, and efforts to address systemic discrimination to prevent further atrocities.

B. General Information of Itaewon Class

"Itaewon Class" is a South Korean television series based on the webtoon (webcomic) of the same name, written by Jo Gwang-jin. The webtoon was serialized on Daum Webtoon, a popular platform for webcomics in South Korea. Produced by Showbox and JTBC (Joongang Tongyang Broadcasting Company), the series was directed by Kim Sung-yoon and adapted for television by Gwang Jin, who also authored the original webtoon.

The main cast of the series includes Park Seo-Joon, who portrays the central character, Park Sae-ro-yi. Sae-ro-yi is a determined and principled protagonist who embarks on a journey to achieve his dreams despite facing numerous challenges. He is joined by Kim Da-mi, who played Jo Yi-seo, a highly intelligent and ambitious character integral to Sae-ro-yi's journey. Kwon Nara portrayed Oh Soo-ah, a character with a complex relationship with Sae-ro-yi. The

antagonists in the series are portrayed by Yoo Jae-Myung, who plays Jang Dae-hee, the chairman of a powerful food conglomerate, and Ahn Bo-hyun, who portrays Jang Geun-soo. Kim Dong-hee played Jang Geun-won, the son of Jang Dae-hee and a central character in the story.

"Itaewon Class" originally aired in South Korea from January 31, 2020, to March 21, 2020, consisting of 16 episodes. The series received widespread critical acclaim for its compelling storytelling, well-developed characters, and social commentary. It addressed important themes such as discrimination, diversity, and the pursuit of one's goals. The show's popularity extended beyond South Korea, gaining a dedicated international fanbase through platforms like Netflix. The success of "Itaewon Class" contributed to the rising popularity of its lead actor, Park Seo-Joon, and solidified its place as a significant cultural phenomenon in the world of Korean television.

"Itaewon Class" achieved remarkable success and acclaim both domestically and internationally. Critics and viewers alike praised its well-crafted narrative, character development, and thought-provoking social commentary. The series secured strong viewership ratings in South Korea, solidifying its popularity within the country. However, its reach extended far beyond South Korea's borders due to its availability on Netflix, which introduced it to a global audience and contributed significantly to the increasing popularity of South Korean dramas worldwide.

In terms of recognition, "Itaewon Class" received numerous awards and nominations. Notably, Park Seo-Joon, who portrayed the central character Park Sae-ro-yi, received the prestigious Baeksang Arts Award for Best Actor in a Television Series. The series garnered several other nominations and awards across various categories, further cementing its status as a successful and respected production in the industry.

Beyond its accolades, "Itaewon Class" left a profound impact on various aspects of South Korean culture and entertainment. The series boldly tackled critical societal issues such as discrimination, diversity, and social justice within its narrative, sparking significant discussions and increasing awareness of these important topics in South Korea. It played a vital role in promoting greater representation of marginalized communities, including individuals from multicultural backgrounds, within mainstream media.

Additionally, "Itaewon Class" left a lasting impression on entrepreneurship and start-up culture. The unwavering determination and resilience displayed by the characters in their pursuit of their dreams resonated with viewers interested in the world of business. The series

ignited conversations about the challenges and rewards of entrepreneurship, inspiring individuals to pursue their own ambitions and business ventures.

Lastly, "Itaewon Class" demonstrated the potential of webtoons (webcomics) as a source for compelling television content. Its success as an adaptation of a webtoon underscored the viability of such adaptations in the entertainment industry. This achievement encouraged further exploration of webtoon-based dramas and movies, strengthening the connection between the world of webcomics and television entertainment in South Korea.

C. Itaewon Class Synopsis

"Itaewon Class" is a South Korean television series based on a webtoon by Jo Gwang-jin. The story revolves around the life of Park Sae-ro-yi (Park Seo-Joon), a principled and determined young man whose life takes a tragic turn when he confronts Jang Dae-hee (Yoo Jae-myung), the CEO of Jangga Group, a powerful food conglomerate. In a fit of anger, Sae-ro-yi assaults Jang Dae-hee's son, Jang Geun-won (Kim Dong-hee), holding him responsible for his father's untimely death.

Sae-ro-yi is wrongfully convicted and serves time in prison, where he meticulously plans his path to revenge against Jang Dae-hee and the Jangga Group. Upon his release, he is determined to fulfill his late father's dream of opening a successful restaurant. In the vibrant and diverse neighborhood of Itaewon in Seoul, Sae-ro-yi realizes his dream by establishing a small bar-restaurant named "DanBam." Beyond pursuing business success, this endeavor serves as a quest for justice and retribution against the oppressive Jangga Group. DanBam quickly becomes a symbol of hope and resistance against corporate tyranny. Sae-ro-yi assembles a close-knit group of friends and allies, each with their unique backgrounds and strengths. Among them is Jo Yi-seo (Kim Da-mi), a highly intelligent and ambitious woman who becomes an essential asset to DanBam's growth and success.

The series portrays the challenges and successes of DanBam, including a notable cooking contest where the restaurant's unique dishes gain recognition and popularity. Sae-ro-yi's steadfast principles and commitment to quality food contribute to the rise of DanBam as a notable culinary establishment in Itaewon. As DanBam expands in popularity, it faces numerous obstacles and confrontations with rival businesses and individuals associated with the Jangga Group. These conflicts heighten the tension and stakes of Sae-ro-yi's quest for revenge.

Throughout the series, viewers witness the complex relationships and personal growth of the characters, particularly Sae-ro-yi and Jo Yi-seo, whose dynamic evolves from partnership to a deep emotional connection. One of the most pivotal moments in the series is the ultimate confrontation between Sae-ro-yi and Jang Dae-hee, which determines the fate of DanBam and the intertwined destinies of its characters.

Chapter 3
Research Finding

A. First Finding – Scene 1

1. Identification



3.1. A confrontation between Park Sae-Ro-Yi and Jang Geun-Won due to Jang Geun-Won bullying a classmate.

In this scene from episode 1 in the timestamp between 24:30 – 25:35, it is displayed how Jang Geun-Won is bullying another classmate while the other only watches by, not wanting to get involved. However, the new transfer student Park Sae-Ro-Yi decided to intervene. It is as shown in the transcript below:

(Park Sae-Ro-Yi stopped Jang Geun-Won, a rich student, from bullying his classmate while the other students just watched from the sideline)
Jang Geun-Won: You look like you have a temper. You must be a pretty good fighter. Am I correct? (pulling on the classmate's hair)
Park Sae-Ro-Yi: Stop it.
Jang Geun-Won: Do you want to know the school rules?
(Students clamber back to their seats as teacher came to the classroom)
Teacher: What's going on?
Jang Geun-Won: My gosh. The teacher is here. (Scoffed)
Jang Geun-Won: Hey, loser. (He stared at the classmate and pulled his hair more)
Jang Geun-Won: Let's carry on a bit later. (He slammed the classmate's head to the locker as he looked back at Park Sae-Ro-Yi)
Park Sae-Ro-Yi: Sir, don't you see this? (As he looked at the teacher)

Teacher: What...Well... That is enough fooling around, get ready for class. (While not looking at Jang Geun-Won and Park Sae-Ro-Yi)
Jang Geun-Won: Yes, sir! (Cheerfully)
Jang Geun-Won: Do what the teacher says. Do you get it now? (As he wiped his hand on Park Sae-Ro-Yi's blazer)
Jnag Geun-Won: This school rule, Jang Geun-Won is the law.

Table 3.1. Conversation 1

2. Textual and Discourse Analysis

a. Description

The scene unfolds in a classroom setting, where the oppressive atmosphere is palpable as Jang Geun-Won, a student from a privileged background, engages in acts of bullying against a classmate. As the scene opens, Jang Geun-Won's verbal taunt,

> "You look like you have a temper. You must be a pretty good fighter. Am I correct?"
> - Jang Geun-Won

Sets the tone for the power dynamics at play. With his condescending demeanor and physical aggression, Jang Geun-Won exerts dominance over his classmate, pulling his hair and subjecting him to physical abuse. The victim's helpless reaction underscores the imbalance of power, as he is unable to defend himself against Jang Geun-Won's onslaught. Despite the presence of the teacher, who enters the classroom mid-confrontation, the bullying continues unabated, highlighting the failure of authority figures to intervene effectively in situations of abuse and harassment.

b. Interpretation

Jang Geun-Won's behavior epitomizes the toxic culture of entitlement and privilege that pervades the school environment in "Itaewon Class." His taunts and physical aggression are emblematic of the unchecked power wielded by individuals from affluent backgrounds,

who perceive themselves as above reproach and immune to consequences. Park Sae-Ro-Yi's feeble attempt to intervene, with a simple plea of,

"Stop it,"
-Park Sae-Ro-Yi

Which is met with derision and further abuse from Jang Geun-Won, who dismisses his efforts with the chilling remark,

"Let's carry on a bit later."
-Jang Geun-Won

This interaction illustrates the futility of challenging entrenched power dynamics without systemic support and underscores the normalization of bullying behavior within the social hierarchy of the school.

c. Social Analysis

At its core, this scene exposes the insidious nature of social inequality and the perpetuation of power imbalances based on wealth and status. Jang Geun-Won's brazen display of dominance reflects broader societal attitudes toward privilege and entitlement, where individuals from affluent backgrounds are granted impunity for their actions. The teacher's passive response, marked by a dismissive admonition to,

"get ready for class,"
-Teacher

Underscores systemic failures in addressing and preventing instances of bullying and harassment within educational institutions. Furthermore, the bystander effect observed among the other students, who silently observe the abuse without intervening, underscores the normalization of violence and the reluctance of individuals to challenge authority or disrupt the status quo.

