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Dissertation for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

**Exploring South Korean Women's
Experiences in Aesthetic Exercise
- A Postcolonial Feminist Approach -**

**한국 여성의 에스테틱 건강운동 경험 탐색
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Abstract

Exploring South Korean Women's Experiences in Aesthetic Exercise - A Postcolonial Feminist Approach -

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This study focuses on exploring the experiences of Korean women participating in exercises such as yoga, Pilates and pole dance and media contents from a Korean women's magazine to understand how their experiences configure the mechanism of aesthetic exercise as well as the meanings of their experience in relation to the cultural and social context of Korean society through a postcolonial feminist approach. A total of 12 women were selected as research participants. Their experiences were collected through in-depth interviews and participation observations from an "insider" stance. In addition, media texts and images from a popular Korean women's magazine, *Woman Sense*, were collected to understand the cultural landscape in which the participants were surrounded in. This study examines the phenomenon of women's raising participation in *aesthetic*

exercises through a postcolonial feminist approach in which considers the women of non-Western societies and cultures as well as regarding their social, cultural and economic status in interpreting their experiences.

It was found that most of the research participants began exercises to lose weight and chose “female appropriate” exercises – such as yoga and Pilates, according to media and participant perceptions— as a result of their lack of past experience in exercise, physical activities or sports. These types of exercises were an easier access for the participants. They chose to get involved in dieting and losing weight to reach social standards of beauty and appearance. It was evident that media and celebrities had an important role in the engagement of participants to take part in exercises and beauty related activities including facial and body reconstruction injections. Media contents played the role as the supply and celebrities as the supplier. Furthermore, media outlets portraying resistance to aesthetic labor and activity of women’s movement in Korea did not have great influence on the research participants. Moreover, participants did not engage in SNS hashtag movements that resemble the resistance of aesthetic labor.

Through a postcolonial feminist approach – which focuses on females in non-Western societies and in consideration of social and economic status— the participants mention their participation in exercise as a symbol of status. However, participants interpreted their experiences differently according to their participated exercise. For example, yoga

participants focus on body changes and mindfulness; Pilates participants later participate in instructor certification programs to personally enhance their ability and not to become full-time instructors; and pole dance participants take part in domestic and international competitions to challenge themselves as well as a tool for self-empowerment. It is noticed that their participation in aesthetic exercise rotates around their economic and social status as well as their personal understanding of self-femininity.

In addition, the body image in which participants desire to gain and media illustrations of attractive female bodies represent characteristics of Westernized looks. The woman's magazine portrays several articles of celebrity dieting experiences. They all show slim and thin body images of females and introduce exercises and workouts that initially focus on females. The characteristics from "female appropriate" exercises added in constructing *aesthetic exercise*. Thus, through the experiences of Korean women and media content constructed *aesthetic exercise* as an emerging category in which women have shaped through their understanding of exercise experience and social and cultural content.

Keyword : exercise participation, Korean women, postcolonial feminist approach, body image, media influence, insider approach

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To my parents, for their perpetual support

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CHAPTER I. Introduction

In Korea, the abundance of material riches in a contemporary consumer society has attracted the interest of welfare and quality of life through participation of leisure (Han, 2004). To manage a healthy lifestyle, female participation in physical activities have a skyrocketed— alongside the dramatic development of various occupations, roles, social views and enhancement of daily health in the mind and body (Ham, 2006; Kim, 2010a; Kim & Chang, 2015; Kim & Lee, 2009; Kim, 2007). It has been stated that participation in physical activities motivates women to be independent and subjective females who can manage to enjoy a stable and healthy quality of life (Park, Kim, & Kim, 2015).

Despite, social change and the inclusion of females in physical activities, women experience depression (Jun & Choi, 2014), eating disorders (Jung & Forbes, 2006; Kim, 2015a), and body dissatisfaction (Han, 2003; Rice et al., 2016), much of which is influenced through standards of beauty have been exhibited through media outlets (Han, 2003; Kim, 2011b) and celebrity culture (Brown & Tiggemann, 2016; Kim, 2020a; Vojtíšková, 2017). Brown and Tiggemann (2016) highlighted that in recent years, social media outlets have influenced mood and body image among females. Hogue and Mills (2019) also emphasize how social media engagement increases girls and women's concerns of body image. In addition, Bissell and Chung (2009) pointed out that magazine exposure of body types plays a crucial role

in evaluating attractiveness. Magazine analysis of women's exercise representation constructs a critical discourse of female body images and ideal body types as well as commodification of the female objectification (Bhalla & Moscovitz, 2020; McGannon & Spence, 2012).

For example, the Korean language used on media platforms perpetuates image-oriented terms which are being used naturally on a daily bases. Words such as, *eulzzang* and *moomzzang* mean 'perfect' or 'best face' and 'body'. These nationally used terminology was coined throughout the media in the 1990's which eventually was added in the Korean dictionary. As media represents an ideal *moomzzang*, trendy methods of weight loss, exclusively for women, began from yoga. The "yoga boom" changed the fitness scene and yoga not only settled as a workout for weight loss, but also had commercialized purposes for aesthetics and beauty which targeted female consumers (Sim, 2015). Hence, the combination of media exposure of celebrities, a society taking appearance as an important factor, and beauty standards shapes and influences contemporary exercise culture.

Therefore, this study examines how aesthetic exercise culture is illustrated in a Korean women's magazine and explore Korean women's experiences in the exercise. Furthermore, with the understanding of media representation of women and exercise culture, this study also explores the experiences of Korean women participating in the exercise culture. 12 women who participate in exercises (not including fitness gym goers,

weight lifters, gym-affiliated group exercise participants) that are coined to be female-appropriate –such as yoga, Pilates— were selected as the research participants. The discursive practices of exercise culture in which women participate in will develop a notion of reality-based discourses related to the overall culture and tradition of the society. Due to discursive practices that position women as subjects as well as implement their bodies as members of the exercise culture, they obtain a sense of self and interpret their experiences from their perspectives. Hence, to understand the perspectives and to interpret the experiences, in-depth interviews and participation observations through an “insider approach” was applied.

To extend the analysis of media representation and Korean women’s experience in exercise culture, this study aims to take a postcolonial feminist approach toward the phenomenon. A postcolonial feminist viewpoint emerges as a response to generalized and homogeneous recognition of Western feminist discourse and practices (Chambers & Watkins, 2012). Postcolonial feminism positions itself as a critique to consider women outside of the dominant literature surrounding feminism and reflects on non-western, non-white women as well as recognizing social class, race, ethnicity or sexual preference. Hence, it argues that by articulating the term “woman” as a universal entity, they are defined by gender and does not review different colonial and imperial relations that impact particular cultures (Said, 1993).

Spivak (1985) pointed out “feminist individualism” in which “woman” is changing and transcends historical boundaries. Thus, difference of feminism(s) should be acknowledged according to political and narrative descriptions as well as in considerations other than solely gender. For literature based on a postcolonial feminist approach, Ogana and Ojong (2013) explore black women and their portrayals of bodies through a feminist postcolonial viewpoint. The study emphasizes the diversity of different woman’s opinions of body and exercise participation as well as expanding the definitions of beauty of the body ideals by acknowledging tradition and colonial influence. In addition, Lelwica, Hoglund, and McNallie (2009) consider hybridity in understanding postcolonial discourse related to the pressures of the “thin ideal” from “white-Western female body norms”.

In the case of Korea, Schwegendiek, Yeo, and Ulijaszek (2013) emphasize the a “corporal ideal” manifested through a combination of Western media imperialism, the socioeconomic value of body, and an appearance obsessed culture. As external influence to body politics and norms, the philosophy of Confucian has impacted how women adapt to societal change and social recognition (Bell & Chaibong, 2003). However, as mentioned by Lee (2016), “the intersection of social media, feminism, and geopolitics” package and contribute to “feminist forms of resistance”. Hence, Korean women and their culture of body politics and beauty

discourses are limited to combinations of multi-concepts of social and economic situations. As most feminist approaches of female experiences are focused on Western societies and white women of middle class, this study attempts to understand Korean females' perceptions and understandings of experienced exercise culture in respect of individual stories, social class, and ethnicity. Furthermore, with the understanding of media representations this study will contribute to the growing literature of Korean women and cultural practices that shape the society and its culture.

1.1 Research Purpose

The role of media and individual experiences of exercise to development and maintain body ideals and body image has been widely studied. Media exposure of body images operates more than a means of distribution, but as a tube that consists of mainstream trends which cultivate the interaction between an audience and society. It is highlighted that media representation encourages audience attitudes as well as influences and reflects on social issues and standards which in this study shapes female-appropriate exercises – *aesthetic exercise*. Hence, to understand the landscape of the society in which Korean women's experiences of aesthetic exercise are fostered, it is a key point to analyze media content. In other words, to reach a deeper understanding this study seeks to explore individual experiences to identify meanings that are interconnected with society as well as media content that surround research participants.

Thus, this study attempts to investigate Korean women participating in *aesthetic exercise* and how *aesthetic exercise* is constructed. Furthermore, feminist theories have simplified female experiences and generalized women while continuing to marginalize women of non-Western societies. Thus, this study explores experiences of Korean women participating in exercise to discover the social and cultural influences through a postcolonial

feminist lens that considers race, class, gender and economic status of non-Western women.

1.2. Research Questions

1. Why do Korean women participate in *aesthetic exercises*?
2. How do women and media texts construct the mechanism of *aesthetic exercises* in Korea?
3. How does Korean women's participation in *aesthetic exercise* and media texts manifest its context from a postcolonial feminist approach?

CHAPTER II. Literature Review

2.1. Contextual Background

This chapter provides the contextual background of body representation and body politics through history and culture of Korea. This chapter gives historical, cultural and educational contexts to understand the foundation of which body politics are built on and to understand the notions of women and girls participation in exercise. Furthermore, this chapter frames the definition of *aesthetic exercise* to explain the foundation as well as the characteristics of exercise which are included throughout this study.

2.1.1. Social and cultural context of Korea

Though myths of beauty vary from cultural and society, they have been rooted from standardized norms which correspond within a community. In Korea, the Dangun myth represents the founding of Gojoseon, the ancient Korean kingdom. This mythical story is about a heavenly king, Hwanin, whom had a son named Hwanung. He was given the power to rule over the people of the lands. While Hwanung was king, a tigress and a bear prayed to be reincarnated as human beings. Hwanung instructed the two animals to eat mugwort and twenty pieces of garlic and to not see day light for 100 days for it would transform them into humans. In the story, the tigress fails the instructions while the bear obeys them and becomes a human. This bear is

named Ungnyeo¹ who later marries Hwanung and gives birth to Dangun who becomes the founder and king-god of Gojoseon. Many interpret this story as an emphasis on encouraging Korean identity and superiority, however, as a narrative; it is understood in various ways.

According to Kang (2012), Ungnyeo's transformation represents the basis of an agricultural society's order and structure. In addition, it reflects to a patriarchal system in which produces a society that encourages voluntary religious participation and the creation of culture. In other words, the mugwort and garlic symbolizes the importance of farm life while the long period of patience represents a rather passive and systematic structure of patriarchal order of a female bear "obeying" to her stronger counterparts. In contrast, Park (2007) articulates a connection to this mythical story and modern society by highlighting the bear's experience of enduring pain and patience in the darkness to dieting and plastic surgery as the process of "becoming a female being" in modern day Korea. Interestingly, the two interpretations highlight a passive and dependent female within a patriarchal order. The myth praises on the fact that the Ungnyeo's patience and obedience is the base of a profound farming environment which simultaneously represents as an epitome of a female in Korea (Shin, 2001).

According to the myth, there are two characters that wish to become human, a bear and a tiger. Aside from the mythological beings, in

¹ Ungnyeo in Korean translates to bear (ung) and girl or women (nyeo).

contemporary Korea, there exist two stereotypical descriptions of women which dates back to Korean traditional folktales which mostly portray two contradictory characters; “the good” and “the bad” (Cha, 2015). Throughout several folktales, there appears a female bear that is depicted as a symbol of Confucianism in which embraces its loyalty to the patriarchal system with a passive personality. Whereas, in the case of the Dangun myth, the tiger is illustrated as a character with less patience, aggressive characteristics, and more focused on the self, in comparison to the bear. Thus, through the eyes of Koreans an ideal female is passive, patient, and intrinsic. With the basis of the mythological story and the portrayed female image, as well as the external influences, such as media, consumer behavior, and peer influence from modern society, it accumulates to the standards of an intrinsic “ideal female” (Han, Brewis, & SturtzSreetharan, 2018; Jung & Hwang, 2016; Mangan & Ha, 2001; Park, Kim, & Han, 2015; Park, 2007).

According to Kim (2017c), the analysis of beauty from the pre-historic period to modern day mentions each periodical change of beauty in relation to historical and social ideology. It is emphasized that during the Joseon dynasty (1392-1910), with the influence of Confucius values – which focuses on the mind rather than the physical body, rationale over reality and other than self—people idealized females to be natural, virtuous and elegant in appearance. In addition to a patriarchal society, it has been noted that the ideal beauty was portrayed as the “eldest daughter-in-law”

look which emphasizes round faced, light-skinned with healthy looks and thick hair.

During the Japanese colonization (1910-1945), the rapid spread of theater, photography, newspaper and magazines influenced Western fashion and beauty standards (Kim, 2017b). It was pointed out by Ha (2016) that it was in 1912 that a daily newspaper began to use the word, “mi in” which translates to “beautiful person”, hence beautiful female in which an article specifically points out the “requirements” to become a beautiful woman. It does not present particular facial features, though it mentions an image of “a round faced, slightly chubby around the neck and shoulders, and one who’s collar bones don’t show”.

Later from the 1920’s and 30’s people began to be exposed Westernized looks from magazines, newspapers and movies which highlighted light-skinned. Furthermore, Korean females were constantly being compared to their Western counterparts of their height, disproportionate body and flat faces (Kim, 2013a). After the Japanese colonization, from the 1950’s women who appeared to bear many children were seen as “mi in”. Soon later in 1957 the first Miss. Korea was held. The committee pointed out in The Hankook Ilbo to choose a female with “modern beauty, one who can compete against Westerners”. During this period, double eyelid surgery became popular among women, to look “more Western”.

From the 1990's, Korean society was undergoing postmodern changes which transformed social order and began to intake Western advertisements that featured Hollywood stars and global franchise fast food restaurants such as McDonald's and Pizza Hut. Cable television became generalized from 1995 which allowed more channels for the general audience to absorb. Since this era, internet, movies, SNS and cable media influenced a female ideal close to the images of a Western female. Beginning from the 2000's television, news and magazines emphasized not only facial ideals, but also body types. Though, the thin ideal was focused on as the "perfect body", exercised bodies have become extra criteria to reach the ideal body.

According to a newspaper report in 2006, Korean women in college were highly obsessive over their body-weight, though they were thinnest among 22 other countries². Later in 2018 the same newspaper reported that three out of ten female college students were considered skinny fat, which indicates a person who appears to be thin, however, have several health problems that could lead to obesity³. Furthermore, it was highlighted that women were more likely to be aware of their body images than men and linked social pressures and ideal attractiveness of female standards (Joh et al., 2013; Jung & Forbes, 2006; Lim et al., 2015). The standards of

² Chosun_Ilbo. (2006). Korean female college students, "thin (sick) ness". Chosun Ilbo. Seoul, South Korea.

³ Hae Na LSY, Jung. (2018). Three out of ten female college students, skinny fat: Wrong dieting methods. Ibid.

appearance are not simply points that are new to the society. They are different versions from each society's culture and period. Hence, the variations of cultural standards can be found in details of education and media.

2.1.2. Influence of education on girls and women in sports and physical activities

Kim and Lee (2009) mention the Korean women's sport discourse is based upon educational values and the Korean education system that was highly influenced during the Japanese colonization from 1910 to 1945. They explain a passive image of female body which was constructed during Japanese imperialism, of which creates a body that conforms to systematic power and physical discipline. However, in contrast to traditional ideas of female, girls were given the same privileges as boys to participation in physical education classes (Kim, 2007). Moreover, girls and women's educational institutions began to increase which influenced the interest of sports and physical education for females (Hwang, 2019; Lee & Heo, 2016). Furthermore, Kim (2017a) explains in a news article about the 1988 Seoul Olympics became a turning point, building Korea to be the mecca of body culture. The commonalities of the three statements all have an explanation of the vocabulary used in daily life which exhibit body image and a highly appearance-oriented society influenced by media and historical events.

On an administrative level in Korea, there are a very small number of female coaches, however, in other professional leagues; there are very few or no female coaches and administrators in volleyball. Even in major sports organizations, it is found that only 15% of committee members are women. According to a report issued by the Korean Sports and Olympic Committee (KSOC) in 2017, seven out of 51 members of the Korean Olympic Committee and 63 out of 522 members of province and city sports organizations were counted as female members. The tallies have taken to point and the KSOC has begun to take action to increase the volume of women in sports. As both athletes in elite athletes and administrators take an effort to increase the positions participated by females, the educational level at schools has focused on girls to join more physical activities as well.

As stated by the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Tourism's annual Sport for all Survey conducted in 2012, 51.8% of grade level boys responded to participating in sports, and only 27.1% of girls answered to the same question. With the low participation rate of girls in sports and physical activities, as well as the national female soccer team placing third at the 2010 FIFA U-20 Women's World Cup, Gu (2010) and Kim (2010a) both suggested applying Title IX – the Education Amendments Act of 1972 of the federal law of the United States of America, known for its inclusion of girls in not only sports, but in all parts of the education system to have equal participation regardless of gender. During the 2010 FIFA U-20 World Cup,

Gu (2010) pointed out the lack of media and public attention to both the athletes and the games itself. In 2013, Minsuk An – a member of the national assembly— opened a forum titled, “Promoting P.E. for girls: The beginning of Korean Title IX” 「여학생 체육 활성화 방안: 한국형 Title IX 을 시작하며」 (2013.09.13), and later in 2014, he opened a debate titled, “Debate: Education Equality Law” 「교육평등법(가 칭) 제정을 위한 토론회」 (2014.03.21). Thus, Title IX has been benchmarked as a positive source to apply in the Korean education system (Joo, 2015). While reports and administrators have been promoting and suggesting Title IX to be applied in the Korean education system, policies and activities have been found to encourage more girls to participate in physical activities.

In 2013, the KSOC initiated a project, Mi-Dream (미드림), to support physical activities for girls to increase their participation in sports. In addition, to understand the needs of different age groups, interests of women, advocate active sports participation and to learn the possibilities for future projects to involve more women, Mi-Chaewoom (미채움) – another project introduced by KSOC in 2017—commenced in over 50 locations of the nation. As education and schools have put in efforts for girls to participate in sports and physical activity, girls participating in physical education activities and sports have highlighted their engagement in exercise later as they become adults.

In 2014, Equality Law (양성평등 기본법) was introduced which became fully executed in 2015 which alongside School Sports Promotion Act (학교체육진흥법) supported to stimulate girls' physical activity participation. From the start of 2015, one of five top priorities of the Ministry of Education was to establish policies to increase the level of interest of sports among grade school girls. The same year, Seoul Metropolitan Office of Education set a goal to increase the level of grade school girls' sports participation from 20% to 50% within three years which was the first project of all 17 office of education to introduce 'Fun P.E. Activities for Girls'(여학생 신나는 체육활동) also known as 'Goddess Project' (여신 프로젝트) (Seoul Metropolitan Office of Education, 2015). As a result, more than a hundred different types of sports and physical activity programs were developed for female students from elementary to high school.

In the most recently reported from the annual Sport for all Survey, 2018, 61.6% of teenage boys answered that they participated regularly in a sports activity more than once a week. Surprisingly, 52.4% of teenage girls responded to the same question, which shows significant increase of 25.3% from the same annual survey held in 2012. This increase is also found in other age groups. According to the annual Sports for All Survey, in 2015, 53.8% of women in their 20's participated in exercise at least once a week

and in 2019's report 65.1% of women responded to the same questions⁴.

Thus, girls and women's participation in daily physical activities and exercise have significantly increased. As participation rates are rising and the school systems are improving policies to get more girls to participate in P.E. activities and sports, the perspectives of girls "doing" exercise has also shifted with the influence of media and popular culture.

2.1.3. Contemporary Korea and politics of body

Females in Korea have traditionally and culturally described to be the subordinate members of the family (Tago, 2005). During the Joseon Dynasty, daughter, wives, mothers, hence, members of a family and home were the only identities for women (Lee & Heo, 2016). Up to modern day, when a woman participates in sports, it is portrayed as though she is sacrificing her roles as a wife and mother or displays that they are committing overcome barriers for their careers⁵. This is portrayed in a Korean movie⁶ and media reports of female athletes on national teams with

⁴ Ministry of Culture, Sports and Tourism's annual Sport for all Survey from 2015 to 2019 shows the participation rate of sports and activities, as well as the tendency of both males and females from teens, 20's to 70's and the types of activities that they participate in.

⁵ "Table tennis player champion, KyeongAh Kim comes back as "mom athlete", MBC News (2017). Link: https://imnews.imbc.com/replay/2017/nwdesk/article/4255255_30212.html; "Only mom soccer player Boram Hwang comes back to play for team", The Hankook-Ilbo (2019). Link: <https://www.hankookilbo.com/News/Read/201904221625354795?did=NA&dtype;=&dtyp ecode;=&prnewsid;=>

⁶ Korean movie, [*Forever the moment* (Korean title: *Woo Sang Soon*)] portrays the woman's handball national team and the obstacles they face as a female in society, as

children. Whist women have been naturally far seen from physical activities and/or sports. However, though a small number of participants, participants of non-traditionally gender appropriate sports such as soccer players (Hwang, 2016; Kwon & Kwon, 2012), non-professional female boxers (Kim, Kwon, & Lee, 2015), women's body building athletes (Jung, 2013; Lee & Kwon, 2018) have been studied domestically. In contrast to elite sports, women of the general population have begun participating and have become interested in physical activities in recent years.

In the 1980's, the beauty of the physical body was to restrain and control the self. And that the physical body was respected as a tool for reproduction and labor (Chung, 2007). The overall social standard for body was highly influenced from Confucianism tradition and culture. From the late 1990's, there have been a growing interest and participation in women's exercise and fitness activities which has been accompanied with the skyrocketing development of the fitness industry. An explosive increase of diet related ads, equipment and dieting supplementary products were visible starting from the mid 1990's. As advertisements for dieting, toning body, and aesthetic care have increased; various exercise workouts have developed targeting females (Ham, 2006).

In the early 2000's, media contents such as dieting television shows, online news reports of celebrities exercising, and social networking services

mothers, as athletes as well as athletes performing and training in a non-popular sport at the time of their careers.

are influencing the demand for both a highly appearance-oriented social atmosphere. From the beginning of the 21st century, the iconic word ‘*eulzzang*’ is still very present, though adds another descriptive vocabulary to beauty, ‘*moomzzang*’. The word ‘*eulzzang* (을짱)’ directly means a ‘beautiful face’ in Korean⁷. This compound word has been an iconic trend since the early 2000’s and has been used constantly through television shows, media sources as well as daily life. The suffix ‘*zzang* (짱)’ is a colloquial expression used with other Korean words to emphasize how great or the best something is. ‘*Zzang*’ originally referred to ‘a leader of a group’, ‘a good fighter’ or ‘the best’ and isn’t used only with people, but also items as well.

‘*Moomzzang*’ is also a compound word of ‘*moom*’ which means body and ‘*zzang*’. Therefore, ‘*moomzzang*’ means to have ‘the best body’ or a ‘good body’ which refers to a slim, fit and toned body. And recently, muscles have become an appealing asset among women which have attracted more women to start fitness activities (Sa, Kim, & Lee, 2017). The usage of ‘*moomzzang*’ is still called to this day as a syndrome, and this word originally appeared when a married lady’s well-toned and fit body was shown-off as a motivation for women in Korea through media sources. Since then, the word has been used with all people regardless of age and gender to those with nicely toned and fit bodies.

⁷ ‘Eul’ is part of the word ‘eulgul’ which means face in Korean and ‘zzang’ means the best. Therefore, ‘eulzzang’ is a compound word meaning, ‘best face’.

For over a decade '*eulzzang*' has been used commonly not only among celebrities and public personal, but also sports stars and people in general indicating those with perfectly toned skin and facial beauty. This word has been used so commonly in Korean society that people strive to become '*eulzzang*'. Interestingly this word does not explicitly point toward only women, but also men. Therefore, the beauty industry in South Korea has an on-going history which stimulates both men and women to 'look better' and to 'look prettier'. Furthermore, in 2017, it was counted in the National Tax service of South Korea that there were a total of 470 beauty clinics (concentrated on facial and body reconstruction) located in the Gangnam district which is 120 more clinic than the total of clinics of the major five districts within Seoul, Korea.

According to Ham (2006), an analysis of advertisements printed in woman's magazine, **W Dong-A**, from the 1970's focused mainly on skin care and facial beauty products. And later in the 1980's, advertisements related to facial plastic surgery were skyrocketing and to this day, plastic surgery done on one's face has settled as a 'normal' transformation for both men and women, though more that of women. It is even noted that facial attractiveness is a 'gateway for better career and better life' and works as a credential at job interviews (Heo, 2012; Kim, 2010c). Several documentaries have even explored the skyrocketing plastic surgery business in South Korea and highlights "Seoul to be at the heart of the growing

obsession of plastic surgery to look ‘perfect’”⁸. Throughout the documentary psychology professor Yang Yoon mentions, “Korean society is constructed of a homogenous group of people; therefore, it is easier for people to compare one another within the group which enhances the thought of *wanting* to be better than someone else.” Additionally, in another contemporary documentary published on *Youtube* as well as *CBS This Morning* stated, “More people have cosmetic surgery per capita in Korea, than anyone else on Earth”⁹. It also follows with how K-pop creates images of ‘perfected faces and bodies’ which attracts more people to look like the well-polished celebrities.

Holliday and Elfving-Hwang (2012) mention the levels of cosmetic surgery among both men and women; and negotiate global and national standards of beauty as highly Westernized, and that cosmetic reconstruction is rather a gendered practice than narrowed as a feminist approach. Vojtišková (2017) provides a critical analysis of cosmetic surgery conducted in Korea and how it is associated with K-pop, mass media and celebrity culture. Furthermore, Leem (2017) contributes to how cosmetic surgery is influenced by westernized women’s bodies and that the ‘Gangnam-Style’ plastic surgery opens up a new paradigm for appearance to be ‘very’

⁸ AlJazeeraEnglish. “Plastic Surgery: The Cost of Beauty | 101 East.” *YouTube*, YouTube, 22 Aug. 2014, www.youtube.com/watch?v=wp4YZdSz2aA.

⁹ idmagazineonline. “Inside Korea’s Billion Dollar Beauty Industry.” *YouTube*, YouTube, 26 Apr. 2016, www.youtube.com/watch?v=-qvN_Gi1kNE.
 CBSThisMorning. “Behind the Plastic Surgery Boom in South Korea.” *YouTube*, YouTube, 28 Sept. 2015, www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZSAoETxubSI.

Western. This shows the alleged obsession of appearance and social influences in engaging the perception of beauty, but also the standards and importance of beauty.

2.1.4. Development of female-appropriate exercises

Defining “aesthetic exercise” through the context of the Korean Society

Universally, the interest to obtain beauty dates back to centuries before. Individuals constantly cope with the norms of beauty and the efforts to reach the standards of the socially expected criteria of beauty integrated with culture and history. Craig (2006) states beauty as a ‘contested symbolic resource’ which the periphery between concepts of liberation and oppression as well as domination and resistance are intertwined, creating ambivalence in approaching the relationship of beauty and contemporary society. Though decades of female beauty differ from border, culture and generations, the relentless obsession “to look better” is a social phenomenon that has been absorbed within each living society.

In the 21st century, the extents for women to achieve beauty have gone to facial plastic surgery, body reconstruction and even to the point where women are forced by social standards to stay slim, causing severe health problems such as anorexia or bulimia (Leem, 2017; Lelwica, Hoglund, & McNallie, 2009). However, in recent years, ‘beauty criteria’ does not necessarily emphasis simply facial appearance. In contemporary

society, it has been widely shown that women have become accustomed to having “fit bodies” as a trait of attractiveness.

In Korea, there have been a growing interest and increasing number of participation in women’s exercise and fitness activities and was accompanied by the rapid development of the fitness industry from the 1990’s. There was an explosive increase of dieting related advertisements, fitness equipment and dieting supplements (Ham, 2006) and from the 2000’s women began to display a fit body image rather than a simply thin or skinny body (Kim, 2017c). Furthermore, influenced by Western media such as Jane Fonda with her workouts and outfits which emphasized a slim and muscular female body that contrasted from the traditional images of a passive, subordinate, and gender stereotyped female (Choi & Ha, 2005; Kim, 2011a), also effected the participation of physical activities in Korea women. Thus, as the demand for dieting, body management aesthetic care increased; a variety of “female-oriented exercises” were introduced.