In essence, this scene serves as a microcosm of larger societal issues surrounding power, privilege, and accountability. It highlights the urgent need for systemic reforms and

institutional support to combat bullying and create safer, more equitable learning environments. By addressing the root causes of social inequality and challenging entrenched power structures, we can begin to dismantle the barriers that perpetuate discrimination and oppression in all its forms.

B. Second Finding – Scene 2

1. Identification



3.2. Jang Dae-Hee threatens a woman with his financial power and position in the business world.

In this scene from episode 1 in the timestamp between 44:35 - 46:05, Jang Dae-Hee and a woman are conversing about certain Mr. Park who seems to have an issue with Jang Dae-Hee as the woman tries to make Jang Dae-Hee think twice before he makes any moves that may implicitly do harms to Mr. Park. It is as shown in the transcript below:

(Inside an office)
Woman: I heard what happened to Mr. Park.
Jang Dae-Hee: Yes, he was your mentor, wasn't he? I know you guys were close.
Woman: Yes, he was also very close with my late father. And from what I know, he was very close with you, too.
Jang Dae-Hee: That doesn't matter when it comes to running a company.
Woman: You of all people know that Mr. Park is very smart and competent. He played a very big role in...
(Jang Dae-Hee slammed his cup on the table then he stared at the woman with his head raised and his eyes narrowing)

Jang Dae-Hee: He disobeyed me. He was a very loyal dog. But what do you think happens when an old and useless dog fails to recognize its owner?
Woman: Sir.
Jang Dae Hee: Personally speaking, I am a very authoritive person. Do you know why?
Jang Dae Hee: Your father and I started out with a small pub and were able to build Jangga Co. after so much hard work. All the decision I made throughout that journey were all correct. I think of you as my own daughter, but please don't provoke me too much.

Table 3.2. Conversation 2

2. Textual and Discourse Analysis

a. Description

The scene unfolds in a corporate office, with Jang Dae-Hee, a figure of authority, engaging in a conversation with a female colleague or subordinate. As the dialogue progresses, tension mounts, culminating in Jang Dae-Hee's aggressive response to the woman's mention of Mr. Park. His physical gesture of slamming the cup on the table underscores the dominance and control he wields in the interaction, setting a tone of intimidation and power dynamics within the corporate setting.

b. Interpretation

Jang Dae-Hee's authoritarian demeanor and use of dehumanizing language toward Mr. Park reveal the extent of power imbalances within the corporate hierarchy. By likening Mr. Park to a "loyal dog," Jang Dae-Hee diminishes his agency and underscores the consequences of insubordination. Which can be seen from his dialogue,

> “He disobeyed me. He was a very loyal dog. But what do you think happens when an old and useless dog fails to recognize its owner?”
>
> -Jang Dae-Hee

This exchange highlights the oppressive nature of leadership in the organization, where obedience is valued above empathy, and dissent is met with intimidation and dismissal.

“Personally speaking, I am a very authoritative person.”

-Jang Dae-Hee

In this context, Jang Dae-Hee's assertion of authority serves to maintain the status quo and reinforces systemic barriers that hinder meaningful change or opposition within the organization. His use of authoritarian language perpetuates a culture of fear and subjugation, where individuals are devalued and objectified based on their perceived loyalty or compliance.

c. Social Analysis

This scene serves as a microcosm of broader societal issues concerning power, authority, and gender dynamics within corporate environments. Jang Dae-Hee's authoritarian leadership style reflects deeply ingrained attitudes toward leadership, where hierarchical structures prioritize obedience and compliance over ethical considerations and empathy. His use of dehumanizing language to describe Mr. Park as a "loyal dog" not only diminishes Mr. Park's agency but also reinforces the hierarchical power dynamics within the organization, where dissent is met with intimidation and punishment.

Moreover, the gender dynamics at play underscore the intersectionality of power and privilege within corporate settings. The female colleague or subordinate's tentative attempts to navigate the conversation highlight the challenges faced by women in male-dominated workplaces, where speaking up against authority figures can result in marginalization or dismissal. This interaction sheds light on the systemic barriers faced by women in challenging entrenched power structures and underscores the need for gender-inclusive leadership practices that prioritize collaboration and empathy over dominance and control.

Additionally, the hierarchical power structures depicted in the scene mirror broader societal inequalities perpetuated by corporate environments. The normalization of authoritarian leadership styles and the devaluation of dissent contribute to a culture of fear and subjugation, where individuals are discouraged from challenging the status quo or advocating for meaningful change. This scene thus highlights the urgent need for systemic reforms within corporate environments to promote transparency, accountability, and inclusivity, thereby creating more equitable and empowering workplaces for all employees.

C. Third Finding – Scene 3

1. Identification



3.3. Jang Dae-Hee was threatening Park-Sae-Ro-Yi to relent and do his bidding by exerting his economical power that could affect the law.

In this scene from episode 2 in the timestamp between 13:20 – 14:50, Park Sae-Ro-Yi is seen sitting behind the glass door of his detainment in jail while Jang Dae-Hee is on the opposite side of the glass. He is offering a chance that will help Park Sae-Ro-Yi get out of jail if he is willing to do as Jang Dae-Hee wishes. It is as shown in the transcript below:

(Inside a holding cell where Park Sae-Ro-Yi is detained after he assaulted Jang Dae-Hee's son, Jang Geun-Won for killing Park Sae-Ro-Yi's father in a car crash and covering the incidents)
Park Sae-Ro-Yi: A second chance?
Jang Dae-Hee: What do you say?
Jang dae-Hee: If you self-reflect and apologize to my son on your knees.
(Park Sae-Ro-Yi slammed his fist on the table and headbutted the glass door repeatedly as he shook in anger)
Park Sae-Ro-Yi: Your son is the one who should get on his knees.
Jang Dae-Hee: This is amusing, is this how your father taught you? (Chuckled)
Jang Dae-Hee: Let me give you a word of advice out of affection. Beliefs. Ambition. They're just words used by those who have nothing but their egos. If you gain nothing, that is just being stubborn and foolish. I'll leave you self-reflect in prison for a long time.

Table 3.3. Conversation 3

2. Textual and Discourse Analysis

a. Description

Within the confines of a holding cell, Park Sae-Ro-Yi, detained after assaulting Jang Dae-Hee's son, confronts the powerful figure of Jang Dae-Hee himself. The tension in the scene is palpable as Park Sae-Ro-Yi refuses to apologize, his refusal echoing against the walls of the cell. His physical outburst, manifesting in the forceful slamming of his fist against the table and the repeated headbutting of the glass door, underscores the intensity of his emotions and his unwavering determination to seek justice for his father's death. The stark contrast between the confined space of the cell and the weight of the confrontation within it amplifies the gravity of the situation, highlighting the power dynamics at play.

b. Interpretation

"Beliefs. Ambition. They're just words used by those who have nothing but their egos. If you gain nothing, that is just being stubborn and foolish."

-Jang Dae-Hee

In this charged exchange, Jang Dae-Hee's disdainful dismissal of Park Sae-Ro-Yi's beliefs and ambitions serves as a stark illustration of the systemic discrimination present in South Korean society. By reducing Park Sae-Ro-Yi's principles to mere ego-driven stubbornness, Jang Dae-Hee perpetuates the devaluation of marginalized voices and the reinforcement of existing power structures. The dialogue reflects the entrenched inequality and discrimination faced by individuals from lower social classes when challenging those in positions of power and privilege.

"Your son is the one who should get on his knees."

-Park Sae-Ro-Yi

Park Sae-Ro-Yi's defiance in the face of Jang Dae-Hee's demands reflects his refusal to succumb to intimidation or coercion. Despite the consequences he faces, Park Sae-Ro-Yi remains steadfast in his pursuit of justice and accountability, challenging the corrupt systems of power that perpetuate injustice and inequality.

c. Social Analysis

This scene serves as a poignant commentary on the entrenched power dynamics and systemic injustices within South Korean society. Jang Dae-Hee's manipulation and coercion of Park Sae-Ro-Yi exemplify the pervasive influence of corporate interests over individual autonomy and moral integrity. The unequal distribution of power and privilege is starkly portrayed, with Jang Dae-Hee wielding his authority to suppress dissent and maintain his family's dominance in the corporate world.

Moreover, Park Sae-Ro-Yi's defiance and refusal to capitulate to Jang Dae-Hee's demands represent a challenge to the status quo and a call for accountability and transparency within institutions of power. His unwavering commitment to his principles underscores the importance of moral courage and resilience in the face of adversity, inspiring others to question authority and strive for positive social change.