The first trendy method of losing weight and form appealing among women in Korea was yoga. From the beginning of the 1990’s, yoga was the most popular exercise as a method of dieting among women. Many began to participate and the number of yoga studios increased, allowing news articles to state this as the ‘*yoga boom*’. The ‘*yoga boom*’ changed the fitness scene as well as setting yoga as a contemporary workout form, but also had a commercialized purpose for aesthetics and beauty which solely targeted

women as the consumers (Kim, 2005b; Sim, 2015). In addition, Korean celebrities and television personnel were broadcasting and producing home training videos which attracted more women to begin the workout.

Gradually, female-only yoga studios were appearing in neighborhoods and through advertised cases of women losing weight through yoga classes in media platforms such as TV and SNS; yoga established its reputation as an *aesthetic exercise* for women.

Moreover, it was identified as unique, “abnormal”, and difficult to access for men to participate in yoga (Bae, 2017; Kwon, Choi, & Lee, 2018; Kwon, 2016b) due to the dominated population of yoga practitioners being female. Hence, as Korea’s social norms rooted from Confucius values and patriarchal order, labeling an activity as “feminine” reinforces gender divided and stereotypes which works as a catalyst to reproduce activities based on genders rather than individual preferences. Thus, yoga being a female-oriented exercise for dieting and body management, several different exercises emerged into this pattern which framed them as female-appropriate *aesthetic exercises*.

As the trend of physical activity expanded, exercises “similar” or “alternative” to yoga have appeared, attracting females once again. Pilates—an exercise originally for rehabilitation, prevention of injury and muscle conditioning— appeared and began to attract the public’s attention aiming towards women (Kim, 2015b; Lee, 2006; Park & Lee, 2009; Park, Yoon, &

Lee, 2006). Yoga and Pilates studios were opening and some studios had both types of exercises combined together. While yoga and Pilates is known as a quiet and static exercise, recent trends have moved toward a “new” exercise. The newly introduced and empowering exercise which women worldwide have begun to participate is pole dance/fitness (Allen, 2011; Donaghue, Kurz, & Whitehead, 2011; Gómez-Ramírez, 2007; Griffiths, 2016; Whitehead & Kurz, 2009). Originated from pole dance, pole fitness has been introduced in Korea as another “new” method of losing weight and maintaining a slim and strong body figure. Though, pole dancing is from erotic dance and sub culture, strip clubs are non-existent in Korea (Kim & Kwon, 2019), it has created an atmosphere for it to settle as a ‘hard core’ exercise. Thus, all exercises are labeled as female-appropriate and as aesthetic tools, conceptualizing the introduced exercises as aesthetic exercises; as well as an interception with the characteristics of the Korean society.

Consequently, the Korean society exhibiting high interested in appearance and attractiveness, through its cultural atmosphere of the “showy culture”, the efforts for women to continuously be alert about their body shape has been influenced both within its cultural and social trends (Han, 2004; Sa, Kim, & Lee, 2017), but also from Western media (Ha, 2016; Kim, 2017c). Therefore, understanding the linkages between the cultures of the Korean society and the influences of body ideals of Western agency, the

phenomenon of exercises dominated by females and the commercialization of dieting and body management industry produces a vague, yet hypothetical category coined *aesthetic-exercises*. Though aesthetic fitness, aesthetic workouts or cosmetic fitness appear in the world of fitness and body building, this research does not include body building in the same sector as *aesthetic exercises*. This is due to the fact that the definitions of aesthetics and cosmetic in the body building field have distinctively different characteristics.

Therefore, the following section of the chapter explores three trending exercises, yoga, Pilates and pole dance that have been grouped as *aesthetic exercises*. While investigating the aspects of each exercise, academic studies and media reports are used to understand the trends and transitions of each *aesthetic exercise*.

Contemporary Yoga

In 2003, it was reported that there were approximately 600 thousand people participating in yoga in Korea (TheChosunIlbo, 2003). 14 years later, Joong Ang Ilbo announced that the estimated population of people participating in yoga was roughly 2 million domestically (Jeong, 2017). According to a domestic annual survey held in South Korea (further on referred to as Korea), 97.6% of people who stated that they practice yoga on a daily bases were found to be female (MinistryofCultureSportsandTourism,

2015).

Yoga in Korea was first seen during the 1990's. However, it wasn't until the early 2000's when Jeong-Hae Won's "*Happy Happy Yoga Diet*" was broadcasted through a television series, "Name of the Rose [Jangmieui Erumero]" on SBS¹⁰ when yoga began appearing in front of the public. Through the show she presented yoga as a healthy way to lose weight as well as showing her personal body change (Go, 2002). Even to this day, news reports comment how she publicized yoga as a popular yoga instructor to the public's eye through television shows, personal workout videos and books on dieting and yoga (Lee, 2018a).

According to media reports from the early 2000s; "*Working class women, 'yoga diet' fever*" (Jeon, 2003), "*Yoga/Posture training plus diet effect*" (Seo, 2002) mention women 'doing yoga' for weight-loss and dieting purposes. Mass media outlets have additionally depicted female celebrities participating in yoga exercise resulting in dramatic outcomes of weight loss and body reformation. One of the mostly common was Korean female celebrities who launched personal dieting videos using yoga workouts such as "*2003 Miss. Korea, Yoon-young Choi's Yoga Video*", "*2005 Looking like Joohyun Ok*¹¹, *Diet and Yoga*". Celebrity involvement

¹⁰ Seoul Broadcasting System: One of the top four public television and radio network companies in Korea. The four new networks supplement existing conventional free-to-air TV networks like KBS (Korean Broadcasting System), MBC (Munhwa Broadcasting Corporation), SBS and other smaller channels launched following deregulation in 1990.

¹¹ Joohyun Ok is a Korean female recording artist and girl group Pinkle member who gained popularity for her singing ability and physical transformation – from an overweight

in yoga practice has triggered women to participate and enjoy yoga. Women practicing yoga has constantly showed lean bodies through workout videos as well as television programs focusing on exercise and aesthetics which were appealing to Korean women (Bae, 2017).

In 2015, UN's International Yoga day was celebrated in front of city hall in Seoul, Korea. The event gathered more than two thousand yoga practitioners and audience. Sport celebrity Soo-ji Shin—former Olympic rhythmic gymnast—was presented as the honorary ambassador. Collaboration with other 'yoga-like' formation fitness workouts have become themes for open events the following years. Most recent, at the Korean National Maritime Museum located to Busan, Korea; opened a program to participate in yoga while enjoying an exhibition in the museum. In a news article, it mentions combining yoga and museum exhibitions is an attractive item in which many foreign countries are opening to the public; for example a yoga program at the Brooklyn Museum engrossed over 400 people (Yonhap News, 2018). Furthermore, other events have collaborated yoga with attractive themes such as beer as a way of attracting yoga participants (Kwon, 2017). In 2018, a collaboration between a hotel and a fitness brand are opening and hosting 'MY BALANCE WEEK' using beer and yoga as a theme to utilize their fitness brand (No, 2018).

Over the years, yoga practitioners and scholars point out how the

fundamentals and elements of traditionally yoga have been manipulated as either female-oriented or commercialized in modern society (Kang & Kim, 2013; Kim, 2005; Sim, 2015). The power of media and the fitness industry develops an intertwined relationship that prints and broadcasts yoga to be designed for women, about women and illustrated as women. As media platforms produce yoga as a female item, yoga studios and instructors offer yoga classes exclusively for female-only. Advertising and informing people that yoga studios only precede female-only classes reinforces yoga to be female-oriented which crosses a thick line for it to be difficult for men to have curiosity of yoga practice. Hence, the fitness industry's aim for women to participate in yoga and the media material relating yoga as a dieting exercise, consistently connect yoga with females and dieting which results yoga to be female-centered. Furthermore, with the development of technology and industrialization while women began to participate and have a growing interest in physical exercise and fitness, the fitness industry spread to aim at females as potential customers which confidently portrayed selected physical exercises as highly feminine, thus, only for women.

Pilates today

Since its birth, Pilates has been known for its development of muscle strength and balance since the late 1920's in New York by founder Joseph Pilates. As an exercise system based on a series of movements

performed on a mat and/or using exercise instruments to enhance physical balance and strength, Joseph Pilates developed the system over 20 years which was influenced by yoga and other eastern practices of movement. The philosophy of Pilates includes breathing, concentration, control, centering, precision, and flow. He first called the exercise ‘contrology’ which later became ‘Pilates’. The first people to experience Pilates were dancers in New York who used this method to prevent injuries as well as rehabilitation for stiffened joints and muscles occurring before, during and after dance training. Over the years, Pilates was initially practiced by athletes for same reasons as those of dancers. According to Dong-A Ilbo in 2004, a news article mentions how professional volleyball players are nowadays applying Pilates in their workouts to stretch muscles and to increase body balance (Kim, 2004).

Academically, previous studies have focused on the effects of how the training method enhances physical balance and control, prevents injuries and muscle cramps as well as increases range of joint movement and back pains (Yoon, Park, & Yoon, 2007). Several other researches prove the effects of Pilates posture-related exercise and prevention of injuries for university-level female dance major students (Bang, 2012; Oh, 2017a; Park & Lee, 2009). Other studies have been conducted among women who are Pilates participants which show a wide range of change not only related to physical health, but also to personal mental state. According to (Kim,

2015b), it was shown how female participants of Pilates had a higher degree of feminine attractiveness, self-esteem and quality of life from that of those who did not participate in Pilates. Moreover, participation in Pilates not only elevated self-confidence, but also helped in maintaining an ‘aesthetic body’ (Park, Yoon, & Lee, 2006).

Furthermore, there have been studies cover experiences of Pilates practitioners—both men and women—and focus on their physical training experience, mental status and the socialization through Pilates exercise (Lee, 2006). Though there are a higher number of female participants in Lee’s study, there is not mention about the social and cultural reasons for the phenomenon. Similar to Kang (2017), who concentrations on female Pilates instructors, highlights the teaching experiences of the instructors, however does not indicate why research participants were all female. However, there is little foundation about the inner social interactions that Pilates has with its participants and society.

While academically researched by proceeding Pilates-based interventions, the 1980’s presented Pilates to the public in Western countries through media sources. Decades after, in 2002, The Dong-A Ilbo—one of three major newspapers in Korea—reported a side column titled, “*Five Minute Pilates*”¹² which introduced Pilates to the public as references for

¹² Retrieved from the following URL:
http://news.donga.com/List/Series_70080000000164/3/70080000000164/20040201/8025034/1

everyday exercise. Over the course of three months, the newspaper company shared a photo and explanation of a Pilates exercise. However, before “*Five Minute Pilates*”, this every-day-exercise column was named “*Learning Office Yoga*”¹³ which also illustrated a yoga posture that could be done in and during working hours. This simply shows how yoga and Pilates seem to be understood as similar workouts that could be practiced on a daily bases, regardless of the location.

Other news media reports have presented celebrities practicing Pilates as a guide to lose weight and results of celebrity weight loss success stories have attracted the public to gain interest in the training method. Similar to yoga, viral fitness videos and home training books have been published for the public to enjoy and experience. Online media articles mention lists of female celebrities participating in Pilates as a method of weight loss and body management. The following articles highlight who as well as benefits that Pilates have brought entertainment personal: “*Open List' Perfect Bodies of Entertainment Industry's Secrets*”(Kwon, 2016a) and “*"Hanee Lee and Yoonju Jang's Diet Secrets"...'Pilates? What is it?'"* (Lee, 2017). Similar to yoga, media sources have depicted female celebrities with trendy fitness workouts which not only points out the benefits that the workouts have given the participants, but also emphasizes workouts as diet

¹³ Retrieved from the following URL:
http://news.donga.com/List/Series_70080000000164/3/70080000000164/20020602/7826253/1

management methods and that female celebrities are mainly using them. Therefore, this gives the audience a sense that yoga or Pilates is a dieting workout regardless of its origin, and that those workouts are female-oriented.

Pole Dance as a sport

For decades, in Western societies, pole dancing has been considered as an erotic dance performed in night clubs for the gaze of an audience – mostly men. Though there are several theories as to the origin of pole dancing, one points out how pole dance is associated with a traditional sport called *Mallakamba* from India which emphasizes physical fitness and yoga postures. Others say that pole dancing is originated from the Chinese pole from circus performers and gymnasts. Before it was commercialized with flashy movements and sexually appealing appearances spotted through Western media sources—such as movies and television shows, pole dance was part of an act performed by a group of Egyptian female dancers.

It wasn't until the 1980's that pole dance was introduced in America where it altered into a form of erotic dance. Since the 1980's, pole dance was incorporated with athletic moves and tricks performed on a pole— first in Canada then in the United States. During the 1990's, pole dance became a form of physical exercise which was practiced in non-sexual athletic settings such as pole dance-fitness studios or centers. The transformation of pole dance/fitness has brought up the discourse of the

female and feminine body, trends of the fitness culture, controversies regulated with cultural and social understandings of the activity, the categorization as a sport, and in a micro-perspective, what and how women are experiencing during their participation (Griffiths, 2016).

Pole dance has transformed from a provocative activity performed in night clubs to an activity which has been marketed as a form of exercise activity (Whitehead & Kurz, 2009). And some studies have revealed how women have tried to lessen the connection of adult entertainment as well as expressed how they are empowered through pole fitness (Fennell, 2018; Griffiths, 2016; Whitehead & Kurz, 2009). There hasn't been a single amount of academic literature reviewing the participation of Korean women experiencing pole dance classes, Western literature by Whitehead and Kurz (2009) mention how women have acquired self-empowerment through pole dance classes and how the space of fitness constructs women to actively resist dominant patriarchal notions of feminine sexuality. Furthermore, through Donaghue, Kurz, and Whitehead (2011), pole dancing studios are played as the role of a setting in which allows women for self-expression and self-display as well as to gain confidence and power over one's self. Though there is a lack of Eastern material related to pole dance or any other erotic dance, there has been a number of media coverage on Korean women performing and practicing pole dance.

In Korea, pole dance was first adapted as a fitness activity, surely

due to the fact that the night club culture did not include the performances of pole dancing nor were people exposed to pole dance stripping and erotic dance up until the 2000's. Yet, the notion of pole dance ('*bongchom*' in Korean) among Koreans is perceived as a vulgar dance performed by women usually in night clubs without stripping – mainly women standing next to a pole and dancing around it.

In a 2006 Korean online news article, it mentions how pole dancing has become a type of popular fitness in Australia and its physical fitness benefits alongside participation among both men and women (Bae, 2006). Even in on one of the top major broadcasting companies in Korea, MBC (Munhwa Broadcasting Company), shortly introduces pole dancing as a fitness which many Hollywood stars are joining as a method of exercise (MBC, 2007). Though it points out how pole dance is rather a form of fitness than a dance, both media reports do not comment on whether Korean women participate or if there are any pole dancing fitness studios in Korea. Rather the news depicts pole dance as a foreign way of exercise. It wasn't until 2009 when it appeared in an internet article mentioning a Korean drama aired in one of Korea's top broadcasting companies, which presented an actress performing difficult pole dance fitness tricks and that pole dance has become a method of gaining muscle and strength. The article also interviews representative of Pole Dance Korea¹⁴ and she also mentions the

¹⁴ Pole Dance Korea is the nation's first pole dance/fitness studio which was established in

benefits of what the exercise can give you (Shin, 2009). Most recent, Korean pop-stars' dance routines included basic pole dance moves and tricks in music videos and concerts for example female artists such as Gain in 2012, After School in 2013, and Mamamo in 2018.

Similar to Western culture, Korean media reports have described pole dance as a new form of exercise in which reliefs stress and strengthens physical. However, some point out how perceptions of pole dance are misconstrued and those who are participating in pole dance are trying to promote pole dance to women of all ages and shapes bodies. In a three chapter news series from *Sports Seoul* in 2017, it includes exclusive interviews with one of Korea's popular pole dance/fitness studio director/pole dancer, 'Poling Mia'¹⁵. Throughout the series, she explains how pole fitness is a sport that anyone can participate, the benefits that pole fitness has given to her physically and mentally on a personal level as well as the reasons to why pole fitness could be misrepresented (SportsSeoul, 2017a;2017b;2017c). And recently, in *The Asia Business Daily*, another pole dance experience of a famous Korea pole dancer was mentioned in two articles, similar to the one with 'Poling Mia'. In this series, Youngji Kim emphasizes how pole fitness helps get rid of cellulite and creates toned body figure (Moon, 2018a;2018b).

2008. Though it is not the largest studio in Korea, it is the longest running pole dance/fitness studio with annual performances, world championships, and regional competitions.

¹⁵ 'Poling Mia' is the online user name that is used for the director/pole dancer of Polers Korea Pole Dance Studio.

Despite media contexts and pole dancers/directors of the Korean pole dance/fitness scene have put in effort to uncover the misunderstanding and misperceptions of the exercise, unlike sports and other physical activities, it requires very little clothing to cover the body. Less clothing can generate misunderstanding of pole dance-fitness as well as the movements during the activity create a misconception of the benefits that women gain through the '*sport*'. Though the society's idea of pole dance is rather frowned upon, there are a growing number of pole dancers as well as pole dance studios in Korea. International and national pole dance championships are held yearly and the number of women participating as amateur and professional dancers is rapidly increasing. Furthermore, constant updates of pole dance routines and tricks are being uploaded generally via *Instagram* – the main source of how pole dancers communicate and share pole tricks and videos worldwide. C

Currently there are 57 pole dancing studios registered as fitness venues and/or exercise studios in Seoul, South Korea. Each studio has at least ten poles in each dance hall, though schedules for classes differ from studio to studio, it is known that some are fully booked, that participants are on waiting lists to join the classes. Therefore, it is evident that pole dancing has been and is relatively imaged and perceived as an erotic dance which is highly associated with the female body as well as sexual objectification, nevertheless, many Korean women are participating and view it as a

combination of physical fitness, dance, and art.

2.2. Body Discourses

This chapter explains the body discourses of Western literature and Korean literature. It focuses on body politics of Western societies and the structuration of the physical body through feminist theories as well as current trends of SNS usage in the manifestation of the body image. In addition, it uncovers the dynamics of Korean women and their interpretations of body management as well as their experiences in exercise, fitness, and physical activities. Last, it mentions media representation of female body ideal images.

2.2.1. Body discourse and management in Western literature

The social and academic background that has prompted interest in the Western social science community includes the influence of the second feminist wave, the surge of the aged population as a new group, the emergence of consumption culture related to the structural changes of modern capitalism, and the vulnerability of the physical body (Shilling, 2012). Relationships of social structures constrain and operate people's thoughts and decisions which intervene how we feel and think about the physical body. For over decades, the female body has been sought as oppressed by its male counterparts, hegemonic order, and high consumer culture, moreover, for these reasons scholars have criticized physical

activities such as aerobics to be “feminized” supporting the former (Lenskyi, 1994; Theberge, 1987). Theberge (1987) mentions how exercise participation is more sexualizing than an empowering experience for women. And that woman’s fitness classes are not to enhance physical strength and fitness, but rather for women to gain sexual attractiveness and appeal. These assertions have conveyed that the fitness movement preserves female oppression by the dominant ideology of masculinity.

Only recently, the female body has been ‘free’ and ‘open’ to decide independently for what they want to do. One of the visible platforms which women have been free to be a part of is sports and physical activities. Though women have had the ‘freedom’ to choose to participate, the purpose of their participation differs within cultural context. From the past feminist work has challenged the conventional understandings of behavior related to women’s dieting, anorexia, and compulsive eating disorders; and to produce interpretations that focus on a wider range of sociocultural issues; patriarchal power and capitalist economy (Bordo, 1990; Chernin, 1981; Székely, 1988). Bordo (1993b) shares how women are associated with body image and constructs designed by Western culture ideology of slenderness and femininity. She points out that women and girls are captured by the culture of social pressures to embody standards that define their bodies and roles within society. However, previous studies do emphasize how physical fitness plays a role in freeing women’s oppression of thinness and/or ideal

body standards.

According to Markula (1995), women participating in aerobics have somewhat control over their bodies and seek to change the existing body ideal in which is represented within media. However, women's personal aims of the ideal body are influenced by the societal standards which then women are continually oppressed. Whereas, In Lloyd (1996)'s study of female body image and aerobic exercise; it is stated that the form of exercise creates a particular representation of the female body as to be well-toned, slim and perhaps a "'feminine'(or feminized) body". This being found, fatness is to be defamed to be 'unfeminine' and 'unattractive'. Though it is commonly found in both studies, women are not visibly resistant to the dominant patriarchy power of body image. Interestingly Bordo (1993a) points out eating disorders among females through the readings of Michel Foucault's body in docile, is rather a way to practice power and control whilst meeting the expectations of social demands. Thus, men are not considered the higher counterpart in the social structure rather where there is power, resistance co-exist forming new forms of relationships and culture (Bordo, 1993a). Jung (2006) mentions that the body is a subject of consumption as the standards and demands to have a slender body increases. Contexts of consumer culture and the image of a fit body are created upon intertwined discourses of media, consumerism and beauty (Featherstone, 1982). It has been noted by Parker (1996) that the body is at the center of

today's consumer culture as it is visible within the market's path of consumption. Bordo (1993b) also mentions the physical body as an example of consumption from a dieting point of view and that in Western culture, those who ate well had the beauty body, however from the beginning of the Victorian age, the beauty body included efforts of not eating which later influenced other cultures around the world.

In further study by Markula (2004), instructors participating in mindful fitness—a combination of Pilates, yoga, Tai Chi, and Western strength training—is explored through Michel Foucault's interpretation of self which is characterized as “self-care, critical awareness, and aesthetic self-stylization”. Here, it is discussed how mindful fitness is a practice where freedom is engaged while being aware of the individual's body (Markula, 2004). And in recent years, with the development of technology and the internet, media sources have high influences on the “ideal body style”. Markula and Kennedy (2011) mention how women's fitness and health media contents continue to express the aesthetic boundaries of the “thin, healthy looking body”.

In recent years, media communication has become an influential part of the “ideal body” image. Physical activity and sports have grown to become a chapter for women to enjoy and feel liberated, however, with rapid sharing of media content, the body image has established into appearance and beauty-oriented platform. Throughout the internet, “hashtag

thinspiration”¹⁶ has been widely used. Ghaznavi and Taylor (2015) highlights the images of thin-deal women could rather support eating disorder activity and rise concerns for unhealthy body images. In contrast, Tiggemann and Zaccardo (2015) studied the impact of “fitspiration”¹⁷ images on the image of women’s bodies. However, despite the word being combined with “inspiration”, online media trending “fitspiration” resulted in rather negative moods, body dissatisfaction and low self-esteem. Though images portrayed women who were “fit”, they were relatively thin. In spite the intentions to promote “fitspiration” to encourage healthy lifestyles and to participate in fitness, results show otherwise. It holds the standard as “not being skinny is enough”, but “you have to be fit and toned”. This was found in both Simpson and Mazzeo (2017) and Tiggemann and Zaccardo (2018)’s study of women’s body image and satisfaction in relation to “fitspiration” images. Thus, in contemporary society, women’s participation in fitness and the created culture surrounding fitness is combined with, not only the intervene of male dominated standards of beauty, but also the media’s portrayal of “ideal body” image, which is reinforced by the women themselves as they use social networking platforms to share and show “what is likely to be the wanted body”.

¹⁶ Hashtag (#) is a symbol that is put in front of a series of words that turns into metadata in which more people become access to. *Thinspiration* is used on online communities as a word that combines “thin” and “inspiration”.

¹⁷ Fitspiration is an online trend similar to thinspiration. Fitspiration is a word that combines “fit” and “inspiration”.

2.2.2. Body discourse and management in Korea

The “thin ideal” has been a societal obsession in Korea. Though there is a low obesity rate in Korea, women of various age groups are concerned about their body weight and image (Lee & Jung, 2018) which can cause several mental and physical diseases (Jun & Choi, 2014; Lim, Park, Jeon et al., 2015; Seo et al., 2016). It is highlighted that much of this is cultivated through media presentations of thin celebrities and the manifestation of cultural backgrounds (Han, 2003; Kim, 2011b; Kim, 2003; Koh, 2011; Park, 2007; Vojtíšková, 2017). Media outlets portray a body image and facial appearance has influenced the awareness of outer beauty, however, it is emphasized that the social atmosphere of Korea’s competitiveness for success and jobs play a crucial role in the obsession of appearance¹⁸ (Heo, 2012; Kim, 2010c). This can be understood through the cultural background in which Korea was built on.

The Chosun Dynasty¹⁹ was noted as one of the most “Confucianized dynasties” in the history of East Asia (Tago, 2005). The influence of Confucianism has constructed a patriarchal system which structured male domination over beliefs, norms, ideologies and relationships. Furthermore, the establishment of Korean patriarchy during the Chosun Dynasty was highly part of the cultural basis which encouraged the

¹⁸ CBS News. (2015). Competitive culture triggers plastic surgery boom in S. Korea. CBSN. <http://www.cbsnews.com/news/plastic-surgery-south-korea-obsession-competitive-culture/>.

¹⁹ Korean dynastic kingdom that lasted over five centuries.

entrenchment of Confucian ideas and doctrines which enforces female bodies within the idea of Confucian patriarchy (Go, 2004). The idea of women being passive compared to their male counterparts created the ideal female as fragile, vulnerable and ladylike. This cultural and traditional basis is still shown in contemporary Korean society.

In contemporary Korea, the ideals of body and appearance have changed in a more sophisticated matter, though what is added in the modern world, is that the body and face can change. In other words, it is noted that facial beauty can easily be 'fixed' through surgical procedures, though the body is an object which needs 'managing' (Leem, 2017). In recent decades, the trend of appearance management has been linked to plastic surgery and extreme dieting (Hahn, 1998). The continual '*eulzzang*' and '*moomzzang*' culture is to this day pervasive and it is found in critical studies that women are influenced to manage their bodies due to traditional reasons.

Hwang (2005) examines the motivations and experiences of women participating in exercise and dieting as well as explores the perceptions and attitudes toward females in sports-and leisure. She points out how the patriarchal society has influenced women to take part in exercise and dieting. Jung (2006) highlights consumption culture and its relation with the body, beauty products, and dieting. He also points out how the range of choices for beauty supplies and methods vary, those standardized beauty in society is being reproduced which creates a criteria for beauty fabricating

consumer's bodies to product consumption. Park (2007) highlights the Korean myth of human creation and connects the society's obsessions toward appearance and body weight. In addition, Chung (2007) critically points out women's body discourses within Korea's television program focusing on the era of the body, weight loss and plastic surgery. And reveals the amount of sources that may trigger more women to be interested and begin dieting. In a recent news editorial, chief manager of Konkuk University's Institute of Body & Culture mentions, "the transformation of a capitalized physical body, the body is no longer considered as a personal entity, but a body that is part of a culture, medical and aesthetic industry" (Kim, 2017a) .

On the one hand, it is critically noticeable that the healthy part of toned and fit bodies is eliminated. For decades, muscled women are displayed as too manly and masculine (Amin, Kanemasu, & Molnar, 2018; Jones & Greer, 2011; Klomsten, Marsh, & Skaalvik, 2005). Lean muscles, fat-less, apple-hip and big breasts are the elements to being a '*moomzzang*' and what is called to female in Korean who are well-toned and fit females. And the content of having a healthy body is portrayed as a muscular and at times a manly woman. Similar to Western culture, it identifies that women are interested in losing fat and going on diets to become slender more than men (Bordo, 1993b; Markula, 1995). Even throughout fitness culture, women are once again oppressed by its counterparts as well as westernized

culture of the body image. Female body builders in Korea have experiences in which they negotiate their masculinity and femininity (Sa, Kim, & Lee, 2017). They show conflict in what beauty is to societal standards and personal level of human beauty.