D. Fourth Finding – Scene 4

1. Identification



3.4 A police officer arguing with his boss regarding the suspiciousness of a case.

In this scene from episode 2 in the timestamp between 26:38 – 27:30, A police officer is arguing about how the suspected perpetrator actually had an alibi during the time of accidents in the case he investigated on but somehow still claimed as guilty however, the boss instead intimidate the officer with his jobs and family. It is as shown in the transcript below:

(Courtroom of Park Sae-Ro-Yi trial, an officer sat in silent staring forward as he was deep in thought before the location switched to an office, with him and his superior)
Officer: The victim's estimated time of death is 8:20 P.M.
Officer: This guy was at home sweeping the garden. It doesn't make any sense. (As he pointed to a picture of a man on top of a board along with an evidence of alibi)
Boss: Right. It doesn't make sense. You once killed someone through coercion and even got demoted for that. How are you on the promotion list?
Officer: Pardon?
Boss: How did you get this? Did you go through a civilian CCTV footage without even asking me or the house owner? (As he grabbed the board with the man's picture and evidence of an alibi)
Officer: Sir. (Perplexed face)
Boss: Wake up, you punk. Get to your senses if you want to keep your job. (The boss ripped everything on top of the board before throwing it into the trash bin)
Boss: Isn't your daughter turning one next month? Don't let that useless sense of justice get the best of you. You should think about your family.

(Switch back to the courtroom as the officer exhales heavily as he remember the boss's word.)
Boss: Remember. Your life depends on the chairman's son, Jang geun-Won.

Table 3.4. Conversation 4

2. Textual and Discourse Analysis

a. Description

The transcript depicts a scene transitioning between a courtroom and an office. In the courtroom, an officer is silent, appearing to be deep in thought. The location then shifts to an office where the officer is with his superior. The officer provides information about the victim's estimated time of death, presenting evidence suggesting the suspect's alibi. However, the boss criticizes the officer, reminding him of past misconduct involving coercion and demotion. The boss questions how the officer obtained the evidence without proper authorization and admonishes him for prioritizing justice over his family's well-being.

b. Interpretation

The interaction between the officer and his superior reveals the pervasive influence of power dynamics and familial responsibilities within the judicial system. The superior's admonishment of the officer's pursuit of justice underscores the prioritization of personal interests and loyalty to those in positions of authority. The officer's dilemma reflects the internal conflict faced by individuals torn between upholding moral integrity and succumbing to pressure from higher-ups, highlighting the ethical dilemmas inherent within institutional structures.

"Wake up, you punk. Get to your senses if you want to keep your job."
-Boss

In this exchange, the superior's derogatory language towards the officer, calling him a "punk," emphasizes the hierarchical power dynamics at play within the office environment. The officer's position is further undermined as his superior dismisses his concerns and

emphasizes the importance of maintaining the status quo to secure job stability. This highlights how individuals from lower social classes or positions within the hierarchy are subjected to discrimination and exploitation by those in positions of power.

c. Social Analysis

This scene offers a sobering portrayal of the systemic injustices and ethical compromises prevalent within legal institutions. The officer's dilemma underscores the pervasiveness of corruption and nepotism, where personal connections and loyalty to powerful figures supersede the pursuit of justice. The superior's reminder of the officer's familial obligations further emphasizes the intersectionality of power dynamics and socioeconomic pressures within the judicial system, highlighting the challenges faced by individuals striving to navigate moral ambiguity while providing for their families.

"Remember. Your life depends on the chairman's son, Jang Geun-Won."

-Boss

Moreover, the emphasis on the chairman's son, Jang Geun-Won, as the key determinant of the officer's fate underscores the pervasive influence of elite privilege and nepotism within the legal system. The officer's loyalty that should be to Jang Geun-Won, despite his involvement in a murder case, reflects the systemic biases and preferential treatment afforded to individuals of higher social status, regardless of their actions. This reinforces the entrenched inequalities and discrimination based on social class and status, perpetuating a cycle of injustice within society.

E. Fifth Finding – Scene 5

1. Identification



3.5 A teacher and a student in a heated argument regarding the Student behavior.

In this scene from episode 2 in the timestamp between 10:45 – 11:30, a teacher is seen reprimanding a student called Jo Yi-Seo. However, Jo Yi-Seo responds about how she deserves to stand up for herself instead of just accepting the unjust treatment she has gotten from someone of a higher social and financial status than her. It is as shown in the transcript below:

(In a school staff room, a male teacher hit the table with a ruler as he stared angrily at Jo Yi-Seo)
Male Teacher: Hey, have you lost your mind? How could you slap her in the face?
Jo Yi-Seo: Why can't I?
Male Teacher: What? 'Why can't I?'? Hey, do you know who she is?
Jo Yi-Seo: Right, so because she is an adult and her husband is the borough chief, I should've just let her hit me and sucked it up?
Male Teacher: What?
Jo Yi-Seo: Right, it'll be a hassle to deal with the borough chief asking you to do something about it.
Male Teacher: You little-- (About to hit Jo Yi-Seo)
Female teacher: Sir, she is my student, so I'll have a word with her. Yi-Seo wait in the classroom.
Jo Yi-Seo: Okay then. (Cutely)
Teacher: 'Okay then'?! What? 'Okay then'? hey, stop right there. I said, stop!
Female teacher: Sir...

Table 3.5. Conversation 5

2. Textual and Discourse Analysis

a. Description

The scene unfolds in a school staff room, where tension rises between a male teacher and Jo Yi-Seo, a student. The male teacher, visibly angered, slams his ruler on the table as he confronts Jo Yi-Seo about her actions. Jo Yi-Seo, defiant and unapologetic, challenges the teacher's authority, questioning why she shouldn't defend herself when attacked. The exchange escalates as the male teacher's frustration mounts, culminating in a physical altercation that is halted by a female teacher's intervention.

b. Interpretation

The confrontation between the male teacher and Jo Yi-Seo underscores the intersecting dynamics of power, privilege, and gender within the educational setting. Jo Yi-Seo's refusal to accept mistreatment highlights her defiance against the societal norms that dictate deference to authority figures, especially those with higher social status. Her questioning of the teacher's implicit biases and assumptions challenges the entrenched hierarchies that perpetuate discrimination and inequality within educational institutions.

> “Right, so because she is an adult and her husband is the borough chief, I should've just let her hit me and sucked it up?”
>
> -Jo Yi-Seo

This dialogue exposes the underlying power dynamics at play, where Jo Yi-Seo's status as a student and her lack of social privilege are pitted against the authority and privilege of the teacher's position. Her assertion of agency and refusal to submit to unjust treatment reflect a broader resistance against systems of oppression and discrimination based on social hierarchy and gender norms.

c. Social Analysis

The confrontation between Jo Yi-Seo and the male teacher sheds light on the broader social dynamics at play within educational institutions, particularly regarding power differentials and the perpetuation of discrimination. Jo Yi-Seo's refusal to passively accept mistreatment reflects a broader resistance against societal norms that dictate deference to authority figures, particularly those with higher social status or privilege. This resistance underscores the importance of agency and empowerment for marginalized individuals who navigate systemic barriers to justice and equality.

Moreover, Jo Yi-Seo's pointed question regarding the teacher's implicit biases highlights the intersectionality of discrimination, where gender, social status, and privilege intersect to perpetuate unequal power dynamics.

> "Right, so because she is an adult and her husband is the borough chief, I should've just let her hit me and sucked it up?"
>
> -Jo Yi-Seo

Her inquiry challenges the normalized behaviors and attitudes that reinforce hierarchies of power within educational settings, prompting critical reflection on how institutional structures perpetuate discrimination and oppression.

The male teacher's instinctive resort to physical aggression as a means of asserting dominance further underscores the entrenched gendered power dynamics within the educational system. His reaction exemplifies the normalization of violence and abuse, particularly against individuals who challenge traditional power structures or assert their agency. This normalization contributes to the marginalization and silencing of dissenting voices, perpetuating a culture of fear and intimidation that stifles meaningful discourse and social progress.

Furthermore, the intervention of the female teacher serves as a beacon of hope, highlighting the potential for allyship and advocacy in challenging discriminatory practices and promoting inclusive environments within educational institutions. Her recognition of Jo Yi-Seo's agency and her willingness to address the situation exemplifies the importance of fostering a culture of respect, equity, and solidarity. Through such interventions, educators can play a crucial role in dismantling oppressive systems and fostering environments that prioritize justice, dignity, and empowerment for all individuals, irrespective of their social identity or status.

F. Sixth Finding – Scene 6

1. Identification



3.6. Park Sae-Ro-Yi is in a police station after his staff is Reported for serving an underage customer.

In this scene from episode 3 in the timestamp between 56:25 – 57:50, Park Sae-Ro-Yi is seen in a police station alongside his staff and the 2 customers who use fake IDs to get into their bar/restaurant, DanBam. Coincidentally, at the same time, Jang Geun-Won appears, claiming that one of the underage customer is his brother. It is as shown in the transcript below:

(In a police station, Park Sae-Ro-Yi is dragged into a problem as his bar staff served an underage when Jang Geun-Won appeared)
Police Officer: You're Director Jang. What bring you here? (As he bowed)
Jang Geun-Won: Oh well... my gosh. (Laughed)
Jang Geun-Won: This boy is my family. (As he patted the underage guy shoulder)
Police Officer: Oh, is that so?
Jang Geun-Won: And this guy is my high school classmate. Oh, no. He got expelled before graduation. So we aren't technically alumni. (As he pointed to Park Sae-Ro-Yi)
Jang Geun-Won: Gosh we met again. What a strange coincidence. (Smirking and chuckling)
Jang Geun-Won: Nice to meet you Park Sae-Ro-Yi. (Offering his hand)
Park Sae-Ro-Yi: I'm tired. Let's get this over with. (As he looked at the police officer)
Police Officer: Oh, okay.
Jang Geun-Won: I guess my friend is in trouble because of my family. I feel bad about that. (He smirked at Park Sae-Ro-Yi)

Jang Geun-Won: How about it do you want my help? (Mockingly as he stand closely behind Park Sae-Ro-Yi)
Police Officer: If he is your friend, I am sure there might be a way. Don't worry.

Table 3.6. Conversation 6

2. Textual and Discourse Analysis

a. Description

The scene takes place in a police station, where Park Sae-Ro-Yi finds himself embroiled in a situation involving an underage individual being served alcohol at his bar. Jang Geun-Won, appearing with an air of entitlement, inserts himself into the situation, emphasizing his familial and social connections to both Park Sae-Ro-Yi and the police officer. Despite Park Sae-Ro-Yi's weariness and reluctance to engage, Jang Geun-Won persists in his mocking and manipulative behavior, offering his assistance in a thinly veiled display of superiority.

b. Interpretation

The interaction between Jang Geun-Won, Park Sae-Ro-Yi, and the police officer underscores the insidious nature of privilege and entitlement, particularly within the context of social class and familial connections. Jang Geun-Won's casual assertion of authority and his attempts to downplay Park Sae-Ro-Yi's status reflect a broader pattern of elitism and manipulation that perpetuates unequal power dynamics. By leveraging his social and familial ties, Jang Geun-Won seeks to exert control over the situation and assert his dominance over Park Sae-Ro-Yi, exploiting his vulnerability and marginalization.

> "I guess my friend is in trouble because of my family... How about it do you want my help?"
>
> -Jang Geun-Won

This dialogue exemplifies Jang Geun-Won's manipulative tactics and his attempt to assert control over Park Sae-Ro-Yi by offering assistance in a patronizing manner. His mocking tone and smirking demeanor reveal his underlying contempt for Park Sae-Ro-Yi and his belief

in his own superiority. By positioning himself as a benefactor, Jang Geun-Won seeks to reinforce existing power differentials and maintain his privileged position within the social hierarchy.

c. Social Analysis

The scene serves as a microcosm of broader societal issues surrounding privilege, entitlement, and social stratification. Jang Geun-Won's unabashed display of privilege, marked by his flaunting of familial connections and social status, reflects a culture where individuals from affluent backgrounds wield disproportionate influence and power. His willingness to exploit these connections for personal gain underscores the pervasive nature of nepotism and cronyism within society, perpetuating cycles of inequality and marginalization.

Furthermore, Park Sae-Ro-Yi's marginalized position as a small business owner and former high school classmate of Jang Geun-Won highlights the systemic barriers faced by individuals from disadvantaged backgrounds. Despite his attempts to navigate the situation with integrity and resolve, Park Sae-Ro-Yi finds himself at the mercy of Jang Geun-Won's manipulative tactics and the implicit biases of the police officer. This portrayal underscores the inherent injustice and inequity embedded within social institutions, where access to justice and fair treatment is often contingent upon one's social standing and connections.

> "I guess my friend is in trouble because of my family... How about it do you want my help?"
>
> -Jang Geun-Won

Through the lens of racism and discrimination, this scene highlights the intersectionality of privilege and power, where individuals from privileged backgrounds wield unchecked authority and influence at the expense of marginalized individuals.

G. Seventh Finding – Scene 7

1. Identification



3.7. A club bouncer is preventing To-Ni, DanBam staff despite claiming as korean is not allowed inside the club due to his skin color and ethnicity.

In this scene from episode 8 in the timestamp between 26:55 – 27:30, To-Ni and the rest of the DanBam crew were going clubbing but while the rest of the crew, Jo Yi-Seo, Ma Hyun-Yi, and Choi Seung-Gwon were allowed inside, To-Ni himself was excluded since he looks like a person from certain ethnicity that the club prohibited from coming. It is as shown in the transcript below:

(club entrance)
Bouncer: Stop, stop. Where are you from? (asking in English instead of Korean)
To-Ni: What?
Jo Yi-Seo: Why are you asking him that?
Bouncer: People from Africa and the Middle East can't enter. (Face in disdain)
Ma Hyun-Yi: Come on, this is Itaewon. Don't be like that. You're embarassing us.
Bouncer: This is our club rules.
Bouncer: Where are you from? (Yelling at To-Ni)
To-Ni: I'm Korean.
Bouncer: Show me your passport. (As he laughed mockingly)
To-Ni: But I'm Korean. My dad is Korean.
Bouncer: Hey, we have a degenerate here. Send someone to the entrance.

Table 3.7. Conversation 7

2. Textual and Discourse Analysis

a. Description

At the entrance of a club, a bouncer stops To-Ni and asks him where he is from in English instead of Korean. Jo Yi-Seo questions the bouncer's inquiry, and Ma Hyun-Yi intervenes, urging the bouncer not to discriminate against people from Africa and the Middle East. The bouncer insists that such discrimination is part of the club's rules and continues to demand To-Ni's nationality, mocking him when To-Ni asserts his Korean identity. The bouncer derogatorily refers to To-Ni as a "degenerate" and calls for backup.

b. Interpretation

The conversation encapsulates deeply ingrained racial biases and discriminatory practices prevalent within South Korean society, particularly in urban settings like Itaewon. The bouncer's initial question to To-Ni in English rather than Korean reflects a form of racial profiling, assuming that individuals who appear non-Korean must be foreigners. This demonstrates how racialized assumptions shape interactions and contribute to the marginalization of racial minorities.

Furthermore, the bouncer's refusal to allow individuals from Africa and the Middle East to enter the club underscores overt racial discrimination.

"People from Africa and the Middle East can't enter."
-Bouncer

"This is our club rules."
-Bouncer

By explicitly targeting people from specific racial or ethnic backgrounds and denying them access based solely on their race or nationality, the bouncer perpetuates harmful stereotypes and exclusionary practices. This reflects broader societal attitudes that associate certain racial or ethnic groups with negative stereotypes or assumptions, leading to their systematic marginalization and exclusion.

To-Ni's assertion of his Korean identity in response to the bouncer's questioning is met with disbelief and mockery, highlighting the internalized racism experienced by many racial minorities within their own country.

"I'm Korean."

-To-Ni

“Show me your passport.”

-Bouncer

Despite being Korean, To-Ni is subjected to skepticism and ridicule simply because of his appearance, illustrating how racial identity can be policed and invalidated based on physical characteristics.

c. Social Analysis

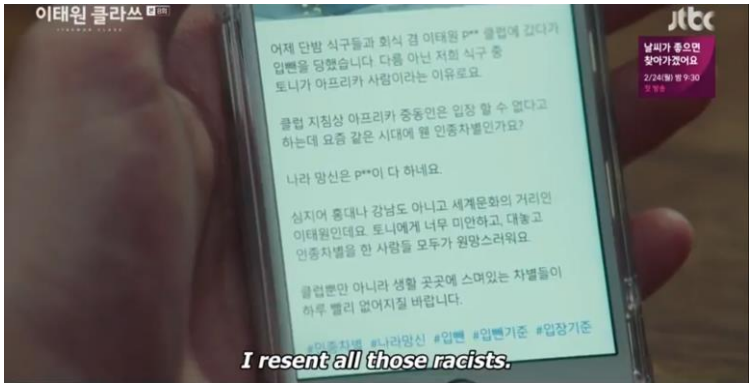
The interaction at the club entrance sheds light on the complex dynamics of race, nationality, and identity within South Korean society. Itaewon, known for its multiculturalism and diversity, serves as a microcosm of the broader social challenges faced by racial minorities in navigating spaces dominated by homogeneity and racialized perceptions.

The bouncer's discriminatory actions not only reflect individual prejudices but also highlight systemic issues of racism and xenophobia embedded within institutions and societal structures. The club's rules, which explicitly target individuals from certain racial or ethnic backgrounds, perpetuate a culture of exclusion and reinforce dominant power dynamics that privilege certain racial groups while marginalizing others.

Ma Hyun-Yi's intervention, while well-intentioned, underscores the need for collective efforts to challenge and dismantle racist attitudes and practices. While her call for inclusivity is commendable, it also underscores the reality that addressing racism requires systemic change and collective action, rather than individual interventions.