Furthermore, media studies representing women sports and fitness have either been under-represented or manipulated for the purposes of ‘male gaze’ whether it is female elite athletes or women who participate in physical activities (Fink, 2015; Gill, 2008; Kane, LaVoi, & Fink, 2013). This is evidently true in the context of Korean women in sports as well. Park, Kim, and Han (2015) mention how female athletes are portrayed by their appearance and the characteristics of the sport. For example, a rhythmic gymnast would have been framed and known for her appearance and beauty whereas a weight lifting champion is rather referred to through sports nationalism within the media. Though there shows an increase of media coverage of female athletes in Korea, the contents in which women are referred to as to be feminine have not changed as much (Kim & Ko, 2004;2011). The ‘showy culture’ of the Korean society has escalated which according to Han (2012) mentions, “East Asian people then to fit their own identities and values into the standard of the society where they belong”. Moreover, in a study of examining weight-loss reality TV shows in Korea, women, it reinforces “ordinary” women who are obese to be categorized as “abnormal” counterparts, while supporting the gender discourse in a cultural

context (Choi, 2018). Thus, the relationships between the cultural and traditional context and the ideal norms of female body and appearance are articulated not only through contemporary media, but the modern day standards can be seen as another version of beauty to the existing rules of societal expectations.

2.2.3. Media representation of body in Korea

Media texts are a prevailing feature on the social environment which can be uncritically dealt with, which delivers and shares information as well as creates reactions from the consumed audience (O'shaughnessy & Stadler, 2002). Various forms of media outlets – newspapers, magazines, posters, etc – allow institutions to convey produced meanings and beliefs that influence cultural aspects and individual perspectives. Media plays a major role in creating and reproducing the image of the body. Televised media has created the skinny body as a positive image while producing body discourse relating to women with slim bodies as ‘heroes’ (Yoon, 2004). Several scholars have discussed the interrelationships between media and the body (Grabe, Ward, & Hyde, 2008; Han, 2003; Kane, LaVoi, & Fink, 2013; Kim, 2013b; Wykes & Gunter, 2004; Yamamiya et al., 2005), which mostly trend in the negative aspects of body image dissatisfaction and depression. Thus, mediated images and contexts influences how individuals perceive societal standards of body images and ideals.

For decades, studies have shown that the body is socially constructed through media discourse (Bishop, 2001; Bordo, 1993b; Dittmar, 2009; Han, 2003; Kim, 2011b; Vojtíšková, 2017). Misrepresentations and discrepancy between media illustrated and “real” body images have been pointed out in most of the studies. In the case of Korea, several studies have discussed the interaction between society and the representation of media about the body. Kim (2013b) argues about the discourse of “looking young” or “looking younger” (Korea: Dong Ahn)—dong ahn discourse – as a result of the reconstruction of the society and its culture. The ideal “looking younger” image are those in their 20s and 30s who’s manifestations of reinforcing self-surveillance and self-progress are provoked and neoliberal and the dominant patriarchal ideology are not exhibited (Kim, 2013b).

Furthermore, many have discussed the criteria of a “normal” of body image and how to address “abnormal body images” (Cho & Lee, 2012; Lim, 2004; Lim & Kim, 2012). Cho and Lee (2012) interpret a television show related to the “fitness girl” and mention that the standards for beauty are created through the dominance of male power, displayed as experiment subjects of losing weight, and being judged as a criteria to “pass” and be acknowledged as a member of the community. Lim and Kim (2012) points out how dieting boot camp depicts obese women through stigmatized stereotypes of laziness and lacking self-management. In addition, Lee (2018b) analyzes a documentary about a “muscle women” by interpreting

her experiences shown on television. She emphasizes how the female's body is a product of social perception and that being thin, but muscular is a sign of potential self-management.

Recently, with the advanced development of technology, social networking platforms (SNS; Facebook, Instagram, Twitter etc) provide personal images that hinder perceptions of body image and appearance (Dittmar, 2009; Ghaznavi & Taylor, 2015; Hogue & Mills, 2019; Kim, 2011b; Oh, 2017b). Oh (2017b) mentions that the exposure of a healthy body image through SNS can play a pivotal role in creating a standardized body image. It is also pointed out by Lee and Kim (2017) that there is a high interest in a body image produced through exercise and fitness within Instagram. The numerous contents exposed through SNS platforms influences body objectivity and as the body becomes objectified, it transforms into an object of observation from a third party. Thus, the objectification of the body tends to be stimulated by media outlets rather than family and friends (Park, 2003).

Furthermore, as people are showing awareness of socially acceptable, hence, good-looking bodies, the number of people registering in fitness centers is increasing (Kim & Chung, 2019). SNS instigates specific images and messages of the body which establish change and reproduction of body ideals (Kang & Shin, 2016). Hence, the society is fabricated with factors from social networking platforms where are produced by individuals who

reproduce and create influential images. Moreover, the social atmosphere emphasizes “thinness” which effects people in a psychological level and demands ideal bodies and reinforces more women than men to follow socially designed socio-cultural criteria (Choi & Lee, 2020).

2.3. Theoretical Background

This study engages to apply a postcolonial feminist approach to understand Korean women's participation in exercise and a selected form of media resource. This section provides a brief introduction to feminism and the concepts affiliated with the women's movement. In addition, it gives an overall review of Korean women and the female movement in contemporary Korean society. Due to the intention of this study, postcolonial feminism is applied as a sequence to understand and interpret the data of the study. Furthermore, the articulation of postcolonial feminism highlights is that it stands as a response to colonialism and Euro-American feminist theories. Thus, it reminds the ideas that feminist formations can differ from region, history and culture.

2.3.1. Concepts of feminism

The concepts of feminism has transformed since the women's rights movement in the 1960's. In the 19th and early 20th century, the first wave-feminism sought out for the right to vote in the UK and USA. It focused of marriage, parenting and property rights for women. During the second wave, known to be the women's liberation movement, much focused on legal rights; such as to participate in public office, to earn fair wages, to receive education and to own property. With economic change and the development of social inclusion, in the third wave, women began to challenge the second

wave paradigm for the consideration of race-related subjects. Thus, the core idea of feminism stands for the equality and treatment of women in all diverse spaces. With the emerge of change in society and of social issues occurring to encourage the participation of females in various levels of the society, several concepts have shaped feminism, which creates wider understandings of women all over the world.

In the fourth wave of feminism also noted as postfeminism and at times criticized to be anti-feminist backlash. The understanding of ‘post’ pointed out various interpretations of feminism to reach the stages of maturity which included the plurality of feminist ideas (Brooks, 1997). Postfeminism began in the 1990’s, up to present day. It is grounded from the understanding that most of “women’s material needs are met and that a feminist movement is no longer necessary” (Anderson, 2015). It is said that this phase of feminism focuses on women’s individual empowerment rather than social transformation. Furthermore, several aspects of feminism have branched out to understand and identify the different dimensions to manifest the shapes of feminist studies.

In this regard, it is difficult to directly indicate that Western female’s experience and ideas can represent women from different cultural backgrounds. The beginning of feminism started in Western societies which lack the interest of non-white women, hence, 21st feminist theories such as postcolonial feminism, cultural feminism, radical feminism studies and etc.

are being considered into the literature. It articulates the different intersections of female autonomy while regarding their social settings which imply that equality or rights are interpreted differently from women of Western societies.

In the context of Korea, in 1948, women were given the rights to vote. Feminist movements or women's rights movements occurred recent compared to first and second wave feminism in Western societies. Due to Confucius concepts deeply embed within the minds of people, women being subordinate and conforming to the patriarchy were recognized as the norm. However, it was not until the mid-1980's when groups and organizations were focusing on women's rights and issues.

2.3.2. Korean women and the female movement

It have been highlighted that the participation of females in the nation's economy has increased from 1960 to 1989, from 28% to 47%. Since then, according to Korean Statistical Information Service²⁰, the participation of economic activities among women inclined to 53.5% in 2019. However, among OECD countries, Korea has the lowest female employment rate and the highest gender gap²¹. In addition, women withdraw temporarily or permanently due to cultural pressures and social

²⁰ Korean Statistical Information Service, annual statistic of female economic participation: https://www.index.go.kr/potal/stts/idxMain/selectPoSttsIdxSearch.do?idx_cd=1572. Accessed 12th Dec 2020.

²¹ OECD, <https://data.oecd.org/earnwage/gender-wage-gap.htm>. Accessed 12th Dec 2020.

expectations to raise a family. Furthermore, women undergo limitations and social pressures in economic, social and political settings (Park, 1993).

It has been recognized that cultural influences contribute the economic development Korea (Kwon, 2005; Nam, 1994). Due to the combination of Confucian ideas and Japanese colonization, Korea exploits interesting outcomes that have altered its reach its economic status. However, Gong and Jang (1998) highlight the analysis of the influence of Confucius values on economic growth is generalized among East Asian countries, hence the definition and practices between countries differs which gives vague “without clear empirical evidence”. In addition, Kwon (2005) points out limitations to social and cultural influences on economic development in Korea which highlight the changes of cultural trends and social atmosphere in systems, that can trigger the prospects of the economy. In contract, women have experienced lower wages compared to men in the same sector which can be seen as a result to cultural and historical norms of the Korean society.

Individuals who spend more on education and training are more likely to earn higher wages and have advance-skilled occupations. Hence, due to historical and cultural segregation of women and men both in the social and domestic sector –based upon a patriarchal and male-dominated society— the option to engage in education for females was inferior to that of males. From a social setting, though equality was given as a legal matter

through the constitution, traditional customs and social ideals of females are deeply embedded throughout several dimensions of the society's culture. To this extent, the political scene in Korea, can be noted as the most typical male domain (Park, 1999). However, as women's movements in Western societies fought for suffrage, women in Korea fought for independence during the colonization of Japan whom later successfully achieved positions in the government's offices (Park, 1993).

Though women's movement groups formed before World War II, yet, did not concentrate fully on women's rights until the 1980's (Palley, 1990). Palley (1990) points out "reformist" and "radical" feminist movements which are different from one another; "reformist" focuses on the roles of women in society which can be construed comparable to feminist movements in the United States and "radical" which emphasize on women's rights as human rights. Recently, in 2018, radical feminist movements in Korea have begun to emerge in Korea. The outbreak of the #MeToo Movement²² followed by protests against misogynistic practices such spy cam²³ and Free the Corset movement²⁴ which mainly women who seek to challenge the high beauty standards in South Korean society were some of

²² A social movement against sexual abuse and sexual harassment where people publicize allegations of sex crimes committed by powerful and/or prominent men.

²³ Spy cameras operating in woman's bathrooms and lockers were found by the police which the videos were released on online sites (2018)
<https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2018/07/07/south-korean-women-turn-thousands-protest-against-widespread/>. Accessed 12th Dec 2020.

²⁴ 'Escape the corset': South Korean women rebel against strict beauty standards. (2018)
<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2018/oct/26/escape-the-corset-south-korean-women-rebel-against-strict-beauty-standards>. Accessed 12th Dec 2020.

the movements that have come up to the surface. Thus, feminist movements in Korea have been recent and are undergoing interventions to shape feminism in Korea.

Free the Corset movement, also known as the Escape the Corset champion or the corset-free movement has widely spread through SNS platforms. Through this movement issues related to liberation and choice emerged nationally which emphasized gender wage gaps, female-hate crimes, and abortion rights. In 2018, The New York Times²⁵ highlighted the demand for cosmetic surgery to achieve beauty standards of Korea. It includes the story of a female Youtuber rejecting makeup and the beauty ideals influenced by Korea idol group singers. Challenging the social standards and pressures through the resistance of aesthetic labor by protests such as the “topless protest” and SNS hashtag, #freecorset, #탈코르셋 and #탈코 spreading rapidly on online platforms attracting attention toward female movements²⁶.

The women’s movement in Western societies began from women’s suffrage and the right to participate in politics, whereas in women’s involvement in politics and social settings were formed through laws and policies. Despite polices enforcing female participation and women’s rights,

²⁵ South Korea Loves Plastic Surgery and Makeup. Some Women Want to Change That (2018) <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/11/23/business/south-korea-makeup-plastic-surgery-free-the-corset.html>. Accessed 12th Dec 2020.

²⁶ Korea JoongAng Daily (2018) <https://koreajoongangdaily.joins.com/2018/06/06/fountain/A-corsetfree-movement/3049006.html>. Accessed 12th Dec 2020.

Korean women have been experiencing inequality in various dimensions of society due to deeply embedded cultural and historical factors.

2.2.3. Postcolonialism and Korea

The term post-colonial is a compound word made up with the prefix ‘post’ and adjective ‘colonial’ and can be described as ‘after colonial’. Postcolonial on the other hand, indicates the persisting influence of colonization across time periods and geographical regions. Academically, it is the study of concentrating on the human significances of the control and exploitation of people. Though imperialism is the general concept which has been used to describe the control of a nation’s political and economic life, it expands to which it includes the influences on internal and external colonialism of people’s mindset and values. And colonial relationship is the domination and subordination between groups which is built to serve the interests of the dominant group (Sharp, 2009).

As imperialism indicates the practice and attitudes of domination, colonialism is referred to as more of a consequence of imperialism which perpetrates the ideas and settlements of the other territory (Gilbert & Tompkins, 1996). However, as simple as the definition of imperialism and colonialism may sound, the underlying definition beneath this general understanding has continued and is continuing to be debated. And much more has been discussed about postcolonialism in modern society – simply:

what happens after colonialization?

Postcolonialism is intertwined and understandable with the existence of colonialism, imperialism, neo-liberalism, transnationalism and globalization. Drawn from poststructuralist idea postcolonial is more of a concept than a state. All theories have different interpretations and approaches to postcolonial settings. Though they are connected to each other's theory, mistranslations and misinterpretations of theories can confuse postcolonial approaches. According to the Oxford Dictionary of Sociology, postcolonialism is described as follows:

“Epistemologically, the post-colonial viewpoint purposes a standpoint theory of knowledge, according to which knowledge and ideas are shaped by the perspective of a social group, and this perspective, in turn, is shaped by the social location of the group in historical distributions of material and cultural resources.” (Scott & Marshall, 2009)

For some this has implied relativism and a denial of objectivity, according to which knowledge derived from a postcolonial standpoint must remain separate and distinct from what is produced from the standpoint of the colonizer, rather than being integrated into any larger sociological or historical account. Postcolonialism discusses the effects of colonization on culture and the society. Along with texts from Said's 1978 *Orientalism*, and other colonist theory scholars such as Spivak (1988) and Bhabha (1994), most literature reviewed European territorial conquests and various

European colonialisms, empires and operations surrounding African countries and slightly touches other parts of the world. Therefore, the term has limitations of not including the histories of colonial and imperialism in Asian countries, yet universally generalizing non-Western as a whole.

Spivak (1988) establishes postcolonial definition with the term subaltern which points out that all things that are “limited or has no access to cultural imperialism is subaltern”. However, those within the hegemonic discourse cannot say for themselves that they are subaltern, rather than being the discriminated minority. Moreover, Spivak further notified against disregarding subaltern peoples as “cultural others”, and mentions “the West could progress—beyond the colonial perspective—by means of introspective self-criticism of the basic ideals and investigative methods that establish a culturally superior West studying the culturally inferior non-Western people”. Theoretician Homi Bhaba argues that the viewing of the human world as composed of segregated and unequal cultures, rather than as the integral human world is where it perpetuates the understanding of the existence of symbolic people and places. He also appeals to the fact that “‘national’ cultures are being produced from the perspective of disenfranchised minorities” (Bhabha, 1994). Therefore, both scholars note from Said’s concept of non-Western and mainly European imperialized cultures of national cultures in postcolonial settings are deprived which further have much to do with modernization.

In the case of the Korean peninsula, it is argued that ‘postcolonial’ Korea was pushed to another colony-dominant discourse of international relations. Japan’s colonization of Korea from 1910 to 1945 amplified Korea’s perception of Japan as a national rival and enemy. For decades Korea and Japan’s ownership dispute over territory (Dok-do, an island also known as Liancourt Rocks), content of Japanese history textbooks regarding Korea’s historical and territorial relations, conflicts over Korea’s comfort women during World War II and Japan’s political responses, and controversies during any international sporting event against both countries have constantly been major topics of national conversation.

Though colonial and imperialism rule of Japan on the Korean peninsula has evoked anti-sentimental reactions and negativity (Oh, 2009), it is highlighted the economic and social benefits as well as modernization of the Japanese colonial regime (McCormack, 2002). Despite these critiques, sports and in this case football has triggered both Koreas (South and North) to illustrate nationalism over the years (Bridges, 2009; Podoler, 2008). Media contents have depicted Korea versus Japan football matches as ‘wars’ or ‘battles’, as well as portraying football players as ‘warriors’ and if the matches end with Korea winning, news reports announces athletes as ‘iconic heroes’(Kim & Kwon, 2000; Mangan et al., 2013; Tosa, 2015). This is apparent not only during football matches, but are also seemingly visible in other international sporting events. Surely sports games are the epitome of

nationalism and the reactions that the people of Korea have of Japan, scholars are aware of how modern sports have arrived in Korea.

Mangan and Ha (2001) have noted one again that it was during the late 19th and early 20th centuries in which Western culture was introduced in Korea. During this time period the Confucius ideology and value system were going through obstacles of adaptation and struggle in accepting the “new” culture. The strong notion of independence as a nation in which Western culture cultivated, Koreans became inspired, and sports became a root instrument in constructing modernized Korean culture. To be exact the American military played a major role in the popularization of sport in Korea. Thus, postcolonial settings became ‘another colonial era’ within Korea with westernized components. However, due to the Korean War in 1950, the development of sports was interrupted. Political confrontation between South and North Korea brought cultural conflict and sports became ‘a weapon in this cultural competition’ (Ok, 2004).

In contrast to sports and political tensions from former colonizer, Japan, the modernization of Korea seems to have applied Western standards of sports and fitness culture. Additionally, during the period of Japanese colonization women’s education and liberation were sought of as important for national power and strength, which entitled women to be a part of the nation’s build (Kim & Choi, 1998). In post-colonial Korea, under U.S. military, the position in which women stood monotonous as before. In

advance, post-colonial Korea incessantly suppresses ambivalence to women's subjectivity, moral purity, also reproducing gendered and sexualized relationship (Choi, 1998).

2.2.4. Orientalism: The 'other women'

The study of *Orientalism* is based on various cultural phenomena such as literature, art, music, and architecture which focus on understanding cultural exchange between the East and West. Many studies present the direction of criticism and cultural diversity of existing cultural imperialism through Western perspectives and methods of particular cultural phenomena. And because there is a wide range of implications to Orientalism, this study focuses on the works of Edward Said's Orientalism. Said's definition of Orientalism – a way of thinking on ontological and epistemological distinctions created between the East and West— is related to the Orient, a Western way of thinking and the governance of the Orient, and special status of the Orient within the Western experiences (Said, 1978). Therefore, the 'Orient' is not a true mode of the Orient because it is composed and framed by the West.

Said (1978) makes it clear that the Orient indicates the Middle East throughout his book, though he discusses other parts of the world, he concentrates on the Arab world. Thus, the 'Orient' that is representing Orientalism is a form of 'reconstruction' or 'representation' by the West.

This notion of the Orient means includes the systematic prejudice of Western supremacy and racist distortions which have also served as a justification for imperialism to spread its dominance throughout the world. It is a strategy that defines and constructs the powerless Orient in the relationship with the self for the benefit of the West, which is strong in the assumption of supremacy.

Thus, the concept of 'Orientalism' often refers to the negative Western stereotypes about Asians (Ngai, 2000). It mostly focused on European colonial territories in the Middle East and India, however, this concept highlights the relationship, status and representation of Eastern culture settled within the experiences of Western society. The stereotypical idea of Asians divide and define hegemonic order in society as the West being superior to the East, white and blacks, blacks and Asians, and men and women which also continues to both men and women of color.

According to feminist studies, non-Western women on the other hand are double-colonialized through post-colonial white hegemony and patriarchal oppression embedded within traditional culture. Throughout studies of women and women of color have been homogenized as non-Western societies without appreciating cultural and historical differences, inherent in the East's material culture and experiences are commonly considered in both Orientalist and Western feminist discourses. Uchida

(1998) mentions the image in which Asian women as the 'Exotic other', 'the far East', the 'Oriental Woman', have set on North American society.

Though their image has no relation to the experiences and cannot define non-Western women, the stereotypical image of Asian women do create the overall societal understanding of how they are perceived. The analysis refers to historical issues related to the history of U.S. military, prostitution, cultural dominance and resistance. Hasan (2005) points out Said's critique of stereotypical assertions of eastern/Muslim women, non-Western cultural differences and histories, and feminist issues vary from different parts of the world and contexts.

In Kim (2012)'s thesis on Korean women golfers in the LPGA tour mentions how Korean women are imaged in North American media as rather racialized which then again sustains Global white supremacy within the context of Orientalism. Seo (2014) discusses Asian American female skaters' narratives within the American media from the early 1980's to the late 2000's. He extracts a concept called 'Yellow Pacific' explains American Orientalism of which is the force of the imperial frame and argues the distinction of the East-West relation to the colonizer and colonized as male and female. In a broader sense, Seo and Chun (2016) take another attempt by questioning the idea of Orientalism in Korea and why it is an issue within the sporting world and how it is portrayed as 'white' and 'American'. It takes the reverse approach and points out how traditional

Korean sports are subordinated by Western capitalism and that power relations embedded within the structure of white supremacy as well as postcolonial cultural strategy that respond to global movements that are intervene in the system of representation created by the West. Therefore, considering limitations of studies and stereotypes of non-Western women in previous feminist discourses solely focusing on context through the west, this study approaches specifically Korean women and their personal experiences, and focus on the distinction between stereotypical non-Western, Asian and gender related discourse.

2.2.5. Postcolonial feminism

Postcolonial feminism acknowledges the diversity and differences in perspectives among women. It is a useful concept that theorizes women of color and Third World women's experiences, while the theoretical and political ambiguities of the term 'postcolonial' need to be redressed (Narayan & Harding, 2000; Said, 1993). It is a branch of intersectional feminist thought that challenges female essentialism, the view that the idea of 'woman' exists as some sort of Platonic form for each flesh-and blood woman must somehow embody (Chris, 1987; McEwan, 2001). They disavow female chauvinism, the tendency of some women— particularly privileged women— to speak on behalf of all women, including women they regard as “other” than themselves (Jayawardena, 1986).

Postcolonial feminism emerged as a part of the third wave of feminism when feminist movements were reflected on the diverse nature of women's individual lived experiences. As to the first and second wave of feminism which was limited to the understanding of white, privileged, educated females and their rights to vote, the third wave takes into consideration of the social class, race and gender (Mohanty, 1988). Thus, postcolonial feminism cannot be simply regarded as a subset of postcolonial studies, or, alternatively, as another variety of feminism. Rather it is an intervention that is changing the configurations of both postcolonial and feminist studies. It is an exploration of and at the intersections of colonialism and neocolonialism with gender, nation, class, race and sexualities in the different contexts of women's lives, their subjectivities, work, sexuality, and rights (Lewis & Mills, 2003).

Though it is a combination of disciplines, postcolonial feminism has never been applied distinctly from post colonialism. It has influenced the direction and construction of postcolonial politics. It includes non-Western feminisms which discuss political demands, feminism, liberalism, and in conjunction with social challenges. As mentioned, less has been studied of Eastern women's experiences, thus, postcolonial feminism emerges as a response to Western feminism. Therefore, postcolonial feminism focuses on non-Western female experience, considering class, race, economic status. Female experiences in fitness culture cannot be

simply understood as a resistance to male-dominance in both society and fitness space, but a space where women become free to express their inner self, understand their sexuality, and perceive the image of their bodies.

Feminism has been focused on Western literature and has understood interpersonal and societal mechanisms. Though, women show general patterns of attitudes and behavior, existences of contextual differences among women in different parts of Asia. In Western theory, Asian studies may seem to be a minority part of research, society these days are not only made up whites and blacks (Suleri, 1992). Postcolonial feminism helps understand what appears postcolonial alongside a feminist approach. By acknowledging the differences among diverse groups of women, postcolonial feminism addresses what some call the oversimplification of Western feminism as solely a resistance against sexist oppression (Mohanty, 1988). Postcolonial feminism is not only in relation to gender issues, but also to other dimensions of social influence within its community. This means that this theory anticipates to look beneath the surface and analyze what is known as the 'Other' in terms of postcolonial theory and Orientalism.

Hence, feministic experiences have been generalized and homogeneous to females in Western societies. Considering the fact that the concept of feminism and the women's movement being a recent set of protests and actions, it is without a doubt to mention that women's

interaction within the Korean society is difficult to understand through domain feminist literature. As postcolonial feminism reflects on the regional culture and history, it can draw attention to the point that the experiences and internalized interpretations are complex and diverse in several levels.

CHAPTER III. Methods

This study uses a qualitative research method to focus on analyzing media work and the experiences of Korea women who participate in exercises such as yoga, Pilates etc. This chapter is organized to examine the logic of applying a qualitative method for the study. Additionally it gives a brief definition and understanding of the methods and roles in which the research will undergo. This section elaborates the role of the researcher, hence, the role as an “insider” of the study. In addition, this chapter includes how the data was collected and analyzed.

3.1. Qualitative research and viewpoint

This study uses a qualitative method to reach the goals of the research. A qualitative research is an interpretative research in which the inquirer is mostly involved with the selected research participants’ personal experiences and perceptions within a context. A qualitative research includes multiple sources of data such as interviews with participants, observing behaviors, examining documents and using non-numerical data (Creswell, 2009). This approach enables the researcher to get a profound understanding of participants’ experience which also provides a three-dimensional view of the setting in which the participants are engaged in, the surrounding influences that interact with the participants, and the overall social and cultural atmosphere the research context is rooted in. This focus

attempts to understand and define not one personal experience, but a multiple of subjective existences (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Therefore, a combination of research participants' experiences and media texts were utilized for this research.

In addition, this study espouses a social constructivist viewpoint which seeks to understand individual experiences and how they develop subjective meanings through their lived experiences (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Lincoln, Lynham, & Guba, 2011). To reach the goals of the research, it is important for the researcher to focus on the viewpoints and situations in which the research participant is affiliated with, including their interactions within the community they are a part of. These interactions construct and create meanings of the research participants' experiences which carries out a rather complex view than narrow interpretations of ideas (Creswell, 2009), thus social constructivism, combines historical and cultural norms embedded in each individual's life as well as the relation and communication between others. Moreover, the background of each individual has an influence on how they perceive the world and interpret their experiences. Hence, knowledge of a research participant's past experiences is an important factor in seeking the motives of perceptions and understanding the context of the settings in which the participant has or will adapt to. This works for the researcher as well. The gathered information about the research participant is then interpreted and built through the

researcher's experience and background (Crotty, 1998). Thus, it is useful to engage in the activity itself and have in-depth open ended questions with the participants to be able to share various perspectives.

From a social constructivist point of view in academic research, researchers are to believe that the world is built according to human interaction. Through interactions, individuals gain experiences which are put into meanings that construct and structure a society, forming what we can call history and culture. These social meanings are evolved and shaped through an arrangement of communication within the groups that the individual is a member of. In addition to media text from the selected magazine – occasionally pointed out as popular material provided for a general audience— it can yield the landscape of the participants' environment. Therefore, to investigate and thoroughly understand personal experiences, interactions, and meanings, it is important for the researcher to have full access with the participants as well as the landscape of the community that they are affiliated to. Hence, individual in-depth interviews and media texts can be an efficient tool to explore experiences and support to understand the contexts of their experiences. Forming interaction between the researcher and participant prior to formal in-depth interviews can later help the research participant to answer and give opinions in a more comfortable environment. This process of rapport formation is an important factor to establish during a qualitative research.

Additionally, to in-depth interviews, participation observations encourage the researcher in seeking the establishment of the meanings of the participants involved in the focused phenomenon (Creswell, 2009). Noting observations is another method that is used in a qualitative research. This initiates knowledge shared among the community and behavior identified in creating and shaping the culture. In collecting participation observations, the researcher explores the phenomenon from an “insider” point of view. As an “insider”, the researcher is able to recruit research participants easier through established rapport, gains access to restricted locations, and has the advantage for participants to share information and knowledge that is difficult or not welcome for an “outsider” to collect (Ergun & Erdemir, 2010). Hence, as former and current active participant of yoga, Pilates, and pole, this positions the researcher as an “insider”.

However, this standpoint can expose the researcher to face dilemmas during field observations and participation such as compromising a non-bias stance throughout gathering enriched data and balancing a friendly relationship with the research participants (Taylor, 2011). It is also found that as an “insider”, gathering information through informal conversations and gossip benefits the researcher to understand the social setting of the research participants, as intimate and critical issues are difficult for “outsiders” to gain access to as well as to understand (Coghlan, 2007; Coy, 2006).