H. Eighth Finding – Scene 8

1. Identification



3.8. After exploiting the club racism to the internet, the post gather a lot of attention.

In this scene from episode 8 in the timestamp between 51:37 – 52:00, Park Sae-Ro-Yi, Ma Hyun-yi, and Choi Seung-Gwon observe a popular post made by Jo Yi-Seo on the internet after their displeasing experience in the club due to the racism that one of their friend and fellow staff member, To-Ni was getting discriminated by a racist club because of his ethnicity and skin color. The post garners attention nationwide and a lot of the comments offer support to To-Ni situation. It is as shown in the transcript below:

(DanBam staff except Jo Yi-Seo and To-Ni observe the post made by Jo-Yi-Seo in Choi Seung-Gwon phone)
Jo Yi-Seo: I went to a club in Itaewon with the employees of DanBam last night, but we were denied admission. Just because one of our employees, To-Ni was an African as the reason. I can't believe there's racism in this day and age. Itaewon is an international town. I resent all those racists. (narrating the post)
Ma Hyun-Yi: This is making me crazy (laughing happily)
Internet comment 1: This is embarassing. It's a disgrace to our country.
Internet comment 2: I can't believe it still happens.
Internet comment 3: It's just skin color.

Table 3.8. Conversation 8

2. Textual and Discourse Analysis

a. Description

In the DanBam restaurant/bar, staff members, excluding Jo Yi-Seo and To-Ni, observe a post made by Jo Yi-Seo on Choi Seung-Gwon's phone. Jo Yi-Seo narrates the post, expressing disbelief and resentment towards the racism they encountered at a club in Itaewon the previous night. The post condemns the denial of admission based on To-Ni's African ethnicity and asserts that such discrimination and racism have no place in modern society, particularly in a diverse area like Itaewon. Ma Hyun-Yi reacts to the post with amusement.

b. Interpretation

The conversation highlights the impact of racial discrimination and the response it elicits within the community. Jo Yi-Seo's post reflects her frustration and outrage at the racial discrimination experienced at the club.

> "We were denied admission. Just because one of our employees, To-Ni was an African as the reason. I can't believe there's racism in this day and age. Itaewon is an international town."
>
> -Jo Yi-Seo

Her narration emphasizes the unjust denial of admission based on To-Ni's African ethnicity and condemns such discriminatory practices in a multicultural setting like Itaewon. Jo Yi-Seo's post serves as a call to action against racism and an assertion of the values of inclusivity and equality.

Ma Hyun-Yi's reaction, laughing happily, may indicate a sense of disbelief or discomfort in confronting the reality of racism. This response underscores the complexities of addressing systemic issues of discrimination within society, where individuals may struggle to acknowledge or confront the pervasive nature of racism.

The internet comments that follow Jo Yi-Seo's post reflect a range of reactions from the online community. Commenters express embarrassment, disbelief, and condemnation towards the incident, highlighting the broader societal awareness and concern regarding racial discrimination. The comment "It's just skin color" suggests a recognition of the arbitrariness and irrationality of racism, emphasizing the fundamental humanity and equality of all individuals regardless of race.

c. Social Analysis

The conversation underscores the role of social media in amplifying voices against racism and fostering dialogue around issues of discrimination. Jo Yi-Seo's post serves as a platform for raising awareness and mobilizing support against racial injustice, demonstrating the potential of social media to galvanize collective action and challenge discriminatory practices.

Furthermore, the varied responses from the online community reflect the diverse attitudes and perspectives towards racism within society. While some express shock and condemnation, others may downplay the significance of racism or deny its existence altogether. These differing reactions underscore the need for ongoing education and advocacy to promote understanding and empathy toward marginalized communities and to combat the normalization of discriminatory attitudes.

I. Ninth Finding – Scene 9

1. Identification



3.9. Jo Yi-Seo and Jang Geun-Won meeting each other in a Cafe

This scene from episode 8 in the timestamp between 1:00:25 – 1:01:50, depicts a scene of Jo Yi-Seo conversing with Jang Geun-Won in a cafe discussing Park Sae-Ro-Yi's dead father case. Jo Yi-Seo keeps inquiring about the case to Jang Geun-Won as Jang Geun-Won opens up to her about his side of the story regarding the case and how he is able to avoid responsibility for the death of Park Sae-Ro-Yi's father. It is as shown in the transcript below:

(Jo Yi-Seo and Jang Geun-Won in a cafe, sitting face to face with each other)
Jo Yi-Seo: If that is true, you are unbelievable.
Jang Geun-Won: What? (Confused)
Jo Yi-Seo: It means you are above the law. That is amazing! (Excitedly)
Jang Geun-Won: Oh, well... (uncomfortable)
Jo Yi-Seo: Oh, sorry. I can't really discern right from wrong. (chuckling)
Jo Yi-Seo: Did I offend you?
Jang Geun-Won: No. That is just how people live. (scoffed)
Jang Geun-Won: The law is all about disciplining the poor. The law doesn't apply to those who rule.
Jo Yi-Seo: So? Would you please tell me about it in detail?
Jang Geun-Won: It's nothing. It was an accident. I hit his dad with a car and he died instantly. But someone else ended up in jail. End of the story. I wonder how that punk Park Sae-Ro-Yi found it out though. I guess he hasn't learned his lesson. He is still trying to get back at me.
Jang Geun-Won: But what can livestock do? Don't you think so? (Face of disdain)

Jang Geun-Won: There is nothing. What can he do? (Laughing happily)

Table 3.9. Conversation 9

2. Textual and Discourse Analysis

a. Description

In a cafe, Jo Yi-Seo and Jang Geun-Won engage in a conversation marked by tension and manipulation. Jo Yi-Seo initiates the dialogue with a seemingly innocuous statement, expressing disbelief at something Jang Geun-Won has said.

"If that is true, you are unbelievable."

-Jo Yi-Seo

Her tone suggests a calculated attempt to bait Jang Geun-Won into revealing more information. Jang Geun-Won is visibly uncomfortable and confused by Jo Yi-Seo's remarks, which can be noted with his responses that are said cautiously. As Jo Yi-Seo continues, her excitement and amusement appear feigned, masking her true intentions. Jang Geun-Won's discomfort persists, reflected in his terse responses and awkward demeanor. Jo Yi-Seo's subsequent comment, delivered with a chuckle, further highlights her manipulative nature, as she claims an inability to discern right from wrong. Finally, Jang Geun-Won's guard slips, revealing a moment of vulnerability as he offers a revealing confession. His admission of causing harm and evading accountability underscores his sense of entitlement and privilege (Jang Geun-Won. Jo Yi-Seo's calculated manipulation has succeeded, extracting a crucial piece of information that could have far-reaching consequences.

The exchange concludes with Jang Geun-Won's derogatory remarks about Park Sae-Ro-Yi, further highlighting the deep-seated prejudices and hierarchies prevalent in society.

"But what can livestock do?"

-Jang Geun-Won

Jo Yi-Seo's strategic manipulation has not only succeeded in extracting a confession but has also laid bare the underlying power dynamics and ideological tensions at play. Through

her cunning tactics, she has managed to navigate the complexities of social interaction, exploiting Jang Geun-Won's vulnerabilities to achieve her own ends.

b. Interpretation

Jo Yi-Seo's strategic manipulation of Jang Geun-Won in the café scene highlights the intricate power dynamics and underlying tensions that are present. By feigning excitement and amusement while subtly provoking Jang Geun-Won, Jo Yi-Seo demonstrates her adeptness at navigating social interactions to achieve her own objectives. Her calculated approach reflects a keen understanding of human psychology and interpersonal dynamics, leveraging Jang Geun-Won's discomfort and vulnerability to her advantage.

Moreover, Jo Yi-Seo's manipulation of Jang Geun-Won underscores the broader themes of power and privilege explored throughout the drama. As a character from a marginalized background, Jo Yi-Seo is acutely aware of how individuals with privilege and influence wield their power to maintain their status and evade accountability. Her strategic maneuvering in the café scene serves as a microcosm of the larger power struggles at play within South Korean society, where those with power exploit and manipulate those beneath them to maintain their dominance.

Additionally, Jang Geun-Won's eventual confession reveals the fragility of his façade of invincibility. Despite his attempts to maintain composure and assert control, Jang Geun-Won is ultimately unable to withstand Jo Yi-Seo's relentless probing, succumbing to her manipulative tactics and revealing a damning truth about his past actions. His admission highlights the complexities of identity and morality, as he grapples with the consequences of his privileged position and the harm he has caused.

Furthermore, the café scene serves as a commentary on the pervasiveness of discrimination and injustice within society. Jang Geun-Won's derogatory remarks about Park Sae-Ro-Yi reflect the deeply ingrained prejudices and hierarchies that permeate South Korean society, perpetuating systemic inequalities and marginalizing those from disadvantaged backgrounds. Jo Yi-Seo's manipulation of Jang Geun-Won exposes the hypocrisy and moral bankruptcy of the privileged elite, challenging viewers to confront the realities of power and privilege in contemporary society.

c. Social Analysis

The café scene in provides a lens through which to examine broader societal issues of power, privilege, and discrimination within South Korea. Jo Yi-Seo's manipulation of Jang Geun-Won reflects the pervasive influence of social hierarchies and power differentials in shaping interpersonal relationships and interactions. As a character from a marginalized background, Jo Yi-Seo employs strategic manipulation as a means of navigating and challenging the entrenched systems of privilege and inequality that dominate South Korean society.

Furthermore, Jang Geun-Won's eventual confession exposes the moral bankruptcy and impunity that often characterize the behavior of the privileged elite. His admission of causing harm and evading accountability underscores the systemic injustices and disparities that perpetuate social inequality and marginalization. In South Korea, as in many societies, individuals from privileged backgrounds often enjoy immunity from the consequences of their actions, while those from marginalized communities are disproportionately impacted by systemic discrimination and oppression.

Moreover, the café scene serves as a reflection of broader societal norms and values surrounding power, privilege, and identity. Jang Geun-Won's derogatory remarks about Park Sae-Ro-Yi highlight the deeply ingrained prejudices and hierarchies that inform social interactions and attitudes toward marginalized individuals. His dehumanizing language underscores the pervasive nature of discrimination and inequality within South Korean society, where individuals from marginalized backgrounds are often subjected to derogatory stereotypes and systemic barriers.

Additionally, Jo Yi-Seo's manipulation of Jang Geun-Won challenges traditional notions of power and agency, highlighting the ways in which individuals from marginalized backgrounds navigate and resist oppressive systems. By strategically leveraging her perceived innocence and charm, Jo Yi-Seo disrupts the power dynamics at play, asserting agency and control over her own narrative. Her actions serve as a powerful critique of the entrenched systems of privilege and inequality that govern South Korean society, urging viewers to critically examine the structures of power and oppression that shape their lives.

Overall, the café scene in illuminates the complexities of power, privilege, and discrimination within South Korean society, prompting viewers to confront the realities of systemic inequality and oppression. Through its nuanced portrayal of character interactions and power dynamics, the scene offers a compelling commentary on the social forces that govern human behavior and shape individual experiences of identity and belonging.

Chapter 4
Discussion

In this chapter, the discussion will center on the findings obtained by the researchers. These findings will serve as a basis for addressing the research questions and achieving the study's objectives, specifically examining the portrayal of social issues such as racism and discrimination in the Korean drama "Itaewon Class," as well as exploring the dynamics of power relations. The analysis incorporates nine selected scenes from the drama's sixteen episodes. This examination employs the Fairclough model of critical discourse analysis, which is structured around three dimensions and encompasses three analytical stages. The dimensions include the textual, discourse practice, and socio-cultural aspects. The analytical process involves description, interpretation, and social analysis, utilizing these dimensions to draw conclusions that will inform the subsequent chapters.

"Itaewon Class" itself is a compelling South Korean TV drama that follows the story of Park Sae-ro-yi, a young man who overcomes numerous obstacles to achieve his dreams and seek justice in the wake of his father's death, which is intricately connected to the powerful Jang family. Wrongfully expelled from school and imprisoned due to conflicts with the Jangs, Sae-ro-yi is determined to exact revenge by establishing a bar-restaurant in Itaewon, a district in Seoul known for its dynamic culture and youthful ambiance. The series delves into themes of ambition, love, and the struggle against societal expectations and injustice. Through the narrative of Sae-ro-yi and his eclectic group of allies striving for success in the restaurant industry, the drama portrays their journey of personal development and their interactions. Based on a webcomic by Jo Gwang-jin, "Itaewon Class" showcases the resilience, resistance, and triumph over discrimination, injustice, and racism faced by the characters.

A. Exposition and Awareness of Societal Issues

"Itaewon Class" is a compelling narrative that tackles various societal issues, particularly racism, discrimination, and social hierarchies, through its depiction of social interactions and power dynamics. The drama’s production choices, including casting, setting, and narrative structure, are integral to how these themes are presented and understood by the audience. By employing Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) within Fairclough’s framework, this section explores how the drama not only reflects but also shapes viewers' understanding of these issues by embedding them in broader societal and historical contexts.

The creator, Jo Gwang-Jin, drew heavily from his own life experiences as a pub owner in Itaewon, a district known for its multicultural diversity and social challenges and a citizen of South Korea. His personal encounters with social discrimination and power imbalances deeply informed the narrative, leading to a realistic and emotionally resonant portrayal of these issues. For instance, Jo's (2020) experiences with the struggles of running a business in a competitive environment influenced the character of Park Sae-ro-yi, whose journey in the drama mirrors the creator's own. This connection between the creator's life and the protagonist's challenges underscores how real-life experiences can shape fictional narratives to raise awareness about societal issues.

One notable scene that illustrates these dynamics is when Park Sae-ro-yi, the protagonist, stands up against bullying in his school (Episode 1, 24:30 – 25:35). The scene occurs in a classroom where Jang Geun-won, a student from a wealthy background, engages in oppressive behavior that goes unchecked by the teacher and other students. Through Fairclough's lens, this interaction can be analyzed in terms of how discourse and language within the classroom setting reinforce existing social hierarchies. The passive complicity of the teacher and the students' silence serve as discursive practices that maintain and legitimize Jang Geun-won's power. This aligns with Fairclough's concept of "naturalization," where certain power relations and social orders are normalized and taken for granted through everyday discourse. The teacher's inaction and the normalization of Jang Geun-won's behavior can be seen as part of a larger discursive practice that perpetuates systemic inequalities within educational institutions.

Historically, South Korea has been influenced by Confucian values that emphasize respect for hierarchy and authority, which often leads to the suppression of social dissent. This cultural backdrop helps explain the teacher's passive response in the classroom scene and the general acceptance of Jang Geun-won's actions by his peers. Through Fairclough's CDA, these scenes can be understood as reflecting the broader discursive practices that sustain social inequalities and inhibit challenges to the status quo. The drama also critiques these practices by revealing the consequences of such normalized behaviors, thereby encouraging viewers to question and resist these entrenched power structures.

Similarly, another critical scene in Episode 8 (26:55 – 27:30) features To-Ni, a character of mixed-race heritage, who faces racial discrimination when he is denied entry to a club because of his skin color. Fairclough's CDA approach would analyze this scene by examining how the language and actions of the bouncer, who refuses To-Ni entry, function as discursive practices that reproduce and reinforce racial discrimination. The bouncer's avoidance of eye

contact and the silence surrounding his decision are discursive strategies that reflect and perpetuate societal norms and prejudices. This scene exemplifies how everyday language and interactions contribute to the marginalization of individuals based on racial identity, highlighting the discursive construction of social exclusion and the persistence of racial hierarchies in South Korean society. The choice to cast Chris Lyon, an actor with real-life experiences of racial discrimination, in the role of To-Ni further emphasizes the drama's commitment to authenticity in addressing these issues. Lyon's portrayal is informed by his own experiences, adding depth and credibility to the character's struggles. Lyon (2020) himself has mentioned that the pub scenes relate heavily with him since he also once was denied entry to a restaurant due to his skin color. This casting decision reflects the production's broader intent to use personal narratives and real-world parallels to enhance the drama's impact on its audience.

"Itaewon Class" also critiques the impact of South Korea's rapid modernization and the resulting influx of foreign workers and multicultural families, which has exposed underlying racial prejudices and resistance to multiculturalism. Fairclough's approach would highlight how the drama uses language and narrative to challenge these historical and ideological beliefs, advocating for a more inclusive and equitable society. By addressing these issues through its narrative, "Itaewon Class" serves not only as a reflection of societal realities but also as a discursive intervention that promotes social change.

The production's decision to include these themes is a deliberate choice that aligns with Jo Gwang-Jin's desire to bring attention to social issues often ignored or understated in mainstream media. By integrating these issues into the storyline and character arcs, the drama evokes emotional responses from viewers, encouraging them to reflect on similar issues within their own societies. This approach aligns with Fairclough's notion of the dialectical relationship between discourse and society, where media not only reflects but also influences social practices and power relations.

By analyzing key scenes from "Itaewon Class," this section has demonstrated how the drama uses discourse and production choices to raise awareness about societal issues, particularly racism and discrimination. Through the integration of Critical Discourse Analysis within Fairclough's framework, the analysis highlights the drama's role in challenging and potentially transforming systemic discrimination. By embedding these issues within historical and ideological contexts, "Itaewon Class" not only reflects societal realities but also serves as a catalyst for social awareness and change.

B. Power Dynamics and Resistance on Societal Issues

This section will demonstrate how Itaewon Class vividly portrays the complex power dynamics within South Korean society, with a particular emphasis on how individuals resist and challenge these structures. By employing Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) within Fairclough's framework, this section explores how the drama uses discourse to depict and critique these dynamics, highlighting the forms of resistance against them.

The creator of Itaewon Class, Jo Gwang-Jin, drew heavily on his personal experiences to craft the narrative, particularly the depiction of power dynamics and resistance. During an interview, Jo mentioned a significant dispute he had with a famous pub franchise. Although the specifics of the dispute were not disclosed, Jo noted that the pressure exerted by the franchise had a profound impact on him. This experience is reflective in the drama's narrative, particularly in scenes where characters like Park Sae-ro-yi confront and resist powerful business magnates like Jang Dae-hee. Jo's personal struggles against a powerful entity likely influenced his depiction of Park's relentless pursuit of justice and integrity against the corrupt and powerful Jangga Group. This not only adds authenticity to the narrative but also provides a critical commentary on the oppressive practices of large corporations and the resilience of individuals in the face of such power.