Despite the privileges of being an “insider”, it is important for the researcher to keep a non-bias stance. The position of the situations research participants describe during individual in-depth interviews with research participants which in many cases of research, scholars have been accused of such bias when working within a group where the researcher is familiar to, whether it is ethnicity or nationality (Dwyer & Buckle, 2009; Milligan, 2016; Serrant-Green, 2002). Some have pointed out the dual identity of the researcher as the “professional” and the “scholar”(Dobson, 2009) and as mentioned by Finlay (2002), found it difficult to research those affiliated in the research setting due to challenging the researched. Nonetheless, it is highlighted that “the challenge is not to eliminate the ‘bias’ to be more neutral, but to use it as a focus for more intense insight”(Frank, 1997).

Nonetheless, as a social constructivist view point, it is hardly impossible to imagine interpreting gathered data without the knowledge and background of the researcher. The experiences collected from participants are negotiated and reconstructed by the researcher’s purpose of study as well as identifying the meanings to the experiences. Thus, to understand the mechanisms of the participants’ experiences in which the participants are interacting with and are members of, a qualitative approach of method was utilized in this study from a social constructivist view as an “insider” of the activity.

Furthermore, media data was added to understand the contextual

and backgrounds concepts of the society in which the participants are involved in. Marx Weber pointed out media content as a way to understand “cultural temperature” (Hansen et al., 1998). To understand the research participants and their social settings and the atmosphere that surrounds them as a whole. Media analysis examines the texts of the selected media source, in this study, media data from a selected women’s magazine is analyzed to understand the social sphere of the regional culture in which they belong.

3.2. The Role of the Researcher

Personal experiences of the researcher highly influence the choice of research focus and approach (Creswell, 2009). As the researcher, it is common to find themselves within the same setting as their research participants. Thus, personal background, values and socioeconomic status may create interpretations which are molded throughout the study. This is also known as “backyard research” which includes the researcher’s affiliated institution, friends or significant others (Glesne, 1992). Furthermore, this study arose from the interest of the researcher, from being a participant of the researched community. A combination of the researcher’s personal values and background greatly influenced the goals and questions of the research. Greatly, the researcher positions herself within the research setting as an “insider” in which moderates the intensity of information that is and can be gathered. In following sub-chapter, the

researcher will provide information about herself as the participant and the process of linking her personal experiences to the study.

3.2.1. The “insider”: Researcher background

As a researcher, I have been an active participant of the three most participated in workouts; yoga, Pilates and pole dance which I have coined as *aesthetic exercise*. Starting from 2014, I began to regularly attend a yoga studio in Seoul, South Korea. For approximately six months into my participation I began to establish a form of “closeness” with the other participants of the studio. However, it wasn’t until then that I noticed that there were only women attending the studio, it was as though men were not allowed to enter the studio in any case. I hadn’t seen a male figure join or have any interaction within the studio, which I was aware of. I was astonished by the gender divide that had occurred naturally within the setting I was involved.

As a Korean female brought up in outside of Asia and in a Western society, participating in exercise and my personal background as a former athlete, engaging in physical activities was sought to be “normal”. However, as I began having conversations with the other Korean female participants, exercise and sports did not come natural to most of the women and they did not have experience in physical activities other than their physical education classes during elementary and middle school prior to yoga. Thus, I began to

question why women were the only participants of the studio and why they wanted to participate in yoga, furthermore, what yoga had meant to them. Interestingly, a former yoga practitioner whom I met at the yoga studio that I was attending, recommended me to start Pilates. She had been practicing yoga for over a year, though decided to start another exercise that was, in her words, “a bit more sophisticated and dynamic”. I was intrigued by how she viewed Pilates, whereas, personally “knowing” Pilates as a method of rehabilitation, due to my background knowledge. I agreed to attend the Pilates studio with her.

The Pilates studio that I attended only consisted of small group, up to six people in one class or individual classes. Due to the costly fee of the studio, I joined the group class. I was handling both yoga and Pilates classes at the same time, and I began to notice the difference in not only the exercise itself, but the how women had perceived their intentions of starting and becoming passionate about it. Slowly after three months of participation, female participants began to enroll in certification courses. Here again, the studio had only female clients. The most interesting point was that it was a “female only” studio.

Both yoga and Pilates studios that I was attending were predominated by female participants. However, during my experience in the Pilates studio, I began to notice a difference in the way that women thought about their body image and their reason to exercise. Furthermore, what

interested me more was that women who participated in Pilates gradually began certification courses, approximately four to six months into their participation. I personally could not start the courses with the other participants due to the pricy cost of the certification programs, though I continued taking Pilates classes. However, that same year I began to try a “new sport”, pole dance.

Six months after my participation in pole, I enrolled in a certification course. This course was an intense 12 week course of learning higher techniques and pole tricks that were not taught in other beginner and intermediate classes plus the advantage of gaining a license to teach pole to beginners. Though the course was costly, the price was lower than pilates certification courses. After the 12 week course, I began to compete in pole competition both on a national and international level. Like most of the participants, I was not aiming to be an instructor nor a competitive pole dancer. However, my experience as champion in doubles division²⁷ and competing as a semi-professional pole doubles for four consecutive years, I had piled a career for myself in the pole community. I had become “one of the girls” and because of my pole career, I grew to become “that poler²⁸”.

Above all, these three workouts were and becoming the mainstream

²⁷ Pole dance/fitness has several different styles; exotic pole, pole fitness, pole art, ballet pole etc. Despite the various forms of pole, pole tricks can be performed and more than two people. Pole doubles division is when there are two polers doing pole tricks together both in sync or the actual trick with each other’s contact, similar to acrobatics.

²⁸ Poler is a person who does pole dance, pole art, etc some form of movement with the pole. The term poler will be explained in the following results.

exercises that women had different perspectives of how they viewed themselves as individuals and how they understood beauty in Korea. As a “semi-yogi”, “Pilates client” and “poler”, I am a true “insider” of the activities. Though as a Pilates participant, I did not have the time and could not afford the certification courses, I still stayed in contact with the women who had started beginner classes with me. As an “insider” of the study, there are advantages of having access to information or people, however, as I became close with the research participants, there were disadvantages. For example, I could not continue the study with a couple of research participants due to personally issues that occurred between other participants as well as myself. In addition, when trying to understand and willing to keep an open ear to the opinions and thoughts of the participants, there were moments were I could agree. However, agreeing to all of participants’ thoughts could result in biased intentions and it was crucial as a researcher to keep a subjective and critical stance. At times this resulted in as a difficulty in keeping personal relationships with the research participants while maintaining a distance during data collection. Therefore, during the course of data collection, I had to discontinue the study with a couple of selected participants.

3.3. Research Setting

The research was conducted in Seoul, the capital of South Korea. Seoul is the largest metropolis of South Korea comprised of 25 districts. The

capital of South Korea is ranked as the fourth largest metropolitan economy in the world as well as the most livable city in Asia with a population of 9.5 million (tallied in 2020). With the city having a wide international market, its growth in the health and exercise department is also in coherence. According to Naver²⁹, there are more than 2,500 fitness centers, over 1,900 yoga studios and 700 pilates studios in the metropolis. As of 2020, 200 pole dance/fitness studios were registered in Korea over the past decade, 57 of which are located in Seoul.

In a qualitative research, it is important to focus on the natural setting of the research participants. Therefore, data was collected through in-depth interviews before and after classes. Informal conversations were noted in the observation notebook to ask research participants if needed. The in-depth interviews were conducted in cafes or coffee shops, mostly in preference to where the participants felt most comfortable. All interviews were conducted with only the researcher and the participant. The participants were not allowed to inform each other whether they were part of the study. Observations were made before, during and after classes. During class observations were noted during class, however, due to needing to concentrate in classes and to fully internalize the atmosphere of the class notes were organized after classes.

²⁹ Naver is a Korean online searching portal operated by Naver Corporation.

3.4. Data Collection

To meet the purpose and questions of the study, media text was collected from Korea's top ranking woman's magazine as well as in-depth interviews and participation observations of Korean women participating in an aesthetic exercise.

The selected magazine focuses on a female audience and currently ranks first in the number of female subscribers. Through a media discourse analysis, it can provide a base of information to understand the social and cultural background in which Korean women are associated to. Later, a qualitative research approach was applied to understand and explore the experiences and meanings of Korean women participating in exercise. Women with experience in exercise such as yoga, Pilates or pole dance were selected to take part in in-depth interviews and participation observations. The researcher took part in the classes with the participants prior to conducting the study from 2014. The researcher and participants were acquainted when starting the exercise workouts.

Therefore, it was easy for the participants and the researcher to form a close relationship within the exercising environments. This helped form rapport between the researcher and research participants which helped the researcher gain intimate information regarding their experiences and issues during their participation. Before and during the study, participants and the researcher occasionally met outside of the studios and participated in

activities that were not related to exercise such as having meals or chatting in local coffee shops.

3.4.1. Research participants

The researcher selected 12 women who have had experience in health exercises. All participants are Korean woman who are participating in exercise classes at private studios. This study does not include women who participate in group exercises (GX) that are open in fitness gyms.

Additionally, the research is limited to those who do not regularly visit the gym to work out or do weight lifting exercises. Women with at least 12 months of experience in a particular exercise were selected as participants.

The following table is the demographics of the research participants.

Table. 1 Participant demographic information

Participant	Age	Participating Exercise	Duration of Participation (months)	Occupation	Marital Status
Yungji	30	Pilates	12	Flight attendant	Not married
Unni	30	Pilates	25	Hospital Nurse	Married
Yoojung	29	Pilates	12	Designer	Not married

Heesoo	27	Pilates	23	Graduate Student	Not married
Yoonsu	28	Yoga	26	Preschool Teacher	Not married
Haesun	29	Yoga	14	Graphic Designer	Not married
Jinhee	27	Yoga	16	Researcher	Not married
Soojin	35	Yoga	25	Psychology Counselor	Not married
Haeji	34	Pole Dance	30	Designer	Not married
Yeonji	32	Pole Dance	32	Company Employee	Married
Suyung	36	Pole Dance	24	Telecommuter	Married
Myeongjin	26	Pole Dance	20	Freelance Model	Not Married

The research participants had taken part in either two or one of the following exercises, yoga, pilates and pole dance. It was not intentional in selecting the exercise the participants had taken part in. All participants had day jobs and were focused on individual careers. Three out of the 12 women

are married. One of the participants has children, the others do not. The participants' age range is between 26-36 years old. All participants were required to understand and sign a consent form verified from Seoul National University's Institutional Review Board (IRB). The invitations to participate in the research form, consent form from participants, semi-structured open ended in-depth interview questions, and participation observation notes format was all approved from Seoul National University IRB. (see Appendix 1-6).

3.4.2. Participation observations

A qualitative approach utilizes multiple methods to gather data one of which is through observations. Observations probe significant results while the researcher becomes the key instrument of the focus and provides a variety of information about the people and culture (Creswell, 2009). It has been mentioned to be included as an ethnographic method which generates a diverse approach toward the cultural setting, interactions between participants and the details of the participated activity (Ellis & Bochner, 1996).

Moreover, participation observations provide access to the inner group of where the culture or patterns are formed through individual interaction and enrich the descriptions of the research setting. Throughout this study, participation observations are made to understand the setting,

culture and interaction of the participants and the participated activity as well as its relation to Korean society.

Prior to in-depth interviews and participation observations, the researcher had participated in exercises such as yoga, Pilates and pole dance for personal reasons regardless of operating the study. The researcher had participated in the exercise for duration of two years before exploring the exercise culture and the experiences of women involved in the activities. Through participation the researcher noticed interesting observations of other participants and began to study the works of Korean women. During participation, observations were noted to build a theoretical framework to understand the exercise cultural environment as well as the personal experiences of the potential informants for the study.

During the observations, not all participants were willing to be a part of the study, therefore, those who did not confirm to take part, participation observation notes and informal conversation notes were deleted from the research. Participation observations were made whenever possible which were noted in a separate guide form³⁰. Observations were not exclusively focused on the individual participants, but the environment, interactions with other participants, and noticeable indications and information regarding the participants and the activity were included.

³⁰ Participation observation guide form attached in Appendix 6.

3.4.3. In-depth interviews

An in-depth interview in a qualitative research is method used to listen to the experiences that participants encounter within the context of the research setting. Hesse-Biber and Leavy (2006) states that as active listeners it is important to hear the stories of others while understanding the meanings, emotions and even the silence of the research participants as well as “questioning and disavowing of previously held concepts and categories that frame out understanding of social reality, making the process potentially transformational for the researcher as well.” In-depth interviews were preceded with an organized arrangement of semi-open ended interview questions. These questions were used as a guide during the interviews and additional follow-up questions were asked.

The researcher informally interviewed participants before in-depth one-on-one interviews. Informal interviews were not recorded on a tape-recorder, however notes were taken. Notes that were taken from the non-recorded informal conversations were looked over during formal interviews with the participants to clarify the intentions and opinions. In addition, the notes that were taken before the in-depth interviews were used to form semi-structured open ended questions³¹ for the formal interview. Informal interviews helped the researcher get a clearer understanding of the situations and emotions that participants were experiencing at the moment.

³¹ Semi-structured open ended questionnaire are found in Appendix 4.

In-depth interviews were conducted with the selected participants and were conducted in both Korean and English. The formal interviews lasted from an hour to two hours with only the participant and the researcher. The interviews were conducted up to three times with an addition of a maximum of three extra meet ups for interviews, until enough data was collected. Interview questions began from why they began the exercise, what they experienced during their participation as well as viewpoints and opinions of exercise. After the in-depth interviews, the recordings were transcribed onto a guided form³².

3.4.4. Media text

Media has been an important tool of communication in understanding social and cultural aspects of a community. In promoting women's participation in exercise, media platforms have produced stigmatized images and beauty ideas related to gender. To examine the cultural and social background of the formation of *aesthetic exercise* is, magazine articles relevant to exercise, dieting and body management were collected as data.

Articles drawn from <Woman Sense> were selected. It is noted that <Woman Sense> is one of nine currently publishing women's magazines in Korea. According to Hankook Research³³, it has the most female subscribers and the highest reading rate. It publishes both paperback and

³² Transcription guide form attached in Appendix 5.

³³ Hankook Research is Korea's largest marketing and opinion research company.

online application issues monthly. A total of 29 articles from 12 issues from January 2019 to December 2019 were collected. 12 of the texts were collected from a monthly section, titled *<Into the beauty>* (later named *<Beauty>*). This section exclusively publishes interviews with SNS celebrities and their experiences in various exercises. The interviews also provided photos of the female SNS celebrity participating in an exercise, posing in fitness outfits and exercise movements in the “how to” section of the interview. Each article included at least four to five photos.

The other 19 articles and interviews were also based on exercise, dieting and body management. They were not part of specific sections of the magazine. They included celebrity interviews, informational articles about body management and surveys for subscribers. The 19 articles also included at least one full page photo and several half page or quarter page photos.

3.5. Data Analysis

This study utilizes a thematic analysis to explore the experiences and responses of research participants through the transcribed data from in-depth interviews, participation observations and media text. A thematic analysis is a commonly used in qualitative methods to get a deep understanding of the data set. It is focused on examining and identifying the meanings of the collected data, in this case: in-depth interview transcriptions, participation observations and media text.

Braun and Clarke (2006) highlighted that this method of analysis provides rich descriptions and deep interpretations of the meanings of the data and introduced a six-step guide to conduct a thematic analysis. The steps are as follows: familiarization of the data, coding, creating themes, reviewing themes, defining themes and finalizing themes. In the first step of familiarization, transcribing and reading in-depth interviews, re-reading observations, noting ideas from media text were conducted. Later, coding was utilized to mark interesting and relevant characteristics from each of the data sets. Codes are names or labels that are assigned to particular segments of related meanings that are found through the transcripts (Lawrence Neuman, 2014). The codes were organized and grouped into related themes and subthemes. After the codes were categorized into potential themes and subthemes, they were reviewed to check if they were compatible to the entire data and the purpose of the research. This generated a thematic outline of the analysis. In defining themes, distinctive and direct descriptions were used to deliver a clear understanding of each theme.

Due to three different data sets; in-depth interviews, participation observations and media text, all data sets were considered as text data. Hence, in-depth interviews being recognized as text from specific individual data, participation observations from the research as an insider of the study, and media texts which reflects to the general social atmosphere in which both the research participants and the research are associated in.

Therefore, to reach the purpose of the study, thematic analysis was conducted with micro and macro levels of data sets to articulate the social temperature and individual interactions in structuring aesthetic exercise phenomenon. In-depth interviews were recorded on a separate recording device. Transcribing was conducted after each interview. All the in-depth interviews were held in Korean. They were transcribed in Korean and later translated into English during the coding process. Transcriptions of in-depth interviews and participation observation notes were thoroughly read to gain an overall and comprehensive understanding of the content and context prior to the process of coding. The transcriptions were coded and the codes were categorized into related themes and subthemes to organize the complexity of the data sets. Through the progress of categorization, subthemes were identified to include connections and relationships. Later the codes were evaluated for the relevance to the research goals.

Prior to categorizing media text selected from <*Women Sense*> magazine, textual analysis was applied to understand the language and pictures provided with the texts. Thus, the messages in which the texts deliver, it is often replicate the cultural and social contents it is situated in (Allen, 2017). It is highlighted that texts are interpretations of the context that it is created in (McKee, 2001). In addition, texts from media sources such as television, advertisements, books and internet webpages can be utilized to understand the social climate and cultural influences surrounding

the actors within the structures (Turner, 2003).

Hence, the analysis focused on the articles, editorials and interviews containing information based on exercise, dieting and body management from <Women Sense>. As a magazine, both visual images and textual contexts were coded. The images and texts were coded into characteristics of body type, gender, clothing, poses and type of exercise.

Therefore, with the codes from in-depth interviews, participation observations and media texts were combined to categorize into the themes related and/or contrasting to one another. Furthermore, despite yoga, Pilates and pole were defined and grouped as *aesthetic exercises*, during the familiarization of data, evidence of different approaches and interpretations of participants' experience – according to their engaged exercise— were noticeable. Therefore, the different viewpoints according to the participated exercises were organized as subthemes to the major themes (topics) in which the participants shared and were observed by the researcher.

3.5. Strategies for Trustworthiness of the Study

Several guides and criteria have been recommended for the trustworthiness of qualitative researches. To convince the readers of the accuracy that a qualitative research brings, it is important to undergo strategies to strengthen the credibility of the study (Creswell & Poth, 2018). It is suggested to highlight the concepts of trustworthiness, authenticity and credibility of a qualitative study. Therefore, to

validate the findings of the study, the researcher established three techniques also to heighten the interpretations and descriptions.

First, trustworthiness is related to the credibility of the study, hence, how convincing and believable the research is. In consideration, triangulation, combining several different collections of data, enhances the accurateness of the findings (Carter et al., 2014; Rothbauer, 2008). Therefore, this study examines and analysis specific individual participants to understand their experiences while the research observes the participants and their settings through an “insider” approach. To reach form the logic and rationale to create the purpose of research, several different aspects of physical exercise, and female participation in exercise, the context of Korea and women and feminist theories were considered. Each topic coherent to the research was organized and provided in the literature review. In addition, the collected data from in-depth interviews and observations are compared and contrasted with different researchers of the same field of research. Furthermore, media texts were included to investigate the social atmosphere, time and space, in which the participants and the researcher are situated in. Through triangulation of several data sources and discussions made with the data sets, it establishes critical viewpoints of the studied phenomenon.

Second, peer-debriefing sessions were conducted to have a clearer and critical perspective toward the collected data. Peer-debriefing can be accompanied with colleagues in the respected field as well as those who utilize qualitative researches (Connelly, 2016). This technique allows the researcher to reflect on themselves and to leave out biased approaches to the data sets. It also includes critical insights and notes from colleague which can improve the credibility and

dependability of the study. Comments and suggestions from other researchers and colleagues can assist and remind the researcher of criteria that could have been left out during the data collection process. Moreover, a third person's point of view benefits to elaborate a descriptive explanation of the situations and experiences of research participants which can be seen as the "obvious" from an "insider" viewpoint.

Third, due to the number of research participants and the variety of exercises that were participated, it was necessary to conduct member-checking, also known as respondent validation. This process allows the researcher to reach the participants and check whether the researcher understood the responses made during the interviews (Doyle, 2007). After each in-depth interview was transcribed, the researcher examined the transcriptions and marked responses that were confusing or did not understand to ask the participants the meanings. This was crucial in the coding and theme-creating process. Thus, member-checking and peer-debriefing was combined and conducting, meaning that notes and comments formed through member-checking were applied and negotiated individually with the researcher. Later peer-debriefing sessions were conducted to identify whether the interpretations of the data was accurate and logical.

CHAPTER IV. Findings & Discussions

The following are the findings of the study. The findings are divided into three subchapters. The first section, discusses why women participate in female-appropriate exercise. It highlights reasons related to why the participants choose to participate in an aesthetic exercise and why they believed they needed to undergo body management. Second, Aesthetic conformity to social standards, highlights the findings of how aesthetic exercises are formed through the configuration of research participants. Thus, this theme underlines the mechanism of popular culture, media influence as well as media text data that cultivates an abstract structure in which participants conform to societal standards. The last section, Westernization and the postcolonial “*her*”, manifest a postcolonial approach toward the participation of women in aesthetic exercise. The findings are combined with both media analysis and the experiences of the research participants. The themes are as follows in the table below.

Table. 2 Summary of subchapters and themes in chapter 5

Subchapters	Themes
Participation in Aesthetic Exercises	Beginning aesthetic exercise
	Exercise as an aesthetic tool
	Losing, but with variety

Mechanism of Aesthetic Exercise	Media, SNS and celebrities
	Conforming to social standards of appearance
	Women's movement and aesthetic labor
The Postcolonial "Her"	Patriarchal society and male gaze
	"Her" body image
	Class and status

4.1. Participation in Aesthetic Exercises

This subchapter provides the findings related to the beginning of the participants' engagement of their chosen exercise; yoga, Pilates, and pole dance. Exercise for *looks*: "Healthy" way to "diet" highlights the initial reasons to why participants decided to participate in the exercises. It presents two subthemes: Lack of experience and female-appropriate exercise and Healthier way to lose weight: "At least, compared to surgery". Due to a lack of exercise and physical activity experiences participation participants engaged in exercises which were more familiar to them, hence, female-appropriate exercises such as yoga or Pilates. Second, participants decided that exercise participation was a healthier method of losing weight and dieting rather than body construction procedures.

The second theme, “Into the beauty”: Exercises as an aesthetic tool, mention media text selected from <Women Sense> magazine. It is organized according to the featured issues and a summary of each article. This theme is divided into two subthemes, Thin SNS celebrities and Leggings fit body and “apple” power. The first subtheme mentions that all issues feature SNS influencers/celebrities posing and introducing a female-appropriate exercise such as combinations of yoga movements, Pilates stretches and other body weight exercises. The second theme, Leggings fit body and “apple hip” power, points out the orientation of exercises that are focused on legs and thighs as well as emphasizing the trend of an “apple hip”. The following themes and subthemes are mentioned in the table below.

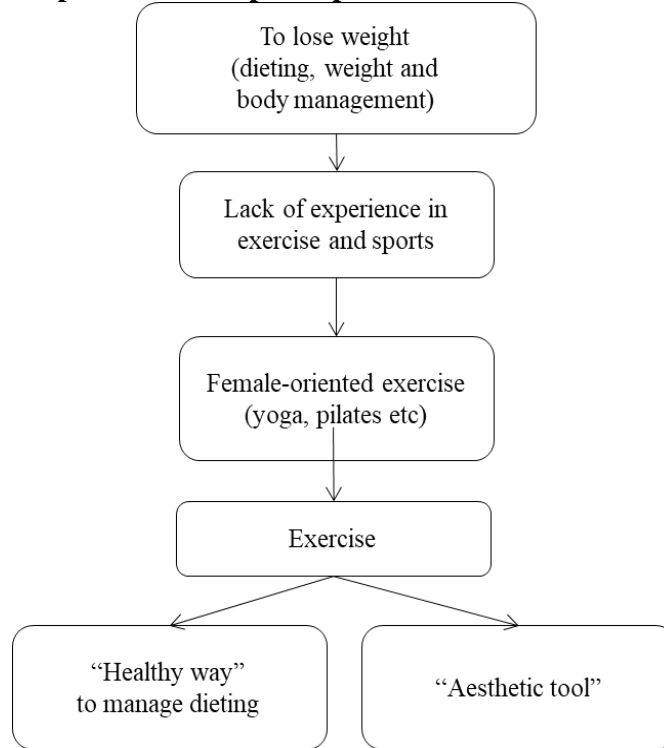
Table. 3 Participation in Aesthetic Exercise: Themes and subthemes

Subchapter	Theme	Subtheme
Participation female-appropriate exercises	Beginning aesthetic exercises	Lack of experience leading to female-appropriate exercises
		Healthier way to lose weight
	Exercise as an aesthetic tool	Thin SNS celebrities
		Leggings fit body and “apple hip” power
	Losing, but with variety	Media texts and the “Menu”

4.1.1. Beginning aesthetic exercise

Participants were motivated to participate in aesthetic exercises to reach their ultimate goal to lose weight (to go on a diet). It was found that many of the participants did not have prior experience in exercise or sports, or participated in any form of physical activities during their middle and high school years. They stated that their parents encouraged them to focus on their studies than out-of-school activities such as sports. Furthermore, the participants viewed their participation as rather a “healthy way” to lose weight in comparison of using other methods such as plastic surgery or body reconstruction injections. Thus, they articulate their participation as an aesthetic tool for weight management. Moreover, the participants choose to engage in female-appropriate exercises which were naturally accessible to participate in rather than competitive or technique required sports or physical activities. The following graph is a visual explanation of the participants’ experiences and interpretation.

Graph 1. Participants' route of participation in exercise



Lack of experience and female-appropriate exercise

Heesoo points out that she uses her summer breaks as times to lose weight. Growing up she mentions how her parents did not allow her to participate in physical activities.

“I started every summer break to lose weight. During the school semester I had to study and we really don’t have extra time. My parents didn’t let me do anything other than study when I was in high school. They always told me to wait until I went to university.” – Heesoo (Pilates, 27)

Heesoo highlights that she did not have any experience in sports or physical activities during her secondary school years. Her parents encouraged her to study and advised her to begin physical activities after she went to university. Jinhee also points out how she did not have experience in her high school years of sports or exercise.

“I didn’t do any sports or physical activities during high school. I think I didn’t even have a chance to think about exercise at that time and my parents really wanted me to focus on my studies.” – Jinhee (Yoga, 27)

“I’ve never played sports or exercised. I wasn’t interested in any of those things. Maybe it was because there weren’t any opportunities growing up.” – Suyung (Pole dance, 36)

It is a known fact that Korean parents can be highly strict about their children’s schooling and education (Seth, 2002). Obtaining higher education to exceed in society has been passed down from tradition and culture. This situates girls and women to be distanced from sporting activities and different forms of physical exercise or extracurricular activities. As Suyung replies that she didn’t have the opportunity, she also points out that she had no interest in sports or exercise. In addition, Haeji mentions how she did not have any exercise experience before beginning pole dance.

“I didn’t have any exercise experience before starting pole dance. I was very weak.” – Haeji (Pole dance, 34)

As participants who pointed out the lack of experience during their schooling years are in their late 20’s and early 30’s. It reflects to the educational atmosphere as well as the culture in which at their time portrayed. However, much of this culture is changing and schools have created policies and programs to encourage more girls to participate in sports and physical activities (Jin & Lee, 2016). 10 to 15 years before, not many girls were participating in sports. The ideal frame and the trend of a female were imaged to be quiet and less active. For example, Yoonsu, on the other hand, had participated in ballet and gymnastics as a hobby since a young age. She also points out she wanted to lose weight after she went to university. Unni similarly highlights she started yoga and Pilates to lose weight.

“When I turned 20 and went to university, I realized I had gained so much fat. I wanted to exercise and lose all the weight.” – Yoonsu (Yoga, 28)

“I started yoga first and then pilates because I wanted to lose weight.” – Unni (Pilates, 28)

Despite Yoonsu’s experience in physical activities such as ballet or

gymnastics, she understood physical activity as a method to lose weight. The participants choose yoga, Pilates or pole dance due to the reason that these exercises were characterized as “female-appropriate” exercises. In Korea, there are private studios that only allow females as members. This allows more women to participate and join exercise centers and studios without the concern of a male presence. It was noted that women found it uncomfortable exercising in an environment with males. Thus, they felt an urge of resistance to enrolling in fitness gyms where both men and women co-exist.

“It’s uncomfortable when you’re sweating and trying to work out at the same time when there are men around. I don’t want to exercise with them.” – Yungji (Pilates, 30)

Furthermore, Yungji points out she does not want to work out with a male presence. And expressed how it was embarrassing for her to sweat in front a male. The exercise environment and settings influence the anxiety level of the exercising participant. It has been found that mixed-sex settings identified a great level of physical anxiety and anxiousness among women than exercise environments of all-females (Raedeke, Focht, & Scales, 2007).