In Episode 2 (13:20 – 14:50), a pivotal scene occurs where Jang Dae-hee, a powerful business magnate, confronts Park Sae-ro-yi in prison. Jang offers Park a chance for freedom if he kneels and apologizes to his son, whom Park had assaulted. Through Fairclough's CDA, this scene can be analyzed in terms of how discourse within the interaction reflects and reinforces the power imbalance between the characters. The setting—a prison holding cell—symbolizes the institutional power that Jang Dae-hee represents. His condescending offer, coupled with the language he uses, such as referring to Park's beliefs as mere ego-driven stubbornness, serves as a discursive strategy to devalue and delegitimize Park's moral stance. This is an example of how language and discourse are used to maintain social control and suppress dissent.

Park Sae-ro-yi's refusal to apologize and his physical outburst are acts of resistance that challenge the dominant discourse imposed by Jang Dae-hee. According to Fairclough's theory, such acts of resistance can disrupt established power relations by introducing alternative discourses that question the legitimacy of those in power. Park's actions, both verbal and non-verbal, reflect a counter-discourse that asserts the possibility of agency and integrity even within oppressive systems. This scene highlights the tension between the dominant discourse

of power, represented by Jang Dae-hee, and the emerging discourse of resistance, embodied by Park Sae-ro-yi. Through this conflict, the drama critiques the use of language and discourse to perpetuate power imbalances, while also illustrating how resistance can generate new meanings and possibilities for social change.

Jo Gwang-Jin's decision to include scenes involving law enforcement and corruption was influenced by real-life observations. In the interview, Jo mentioned witnessing a police officer being bribed while at his pub, which spurred him to think about the broader implications of corruption in society. This personal encounter informed the creation of scenes in Itaewon Class that depict corrupt practices within the police force. For example, in Episode 3 (56:25 – 57:50), a police officer releases a perpetrator of underage drinking due to his connections with Jang Dae-hee of Jangga Group, one of the influential wealthy families. Fairclough's CDA would focus on how the language and actions in this scene reveal the discursive practices that perpetuate systemic corruption. The police officer's begrudging compliance and the perpetrator's smug response highlight how discourse within legal institutions can be manipulated to serve the interests of the powerful. The dialogue in this scene underscores the disparity in treatment based on social status, illustrating how power is embedded in and reproduced through institutional discourse. This scene exemplifies how legal outcomes are influenced by social connections, reflecting the broader systemic issues of corruption and inequality.

The historical and ideological context of South Korea's rapid economic development provides a backdrop for the drama's critique of the concentration of power and its impact on social justice. The chaebol, or large family-owned business conglomerates like Jangga Group, wield significant influence over politics, economy, and society. This power is maintained and reproduced through discourses that naturalize and legitimize the existing social hierarchy. Through its portrayal of these dynamics, Itaewon Class critiques the entrenched systems of power that undermine social justice and equity. By focusing on the discursive strategies used by powerful characters to maintain control, the drama encourages viewers to question the societal norms that allow such practices to persist.

Fairclough's approach to CDA is crucial for understanding the dynamics depicted in these scenes. Jang Dae-hee's control over legal and economic systems exemplifies how power is institutionalized and maintained through discourse. In contrast, Park Sae-ro-yi's resistance illustrates how alternative discourses can challenge and potentially transform these power structures. His refusal to apologize represents a moral and discursive stand against injustice, while his physical reaction underscores his resistance to the dominant narrative imposed by the

powerful. By depicting these scenes of systemic corruption and individual resistance, Itaewon Class engages viewers in a critical reflection on the nature of power and justice. The drama challenges audiences to recognize the pervasive influence of discourse in their own societies and to consider the importance of resistance in enacting social change.

In conclusion, this section has provided a detailed analysis of how Itaewon Class portrays power dynamics and resistance against systemic injustices. By integrating Critical Discourse Analysis within Fairclough's framework, the analysis highlights the drama's significant contributions to understanding and challenging entrenched power structures. Through its realistic and relatable portrayal of these issues, Itaewon Class encourages viewers to reflect on their own societal norms and the potential for resistance and change. Jo Gwang-Jin's personal experiences and observations have been crucial in shaping the narrative, offering a poignant and critical examination of societal power dynamics that resonate with real-world issues.

C. Comparative Study: Reciprocal Benefits

In this discussion section, it is important to note how previous research that has been used as a framework and guideline in this research may have benefits and how this research may have covered their limitation. Out of the several previous types of research, two of them are commonly used due to how an almost similar the object of the research was which is dealing with social issues or how media are reflected in reality. One of these two researches notably is 'Critical Discourse Analysis of Gender Representation of Male and Female Characters in the Animation Movie, FROZEN' by Mohammad Yousef Alsaraireh, Manvender Kaur Sarjit Singh, and Hafizah Hajimia. The other one is 'Analisis Wacana Kritis Film Parasite: Kesenjangan Sosial dalam Budaya Modern (Critical Discourse Analysis of the Film Parasite: Social Stratification in Modern Culture)' by Anindra Sekar Wardhani.

First of all, in 'Critical Discourse Analysis of Gender Representation of Male and Female Characters in the Animation Movie, FROZEN' by Mohammad Yousef Alsaraireh, Manvender Kaur Sarjit Singh, and Hafizah Hajimia, its strength lies in its deep dive into gender representation, which provides a nuanced understanding of how gender roles and stereotypes are constructed and portrayed in media. Utilizing Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), the research meticulously uncovers the layers of meaning within the animated movie, which can serve as a methodological inspiration for my analysis of discrimination and racism. However,

While its focus on gender representation is its strength, it also limits the research exploration of other forms of discrimination or social issues, such as racial or class discrimination which is one of the most prevalent issues in the movie they were researching, limiting its potential.

On the other hand, in 'Analisis Wacana Kritis Film Parasite: Kesenjangan Sosial dalam Budaya Modern (Critical Discourse Analysis of the Film Parasite: Social Stratification in Modern Culture)' by Anindra Sekar Wardhani, Its exploration of socio-economic disparities presents a critical lens through which media can be examined for its commentary on social structures, relevant to understanding the backdrop of how communities and hierarchy in real life work. The focus on cultural specificity in the portrayal of social issues highlights the importance of considering the cultural context in analyzing media narratives, crucial for the examination set within a South Korean socio-cultural milieu. However, it also suffers the same problem in the previous research due to how it is limiting the subject specifically in one category when it can be explored. By concentrating primarily on socio-economic issues, there is a missed opportunity to delve into the intricacies of racial, ethnic, or gender discrimination that are in similar cases as Frozen which is one of the most represented issues within the movie.

The analysis of discrimination and racism in "Itaewon Class" can draw on the strengths of the previous studies by applying a rigorous methodological approach to uncover the layers of social commentary within the series. By extending the scope of investigation beyond gender and socio-economic disparities to include racial and ethnic discrimination, the research can provide a more holistic view of the social issues depicted. Moreover, the emphasis on cultural context observed in 'Frozen' and 'Parasite' analysis is particularly relevant. It underscores the necessity of understanding the specific socio-cultural backdrop of current reality, which shapes and is reflected in the narrative of "Itaewon Class.". This approach allows for a nuanced exploration of how discrimination and racism are portrayed, challenging, or reinforcing societal norms and attitudes.

Incorporating these insights, the research able to fill the gaps identified in the previous research. It is hopefully able to offer a comprehensive analysis of how "Itaewon Class" navigates the complex terrain of discrimination and racism, reflecting broader societal issues within the unique context of South Korean culture. Through this lens, the research not only contributes to the discourse on media representation of social issues but also highlights the role of cultural narratives in shaping and reflecting societal attitudes towards discrimination and racism.

D. Overall Discursive Results

This section synthesizes the key results into several points from the analysis of the Korean drama "Itaewon Class," addressing the research question of how the drama portrays social issues such as racism and discrimination, and exploring the dynamics of power relations. This chapter provides a comprehensive discussion of the drama's discursive portrayal of societal issues, informed by the previous sections' detailed analyses.

1. Represented Discrimination in the Drama

Racism and discrimination in "Itaewon Class" are depicted through various characters and situations, revealing different forms of discrimination and societal biases. The drama employs explicit scenes and nuanced storytelling to highlight these issues, aiming to raise awareness and promote social change. These are the various discrimination depictions in the drama that have been analyzed:

a. Racial Discrimination: The character of To-Ni, a black Korean, faces racial discrimination in multiple instances. One significant scene is when he is denied entry to a club solely based on his skin color. This scene starkly portrays the blatant racism that people of different races face in a predominantly homogeneous society like South Korea.
b. Social Class Discrimination: The struggle of Park Sae-ro-yi, who comes from a humble background, against the powerful Jang family, illustrates social class discrimination. Sae-ro-yi's journey from being an ex-convict to a successful entrepreneur is fraught with obstacles imposed by those in power who use their influence to maintain their status. For example, in Episode 2, Jang Dae-hee, the CEO of Jangga Group, attempts to manipulate Sae-ro-yi by using his economic power to offer a deal in exchange for submission.
c. Gender Discrimination: Female characters in the series, such as Jo Yi-seo and Oh Soo-ah, navigate a patriarchal society that often undermines their abilities and contributions. Their experiences highlight the intersectional nature of discrimination, where gender and other factors such as social class intersect.
d. LGBTQ+ Discrimination: The drama subtly addresses issues faced by LGBTQ+ individuals, reflecting societal prejudice and the struggle for acceptance. Though

not as prominently featured, these elements contribute to the overall narrative of diversity and inclusion.