Healthier way to lose weight

The word “diet” defines, specific food consumption or to manage

weight, however, in the Korean context; the term “diet” (다이어트) is used to lose weight to become thin and skinny. All participants stated that they wanted to lose weight by doing exercise as well as have to “healthier” lifestyle. Interestingly, as an observation, none of the participants appeared to be over-weight or obese. They pointed out their need to start a diet to look thinner and manage their body shape. Yoonsu adds that it’s a commonality among women that they want to diet to be skinny.

“I think it’s a 9:1 ratio. Nine wanting to be skinny and one wanting to be healthy.” – Yoonsu (Yoga, 28)

Laverty and Wright (2010) points out that the exercise centers are the popular place for people to manage and control their body shapes. In addition, pressure for girls and women to keep skinny and thin bodies is created through weight stigma or fat phobia (Winch, 2016). However, Soojin mentions how exercise is for her “to keep healthy”. Haeji also considers exercising a better alternative to lose weight, than going under plastic surgery.

“Dieting isn’t my number one reason to exercise, but it is one of the reasons. I do it to keep healthy. I’m not too obsessed with dieting, but I think dieting is also just a part of my lifestyle. A way to keep my mind and body healthy.”
– Soojin (Yoga, 35)

“Honestly, at least, exercising is a healthier way to lose weight, than plastic surgery.” – Haeji (Pole dance, 34)

In the June and September issues of <Women Sense>, it introduces articles about “diet procedures” (다이어트 시술). These “diet procedures” mention injections and botox procedures that can be made to manage one’s body. In the September issue it is titled, “2019 All about Petit Surgery” (2019 올 어바웃 뽀띠 성형 2019). The subtitle marks, *“I want to look young and beautiful. Internationally famous for K-Beauty, Korea is trending petit surgery”*. It emphasizes how we are living in an era where body shapes are managed by needles and introduces seven different injections and their effects. In addition, it reveals seven “secret” beauty tips covered by injections. Hence, as body management becomes a priority among women, commercialized magazines display “short cuts” to losing weight and managing one’s body shape. As media portrays and provide to a general audience, it is obvious to say that the Korean plastic industry is covering weight and body management.

Furthermore, with the effect of influence from magazines and other media outlets, it is visible to see that exercise is in the transition of being an aesthetic method. Haesun’s interview she views yoga as an aesthetic tool and mentions reading about beauty and yoga in a magazine.

“Since I was young, I was really interested in aesthetics

and beauty related magazines. I remember the magazines saying that yoga helps with beauty.” – Haesun (Yoga, 27)

“I choose to do yoga because I think it would be suitable for me. And because I’m a girl, I wanted to do something that would be good for females.... And since I’m working out and moving around it gives me energy.... I think this is my way of investing in beauty and aesthetics.” – Yoonsu (Yoga, 28)

In the April issue of <Women Sense>, the featured SNS celebrity points out in her interview that yoga has aesthetic benefits to keep healthy and beautiful. As mentioned from Haesun, she highlighted that yoga was understood as an aesthetic means. Though she did not gain this knowledge from the same magazine it can be assumed that the contemporary yoga market and industry could be promoting yoga as an aesthetic exercise practice.

Yoonsu also agrees with yoga as an aesthetic tool as well as a female-appropriate exercise. The participants of the study participate in particularly female-oriented exercises such as yoga, pilates and pole dance. They believe that the exercises they are participating in are for females, and it suits the female biology. Bhalla and Moscovitz (2020) analysis of women’s magazines in the U.S. about yoga and female representation state

how physical features of the female body manifest a narrow idea of body shapes and objectify females. Similarly media culture has influenced the participants in deciding their preferred exercise. Yoonsu also adds that her participation in yoga is a way for her to invest in aesthetics and health.

Furthermore, Yungji began to participate in Pilates to reduce back pains. She also points out how Pilates has helped her lose back pains and gain muscle. She says that Pilates gradually became her method of exercise and dieting while working on her posture and health.

“I started Pilates because someone recommended it to me saying that it was good for people with back pains and it could help with dieting.” – Yungji (Pilates, 30)

Despite the lack of former experience in sporting or physical activities, participants actively participate in activities as a method of body management. Kim et al. (2018) highlights a study of adults in their 20's of dietary habits and motivation, hence, physical activities were the number one method of dieting followed by in taking diet supplements and controlling eating habits. When asked why they wanted to go on diets, in spite their slim appearances, it was notable to say they were concerned about gaining weight or looking less slim. Korea has one of the lowest obesity rates among developed countries (OECD, 2020), however, negative health results such as anorexia, depression (Kim, 2011b), and body

dissatisfaction (Jun & Choi, 2014; Kim & Park, 2012) emerge from society's obsession on slimness and excessive body management practices (Schwekendiek, Yeo, & Ulijaszek, 2013).

While they mention the necessity to lose weight, they point out the social and cultural aspects of Korean society. Though some participants express their opinions on exercising as a “healthy” way to lose weight, it is accompanied with social and cultural elements which are shared in the following sections of the research. Thus, it is certain that not many girls and women have opportunities in participating in various sporting activities, though education policies and programs have emerged to promote female participation and interest. Moreover, exercise and dieting is understood as an aesthetic method.

4.1.2. Exercise as an aesthetic tool

As participants like Haesun who mentions that she recognized yoga as an aesthetic method through magazines years before she began in the previous theme, it was found in <*Women Sense*> that there was a specific section that connected beauty and exercise. Every month a section of the magazine, “*Into the beauty*” (later named as “*Beauty*”), presents a person(s) introducing a personalized exercise. The article is organized in an interview form with an interviewer and interviewee—the interviewee as the person introducing the exercise—with questions and answer format. Of all the

articles, the participated exercises were mostly, yoga or Pilates related exercises. The following is the list of the title, person(s) introducing the exercise and a short description of the exercise from each month's articles.

Table. 4 Brief <Into the beauty> section review

Month	Title	Person(s) introducing the exercise	Description of exercise
January	<i>"Dew's Relieve Pain Stretching"</i>	Pilates Instructor (SNS Influencer, IG: 200K)	Pilates related stretches to relieve stress and to find good posture
February	<i>"Body Challenge Headstand"</i>	Yoga Instructor (SNS Influencer, IG: 250K)	Learning how to do a headstand from yoga related movements
March	<i>"Minsoogo's Day Exercise"</i>	Former NPC Texas Bikini Champion SNS Influencer (Youtube: 180K, IG: 270K)	Shares her daily routine and a 10-minute-daily-exercise
April	<i>"Body & Mind Recovery, Exercise"</i>	Pilates Instructor (SNS Influencer, IG: 700K)	Recovery exercises that are useful after child-birth
May	<i>"Mindful Yoga"</i>	Yoga Youtuber	Yoga and meditation

June	<i>“Fitness Couple”</i>	Married Couple Youtuber	Combination of ballet and fitness as well as working out with a partner
July	<i>“Apple Hip Power”</i>	Pilates Studio Owner and Instructor (SNS Influencer, IG: 400K)	Introduction about the owner and how she became famous for her workouts
August	<i>“Play with Yoga Ring”</i>	Pilates and Yoga Instructor	Combination of Pilates and yoga as well as using a yoga ring
September	<i>“Pilates with Music”</i>	Acro-Pilates Studio Owner and Instructor	Combination of Pilates and acrobatics with musical beats
October	<i>“Make a Leggings Body”</i>	Twin Body Mentor Youtuber	Exercises using a foam roller (exercise equipment)
November	<i>“Move Your Body in the Bed”</i>	Pilates Studio Owner and Instructor (TV Personnel, Youtuber)	Recommending easy stretches for women in their 30’s and 40’s in the morning
December	<i>“Move Your Legs and Hips”</i>	Choreographer /Musical Actress/ Personal Trainer	Recommends convenient leg and hip, thigh exercises that can be done at home

*IG: Instagram (# indicates followers)

Thin SNS celebrities

Interestingly, all of the people that were featured in this section of the magazine were social media celebrities also known as influencers. All of the person(s) interviewed in the articles were social media influencers. Influencers are initially those who are people that have an expert level of knowledge or who can be a social influence in their field of expertise. They mostly were Youtubers with substantial amount of followers and social media (mostly Instagram) stars. Each interview included one main photo of the SNS celebrity and a set of two to three photos related to exercise and “diet” foods. The pictures below are the photos featured in the interview articles.



Picture 1. Main photo of *Into the Beauty* (from left April and September)



Picture 2. Photos from *Into the Beauty* (from left January, October, April)

Maltby et al. (2005) pointed out “celebrity worship” as an imaginary relationship that connects the celebrity and potential fan, due to the fact that celebrities’ personal life is often widely publicized. In addition scholars have mentioned the relationship between celebrity worship and negative body image, thus, women comparing themselves with celebrity images of “ideal thin bodies” results in dissatisfaction (Brown & Tiggemann, 2016;2020). However, even with studies suggesting the ill relationships created from social media and body image, self-esteem and eating disorders (Dittmar, 2009; Dumas & Desroches, 2019; Harrison, 2000; Kim, 2011b), it is obvious of how SNS Influencer marketing truly influences consumer consumption (Balathandayutham & Anandanatarajan, 2020; Braatz, 2017).

Five of the person(s) are married (Issues: February, April, June, July, and November) and three (Issues: February, April and November) of them have children. The June issue introduces a married couple whom are Youtubers that upload videos of ballet and fitness related exercises. They discuss body-weight training and the benefits of working out with a partner. The persons with children recommended exercises and stretches that are

beneficial for post-pregnancy recovery. It displays women in their 20's and 30's. They portray photos and answers that the general audience can relate to which allows readers to somewhat be “like” the celebrities.

Each article ends with a “how to” section which includes the main speaker of All “how to” sections include images of the interviewee in leggings and mostly tight outfits. The images depict a slim fit female perfectly performing the recommended movements. Though the articles empower women to participate in exercises that are considered useful—according to the readers’ situations – the photos, exercises and the SNS Influencer can be understood as highly feminine-oriented and promote a favored body type. The following picture is an example of the “how to” part of the section.



Picture 3. “How to” part of *Into the Beauty* (March)

Leggings fit body and “apple hip” power

In the main photos presenting the interviews, all the SNS celebrities were in tight leggings and shoulder revealing attire. They emphasize women to have a toned body specifically thin and fit legs and thighs. In the July issue – “Apple Hip Power”— introduces Eudum Shim who is a female fitness star. She is well-known for her “apple hip³⁴” which went viral through her personal social media account, Instagram.



Picture 4. Main photo of Eudum Shim from *Into the Beauty*

Lee and Kim (2017) analyzed Instagram photos under the hashtag #운동녀 (“Undo Nyeo”: women who exercise) and found that photos of women with tight and healthy bodies through exercises encourages exercise, however, they still maintain social discourse of the “thin female body”. It is noted that the social atmosphere still emphasizes slimness and thinness has a psychological effect which demands an ideal type of a woman's body from

³⁴ “Apple hip” indicates Korean women with a “nice looking butt” which appears with healthy body shapes that are made from fitness workouts.

exposure of social media (Choi & Lee, 2020; Kim, 2015a). On the contrary, #fitspiration has allowed consumers to communicate and share information and experiences for healthier lifestyles (Kim & Kim, 2019).

In the October issue, it initially points out how to “make” a body that looks good in leggings. In addition in the December issue, the article precisely on leg, butt and thigh exercises. The repetition of leg related exercises and body shapes that may look good for tight pants as well as the connection to female-oriented exercises reinforces all the characteristics of social standards. The portrayal of the personnel introducing the exercises and their selves shows a socially standardized “work outing female”. The articles add diversity with women whom were pregnant and are married, but from similar backgrounds. Most of the interviewees had background in dance, hence female-appropriate activities. This has an influence on the entitled exercise they introduced— mostly yoga and Pilates workout related. Despite the fact that the magazine itself is a women’s magazine, it clearer highlights characteristics of socially acceptable images of Korea women who exercise.

Throughout the text of the interview articles, aesthetics and exercise are linked together. The interviewees emphasize how their participation in their exercises has helped them out aesthetically. Due to the reason that the interviewees are somewhat promoting their studios and self-promoting themselves as the product to attract more audiences to their social media

accounts, they emphasize how their exercises will assist the audience to “look” slimmer and that it will help them aesthetically.

4.1.3. Losing, but with variety

Media texts and the “Menu”

17 articles were retrieved from the entire year’s issues of the magazine. The selected articles were selected according to the contents related to exercise, dieting and body shapes. Articles include interviews, product recommendations and reviews related to exercise and dieting. In the first table, the descriptions of articles from each issue are reviewed. Not all issues had articles related to the topic of the study. Some issues had more than one article related to the contents of the study.

After reviewing the articles, they were categorized into groups related to each other. The following table is a summary of categories of the articles. Product review highlights workout machines and has seven to eight random users rank them according to their personal preferences. Product recommendation gives information about specific products and recommends them to subscribers according to needs. Celebrity interviews are mostly consisted of one or more celebrities and their styled dieting method or the exercise/sport they participate in. Subscriber surveys are constructed surrounding the issues that are mentioned in the month’s articles. Informational articles share health related information to the readers. Last,

editorial highlights viewpoints of recent events and issues.

The magazine acts as a “menu” for female readers to choose their preferred method to lose weight and manage their body shapes. They provide surveys and introduce products. Due to the characteristics of a magazine that focuses on a general audience, it provides commercialized and both intentional and non-intentional images of female images potential needs that are demanded in the time and space that they are situated in.

Month	Title	Contents
February	Into the Lifestyle: <i>Home Diet Equipment</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Introduces seven easy to set-up, portable and in-house exercise equipment - Seven random women and one man reviews the workout machines and personally ranks their favored machines after use
	Into the People: <i>Action Actress Siyoung Lee</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Discusses her experiences in preparation for her action required characters - Mentions her experience of having to lose weight to fit into a dress and to execute martial art movements
April	Special Issue: <i>I am a dieter – Stories of Special Dieters</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Recommends healthy foods and eating habits, importance of daily routines and daily diets - Six celebrities (All female - Singers, T.V. Personalities, Actresses) tell their dieting habits and stories of maintaining a healthy and slim body - The titles of each celebrity story are as follows <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o “Special Dieter” o “The Evil Home Training” o “Habitual Dieting”

- “Workout Mania”
 - “The Queen of Managing”
 - “An Energetic Day”
- Special Issue:
How far have you dieted?

 - Surveyed 158 female subscribers the following questions
 - “Have you been on a diet?”
 - “Why do you go on diets?”
 - “What was your goal weight-loss?”
 - “How did you balance dieting (food consumption) and exercising?”
 - “How much weight did you lose?”
 - “When do you feel most motivated to lose weight?”
 - “What do you think the biggest reason is to fail a diet?”
 - “What do you want to eat the most when dieting?”
 - “What type of dieting routine did you do?”
 - “Who is your ‘wanna-be’ body role model?”
- May Special Issue:
2019 Corset-Free Report

 - Introduces the background of the “corset-free” movement and what it stands for
 - The section is divided into three parts
 - Part 1: Examples of resisting aesthetic labor
 - Part 2: It’s ok to be not pretty
 - Part 3: Interviews a Youtuber, “I’m not pretty”
 - Part 4: Subscriber Survey on the movement
- June Into the Beauty:
*Summer Diet Extreme
Prescription*

 - Introduces three “Solutions”, tips to take care of your body
 - Solution 1: “Skin care and habits”
 - Solution 2: “Makeup to boost your body”
 - Solution 3: “Ready to see diet procedures”

July	<p>Into the People: <i>Working Mom's Diet</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Korean female Comedian/Actress , Mi-Ryeo, Kim tells her story of dieting from the viewpoint as a mom, wife and entertainer - Hopes to encourage other working moms - Takes about the pros and cons of diet supplements - Advices people to cautious of the diet drugs that are exposed - Recommends prescribed diet supplements only when need from a doctor's opinion - Surveyed 164 female subscribers the following questions <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o "Have you tried diet supplements?" o "What type of diet supplements did you take?" o "Where did you buy the supplements?" o "How long did you take them?" o "Were they effective?" o "How much weight did you lose?" o "Are you aware about the detailed nutrition facts of the supplement?" o "Were there any side effects?" o "If so, what were they?" o "Do you want to continue using them?"
August	<p>Hot Issue: <i>Gain or Lose?</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Introduces several celebrities (Two male and Eight female) that have either gained or lost weight - It shows their transformation in their body shapes and points out who looks better with more or less weight

- September Issue:
Golf, Should I start too?
- Introduces golf and its benefits
 - “Taste of golf” includes a Korean female super model who plays golf and shares her experiences of playing golf
 - Answers questions about female golf wear
 - “Golf is a smaller version of life” introduces a classic golf brand CEO and his view of golf and life
 - <Women Sense> selects seven female golfers, all famous for their ability in golf and emphasizes the international prestige of Korean female golfers
- Issue:
2019 All About Petit Surgery
- The article is separated into three parts
 - Part 1: Trending procedures
 - Part 2: Anti-aging injections
 - Part 3: Body management through the injection era
 - Part 4: The secret to top celebrity injections
- Lifestyle:
Burn it at home!
Home trainer’s guide to exercise machines
- Introduces eight different home training equipment
 - Eight reviews and personally ranks the machines from each person’s preference (Seven female and one male)

October People:
 My life's exercise

- Interviews six celebrities who's "friends with their exercise"
 - Sun-young Ahn, "Dancing Sister" talks about a pleasurable way to enjoy exercise as a mother in her 40's
 - Kyunghwa Kim, "Workout Freak", mom of two shares her lifestyle and gym workouts
 - Eunjeong Ha, "Body Weight Training and Jogging", talks about doing thing for herself and self-esteem
 - Dalhwan Cho, "Love for Table Tennis", male actor shares his experience of learning table tennis and how is changed his lifestyle
 - Bomerae Shin, "Young Boxer", professional female boxer and former WIBA Super Feather Champion shares her love for boxing
 - Seounghyn Kim, "My Youth and Basketball", shares his love for basketball and lifestyle
- Introduces 11 (Eight female and three male) other celebrities who engage in exercises and sports (flying yoga, yoga, table tennis, pilates, ballet, hiking, weight training, paddle boating, triathlon)

November *Preventing Cancer Through
 Exercising*

- Interviews with four individuals who start off their days by exercising (One male and Three Females)
- All interviewees were current fitness instructors, coaches and model

2019 1st Meat Marathon with
Youngjo Hwang

- Youngjo Hwang, ex-marathon Olympic champion introduces a marathon in cooperation with a domestic meat industry

December #Exercising Announcer:
“The energetic lifestyle of
Jihae Park”

- Shares her secrets to keep a healthy lifestyle
- Participates in marathons, eats healthy and plays tennis

“Homo Hundred” Era

- Emphasizes the importance of joints and muscles to prevent arthritis
- The section is divided into four parts
 - Part 1: The importance of joints
 - Part 2: All you need to know
 - Part 3: Asking an expert
 - Part 4: Recommended exercises for all ages

Table. 5 Brief review of articles from each monthly issue

Table. 6 Articles categorized into related contents

Category	Month(s)	Total of Articles
Product Review	February, September	2
Product Recommendation	June, September	2
Celebrity Interview(s)	February, April, July, August, October, December	6
Subscriber Survey	April, July	2
Informational	September, November(2), December	4
Editorial	May	1

Combination of celebrity and aesthetic procedures

Throughout the magazine issues, diet related experiences and progress were emphasized by mostly female celebrities. The photos that were used with the interviews depicted slim toned images of singers, actress and TV personnel despite their status as a mother or wife. Bazzini et al. (2015) mentions that women's magazines illustrate exercise as rather a tool to become thin than to be healthy. In addition, Bhalla and Moscovitz (2020) points out by analyzing yoga magazines, that the contents and photos utilize beauty and ideal body shapes. Thus, by having celebrities with similar slim body shapes, it emphasizes a thin body ideal. The picture below shares short

dieting stories of celebrities from the August issue. In this article they introduce two male and eight female celebrities who have gone through body transformation from dieting.



The magazine also uses subscriber surveys to rather justify the use of random dieting methods and diet supplements. The April issue includes a survey asking readers their experiences of dieting. The last question, however adds a question about celebrity wanna-be body shapes. The open questions are answered with a rank of female Korean celebrities. This section of the survey includes actual responses from the readers.

“I want to be born as Sarang Kim.”

“Sarang Kim has a really feminine body. A woman will look at her and want to be her.”

It is visible to spot how the readers idolized the female celebrities. Interestingly, “healthy” was one of the most identified words among the

answers. The following are the comments.

“She maintains her body in a healthy way.”

“Her body shape is from Pilates.”

“I think healthier looking bodies like Hyorin looks better.”

“She has a healthy yoga body and that why I started (yoga).”

“I thought she was just really thin, but it turns out she exercises a lot.”

The comments are related to the fact that some celebrity body shapes “look healthy” and some are connected to their participation in Pilates and yoga. Celebrity influence can be a strong impact on body image (Elfving-Hwang, 2018; Jung & Hwang, 2016; Maltby, Giles, Barber et al., 2005) and participation in activities. Participation in activities can be regarded as a component of spreading trends. For example, several media outlets point out how celebrity Hyori Lee is a trend setter. From her “small wedding” to “YOLO (You Only Live Once)” lifestyle, participating in yoga (Jeong, 2018) and her overall life value has gotten fans and audience to pursuit their lives in her footsteps (Ha, 2020).

In the context of Korea, celebrities have an interesting influence on

their audience and fans. In such a society that is close connected with the internet and celebrity exposure, it is possible that celebrity culture shapes body images and perspectives on appearance. Thin images from media platforms have a direct association with negative body image and body dissatisfaction (Han, 2003; Kim & Aubrey, 2015; Shin, You, & Kim, 2017). Kim (2014) pointed out that Korean females were more sensitive toward the power of media when it came to body images. It is emphasized that media contents strongly promote physical attractiveness and thin ideals within the Korean society (Lin & Raval, 2020).

However, none of the articles depict a celebrity promoting health concerns. The “Informational” category, the articles promote healthy lifestyle methods to prevent cancer and arthritis. They share information about the illness and encourage healthy ways to prevent them. Moreover, under product recommendation, several procedures and plastic surgery related injections are introduced as a “faster way” in become slimmer and to achieve a beauty standard.

Aesthetic plastic surgery in Korea standardizes and maintains ideal faces and body shapes (Holliday & Elfving-Hwang, 2012; Leem, 2017). Plastic surgery makeover TV shows emerged in 2003 and were popular in the 2010’s. However, in 2015 several of Korea’s female unions and media groups held a joint conference against the airing of a particular plastic surgery transformation show that had been running for five seasons. It has

been noted due to the rapid increase of plastic surgery(ized) “perfect faces” have influenced the idealized face and appearance of mixed westernized and domestic characteristics (Leem, 2017).

Furthermore, facial surgery is pressured to maintain youth-like appearances as an indication of self-management which is influenced by neoliberalism which promote personal freedom and self-improvement, though this cannot simply explain the phenomenon (Kim, 2020a). Facial surgery has expanded into body transformations from breast implants and to liposuction as well as small injections, which now are not even construed as surgeries. The magazine provides information about simple injections to perfect one’s body and is neatly organized for the readers to understand the injections as “menus”.

4.2. Mechanism of Aesthetic Exercise

The section describes the mechanism of how women configure the formation of aesthetic-oriented exercises. Before the first theme, this subchapter starts off by emphasizing the influences of an appearance society in which the participants are surrounded in and are a part of. They negotiate the importance of appearance and body image alongside their awareness of social standards.

The first theme provides findings of media, SNS and celebrities. As participants obtain knowledge and awareness from media and SNS platforms, celebrities and influencers are shown as the subject in whom the ideal body standards are delivered. The second theme talks about aesthetic plastic surgery as a way to reach the ideal body image. However, despite the researcher as an “insider” participants were not upfront about their experiences of plastic surgery or injections. The last theme mentions a social movement that can be seen as a catalyst to the women’s movement in Korea. The social movement spread radically through SNS portals and celebrity influencers. However, the connotations in which that are used in describing the social movement in the media text give an ambiguous understanding. In addition, the participants do not mention their active participation toward this movement.

Table. 7 Mechanism of Aesthetic Exercise: Themes and subthemes

Subchapter	Themes	Subthemes
Mechanism of Aesthetic Exercise	The supply and the supplier: Media and celebrities	The supply: Media and SNS
		The supplier: Celebrities and influencers
	Conforming to social standards of appearance	
	Women's movement and aesthetic labor	The movement in Korea and resistance to aesthetic labor

As participants responded to dieting as one of their ultimate reason to exercise, it was important to understand why they wanted to go on diets despite the fact that they appeared to be slim and none of them being clinically obese. All the participants were mostly physically fit and none of them were overweight. They constantly pointed out their concerns to lose weight and to look thin. They continuously discussed media and thin celebrities. It is evident that Korea is a society influenced by media and celebrity culture (Kim, 2013b; Kim, 2011b; Koh, 2011; Oh, 2017b; Yoon, 2004) surrounding their daily routines and mindset. Hence, the participants were fully aware of the fact that they were part of a society in which appearance was an important factor. Heesoo and Yeonji highlight the

obsession of appearance and how the society emphasizes looks.

“Honestly, Korean people care a lot about how they look and how others see them. And I think it’s more with women. I don’t know what guys think, but when girls are talking to each other we look at other girls and talk about how thin or thick their legs are. Probably and slowly we’re all brainwashed.” – Heesoo (Pilates, 27)

“People care a lot about their looks. It’s totally an appearance-focused world. When you figure that out you start to think about your looks and begin to wear makeup.” – Yeonji (Pole dance, 32)

Heesoo uses the word, “brainwashed” and admits to how even she talks about other’s appearances and reflects on herself to look better and more attractive. The belief of the Korean society being appearance oriented and one that emphasizes “lookism” has been co-related with poorer self-rated health (Lee et al., 2017). “Lookism” refers to appearance discrimination or “the practice of discrimination on the basis of physical appearance in the workplace” (Ghodrati, Joorabchi, & Muati, 2015). Despite discrimination over appearance is widespread in most societies (Berry, 2016), it is a critical factor in Korea. Kim (2010c) analyzes the connection of job qualifications and appearance as a credential which is influenced

universally. Several online news articles discuss experiences and the reality of the importance of appearance in getting a job (Heo, 2012; Kim, 2020b). This strong idea of physical attractiveness being a social trend has been looked over decades and points out a combination of media and celebrity influences to perpetrate “Erotic capital” –coined by Hakim (2010).

Due to “brainwashing” contents of looks and appearances, this could be assumed as to the reason why participants worry and stress about their weight even though they are not chubby or in any ways overweight. According to Han, Brewis, and SturtzSreetharan (2018), it was found that the population of weight management between the years 2001 to 2009 had increased as to the reason for “personal concerns of bodies being too fat”. As mentioned, the participants took matters into account and strongly argued that even compliments of “looking” thin stressed them out.

“It goes to a point where I don’t even want to keep the conversation going when people tell me that I haven’t gained weight.” – Yungji (Yoga, 30)

“I know it’s (dieting and losing weight) for self-satisfaction. But I want to be thinner and I don’t like myself in the mirror. So when someone compliments that I’m exercising and looking healthy, it reminds me of myself in the mirror.” –Yoonsu (Yoga, 28)

As mentioned by Yungji and Yoonsu, they were not satisfied with their appearances and bodies. Interestingly, the two participants were engaging in yoga and it was apparent that participants involved in yoga seemed to have more obsessions of their facial and bodily appearances. According to Jinhee, another yoga participant, she also wanted to have a satisfying body through her practices in yoga.

“I want to have a small waist and a butt that is hipup (toned butt). And I want to have thin arms so when I wear yoga tights I can see my waist.” – Jinhee (Yoga, 27)

However, for Soojin a 35-year-old yoga participant – the oldest of the yoga participants – expressed a different viewpoint for her reason to begin yoga and her perception of the body she wants.

“I started yoga because I wanted to be more flexible and wanted to find peace. That’s why I was interested. I was under a lot of stress and I felt so weak. I thought yoga could help me. ... Dieting wasn’t the first reason, but I would be lying if it wasn’t one of the reasons. ... I don’t want to gain weight. Of course. But I don’t want to be thin. I don’t think it’s healthy. Maybe a toned out body is ok, but I don’t want to be thin and skin. I want to look healthy, maybe with a little bit of muscle.” – Sooji (Yoga, 35)

As stated in her response she would rather have a healthy body, than a thin and skinny body. Her definition of a healthy body referred to one with toned and fit with little muscle. Her intentions of beginning yoga were different from the other three yoga participants who wanted to exclusively lose weight and diet. Similar to yoga participants, those participating in Pilates and pole dance had different interpretations of the body they desired. However, the majority of them were aware of the factors that influenced others and themselves to participate in exercise. The following sub-chapters discuss the factors that influence participation and viewpoints of an appearance-oriented society. It will also mention the differences of perspectives according to the exercise they are engaging in.

4.2.1. The supply and the supplier of social standards: Media and celebrities

Throughout in-depth interviews, all the participants mention Korea being an appearance-oriented society. They also mention a combination of factors that influences the society to be based on appearance. First, the participants discuss celebrities and media outlets that effect how people form perceptions of appearance. Perpetual exposure of media contents influence audience to validate ideal images, identifies them as normal, and allows people to be involved in social comparison (Grabe, Ward, & Hyde, 2008). As all participants are aware of the society's social standards of female images and body shapes, they have an ideal "her" that is manifested

through personal experience and media sources.

“I think Koreans all go on diets. It’s an appearance-oriented society. If you look at IG (Instagram) and their influencers they promote themselves with before and after pictures and once I got into it, it was like, ‘reality check’. Why are there so many, too many contents about looks?”
– Haeji (Pole dance, 34)

Haeji expressed her experience of social media use. She points out how IG (Instagram) has account users who are influencers and they promote themselves for endorsements which mostly post photos that are appearance focused. Haeji feels as though there are lots of posts and contents that are related to looks. Instagram is a social networking platform that all the participants are involved in. They all have active accounts and upload posts regularly. Currently, it is known to be one of the most used SNS portals between Koreans.

In the following statement, Unni highlights SNS as a platform for competition among women and girls. She explains that it is a stage for women, including herself, to post her daily self to look better than another female.

“We just say that we’re losing weight, but it means “trying to be thin”. And seriously, it’s like the girls are

trying to compete with each other on SNS. I don't want to be in the competition, but I do it too. I post myself and the gifts I get, and almost everything. I don't like that part of myself, but I do (post)." – Unni (Pilates, 30)

Yoonsu also expresses her discomfort about SNS posts and that it is as though women are competing to “look more revealing”. She points out the clothing that women wear when they are exercising. According to Bhalla and Moscovitz (2020) U.S. women's magazines that feature yoga, usually include photos of women in tight clothes which objectify parts of the body. Though their study points out how those in the Eastern society wear loose clothing during yoga, the commodification of yoga and its contemporary practices, yoga has transformed worldwide.

“If you look at SNS posts, people are trying to look more revealing. That's why they wear less clothing or exposing more, take photos and uploading them. They use sex appeal to get more people to like their photos and follow their accounts. Honestly, I do it too. I like sexy clothes and I think anyone in the world would feel good when someone likes their photos on IG.” – Yoonsu (Yoga, 28)

Interestingly, all participants mentioned SNS as an influence to the society being fixated to appearance and all of them were actively using

different forms of SNS. However, participants engaging in Pilates and yoga showed much obsession over looks, body shapes and appearances, while pole dance participants were rather relaxed when talking about their body shapes and postings on SNS.

“I post a lot of pole dance practice videos on my (SNS) account. I really care out my techniques (during pole dance routines) every time I take them. I want to post the best ones (videos). And they are all uploaded for anyone and everyone to see. I think it’s like a community for pole dancers to share their pole videos. We know each other from contests and from classes.” – Haeji (Pole dance, 34)

“I like uploading my pole dance videos. I can show and see how much I’ve improved. Anyone and I think everyone wants to show people how much they have achieved something. For me it’s just pole dance.” – Myeongin (Pole dance, 26)

For pole dance participants, their SNS accounts are used to share their pole dancing videos for them and others to see their progress. Pole dance participants understood their SNS platforms as a method of communication within the pole community. Whereas, other participants did not post their exercise experiences as much as pole dance participants. This

difference could be due to the characteristics of each exercise. Through observations, all exercises have several level classes. However, yoga and Pilates classes were difficult to differentiate the difference of each class. With yoga and Pilates, even with a beginner in the class or an advanced participant, it was easy to focus on their individual level and participate during the class. Though, in the case of pole dance, participants who were able to do specific tricks (pole techniques) were allowed to go on to advanced classes.³⁵ Furthermore, Suyung, a pole dance participant, emphasizes the influence of celebrities, however, she expresses a strong disagreement to how they diet and how she does not want to try dieting methods as celebrities. Whereas, other participants of different exercises – yoga and Pilates— conformed to the social standard and media preference of appearance, pole dance participants highlighted a rather resisting attitude.

“Celebrities are so skinny. If you take a look at what celebrities eat, I can’t live like that. I think they eat just enough not to die.” – Suyung (Pole dance, 36)

“I know I can’t have a body like a celebrity. They aren’t real. It’s not in my dictionary. I just want a body with a strong core. And I’m not a skinny girl. We all know that... (laugh)... I want to have a fit body. Plus pole dance is a

³⁵ The different cultures and practices of each exercise can be found in the previous subchapter, *Background of participated exercises by participants*.

full body exercise so it will help.” – Myeongin (Pole dance, 26)

Brown and Tiggemann (2020) highlight celebrity photos posted on IG result in higher levels of body dissatisfaction among female users. In addition studies have shown an effect of celebrity SNS images on body images (Brown & Tiggemann, 2016; Tiggemann & Zaccardo, 2015). As participants showed their opinions of celebrity and media contents of body related posts, some showed a sense of conform while some resisted to the body standards. However, all participants were aware of the existence of a “social standard” for appearance and body.

“I think media has such a high effect on our society. There are audition programs and the internet, TV shows, everywhere. They all talk about plastic surgery and we’re all amused by it that we want to try. Because at the end, they do all look beautiful.” – Yoonsu (Yoga, 28)

Yoonsu states TV shows to be one of the factors of responsibility towards the obsessions of appearance. Choi (2018) analysis of a Korean weight-loss reality show articulates female bodies and women whose body were larger considered themselves “abnormal” which reinforces the dominant cultural of thinness and slenderness bodies as the normative. TV shows that analyze appearance culture in Korea have been conducted, most

of which were reality shows that depicted plastic surgery as the main topic (Kim, 2020a; Lee, 2016). Thus the following sub-chapter explains the views of plastic surgery which was a topic brought up by all participants.

4.2.2. Conforming to social standards of appearance

As participants mentioned the Korean society to be highly focused on appearances, they add opinions and social dynamics over the topic of plastic surgery. It is a widely known fact that Korea has become not only one of the top countries in Asia for cosmetic procedures or “going under the knife” for multiple reasons, but it has also been noted to have the highest rate of plastic surgeries per capita in the world (Marx, 2015). In addition, it seems that the Korean society is conscious of the fact that it is internationally known that the country is a “plastic surgery giant” (Kim, 2007). Despite the size of Korea being a “plastic surgery giant” men and women have the tendency not to reveal their experiences of plastic surgery procedures. As Yungji mentions in her interview, she links plastic surgery as a result to the Korean society being appearance-oriented. As she talks about this topic of plastic surgery and cosmetic procedures, she makes gestures and facial expressions which indicate that it’s the truth and everyone is aware.

*“Korea is appearance-oriented. That’s why it’s called
the plastic surgery giant.” – Yungji (Pilates, 30)*

In the following, Yoonsu also agrees to how Koreans consider appearance an important factor in employment which also leads to plastic surgery procedures. She also comments that watching others getting cosmetic procedures provokes people to lose confidence, but to also participate in the plastic surgery culture.

“First of all, Koreans take so good care of their appearance, compared to people from other countries. I think Koreans are the most beauty and get the most plastic surgery. Even when you’re applying for a job or just simply watch TV shows, people rank people according to their looks. I think when we watch those shows or experience things in the real world, people start to lose confidence and start to go on diets or fix (plastic surgery).” – Yoonsu (Yoga, 28)

Though all the participants discussed the topic of plastic surgery not many of them spoke up about their personally experiences with injections or procedures. However, Yoojung shares her experience. She also adds that her friends do not reveal to others if they have plastic surgery experience.

“Yeah, I did get some procedures, but you can’t say this is really plastic surgery. My friends get real surgery. What

I did was just a little injection. Everyone does it, they just don't say anything.” –Yoojung (Pilates, 29)

“Actually, everyone gets something (cosmetic procedure) done. These days there are girls that inject extra fat into their butts and boobs. People recommend implants than fat. They feel real. I mean it's a century of self-satisfaction. Maybe too much would be problem, but boob job or butt job, it doesn't matter.” – Unni (Pilates, 30)

In the statement above made by Unni, she expresses a certainty of plastic surgery to be a part of self-satisfaction. It sounds as though she has her own standard of what is “too much” being a problem. The analysis of Korean women and plastic surgery has mostly been based upon facial procedures (Davies & Han, 2011; Holliday & Elfving-Hwang, 2012; Lee, 2016; Leem, 2017). Not much has been focused on body re-construction or bodily cosmetic injections. However, throughout this study, participants mention ideal bodies that “get made” under the knife.

I think it's a trend. There's a trend for body ideals and I think right now girls want larger boobs and bigger hips and small waists. It's not realistic. You have to get injections and plastic surgery for a body like that. ... But

I'm not born that way and I don't want any surgery done to me.” – Soojin (Yoga, 35)

Soojin points out the type of ideal body women desire. In the following response Yoonsu adds as the body ideals change the procedures that people get are evolving as well.

“Girls want to have an hour glass shape, but a thin type. It's impossible. I honestly want a body like that, but I can't get that body unless I'm born again or I go under the knife. I closest I can do is to work out. Then at least I can have a round butt. But breasts are another story.” – Yoonsu (Yoga, 28)

Interestingly, pole dance participants were aware of the fact that the society based much on looks and body shapes; however, they expressed another set of responses which were different from yoga and Pilates participants. Myeongin admits to having the desire to change her looks, yet she felt more confident with her body after beginning pole dance. In addition Haeji states that she had low self-esteem and confidence. However, with her experience in pole dance, she points out her gain in confidence and self.

"Of course I do want changes, but I mean I like how I look now. Honestly, pole dance has actually made me confident

about my body and looks.” – Myeongin (Pole dance, 26)

“I think after stating pole dance, I gained a lot of confidence and I think it’s really empowering to women. It really helps with self-esteem and I don’t know why, but I began to like my body. When I started pole dance, I had just gotten out of a horrible relationship and my level of self-pride and everything about me, was really, really, really, low.” – Haeji (Pole dance, 34)

It has been noted that pole dance participation enhances women’s empowerment and self-esteem as well as positive body images (Just & Muhr, 2020; Pellizzer, Tiggemann, & Clark, 2016; Whitehead & Kurz, 2009). When discussing the topic of plastic surgery, yoga participants talked much about body shapes and body injections, while Pilates participants were very sensitive about their looks and did not want to reveal too much of their experience. All participants were not fully open with sharing their plastic surgery experience, hence it was not easy to identify whether a participant had experienced cosmetic procedures. All participants were aware of the fact that Korea is a plastic surgery giant. In contrast, pole dance participants had more responses of self-love and high confidence in their bodies compared to other participants. As mentioned in the previous sub-chapter of the background and characteristics of the exercise, despite the fact that pole

dance requires participants to wear less clothing during classes – compared to yoga and Pilates – participants; Haeji, Yeonji, Suyung, and Myeongin had positive attitudes of their bodies.

4.2.3. Women's movement and aesthetic labor

The movement in Korea and resistance to aesthetic labor

Since 2018, Korea has undergone several incidents in which feminist demonstrations have occurred. With the blow against the country's #metoo movement and most recently feminist demonstrations that were against several misogynistic practices, one of which is the "Free the corset movement". Though, the change of social and political status in Korea, women are pressured by Confucian family systems and society as well as beauty regimes. This social atmosphere of women spreading their voice of self-liberation and societal freedom, media text and participants express controversial reactions.

"They (women) don't have to wear makeup and they can do whatever they want, but I choose to look nice, because I'm a female." – Unni (Pilates, 30)

"I get what they are trying to say, but I don't want to be a part of it, it's too political." – Yoonsu (Yoga, 29)

Unni and Yoonsu express their neglect to the social movement.

Most of the participants did not want to freely discuss this topic. Some answered that they did not want to have an opinion about this because they did not know what feminism was or the intentions of women's movements. They agreed that it was too controversial and did not want to be part of politics.

Interestingly out of all the articles that were selected, this was the only editorial that was published. This exceptional article highlighting the 'corset-free movement', was part of the *Special Issue* section from May. With the title *2019 Corset-Free Report* (2019 탈코르셋 보고서), it included features from social movements to celebrity lifestyles in relation to this topic. This article is divided into four parts. The first part explains what the movement is. In the second part, it shares celebrity's perspectives and ways they participate in the movement. The third part includes an interview with a beauty Youtuber. Last, the article ends with a subscriber survey. Additionally, in the August issue, there is a short article about celebrities that have gained or lost weight for their body transformations. Some view that female celebrities that have gained weight look healthier or "better" than when they were thinner. However, this article rather manipulates social acceptance by portraying, "weight gaining" creates an attractive look. Due to the fact that the celebrities looked like they were too skinny to begin with. Thus, the May issue which reviews the Corset-Free Movement with information and interviews are a bigger influence on the readers.

The sub-title includes the following statement:

I want to be free. I want to be free from hair styles, clothes, makeup, anything that symbolizes femininity. It is ok to not be pretty. I have found freedom and my body has become healthier.” – May 2019 (Special Issue)

“Corset-free” (탈 코르셋) is a social movement where women do not have to wear makeup or do any aesthetic labor depending on other’s gaze or perspectives. It resists the society’s standardized definition of feminine-like (or female-like, female appropriate) and promotes freedom and independence to female individuals. In other words, it allows women to challenge aesthetic labor performed by females for “better looking” appearances. In Korea, the Corset-Free Movement is a feminist act which has been spread through online networks and street protests to free women from standardized “feminine” appearances. It is known for the 1020 generation to be the center of the movement which is online-networking-focused (Kim, 2019a). Regardless of the Corset-Free Movement, several feminist activities have been going viral via social media and later disseminate offline which is viewed as an online networking behavior found among the millennial era (Kim, 2019b).

According to Part 1, aesthetic labor is defined as “the social requirements that are demands only females to emphasize feminine practices such as makeup, fashion, dieting, and appearance management.” Throughout this part of the article it covers examples of resisting to

aesthetic labor as a component of the Corset-Free Movement. First, it shares the most common knowledge of the movement, “not wearing bras” (also known as the “free the nipple” movement). It states that in Korea, wearing no bras out in public seems too extreme, thus women find other ways to wear comfortable bras such as bras without wires and bra tops. It also highlights how “no wire” product sales have increased by 20%. Moreover, it points out How international recording artist, Rihanna’s inner wear brand which promotes all type of body sizes in comparison to Victoria Secret’s “unrealistic and forced images” of the female body and its innerwear. Second, the article shares menstrual pads and cups. It quotes:

“Even women were not fully educated about their menstrual cycle or biological information, but rather gave them a sense of hate or fear. It is important for women to be aware of their bodies and to provide them with the rights to do what they want with their bodies.”

The article mentions that it was discomforting to people when using the direct word for menstruation. Therefore, alternative words such as “that day”, “red day”, “magic day” or “the female day”, were used to describe female menstruation. However, this part of the article gives an example of a domestic menstrual pad brand that uses the word, menstruation. The text and former quote encourages women to gain knowledge about menstruation and products that are being used recently, instead of menstrual pads.

Third, it highlights the “no makeup” trend. It talks about how wearing no makeup has become a trend and more students and people are wearing less makeup and looking more comfortable when going to work. It gives international celebrity examples, but none of domestic celebrities.

Last, Part 1 includes international examples of movements being practiced outside of Korea. It includes Japan’s #Kutoo which resists female from wearing heels; the movement against PINK TAX in England which is against the amount of tax being paid according to gender; USA’s Freedom Trash Can which became the moment of “No More Ms. America”; and Saudi Arabian women’s “Nicab under my foot”. In addition it briefly mentions two cases of males wearing dress; one of which was about in 2017 when school boys wore dresses to school due to the weather conditions in England and in 2015 for men wearing dresses to protest on online social media over sexual violence.

Part 2 – It’s okay to not be pretty (예쁘지 않아도 괜찮아)—mentions stories of Korean female idol group member’s diet experiences that resulted in depression. Recently, due to the change in fashion trends and societal acceptance, female idols’ attire has changed from heels and short skirts to tennis shoes and comfortable wear. This part also depicts celebrities that have broken the social stereotypes of female appearance. Eight domestic female celebrities and two foreign celebrities are introduced with their lifestyles and views of social standards. It illustrates some female

performers to be comfortable showing their masculine sides while others display comfortable clothes or less makeup. Additionally, Part 2 includes media source recommendations such as books, web-toons, songs, movies and dramas that emphasize the Corset-Free Movement.

Part 3—I'm not pretty (나는 예쁘지 않습니다.) is an interview with a famous beauty Youtuber. This female Youtuber uploaded a clip declaring the Corset-Free Movement which hit over 7 million views. She highlighted, through the uploaded Youtube video, that she experienced depression, anthropobia, and eating disabilities before she gained confidence after starting her beauty Youtube channel. During her Youtube channel episodes she teaches people about how to wear makeup and through her tutorials she too had gained self-esteem. However, after her video clip of announcing her participation in the movement, she points out how much happier she has become and is satisfied with her decision.

Throughout the interview she mentions her perspective of beauty and appearance. She quotes:

“The standardized beauty that the media has created only cut my self-esteem.”

“This is because we are all taught from a young age about social acceptance and what is accepted in society. This has to go away for everyone to be equal.”

“We are all judged by how we look. ‘Everyone wears makeup’, ‘if you diet, you will look better’, ‘just get a little bit of surgery’, ‘you’re all fine, just your body needs to be worked on’. We hear these things on a daily bases.”

“If there were a variety of female celebrity looks and appearance then maybe it could be better and if you thought you weren’t embarrassed about your face without makeup, then would you even think about putting on so much makeup every day?”

“I think the standards are harder on women. You don’t see people saying a male celebrity is too fat or ugly without makeup.”

“I hope that women of the next generation are freer. I hope that women aren’t criticized for being less pretty or less careful just because they are female. And that females don’t have to experience discomfort only because they are female.”

“I hope this society changes and one day, aesthetics is a choice not a necessity.”

She points out social stereotypes of how women should appear.

Furthermore, it is mentioned that media does not depict a variety of different female bodies and shapes.

The last part of this article is a survey from the subscribers. It shows how women have had experience in being criticized or judged by their appearances. Furthermore, it shows that there is a high percentage of subscribers that are practicing the corset-Free Movement (85.7%). And of the women practicing this movement, the majority answered how they are wearing more comfortable clothes than attire that is revealing. Though, through the survey there does not seem to be dramatic change or practice, it is visible to see that women are participating and taking baby steps in changing social standards.

Despite the fact that the resistance to aesthetic labor had begun from 2018 and is still being practiced to current day, the participants of the research did not mention much about the incident. They point out that it is too controversial or it is too political. They also mention that the movement does not represent all women and their perceptions of beauty. However, most of the participants did not voluntarily mention this incident or they did not want or have any opinions about the situation.

4.3. The Postcolonial “Her”

This following subchapter provides findings of participants’ responses and media texts manifestation from a postcolonial feminist

approach. A postcolonial feminist theory focuses on the representation of non-Western women and acknowledges the diversity of perspectives within female studies (Narayan & Harding, 2000). In addition it is a response to the dominant frame of feminism and considers gender, race, class and sexualities of women's experiences in different contexts (Lewis & Mills, 2003). Therefore, this section is divided into three themes: Patriarchal society and male gaze, "He said he wouldn't date a big girl"; "Her" body image: Westernization, for which it stands; Class and status: The price tag of "my exercise".

The first theme negotiates the culture and traditional aspects of the Korean society of male presence and the definition of female bodies. The changing status and ideas of female participation in society allows women to participate in physical activities, not as a resistance to patriarchal society, but as a means to reach the transforming standards of society. The second theme highlights participants' responses of a Westernized body ideal that is formed from media texts and celebrities. They point out the fact that this ideal body is not Korean, but rather a Westernized female version of a Korean, hence a "Koreanized" Barbie doll. The last theme emphasizes the transformation of class and economic status in which the participants naturally acquired through their lifetime. This allowed them to label meanings to their exercise as a "branded" item, "valuable experience", or simply an exercise method. The themes and subthemes are listed in the

following table.

Table. 8 The Postcolonial “Her”: Themes and subthemes

Themes	Subthemes
Patriarchal society and male gaze	
“Her” body image	“Apple hip” and aesthetic procedures Barbie doll body in Korea
Class and status	

4.3.1. Patriarchal society and male gaze

Participants invested in exercises to go on diets due to an appearance-oriented society. They later emphasized that exercise was a “healthier way” to lose weight compared to the pressures of keeping a specific body shape and size. However, some participants mention the presence and social perceptions of the counterpart was a reason to exercise to stay fit and toned. Mulvey (1988) theorizes “the male gaze” symbolized from film production and erotized perspective of the heterosexual male. The concept of the male gaze has been taken into account as the hegemonic discourse that continues to reinforce ‘a univocal model for the female body’(Ponterotto, 2016). Yoojung shares her experience of male gaze to be

offensive however, a motivation for her to begin exercising.

“I was walking down the street and these guys (men) were talking about if they could date a girl who was chubby. And they were looking at me and laughing, and saying that they could never be with a girl who was big. Honestly, it hurt so much. I was like, and you think you’re look handsome? And these incidents really pushed me to find an exercise that suited me. I don’t want to be laughed at.”
– Yoojung (Pilates, 29)

Though Mulvey (1988)’s theory of male gaze is criticized to be restrictive and as a generalization of female representation (Gledhill, 1999). Glapka (2018) conducts a Feminist Poststructuralist Discourse Analysis to understand the vague personalized way of coping with male gaze. It is pointed out that females are not colonized by the male presence and gaze rather it is related to the engagement of “gendered relations of looking” (Glapka, 2018). Furthermore, the surveillance of women’s bodies is not in the technology of consciousness; however, it can be understood as a socio-cultural state. In the following interview response, Jinhee mentions the culture scope of boys and girls and how they interact as pre-teens and adolescents about appearance.

“I think since when you’re young, there are boys that

make fun of fat and ugly looking girls. Because of that it goes on until you are an adult. In Korea, when you're young and you lack social skills because you're young, we don't get the chance to understand differences. Just because something is unfamiliar they automatically think it's weird and you're made fun of." – Jinhee (Yoga, 27)

Jinhee explains “unfamiliar” to label as “odd” or “abnormal”. As highlighted in the previous sub-chapter of media and body shape, — large women participating in weight loss TV programs categorizing themselves as “abnormal” or “outcasts” (Choi, 2018) – it is found to say that the social standards and phenomenon of putting non-thin and non-slender notion has been built from younger ages. Yoonsu comments that it is a sure fact that people want to look nice for their counter-other and points out her investment in exercise is to allow herself to look attractive.

"I think it's obvious. You want to look nice in front of people. Men exercise to look appealing to women. Women do the same thing. I think there is a limit to saying, yeah, I do exercise for health and self-satisfaction. That might be true, but it's not the whole truth....Of course I want to look appealing to the opposite sex. Who doesn't?" – Yoonsu (Yoga, 28)

It has been pointed out that the desirability of physical attractiveness and to demonstrate beauty can be noted as a contribution to erotic capital. Erotic capital which works as a factor that transforms women's status in society apart from cultural, social, economic capital, is a form of value that is specially found in females (Hakim, 2010). To obtain "elements" of physical attractiveness, participants engage in exercise, simultaneously are aware of choosing environments that are sanctuary solely for females. This is discussed in the previous chapter where Yungi (p. 89) chooses to participate in an exercise away from a male presence. In addition to Yoonsu, a sense of agreement in her last statement is reflected. the assumption to not being able to explore this part of the participants can be related to socio-cultural factors to keep "real" intentions private.

However, from a cultural aspect that emphasizes the "showy culture" of Korea, which is a unique phenomenon in East-Asian countries. "Showy culture" is rooted from the Confucius practice of "being presentable" and "neat" in public (Wha, 2005). The dominated ideology is practiced among females participating in exercise which rather displays their bodies, in contrast to the original notion of female bodies within the structure of Confucius values.

4.3.2. "Her" body image

The combination of participant responses and media data, it was

found that both parties were aware of current trends of body images. As *<Woman Sense>* introduced SNS celebrities and influencers through the “Into the Beauty” section of the magazine, there were direct and indirect messages to the formation of the ideal body image. It presented females in tight leggings and, though there were females who were married or had just finished their maternal leave, they mostly pursued the thin ideal. In addition, the participants were not subscribers of this magazine; however, they were adequately aware of the thin body ideal that society nowadays desires. Throughout the next set of findings, participants and media data shape narratives of a specific body structure and methods such as plastic surgery and aesthetic injections to reach the goal of the ideal body shape.

“Apple hip” and aesthetic procedures

According to *<Woman Sense>*, exercise related articles mostly introduce a protagonist whose abilities and profession is in specific exercises. The protagonist is usually a woman, with the exception of a conventionally married couple. They are all dressed in tight leggings which reveal their bodies and pose in ways that allow the females to seem appealing and motivating for others to participate in exercise. In July’s issue, an owner of a Pilates studio talks about her experience as a female fitness star and current Pilates studio owner. She once again introduces hip and glut workouts for an attractive butt, also known as the “apple hip”.

Haesun talks about the “apple hip” and the female fitness star featured in the magazine. She was not aware of this article at the time of the interview, however, through media platforms she was well informed about the trendy, “apple hip”. She also adds her opinion about the “apple hip” saying that it was a bit over-exaggerated while conforming to the fact that “people” preferred a body like the star.

“Everyone is talking about apple hip. There’s this female trainer who is famous for her apple hip. It’s too much, but it’s what people want these days.” – Haesun (Yoga, 29)

“There are so many things on TV and just advertisements about the apple hip.” – Yungji (Pilates, 30)

“You know how in the United States, they use the peach emoji to resemble a butt. I think it’s the equivalent of the apple hip in Korea.” – Yeonji (Pole dance, 32)

All three participants mention the “apple hip” becoming a serious trend through media platforms. Yeonji also adds that the “peach emoji” represents a round butt and that it is similar to the apple butt in Korea. Lelwica, Hoglund, and McNallie (2009) mentions “the globalization of thinness” which “commercial interests that produce and promote a narrow diversity of female models in the United States also underwrite the

globalizations of the religion of thinness” and this has spread worldwide.

Furthermore, Schwekendiek, Yeo, and Ulijaszek (2013) highlight that the “new ideal body type shaped by the media in Korea is primarily a Western body”. Thus, the participants and the media articles naturally illustrate a female body that is non-Korean and rather foreign, hence, mostly Western. Park (2011) highlights the preference of the westernization of bodies, both male and female, when it comes to surgical procedures. According to Nah et al. (2009), the “Westernized Beauty” became the alternative of the “Korean Beauty” due to plastic surgery technology being imported from Western countries. Since plastic surgery began in the 1960’s in Korea from Western missionary influence which mainly effected women to get “double eye lid” surgery to make their eyes look bigger and sharper like Western females. Yoonsu agrees to how women are going under the knife to “look” like Westerners because it has become the ideal face and body.

“First of all people get plastic surgery to look like Westerners. Thick lips, higher and pointer nose, bigger eyes. They don’t only do it once or twice. People keep on getting them done. Eyes, nose and mouth. And now their bodies too. Some girls get tanned and get butt implants or injections then breast implants. I guess you can say the ideal body has become westernized.” – Yoonsu (Yoga, 28)

Furthermore, Suyung strongly expresses that the standard body of a Korean female is far from “apple hips” and “big breasts” as well as Soojin shows her opinion of bigger butts and breasts. Soojin uses the word “abnormal” and “deformed”. To her, the “ideal body” does not look proportionate or healthy. Though she points out that it is a body that the counterparts would prefer.