"Itaewon Class" leverages these depictions to evoke strong emotional responses from the audience. By presenting these issues through relatable characters and compelling storylines, the drama fosters empathy and a deeper understanding of the consequences of discrimination and bullying. The series successfully sparks conversations about racism and discrimination, encouraging viewers to reflect on these issues within their own societies. The use of popular media to address such themes makes the series a powerful tool for social change, highlighting the role of entertainment in educating and influencing public opinion.

2. Impact of Power Relations

This section examines how "Itaewon Class" portrays the dynamics of power relations, specifically focusing on institutional, economic, and social hierarchies. The drama highlights how these power structures perpetuate discrimination and inequality, offering a critical lens through which viewers can understand and reflect on similar issues in their own societies. Said power dynamics that exist in the drama and how they affect discrimination issues are as follows:

a. Institutional Power: The teacher's passive response to bullying due to the bully's social status in episode 1, illustrates institutional complicity in perpetuating discrimination. The teacher's reluctance to confront the bully, Jang Geun-won, who is from a powerful family, demonstrates how institutional power structures protect the privileged and marginalize the less powerful.
b. Economic Power: The Jang family's influence is a critical element of the drama, showing how economic power can perpetuate discrimination and suppress justice. For instance, Jang Dae-hee exerts his economic power to intimidate a woman, demonstrating how wealth and influence can be used to control and manipulate others.
c. Social Hierarchies: The drama portrays how deeply ingrained social hierarchies allow privileged individuals to act with impunity. Park Sae-ro-yi's resistance against the Jang family's power highlights the struggle against systemic inequality and the courage required to challenge entrenched power dynamics. In Episode 2 (13:20 – 14:50), Sae-ro-yi's refusal to apologize to Jang Geun-won, despite the

potential for severe repercussions, underscores the protagonist's defiance against corrupt power structures.

"Itaewon Class" vividly demonstrates the complex interplay of power relations, showcasing how institutional, economic, and social hierarchies contribute to the perpetuation of discrimination and inequality. These portrayals encourage viewers to critically examine the power dynamics within their own societies and recognize the systemic barriers that individuals face.

3. Effectiveness in Promoting Diversity Issues and Inclusion

"Itaewon Class" effectively brings attention to various forms of discrimination and challenges societal norms through its narrative and character development. The drama's portrayal of racism, social class discrimination, and other biases encourages viewers to confront these issues critically. The characters' journeys and the obstacles they face reflect real-world struggles, making the drama relatable and impactful. By showcasing diverse characters and their experiences, the series promotes a message of diversity and inclusion, aligning with the objectives of this research. Here are the various reasons why the drama succeeded in achieving its objectives of promoting Diversity Issues and Inclusion:

a. Relatable Characters: The diverse cast of characters, each facing different forms of discrimination, helps the audience relate to their struggles and fosters empathy. The series highlights the importance of understanding and accepting diversity in all its forms.
b. Narrative Impact: The drama's compelling storytelling keeps viewers engaged while subtly educating them about the various forms of discrimination and the importance of inclusion. The series successfully uses its narrative to influence viewers' perceptions and attitudes towards marginalized groups.
c. Cultural Context: By situating these issues within the specific cultural context of South Korea, the drama provides a unique perspective on how discrimination manifests in different societies. This cultural specificity enhances the authenticity of the portrayal and the impact of its social commentary.

Overall, "Itaewon Class" serves as an effective medium for promoting diversity and inclusion, using its narrative power to challenge viewers' preconceptions

and inspire social change. The drama's success in addressing these issues underscores the potential of popular media to contribute to societal awareness and transformation.

Chapter 5
Closing

A. Conclusion

In conclusion, this research has provided a comprehensive analysis of the portrayal of societal issues in the South Korean television drama "Itaewon Class." Through an examination of the narrative elements, thematic exploration, and cultural context, this research has shed light on how the drama reflects and critiques various aspects of contemporary society. The analysis reveals how "Itaewon Class" serves as a mirror to societal norms and challenges, particularly in relation to discrimination, power dynamics, and social hierarchy.

One of the key findings of this research is the nuanced depiction of discrimination within the drama, particularly racial discrimination. By portraying the experiences of several characters, "Itaewon Class" confronts viewers with the harsh realities faced by individuals who stand on the margins of societal acceptance. The drama not only highlights the existence of discrimination but also catalyzes national conversations about these issues, mirroring real-world struggles faced by racial minorities in South Korea and beyond.

Moreover, the exploration of power dynamics in "Itaewon Class" provides insights into the societal challenges associated with corruption, educational discrimination, and social mobility. The drama's portrayal of characters navigating these challenges reflects the complexities of contemporary society, where disparities in power perpetuate inequality and injustice. Through its narrative exploration, "Itaewon Class" encourages viewers to reflect on broader societal issues and the need for collective action to address systemic inequalities.

Furthermore, this research has demonstrated the global resonance of "Itaewon Class," highlighting its potential to shape public discourse and perceptions surrounding societal issues on an international scale. By presenting narratives that transcend cultural boundaries, the drama has the capacity to spark global conversations about discrimination, corruption, and power dynamics. The exploration of discrimination, corruption, and power dynamics in "Itaewon Class" taps into discourses that have transcended cultural boundaries and historical periods, resonating with audiences worldwide.

Overall, the analysis presented in this research contributes to a deeper understanding of how popular culture, particularly television dramas, can serve as both a reflection and a critique of societal norms and expectations. By examining "Itaewon Class" through a critical lens, this research has provided valuable insights into the complexities of contemporary society and the

potential of media to inspire social change. However, it is essential to acknowledge the limitations of this research and offer suggestions for future research to further explore these themes in greater depth.

B. Research Limitation

This research provides valuable insights into societal issues depicted in the South Korean drama "Itaewon Class." By analyzing the narrative and themes, it sheds light on discrimination, power dynamics, and social hierarchy. However, to gain a more comprehensive understanding of the drama's impact, it is important to acknowledge the limitations of this study. Addressing these limitations could pave the way for future research to explore a wider range of themes and perspectives.

1. The analysis primarily focuses on narrative and themes, neglecting critical aspects such as cinematography and soundtrack. The research also overlooks the production process and the creative decisions that shape it. Incorporating these dimensions in future studies could enhance the understanding of how these elements contribute to the drama's overall impact.
2. While this research examines themes of discrimination, power dynamics, and social hierarchy, it does not thoroughly explore other significant themes like mental health, LGBTQ+ representation, and environmental sustainability, which are also important within the drama.
3. The research primarily relies on existing scholarly literature, which may result in missing alternative perspectives. Engaging with a broader range of interdisciplinary literature could enrich the analysis and provide a more diverse understanding of the themes and issues addressed in "Itaewon Class."
4. Focusing on a single South Korean drama limits the scope of this research. A comparative analysis with other dramas or international media could offer a more nuanced understanding of societal issues in different cultural contexts, highlighting commonalities and differences in media representations across cultures.

Despite these limitations, this research lays a strong foundation for future studies on media representations of societal issues. By addressing the identified gaps and expanding the scope to include a wider range of themes and perspectives, future research can build upon this work to gain a deeper and more comprehensive understanding of how societal issues are

portrayed in media. This will ultimately contribute to a richer discourse on the role of media in reflecting and shaping societal values and norms.

C. Suggestion for Future Research

Building upon the insights gained from this research, several avenues for future research emerge, offering opportunities to deepen our understanding of media representations of societal issues and their implications. These suggestions of opportunities for future researchers are as follows:

1. Audience Reception Studies: Investigating audience responses and interpretations of "Itaewon Class" could provide valuable insights into the reception of media representations of societal issues. Surveys, focus groups, or qualitative interviews could be conducted to explore how viewers from diverse backgrounds perceive and engage with the drama's themes, characters, and messages. Understanding audience perspectives can shed light on the impact of media representations on public attitudes and perceptions.
2. Production Studies: Delving into the production process of "Itaewon Class" and the creative decisions behind its portrayal of societal issues could offer valuable insights into the intentions of the creators and the dynamics of media production. Interviews with the cast, crew, and production team, as well as textual analysis of production documents and behind-the-scenes footage, could illuminate the motivations, challenges, and ethical considerations involved in crafting the narrative.

By pursuing these avenues for future research, researchers can contribute to a more nuanced understanding of the role of media in shaping societal attitudes, perceptions, and behaviors, ultimately fostering positive social change and collective empowerment.

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