“Honestly, the truth? Apple hip and big boobs aren’t Korean. How can an Asian have big boobs and a high butt? It can’t come natural. It’s either made by another human, like plastic surgery, or it’s just a lot of exercise and hard work. But the big breast part is really surgery. It doesn’t make sense.” – Suyung (Pole dance, 36)

“You obviously have to get surgery to have a body with big butts and big breasts. There’s this celebrity who has a really big butt, but it’s not natural. I think she is the perfect example of Western culture. We all know it’s not natural. It’s rather a bit abnormal, deformed is what I really want to say. Women want that type of body because that’s what men prefer these days.” – Soojin (Yoga, 35)

Yoojung also adds to Soojin’s response by highlighting that the bodies that people are obsessed about are “strange” and “not in proportion to

the human autonomy”. Soojin also makes a point about a Korean celebrity who is an example of Western culture. The image of this female celebrity portrays Western-styled looks and the personality she displays on TV shows appears “American” to many viewers. Yoojung is a designer and drafts several female and male bodies for her work. She discusses her work and sketch experience as a reference to body shapes and images.

“I’m a designer and so I’ve been looking at and drawing women’s bodies my whole entire life. I studied the human autonomy and it is impossible to have a body like that (big hips, small waist, and large breasts). It’s rather it is not in proportion and it honestly looks strange.” – Yoojun (Pilates, 29)

Barbie doll body in Korea

As other participants mention the desire for the ideal body, Unni and Yoonsu point out the “Barbie doll body”. The discourse around the Barbie doll has been mentioned in the course of body ideals (Rice, Prichard, Tiggemann et al., 2016; Urla & Swedlund, 2007; Van Der Hoort, Guterstam, & Ehrsson, 2011). However, it has not been highlighted much through Korean literature. In the culture of Korea, Barbie dolls are not mostly found. Hence the fact that the Barbie doll itself is a doll played in the United States, Koreans are not as accustomed to Barbies as those of girls in the United

States. Rice, Prichard, Tiggemann et al. (2016) emphasize that the interaction with a Barbie doll may allow young girls to have a assumed interest for a thin body, however, does not have a direct influence on body image. Furthermore, the discourse of the Barbie doll attracts young girls rather than those of age and has influenced the toy market (Walter, 2011). In the following quotes, both participants assume that the ideal body is constructed from the West, therefore, the Barbie doll.

“Girls with big butts, long legs, big boobs, like a Western. But it’s exactly like a Barbie doll. Something Westerners made. I don’t know what they say now, but I did hear that the Barbie doll image was a problem in the West. But that’s the image that girls idealize.” – Unni (Pilates, 30)

“Some girls, their SNS IDs are like ‘barbie’ something or something ‘barbie’. And when you look at their photos, they look so artificial. But people want women to have perfect bodies.” – Yoonsu (Yoga, 28)

However, regardless of media and participant’s awareness of the desire to have a westernized body, they understand non-Korean cultures prefer a “healthier looking body”. Yungji explains that when she visited countries abroad, she noticed how women still wore tight clothes regardless of their weight. Myeongin also points out how foreign countries would

desire a healthier body than a thin body. She also expresses the strong craving for a body that is almost impossible to exist without surgery.

“In other countries people wear whatever they want and even if they have bell flab or stretch marks, they’ll still wear short shirts, even if it shows. But in Korea you can’t. If you’re not skinny and yours fat shows people look at you like you’re weird.” – Yungji (Pilates, 30)

“In foreign countries, people prefer a healthy body, but in Korea it’s a thin body that people want. I don’t think non-Koreans don’t like thin and girls whose thighs don’t have gaps. If you think about everyone is all about the apple hip. But at the same time, they want a thigh gap and big breasts. It’s impossible. You have to have plastic surgery.” – Myeongin (Pole dance, 26)

As the participants are aware of a healthier and natural looking body, media exposure of celebrities with Westernized facial features influences their ideas of the “perfect face and body”. Unni explains that the entertainment industry is predominated by a set of features that resemble westernized looks and “Asian looks” do not “get the spotlight”.

“So because of celebrities, who have westernized

features, they pretty much dominate the industry and so celebrities that look “plain” and Asian don’t get the spot light.” –Unni (Pilates, 30)

Furthermore, Soojin mentions Victoria Secret models that portray a thin Western image of females that influences Korean women to want to have a body like the models.

“Sometimes when I look at Victoria Secret models, I do envy them. Because they are tall and thin. They have big breasts and nice butts. But I can’t have that body. I guess I look at them and it’s like a vicarious pleasure. But I do think that their bodies and images do influence not just people in general, but also Korean celebrities too. It’s like a trend.”—Soojin (Yoga, 35)

Soojin also mentions that Victoria Secret models influence the celebrity body image trend of Korea. In a book written by Graham (2009), it points out personal experiences of the transition of a Barbie doll body to a Victoria Secret model image. Hence, this transition and trend of body ideals is international, yet, domestic in the sense of time and space.

4.3.3. Class and status

Pilates and pole dance participants expressed their interest in

obtaining certifications. Three of the four Pilates participants were in their process of gaining a Pilates instructor certification while pole dance participants already were certified instructors (beginner level) and were also aiming to enter pole dance competitions. Though all participants did not have professions as exercise instructors they desired to obtain licenses and certifications as well as competition experience. However, none of the yoga participants were interested in participating in yoga instructor workshops or certifications. They all did not show interest in being professionally involved in yoga and considered it as their form of exercise.

Unni, explains what certifications in Pilates means to her. She hasn't obtained her certification as an instructor; however, she is in the midst of going through the progress by taking classes and studying the human biology. She elaborates her response through the Korean culture of consumerism. Unni gives examples of people who buy and sell products while emphasizing the fact that products costs are extremely high. In addition she mentions high priced brands and uses it as a metaphor to explain how she indicates her Pilates license.

“People want things that others don't have or it's hard to find. Something unique, different and special. And when people market the stuff they put extra words like “premium”. Premium this, premium that. The products I guess make you feel like you are a better person. It's like if

I buy a car and it's a Benz or BMW but they don't have premium, but you have to reserve to buy it. Then people just have to make reservations to get that car. It's like an obsession to own high quality famous branded things. A Pilates license is something like this. You want to pay for expensive courses and expensive certificates because it makes you feel own the good brand certificate. It increases your self-esteem. You're just bluffing and showing off." – Unni (Pilates, 30)

To be a certified Pilates instructor, training courses last from three to six months and taking an exam for the license. The cost for the training programs can start from 2 million won to 6 million won (approximately 2 thousand dollars to 6 thousand dollars). The costs vary from the center the trainee is getting educated and for the type of Pilates license³⁶. To take a Pilates class, individual classes begin from 70 thousand won (approximately 70 dollars) and can be up to 10 thousand won per class. Some participants take small group lessons with an average of three to five people for discounted prices.

"There is this thing for Koreans, we think that a product is better because it's expensive. Or if it's from a brand.

³⁶ Different types of Pilates refer to Pilates with or without additional equipment. There are several types of equipment and every station that gives out licenses have their own way of calculating the cost of the education course as well as the types of Pilates.

Mostly if it's pricey people think it's a good well-made item. That's why everything is trying to beat each other in a game of constantly rising prices. It goes the same for Pilates certifications. They are expensive. Utterly expensive, but people still get the expensive ones because they look legitimate. And maybe that's not the case for everyone, I feel that way too.” – Yungji (Pilates, 30)

One of the core benefits of practicing Pilates is that workouts are “customized” and planned out for the physical characteristics of an individual. In other words, individual training elevates physical performance and enhances concentration on the single student/client/customer/participant. For those who are participating in Pilates, it is complex to label the individual who is participating in Pilates. Interestingly, yoga participants point out that Pilates classes were too expensive which was one of the reasons they choose to participate in yoga. Haesun mentions that she believes yoga and Pilates are similar and adds Pilates is a more “expensive form of yoga”.

“I haven't tried Pilates, but I think it is similar to yoga. Just more expensive. An expensive yoga class. People both wear leggings and tight clothes, you do similar stretches, but in Pilates you use machines and equipment.” –

Throughout Haesun's interview, it was evident to identify her participation in "contemporary yoga." Kim (2005b) points out the foundation of yoga and since the development of social and economic status within Korea, leisure activities or physical exercise forms have changed, hence, yoga has evolved and modernized to meet the standards of female consumers. Simultaneously, losing the essential characteristics of what "true yoga" implies, Haesun regards yoga as simply a form of exercise. Whereas, Soojin explains how yoga has changed over the years and she emphasizes that meditation is a key component in yoga practice.

"I started yoga to heal my body and mind. I heard that yoga focused on meditation and that the physical movements are connected to the circulation and meditation of the body. But many studios don't practice "true yoga"." Soojin (Yoga, 35)

According the *Woman Sense*'s May issue³⁷, a yoga youtuber introduces "Mindful Yoga" which elaborates meditation as a key factor in yoga and that those of the modern world need time to meditate as a means of stress relief. However, all the other issues do not indicate meditation as part of yoga. They have yoga-developed exercises and stretches, however

³⁷ See [Table. 2.].

cannot be indicated as “true yoga”. Furthermore, yoga participants do not mention class payments to be pricy or taking up too much of their time.

In contrast to Pilates and yoga, due to the characteristics of pole dance which holds annual domestic and international competitions, women were interested in achievements as well as being adventurous to try something that they never knew existed to begin with.

“I want to go to competitions. I know I’m not as good as the instructors, but there are divisions for amateurs like me to practice and compete. I think it’s a good opportunity to gain experience.” – Suyung (Pole dance, 36)

“I never exercised, but to be able to enter a competition. I think it’s a chance that I would love to take. That’s why I try really hard and invest a lot of energy doing this.” – Haeji (Pole dance, 34)

“Sometimes I think this is more than an exercise for me. I’m really into it.” – Yeonji (Pole dance, 32)

For pole dance participants, it shows that they are highly committed to their practice and exercise. They featured characteristics of “serious leisure” participants whom are fully committed to their form of leisure activity as well as desires of becoming “professionals” in their affiliated

leisure community (Stebbins, 1992). Furthermore, they regard pole dance as more than a simple exercise, rather a sport. Haeji expressed her opinion on pole dance as a sport and that it should be part of the Olympics. The discussion over pole dance (as known as pole sport) being recognized as an official sport from the IOC has been an on-going issue (BBC, 2017; Payne, 2017)

“I think pole dance is a sport. It’s different from yoga or Pilates. We learn skills and we have a community. I don’t think yoga or Pilates studios have that type of culture.” – Haeji (Pole dance, 34)

Though Weaving (2020) argues that pole dance should not be part of the Olympics due to its hyper-sexualized features. Many pole dance participants and instructors as well as officials support the inclusion of pole dance in the Olympics (Payne, 2017). Similar to Pilates certifications found through the research participants, pole dance certifications and competition entering demands a lot of expenses.

“Honestly, the more time and energy that I do spend on pole classes and competitions, the more money I spend. I don’t really feel it when I’m spending, but when I look back, too much. The clothes and just the amount of practice hall payments, it’s actually a lot.” – Myeongin

(Pole dance, 26)

As the studios are also private business and they are profit-based, it is an obvious fact that exercise studios ask for specified costs. However, the large amount of cash that is asked of for certifications and competition preparation is tied to the socioeconomic status of the participants. All participants have paid jobs as well as some are professionals in their field. Two participants have a high school degree, seven participants have a bachelor degree and three participants have master's degrees. The education level of the participants is mostly high which allow them to build their personal professional careers.

Equally featured in <*Woman Sense*>'s "*Into the Beauty*", the woman seem to be in similar age groups as the participants. It was not identified that the participants subscribed to this magazine, though we can assume the socio-cultural atmosphere of Korean women of the age group ranging from the mid-20's to mid-30. Occasionally the magazine presented women who were married³⁸ they resembled the participants. As both parties had careers, though the women in the magazine were mostly studio owners or instructors the images that they portrayed were alike.

³⁸ Five persons are married (Issue: February, April, June, July, and November), *See page 74.*

CHAPTER V. Concluding Remarks

The purpose of this study attempts to understand the formation of aesthetic exercise and to explore the experiences of Korean women participating in aesthetic exercise as well as to examine the influences of media texts articulating aesthetic exercise and woman's participation. Additionally, this study applies a postcolonial approach toward the phenomenon of female participation in exercise and the intersectional aspects that stand as a response to Western feminism from the experience of non-Western women. The following sections are separated into three parts.

5.1. Social and Cultural Dynamics of Aesthetic Exercise and Female Participation in Exercise

Exercise is physical activity that enhances and improves one's physical body. It benefits to keep a person fit and healthy. It is a known fact that the participation in physical activities allows individuals to gain health and fitness as well as to experience empowerment and self-esteem (Kim & Chang, 2015; Kim, Dattilo, & Heo, 2011; Park, 2017; Paul, 2015). Most recently, in Korea, it is visible to see that the participation of females in exercise and fitness has increased. According to the annual national sport-for-all participation survey in 2019, it is found that 57.7.6% of women in their 20's and 57.9% in their 30's participate in exercise more than two times a week which is an increase from 6.8% and 9.4% in 2010 (Korea

Institute of Sport Science, 2010;2019). Of the exercises that were participated among women, yoga has been extremely popular along with Pilates. The participation of females in yoga skyrocketed initiating the “yoga boom” – during the 2000’s—which was built around media exposure of dieting experiences of celebrities and the society’s obsession for physical appearance.

Before the increasing popularity of body management practices and high number of females participating in physical activities, the cultural atmosphere of Korea accumulated obsession for an attractive appearance. To understand the cultural values and its transitioning ideologies of gender roles and social norms of Korea, it is important to point out the philosophy of Confucianism. These values emphasize a patriarchal society which highlights distinct gender roles for women and girls to be represented from family as the wife, mother or daughter in contrast to independent individuals (Jung, Forbes, & Lee, 2009). This indicates that if a family member disobeyed social norms, it would be a negative reflection of the family which then is a disgrace within the community. Hence, culturally, it is emphasizes “saving face”, in other words keeping a good reputation. Therefore, the society is built on a tradition and culture to be presentable in front of others.

This notion to appear appealing in society has not changed, yet has expanded to influence several dimensions of society, for example

employment (Han, Brewis, & SturtzSreetharan, 2018; Kim, 2020b) and marriage (Holliday & Elfving-Hwang, 2012). In addition to traditional dynamics, popular culture reproduces non-intentional intentions that mirror the cultural atmosphere of an appearance-oriented society. For example the language used in media outlets such as “eulzzang” and “moomzzang” have become daily that they are engraved as social standards. Since the 1990’s “eulzzang” was mostly emphasized to support the beauty ideals, mostly for girls and women. Later in the 2000’s the “moomzzang” syndrome came across to all men and women to highlight “perfectly made bodies”. These words were broadcasted on media platform through celebrities that were embracing the standards.

The influence of celebrities in Korea also accumulates to the social standards of beauty. Grabe, Ward, and Hyde (2008) state that media portrayal of celebrities encourages a standardized body image which people consume and classify as ordinary or normal which influences people to compare their appearances to an unrealistic ideal. In fact, Woo (2014) highlights Korean women compare their physical appearances to idealistic images allowing them to experience low self-esteem. Therefore, many go under plastic surgery to obtain the “looks” that are “needed” to meet the social standards. In 2014, according to the International Society of Aesthetic Plastic Surgery, Korea was fourth in the rank for highest number of plastic

surgery procedures and estimated to have the fifth most plastic surgeons out of 30 countries.

Moreover, acquiring an appearance that is recognized in society initiates social appreciation and professional achievements. Furthermore, it is important to understand that Korea is a homogeneous society. Though it is pointed out that Korea is “no longer a homogenous society”(Lim, 2009) and transitions are being made to transform Korea into a multicultural society (Lee, Arcodia, & Lee, 2012), it is difficult to say that the culture of homogeneity has shifted with its growing number of diverse ethnic groups settling in Korea. As homogeneity is deeply embedded in its socio-cultural characteristics, it is easier to compare one’s self to others not only of physical appearance, but in many aspects of the society.

The complex combination of culture, individuals and society as well as the factors that influence the creation of an appearance-oriented society are compiled and reinforced in different dimensions of society. In this study, the accumulated features are applied and explored among females participating in the exercise scene. It focuses to understand the configuration of recent female-oriented exercises that aims for aesthetic goals and to explore the experiences of Korean women participating in aesthetic exercises as well as attempts to examine the culture articulating exercise and aesthetics through media texts.

The core emphasis of aesthetic exercise in this study is that they are exercises with aesthetic purposes for women while putting healthy and fitness invisible and visible at the same time. Here it categorizes yoga, Pilates and pole dance as aesthetic exercises conveyed as female-oriented and female-appropriate. Yoga in contemporary Korean society has been highly influenced by U.S. media and its commercialization of fitness and female domination (Kang & Kim, 2013; Kim, 2005b; Sim, 2015). In addition, celebrities and media exposure of promoting yoga as a popular form of exercise influences the intentions of yoga and delivers body ideals that are portrayed through the participation of yoga. According to the findings from <Women Sense>, SNS celebrities posed in leggings and tight clothing while performing movements the resembled yoga. They are all slim with thin legs and portray an ideal body image. In an interview article, an SNS celebrity points out that yoga has aesthetic qualities and demonstrates the physical benefits. Bhalla and Moscovitz (2020) highlights that yoga is commodified through popular media and reinforces hegemonic order which objectify women's body images into slim ideals.

Furthermore, Pilates in Korea is situated as a female-dominated exercise, mostly due to SNS postings of females in leggings tights practicing the exercise. Though its origin and purpose is for rehabilitation it has grown into the exercise and fitness industry attracting females. Additionally, literature groups yoga and Pilates under similar categorizes such as “slow

exercise” due to its benefited characteristics (Kim, 2005a). “Slow exercise” is an idea that was mentioned in the media to point out healthy lifestyles that are necessary to in modern day. It includes yoga, Pilates, Tai chi and core which are defined as “slow and soft movement” activities that utilize breathing techniques (Kim, 2005a). Markula (2004) mentions yoga and Pilates as “mindful-fitness” and includes “hybrid” fitness forms that are combinations of “western and eastern training principles” which are modified through popular culture, commercialization and consumerism and embraces to achieve a well-toned fit body ideal. “Mindful-fitness” also includes a fusion of yoga, Pilates and Tai Chi combined exercises participated by a majority of females.

Despite the synthesis of physical activities originated from different parts of the world and with differentiating purposes, it is found that they are highly female-targeted and aesthetic-oriented in the Korean context. In addition to pole dance which has skyrocketed in the participation and demand in Korea, it adds on to the category of aesthetic exercise. It is promoted through media platforms and celebrity participation as well as its emphasis on achieving ideal body shapes. For example, Chosun Media presented an article about a celebrity participating in pole dance and highlights her body figure with a photo of her posing in high heels before performing pole dance³⁹. In addition it is female-dominant which provokes

³⁹ Girl group member Yujo from Girlfriend’s beautiful body, “pole dance made luxury

an understanding that it is not “natural” for men to participate in the exercise. Hence, yoga, Pilates and pole dance are illustrated as female-oriented which neglects and views male participation in either of the exercises to be “not natural” or “strange” (Bae, 2017; Kim & Kwon, 2020; Kwon, 2016b).

This goes back to the socio-cultural contexts that surpass throughout all levels of the Korean society. As a society that has distinctively divided the roles for men and women, it is evident to have standardized norms in which need to be followed to conform to social order. This strongly pushes and separates gender-appropriate activities. It is not only in the domain of physical activities, but also in career fields and families. And it can be said that social norms are educated and practiced from the ideologies that are passed on from schools. However, with gender equality issues and the changing atmosphere of modern society, educational policies to include and encourage more girls to participate in sports and physical activities are being enforced (Hwang, 2019; Joo, 2015; Kim, 2007).

Consequently, many participants did not have experience in other physical activities prior to their currently engaged exercise. Due to their lack of opportunities in their middle and high school years, it was not easily assessable for the participants to begin an activity. They understood that without former experience, they believed they were not capable of learning

body” (여자친구 유주, 美친 몸매란 이런 것... ‘폴댄스로 만든 명품 몸매’.) 2020. Accessed 27th Dec. 2020.
https://www.chosun.com/entertainments/entertain_photo/2020/10/28/DGPEL3WRJIT2CC3UOD324B5CN4/.

a new physical activity as adults. However, the participants were motivated with the raising demand and supply for fit and toned bodies achieved through exercise.

Thus, the combination of a homogeneity, Confucius values, media and Western influence shapes the participation and culture of aesthetic exercise. In relation to the participants of the research point out their motives to begin exercising for the desire to lose weight. As mentioned in the findings, none of the participants appear over-weight or have been clinically diagnosed as obese. Yet, they constantly push themselves to go on diets and to lose weight to be thin. Choi (2018) highlights through weight-loss reality television programs reinforce slenderness as the normal and larger women to be marginalized and as “not feminine”. Television reality shows not only publicly display an ideal body image, but also focuses on the success stories of body transformation which encourage viewers to go through methods of weight loss procedures from simple dieting exercises to extreme body reconstruction plastic surgery. Therefore, participants of this study point out that their participation in exercise is rather a healthier method to manage their physical body rather than dramatic procedures.

Through the provided media text, it was visible to spot photos of women in tight apparels that noticeably presented the woman’s body. Each month, a section titled, “*Into the Beauty*” interviewed a female SNS celebrity who was an active participant of an exercise. The celebrities

mostly claimed to participate in exercises that were yoga, Pilates or a combination of the former exercises. They shared their experiences of weight loss and healthy eating habits. This section of the magazine can be understood as a reflection to body management and body image of modern day in Korea. The female celebrities were in the age range of mid-20's to late 30's and were illustrated as thin, slender and fit. They portrayed the body ideal of Korean women and practiced trendy exercises that were “suitable” for women. Many of the articles emphasized leg and hip exercises as well as flexibility and toning up light muscles. None of the articles mentioned fitness gym workouts or weight lifting exercises. The exposure of thin celebrities stimulates viewers to worship a thin ideal body image which aggravates negative body images and dissatisfaction that results to poor health issues such eating disorders and low self-esteem (Brown & Tiggemann, 2020; Maltby, Giles, Barber et al., 2005; Tiggemann & Zaccardo, 2018).

Additionally, the trend of “apple hip” is repeatedly presented through a famous Pilates trainer known for her toned body and mostly for her “apple hip”. The “apple hip” has been an ongoing trend among females in the exercise and fitness culture. It has cultivated as a component for an ideal body image. This is can be the equivalent to “peach booty” workouts that emphasize a hip and glut. Photos of fit and toned women with leggings and healthy bodies encourages women to work out, however, preserves a

“thin female body” (Lee & Kim, 2017). Though, the contents and the participants do conform to maintain a thin ideal body, they believe that their choice to exercise is a decision to live a healthy lifestyle.

Throughout the magazine exercise equipment reviews, exercise product recommendations, celebrity interviews of exercise experiences and daily routines, subscriber surveys related to dieting and exercise, and informational articles about health and exercises were found. Health magazine promote exercise as a method to achieve or keep an ideal body shape and links appearance orientations to health for females which reinforces gender roles and stereotypes (Bazzini, Pepper, Swofford et al., 2015). In addition, in an analysis of three yoga magazines covers promoted slender and lean female models in tight apparel under the age of 40 while one magazine presented fewer models in tight clothing (Webb et al., 2017). In contrast, it was found that women gave negative and lower body satisfaction toward athletic body messages than that of thin body messages and all messages about body ideal messages elevated body surveillance (Betz & Ramsey, 2017).

Due to the fact that the magazine utilized in the study was a general woman’s magazine that did not specify a specific topic, it revealed thin body ideals. It also assisted and recommended female-appropriate physical activities and equipment as a method to encourage women to participate in

exercise. However, as magazines are promoted in a commercial context, it is difficult to point out the actual intentions in which the magazine aims for.

5.2. Influence of Social Standards on the Mechanism of Female Physical Appearance

As the society is embedded with a set of values and ideas from tradition and culture and enforces these set of social standards in modern day, those being influenced display conformity by putting effort to achieve the ideal body image through exercise. Through the study, participants and media text highlighted media and celebrities, plastic surgery, and reactions towards social movements which provide the mechanism in which aesthetic exercise is shaped and presented. This construction of aesthetic exercise is integrated with popular culture and the development of technology. As media outlets have expanded due to the enhancement of the internet, social media platforms are utilized to spread and share information all over the world.

However, in the past couple of decades, media analysis (Kim & Aubrey, 2015; Kim, 2011b; Yoon, 2004) and experiences of females (Markula, 2004; Park, 2017; Whitehead & Kurz, 2009) have emphasized exercising and dieting as a trendy way of self-management as healthier ways of appearance management. Health and body management has grown with its aesthetic constructions (Washington & Economides, 2016) while fitness

clubs and exercise centers of all kinds have become a place to achieve physical capital and promote particular aesthetics in relation to the physical body (Frew & McGillivray, 2005; Hutson, 2013).

For women, the extent to achieve beauty have expanded from skin care (Ham, 2006) and facial plastic surgery (Leem, 2017; Schwekendiek, Yeo, & Ulijaszek, 2013), to body reconstruction procedures (Kim, 2020a). Hence to maintain social standards of beauty some have resulted in causing health and mental problems (Jun & Choi, 2014; Kim, 2011b; Kim & Park, 2012).

In the case of this study, articles from traditional media texts – woman’s magazine—<*Women Sense*> is analyzed. It is the top most subscribed magazine among females, however, none of the participants subscribe to it. Yet, standards of society’s ideal female body image are deeply engrained within their personal values and ideas. The magazine constantly exposes indirect messages such as exercise methods to achieve and surgical injections to carve body ideals.

Participants mention Korea as an appearance-oriented society (Lee, Son, Yoon et al., 2017). Nah, Tae, Roh et al. (2009) mentions teenagers who are encouraged by the social standards of appearance to consider plastic surgery as a method to accomplish an ideal face. The notion of physical attractiveness being a social practice has been reviewed as a mixture of media and celebrity influences as a form of capital to work in the social

world.

As participants participate in exercise to diet, they diet to manage their physical appearance. They point out their active use of SNS accounts and mention how there is an abundance amount of posts and shared information that stimulates women to have a certain body ideal. Though due to the different characteristics of the exercises, participants had slightly different ways they operated their SNS account as well as different perspectives in approaching body ideals. Yoga and Pilates participants seemed more obsessed about their body shapes and constantly emphasized on losing weight to look slender and thinner than they already were. Whereas pole dance participants, ventured an empowering experience during their engagement. It has been noted that recreational pole dance participants undergo female empowerment and have satisfying ideas about their body shapes (Holland, 2010).

Despite the main goals of each exercise as a means of body management, pole dance studios also consider the idea of diverse body shapes and sizes. Having less clothing when practicing pole dance stimulates to observe others in the same place, however, as participants grow to be comfortable in the environment they began to focus on achieving pole dance tricks and routines. It involves a level process which allows participants to be active and continue their participation.

In contrast, yoga and Pilates participants whom share similar clothing

during exercise sessions, have common exercise patterns. Participants desired to have slender and toned legs. They were highly aware about the ideal body image which was socially formed. In addition to achieve the unrealistic standards, participants mentioned plastic surgery. It is a known fact that Korea is famous for plastic surgery. The unrealistic form of a body ideal perpetrates and evokes women to go under the knife to accomplish the ideal face and body. Even in the media texts, introductions of body injections that allow the body to earn the ideal are routinely mentioned. Lee (2019) points out that people put an effort into their looks to appear “above normal”. Schwekendiek, Yeo, and Ulijaszek (2013) highlight that sociocultural dimensions influence the appearance-oriented society. Thus, participants conform to the social standard of beauty; yet, do not speak up about their surgical experiences under the knife.

Additionally, the specific editorial from the magazine disguises itself and implies to allow females to resist to aesthetic labor, the language that is used to express resistance does not fully agree to resistances. For example, the titles, “It’s okay not to be pretty” and “I’m not pretty” strongly suggested that without makeup or aesthetic labor, females cannot be pretty. This connotation gives females readers that no makeup is the opposite of pretty. It can be noticed as a means of reinforcement to an appearance-oriented society.

By examining <*Woman Sense*>, it addresses a social movement for

women to loosen aesthetic labor and to embrace their natural looks. The first section gives example of international protests and champions that encourage female empowerment, however, the second section indicates a controversy title, “*It’s okay not to be pretty*”. Throughout this article and interview of a Youtuber in section three, it is evident that the protagonist is over-weight and she “does not mind that she looks not pretty.” However, both of title reinforces that being overweight is not pretty, hence not attractive. As mentioned from the participants, quoting that non-Koreans and countries abroad are encouraging a healthy body, the media portrays a narrow vision of how women should look. The concept of “aesthetic labor” has been a growing part of literature in the field of labor and employment (Mears, 2014; Warhurst et al., 2000). This is can be seen as direct influence of the job market in Korea as well. As mentioned before, aesthetics and appearances are a crucial factor of employment (Kim, 2010c; Kim, 2020b).

However, the participants of the study were not willing to mention this social movement. They were aware of the incident to resist aesthetic labor, though they did not want to actively participate in it. As much as this movement is nationally spread, notwithstanding, a part of an internationally movement toward the liberation of females, research participants refused to have comments about it. They mentioned it was too political and did have an opinion about such an event that they were no educated about.

This can be seen as an interpretation of the “quiet submissive girl”

that has traditionally been the ideal characteristic of a Korean woman. As mentioned in the literature review of the Dangun myth that has comparing personalities of a tiger and a bear, as well as Korean folk literature portraying independent females as deviant, this tradition is deeply rooted in the participants.

Therefore, the combination of media and popular culture as well as the industry of plastic surgery that encourages and provides supplementary methods to achieve an ideal image influence that of the exercise domain. Exercise and physical activity only includes additional criteria to the ideal female body which executes more methods to reach it. Furthermore, despite the transition of ideology and paradigm in the female movement, “speaking up and out” are features that are not as accompanied to as much as its social influence.

5.3. Intersection of Gender, Race and Class through a Postcolonial Feminist Approach

A postcolonial feminist approach was applied in the study, which highlights the representation of non-Western women. It acknowledges the diversity and different ideologies of women from non-Western societies (Mohanty, 1988). It is as a response to feminism focusing on women of Western cultures and societies (Weedon, 1996). Postcolonial feminism reacts to the notion that “women” are interpreted as whole, rather than

defining them through race, ethnicity, gender and class (Narayan & Harding, 2000). Therefore, this research has investigated the aspects of women's participation in exercise and media texts through a postcolonial feminist to analyze the experiences of women by race, ethnicity, gender and class.

Mack-Canty (2004) mentions that the "post" in postcolonial feminism does not state that colonialism has come to an end; however, it is continual through geographical and intellectual territories. Wha (2008) highlights Asian women need to be studied outside from the implications of Western theories, colonization and globalization that follow Western hegemonic order. In addition to "break through intellectual coloniality", re-considering and re-conceptualizing Asian women's experiences and perspectives are needed to understand the dynamics non-Western women. Furthermore, with the discussion of Asian feminism and literature interpreting Korean women through Western feminist theory, it has been noted to challenge the frame of "Western feminism" (Kim, 2010b).

As concepts of feminism began from the women's right movement in Western societies, the first-wave feminism developed from women's suffrage and expanded to the establishment of gender equality. In addition, it emphasizes white women of middle class. However, in the case of Korea, the rights for equality were legally given to women and the designed through law and women rather fought for independence from Japan colonization (Park, 1993). Despite legal implications, the social and political

atmosphere has been absorbed through Confucius values emphasizing patriarchal order. In addition to the female movement that plays as resistance to aesthetic labor, the participants did not want to be a part of the movement, nor did they have a straight-forward opinion about it. It situates the participants in a non-political position of society, yet the social habitat in which they are affiliated in raises issues and concern about misogyny and female liberation.

Thus, through the findings, participants mention a patriarchal society and male gaze. They point out that their reasons to dieting links to the result of an appearance-society which leads to the gaze of males. The concept of “the male gaze” represents “looking” from the heterosexual male which was coined from film production (Mulvey, 1988). This gaze of males reinforces the hegemonic discourse. Some participants point out that the gaze of males is a discomfort at the same time a motivation for them to participate in exercise to “look better”. In contrast, woman are not colonized by the presence and gaze of men. It is in relation to the engagement of “gendered relations of looking” (Glapka, 2018). Thus, surveillance of women’s bodies is not in the technology of consciousness; however, it can be understood as a socio-cultural state.

The notion of an appearance-oriented society reinforces and produces an ideology through exercise and physical activity regardless of its health benefits. Choi (2018) mentions women participating in weight-loss

reality TV shows perceive themselves as “abnormal” and “outcasts”. This can be understood as fat surveillance of the body and the neglecting those “different” from the “normal”. As mentioned before, Korea is a homogeneous society as well as a society that encourages each other to follow mainstream ideas and norms.

Furthermore, the trend of an ideal image of a female’s body resembles a “Koreanized Barbie doll”. Though in Korea the Barbie doll does not have the same impact as it does in Western societies where young girls own a Barbie doll from a young age which influences body images as they grow into adolescents, Barbie *is* not popular among (or was not popular) during the childhood of the participants. Since the participants are aged in their 20’s and 30’s, as young girls, Barbie dolls were not the main play-toy for them. However, they related Barbie’s body shape as an image that resembled today’s ideal body types.

The participants emphasize an apple hip as American and the over body shape ideal to the Barbie. They also mention that the body types that are trending in Korean society are unrealistic and not proportionate. The understanding of Western in Korea is shaped as those with white skin, tall noses and big eyes, hence Caucasians. Kim (2017c) adds that in the early years, a woman’s magazine through an interview pointed out that “thick lips and dark skin is far from civilization”. Therefore, light skin was the norm

for beauty in Korea and having Western-like features influenced from Hollywood movies stars became the beauty standard for women in Korea.

As active participants engage in their chosen exercise (yoga, Pilates and pole dance), they expressed ambivalent sides to their opinions. Throughout the in-depth interviews and observations, opinions, attitudes and mindsets show different outcomes in behavior. By way of society being built by individuals and individuals being influenced by societal means, the interaction in which media and participants present the ambiguity. Therefore, through the scope of a postcolonial feminist approach, the study has found how participants shape and reinforce their ways of empowerment through symbols of socioeconomic status and education level.

The differences of exercises' characteristics also influence how participants react to their needs and demands. However, one thing for sure, participants are highly aware of their surroundings of an appearance-oriented society through the language in which they describe their involvement. For instance, "healthier way to lose weight" indicates that they are reproducing their intentions to reach an aesthetic goal. For pole dance participants they include themselves similar to serious leisure participants and strive to enter competitions to stay engaged. Whereas Pilates participants understand license and certifications as a badge of luxuries, yoga participants are not interested in either obtaining a professional

certificate. Due to the characteristics of each exercise, participation formation outcomes are different.

However, when it comes to the awareness of society's standards of an ideal body, participants well understand what they are. They seek to meet the standards through *aesthetic exercises*. Despite the fact that none of them are clinically nor appear to be overweight, they define themselves as “not thin enough” or “still have to lose weight”. Feminist studies have pointed out the resistance of females through sports and physical activities (Taft, 2004; Yang & Won, 2002), however the participants of this study remain to conform to society and what it desires. It is the same when it comes to the conformity of the “male gaze” and to live up to a counterpart's expectation, nonetheless, favor or preference. Even women who participate in exercise and strive to have healthier bodies and lifestyles are yet highly accompanied to media exposures of Western ideal body shapes. Regardless of their socioeconomic status or education level, they are exposed to media contents that can “brainwash” their ideas of what is healthy and what is dieting.

Overall, as postcolonial feminism stresses the response of non-Western women and in which the interpretations of women are generalized, this study seeks to understand Korea women through this approach. With the exiting binary opposition of non-Western/Western, West/Orient, and tradition/modern; the inter-relationship between the presence of male and female reinforces the hegemonic normative which is strongly induced

through tradition and culture. In the aspect of ideal body images, the combination of the influence of Western media and the norms of a Korean female reproduce a modern day body image which is unrealistic and unhealthy, however women continually participate in methods to reach the ideal. Last, the control of government policies and legal actions that liberate females in Korea to take part in the workplace allows women who participate in exercises to produce meanings of their engagement which is portrayed as empowering and “healthy”.

Limitations of the study

It is important to examine the limitations and boundaries identified during the process of the study to understand the intentions and interpretations. This study explores the experiences of Korean females who participate in aesthetic exercise, coined by the researcher through literature, media resources and the social context in which the study was conducted. It focuses on three types of exercises; yoga, Pilates and pole dance, which are defined as aesthetic exercise. The study also focuses on female experience and their participation from an “insider” approach.

Due to the fact that only three forms of exercise were selected as aesthetic exercise, there was a limit to examine other physical activities and exercises that have similar characteristics. In contrast, if the study *did* investigate additional exercise forms, applying a qualitative research method can be difficult to gather in-depth understandings of several exercises and

their participants. Though, exercise forms may have similar characteristics, throughout the process of coding and interpreting the data, it was evident that there were differences in the features of the exercises which resulted in different experiences among the participants. As a qualitative research seeks to provide deep and thick descriptions of a phenomenon, gathering “scattered” data limited the researcher to compare and contrast.

The study focused solely on female participants. Therefore, to understand a society as a whole, it is important to consider male perspectives. However, to include male perspectives in this study, it is necessary to reevaluate the purpose and questions of the study. Though, during the process of data collection, male perspectives and understandings of female participation in exercise and physical activities were raised as topics to consider in the future.

In addition, the number of participants seemed fairly reasonable, yet as an individual researcher as well as an “insider” of the study, having rather a smaller number of participants could have benefited to gather deeper and more detailed information. As an “insider” it was important to keep a close and a “certain” amount of distance from the participants. However, with the number of participants of this study, the researcher faced personal and technical difficulties which later affected the participation of the research.

Moreover, the amount of media texts allowed the researcher to elaborate and explain the mechanism as well as the sociocultural atmosphere.

However, the media texts were limited to a woman's magazine. Expanding the sources from media content can support the findings and the manifestation of the interpretations. Therefore, additional media sources such as social media content or social media accounts of the participants may bring benefits. However, the limitation of media text to a woman's magazine targeting a general audience rather enriched the results to understand the overall social sphere in which the participants experienced unintentionally.

Last, this study applied a postcolonial feminist approach to interpret the participation of women in physical activities and the social dynamics that surround and influence the engagement of females. However, body image and body discourses were also discussed among the participants as well as evidence of body images were visible through the media texts and photos. Therefore, the articulation of female participation in aesthetic exercise through a postcolonial feminist approach limited to gender, race, social role and class which limited to individual and social interactions which provided the formation of ideal body images, yet did not consider individual perceptions of personal body image.

Suggestions for future studies

With consideration of the limitations of the study, the following are potential suggestions for future studies. To gain in-depth understanding and to provide rich insight as to advocate a descriptive qualitative research,

focusing on a specific exercise under the category of aesthetic exercise is suggested. This will allow a deep analysis of an exercise or physical activity. In addition, it can be conducted as a case study that can contribute to the discussion of exercise in Korea.

Second, as the paradigm of social gender roles change, inclusion and status of females improve and the emphases on appearance heightens, it is a true fact that men are also influenced. The social norms and social standards of body image do not only apply to women. Therefore, an analysis to compare and contrast ideal body images of men and women participating in exercise and physical activities is suggested. In addition, though there are studies of men participating in female-appropriate sports, there is a lack of academic research of male participation in female-oriented exercises. Thus, research related to comparing men and women's experience in the same exercise can contribute to the literature of exercise culture.

Third, media texts from additional sources can be analyzed to get a deeper understanding of exercise and body culture in Korea. As media and celebrity influence are great factors that shape the culture in many aspects of society, including social media content can allow further discussion of social and ecological dynamics. Also, as magazines are being subscribed through online applications, magazine analysis is a significant source of data. And studies that examine the influence on readers can be suggested in further studies.

Last, as movements and sociocultural atmosphere are manifesting, body discourse ideologies of Korean women are rapidly shifting. Several different aspects and perspectives of are generating to articulate Korean feminism. As Korean women have experienced a different upbringing of the feminist movement, further discussions of the formation of feminism in Korea can be considered through the content of exercise participation. Therefore, further investigation of women's movements that have influenced exercise culture and the interaction it has to society is suggested.

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APPENDIX

Appendix 1. Research explanation and consent form (For research participant to keep)

IRB No. 2007/003-007

유효기간: 2021년 07월 19일

연구참여자용 설명문

연구 과제명 : 한국 여성 건강운동 경험 탐색: 포스트 식민주의 페미니즘을 통한 접근
연구 책임자명 : 김윤정 (서울대학교 사범대학 체육교육과, 박사과정생)

이 연구는 한국여성의 건강운동 참여의 경험을 탐색하고 경험을 통해 포스트 식민주의 페미니즘의 관점으로 해석하고자하는 연구입니다. 귀하는 학원 혹은 개인 스튜디오에서 건강운동(요가, 필라테스)에 참여하는 여성이기 때문에 이 연구에 참여하도록 권유받았습니다. 이 연구를 수행하는 서울대학교 소속의 김윤정(박사과정생) 연구원(김윤정, C.P. () 이 귀하에게 이 연구에 대해 설명해 줄 것입니다. 이 연구는 자발적으로 참여 의사를 밝히신 분에 한하여 수행 될 것이며, 귀하께서는 참여 의사를 결정하기 전에 본 연구가 왜 수행되는지 그리고 연구의 내용이 무엇과 관련 있는지 이해하는 것이 중요합니다. 다음 내용을 신중히 읽어보신 후 참여 의사를 밝혀 주시길 바라며, 필요하다면 가족이나 친구들과 의논해 보십시오. 만일 어떠한 질문이 있다면 담당 연구원이 자세히 설명해 줄 것입니다.

1. 이 연구는 왜 실시합니까?

이 연구의 목적은 한국여성의 건강운동(요가, 필라테스) 경험을 탐색하고 그들의 경험을 바탕으로 포스트 식민주의 페미니스트 접근을 통한 해석을 하고자합니다. 피트니스 혹은 헬스장에서 혼자 운동하는 여성을 제외하고 여성들만이 참여하는 그룹 운동에 참가하는 사람을 참여대상으로 선정했습니다. 본 연구는 우리나라의 여성들이 건강운동에 참여하는 동기, 참여과정을 통해 본인들의 느낀 점을 이해하고자합니다. 또한 한국의 역사적, 문화적, 사회적 특성을 고려하여 한국여성들만의 특유의 경험을 이해하고 이를 포스트 식민주의 페미니스트적 접근을 통해 해석하고자합니다. 포스트 식민주의 페미니즘은 기존의 페미니즘에서 제외된 서양이 아닌 여성들의 경험과 그들이 속해있는 문화와 사회적 인 맥락을 고려하여 경험과정을 이해하고자합니다.

2. 얼마나 많은 사람이 참여합니까?

12명의 사람이 참여할 예정입니다. 한국여성으로 건강운동(요가, 필라테스)에 참여를 학원에서 12개월 회원제로 등록한 경험이 있는 20대, 30대를 참여대상으로 선정합니다. 즉, 연구대상자는 12개월 이상 참여한 경험이 있는 회원으로 선정합니다. 개인 피트니스 살을 다니거나 헬스장에서 그룹엑서사이즈에 참여하는 여성, 혹은 헬스장에서 개인운동만을 하는 여성은 제외의 대상입니다.

3. 만일 연구에 참여하면 어떤 과정이 진행될까요?

만일 귀하가 참여의사를 밝혀 주시면 다음과 같은 과정이 진행될 것입니다.

1:1 면담 진행 과정

1. 귀하는 30분 분량의 면담에 참여할 예정이며 모든 면담은 녹음기에 녹취를 할 예정입니다. 면담은 최소 3회 진행될 예정이며 추가적인 면담은 최대 3회로 설정할 계획입니다.
2. 귀하와 연구자는 의논 후 귀하께서 편한 장소를 연구자가 섭외할 예정입니다.
3. 귀하께서 원하는 시간대를 연구자는 맞춰드릴 계획입니다.
4. 귀하는 불편하거나 답변을 원하지 않은 질문은 답하지 않겠다고 해도 무관합니다.

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5. 녹취된 자료는 연구자만이 듣게 되며 본 논문에만 사용이 될 것입니다.

참여관찰 과정

1. 수업 공간 도착 후, 수업 전, 중, 후에 나타나는 상황들과 모습을 기록하고 추후 진행 될 1:1 면담을 통해 기록된 내용에 대한 상세한 질문을 할 예정입니다.
2. 수업 전에 이루어지는 상황들과 행동을 관찰하고 기록할 것입니다.
3. 수업 중에는 연구자 또한 수업에 참여를 할 것입니다. 수업에 참여함으로써 연구참여자가 경험하는 수업 내용과 수업의 분위기, 또는 예상 밖의 상황들 파악하고 자세히 이해할 수 있도록 참여를 할 것입니다.
4. 수업 후에 참여대상자의 모습을 관찰할 것이며 참여대상자의 상태, 기분, 분위기, 느낀 점에 대해 이해하기 위해 대화를 나눌 것입니다. 나눈 대화를 기록하고 상세한 질문은 면담을 통해 진행 할 계획입니다.

4. 연구 참여 기간은 얼마나 됩니까?

면담 시간은 약 30분-60분이 소요될 것입니다. 최대 3회의 면담과 필요시 추가면담(3회까지) 진행할 계획입니다. 참여관찰은 최소한 주2회 (1회 최소60분, 수업을 포함한 시간)로 진행을 할 것이며 귀하께서 학원에서 수업을 받기 전, 중, 후로 이루어질 것입니다. 수업이 시작되기 전에 담소를 나누는 것부터 수업을 함께 받고 끝난 후 수업과 관련된 이야기와 일상생활에 대한 대화를 나누면서 관찰이 이루어질 것이다. 또한 다른 회원들과의 교류하는 모습, 강사진 혹은 원장과 대화하는 모습, 혼자 수업을 준비하는 과정 등 관찰을 할 계획입니다. 즉, 학원에서 지내는 동안 지속적으로 관찰을 할 예정입니다.

5. 참여 도중 그만두어도 됩니까?

예, 귀하는 언제든지 어떠한 불이익 없이 참여 도중에 그만 둘 수 있습니다. 만일 귀하가 연구에 참여하는 것을 그만두고 싶다면 담당 연구원이나 연구 책임자에게 즉시 말씀해 주십시오. 그만두는 경우 모아진 자료는 모두 폐기를 원하시면 즉시 폐기됩니다.

6. 부작용이나 위험요소는 있습니까?

부작용이나 위험요소는 없습니다. 녹취를 하는 동안 중도탈락을 원하시면 언제든지 면담을 중단하고 녹음기를 끄고 참여대상이 진행을 원하면 다시 면담을 진행할 것이며 그렇지 않은 경우 폐기를 하거나 참여대상의 선택에 의해 진행 할 계획입니다.

7. 이 연구에 참여시 참여자에게 이득이 있습니까?

귀하가 이 연구에 참여하는데 있어서 직접적인 이득은 없습니다. 그러나 귀하가 제공하는 정보는 본 연구인 여성들의 건강운동 참여의 경험과 그들에 대한 이해를 증진하는데 도움이 될 것입니다.

8. 만일 이 연구에 참여하지 않는다면 불이익이 있습니까?

귀하는 본 연구에 참여하지 않을 자유가 있습니다. 또한, 귀하가 본 연구에 참여하지 않아도 귀하에게는 어떠한 불이익도 없습니다.

9. 연구에서 얻은 모든 개인 정보의 비밀은 보장됩니까?

개인정보관리책임자는 서울대학교의 김윤정(010-5573-5382)입니다. 본 연구에서 수집되는 개인정보(인탁처)는 본 연구에서 수집을 하고 연구를 진행하는 과정에서 참여자대상



과 연락과 면담을 진행하기 위한 목적으로 수집이됩니다. 이러한 개인정보는 연구자인 김윤정과 지도교수님(권순용)에게만 접근이 허락되며, 비밀번호로 보완이 된 노트북에 저장한 방법으로 보관이 될 것입니다. 동의서는 관련 법령에 따라 3년을 보관한 후 폐기할 예정이며, 연구자료의 경우는 서울대학교 연구윤리 지침에 따라 가능한 한 영구 보관할 예정입니다. 저희는 이 연구를 통해 얻은 모든 개인 정보의 비밀 보장을 위해 최선을 다할 것입니다. 이 연구에서 얻어진 개인 정보가 학회지나 학회에 공개 될 때 귀하의 이름 및 기타 개인 정보는 사용되지 않을 것입니다. 그러나 만일 법이 요구하면 귀하의 개인정보는 제공될 수도 있습니다. 또한 모니터 요원, 점검 요원, 생명윤리위원회는 연구참여자의 개인 정보에 대한 비밀 보장을 침해하지 않고 관련규정이 정하는 범위 안에서 본 연구의 실시 절차와 자료의 신뢰성을 검증하기 위해 연구 결과를 직접 열람할 수 있습니다. 귀하가 본 동의서에 서명하는 것은, 이러한 사항에 대하여 사전에 알고 있었으며 이를 허용한다는 동의로 간주될 것입니다.

10. 이 연구에 참가하면 사례가 지급됩니까?

죄송합니다만 본 연구에 참가하는데 있어서 연구참여자에게 어떠한 금전적 보상도 없습니다.

11. 연구에 대한 문의는 어떻게 해야 됩니까?

본 연구에 대해 질문이 있거나 연구 중간에 문제가 생길 시 다음 연구 담당자에게 연락을 하시기 바랍니다.

이름: 김윤정 전화번호: _____

만일 어느 때라도 연구참여자로써 귀하의 권리에 대한 질문이 있다면 다음의 서울대학교 생명윤리위원회에 연락하십시오.

서울대학교 생명윤리위원회 (SNUIRB) 전화번호: 02-880-5153



Appendix 2. Research participant consent form (For research participant to keep)

IRB No. 2007/003-007

유효기간: 2021년 07월 19일

동 의 서 (연구참여자 보관용)

연구 과제명 : 한국 여성의 건강운동 경험을 포스트 식민주의 페미니즘으로 해석

연구 책임자명 : 김윤경(서울대학교 사범대학 체육교육과, 박사과정생)

1. 나는 이 설명서를 읽었으며 담당 연구원과 이에 대하여 의논하였습니다.
2. 나는 위험과 이득에 관하여 물었으며 나의 질문에 만족할 만한 답변을 얻었습니다.
3. 나는 이 연구에 참여하는 것에 대하여 자발적으로 동의합니다.
4. 나는 이 연구에서 얻어진 나에 대한 정보를 현행 법률과 생명윤리위원회 규정이 허용하는 범위 내에서 연구자가 수집하고 처리하는 데 동의합니다.
5. 나는 담당 연구자나 위임 받은 대리인이 연구를 진행하거나 결과 관리를 하는 경우와 법률이 규정한 국가 기관 및 서울대학교 생명윤리위원회가 실태 조사를 하는 경우에는 비밀로 유지되는 나의 개인 신상 정보를 확인하는 것에 동의합니다.
6. 나는 언제든지 이 연구의 참여를 철회할 수 있고 이러한 결정이 나에게 어떠한 해도 되지 않을 것이라는 것을 압니다.
7. 나는 수집되는 자료가 본 연구 이외에 연구책임자 및 다른 연구자의 연구의 목적으로 사용 되는 것에 동의합니다.
동의함 ☐ 동의하지 않음 ☐
8. 나의 서명은 이 동의서의 사본을 받았다는 것을 뜻하며 나와 동의 받는 연구원의 서명이 포함된 사본을 보관하겠습니다.
9. 나는 연구를 수행하는 중에 녹음이 진행되는 것에 동의합니다.
동의함 ☐ 동의하지 않음 ☐
10. 나는 나의 전화번호가 수집되는 것을 알고 있으며, 연구에 사용되는 것을 허락합니다.
동의함 ☐ 동의하지 않음 ☐

연구참여자 성명

서명

날짜 (년/월/일)

동의받는 연구원 성명

서명

날짜 (년/월/일)



Appendix 3. Research participant consent form (For researcher to keep)

IRB No. 2007/003-007

유효기간: 2021년 07월 19일

동 의 서 (연구자보관용)

연구 과제명 : 한국 여성의 건강운동 경험을 포스트 식민주의 페미니즘으로 해석

연구 책임자명 : 김윤정(서울대학교 사범대학 체육교육과, 박사과정생)

1. 나는 이 설명서를 읽었으며 담당 연구원과 이에 대하여 의논하였습니다.
2. 나는 위험과 이득에 관하여 들었으며 나의 질문에 만족할 만한 답변을 얻었습니다.
3. 나는 이 연구에 참여하는 것에 대하여 자발적으로 동의합니다.
4. 나는 이 연구에서 얻어진 나에 대한 정보를 현행 법률과 생명윤리위원회 규정이 허용하는 범위 내에서 연구자가 수집하고 처리하는 데 동의합니다.
5. 나는 담당 연구자나 위임 받은 대리인이 연구를 진행하거나 결과 관리를 하는 경우와 법률이 규정한 국가 기관 및 서울대학교 생명윤리위원회가 실태 조사를 하는 경우에는 비밀로 유지되는 나의 개인 신상 정보를 확인하는 것에 동의합니다.
6. 나는 언제든지 이 연구의 참여를 철회할 수 있고 이러한 결정이 나에게 어떠한 해도 되지 않을 것이라는 것을 압니다.
7. 나는 수집되는 자료가 본 연구 이외에 연구책임자 및 다른 연구자의 연구의 목적으로 사용 되는 것에 동의합니다.

동의함 ☐ 동의하지 않음 ☐

8. 나의 서명은 이 동의서의 사본을 받았다는 것을 뜻하며 나와 동의받는 연구원의 서명이 포함된 사본을 보관하겠습니다.

9. 나는 연구를 수행하는 중에 녹음이 진행되는 것에 동의합니다.

동의함 ☐ 동의하지 않음 ☐

10. 나는 나의 전화번호가 수집되는 것을 알고 있으며, 연구에 사용되는 것을 허락합니다.

동의함 ☐ 동의하지 않음 ☐

연구참여자 성명

서 명

날짜 (년/월/일)

동의받는 연구원 성명

서 명

날짜 (년/월/일)



Appendix 4. Semi-structured open ended questionnaires

면담 질문지 (가이드)

한국여성의 건강운동 경험

*나이, 결혼여부, 직장, 참여하는 운동, 과거 운동 경험 [먼저 기재]

1. 과거에 운동 경험이 있나요?
 - a. 없음
 - i. 왜 하지 않았나요?
 - b. 있음
 - i. 어떠한 운동에 참여를 했나요?
 - ii. 기간은 어느 정도되나요?
 - iii. 운동을 다양하게 했다면 왜 여러 가지 운동에 참여를 했나요?
2. 지금은 어떤 운동에 참여를 하고 있나요?
 - a. 왜 이 운동을 선택했나요?
 - b. 이 운동은 얼마 동안 했나요?
 - c. 다른 운동도 병행하면서 참여를 하나요?
 - i. 왜 다른 운동도 병행을 하나요?
 - d. 지금 참여하고 있는 운동이 즐거운가요?
 - i. 왜 즐거운가요?
 - ii. 힘든 점은 없나요?
3. 운동을 하는 목적이 무엇인가요?
 - a. [목적에 따라 질문을 이어나 갈 것, follow up question]
 - i. Ex) 다이어트. 그렇다면 다이어트를 하는 이유가 뭐예요? 다이어트를 어떻게 정의하세요? 본인만 다이어트하나요? 같이 다니는 친구들도 함께하나요?
4. 지금 참여하고 있는 운동을 혼자하고 있나요?
 - a. 가족 혹은 친구랑 다니고 있나요?
 - b. 같이 다니면 장단점이 있나요?
 - c. 혼자 다닌다면 왜 혼자 다니나요?
5. 운동을 하는 동안 어떤 생각을 주로 하나요?
6. 운동을 하면 어떤 것이 좋아요?
 - a. 안 좋은 점은 없나요?
 - b. 개선하고 싶은 점은 있나요? 없나요?
7. 운동을 즐기 위해 하나요? 운동이 진정 즐거운가요?
8. 우리나라의 여성들이 운동을 많이 하는 것 같나요? 아니면 적게 하는 것 같나요?
 - a. 왜 그러한 현상이 나타나는 것 같나요?
 - b. 여자들만 할 수 있는 운동이 따로 있다고 생각하나요?
 - c. 학원이나 스튜디오에 여성들이 많은 이유는 무엇이라 생각하나요?
9. 다른 학생(회원)들이랑 잘 지내나요?
 - a. 교류가 있나요?
 - i. 있다면 어떠한 교류를 하나요?
 - ii. 없으면 왜 교류를 하지 않나요?
 - b. 교류를 하면 장단점이 있나요?
 - c. 선생님과의 교류는 있나요?
10. 운동을 다른 여성에게 추천을 하나요?
 - a. 추천하는 운동은?
 - i. 이유는?

Appendix 5. In-depth interview transcription guide

면담 전사 기록지 양식

참여대상 이름(가명)			참여대상 나이		결혼여부	
면담날짜		참여하는 운동		직업		
본문 시작						
연구자 질문			참여대상 답변 및 질문			

Appendix 6. Participation observation note

참여관찰 기록지

참여대상 이름(가명)	
참여하는 운동	
본문 시작	
관찰 날짜 및 장소	
관찰 날짜 및 장소	
관찰 날짜 및 장소	

국문초록

한국 여성의 에스테틱 건강운동 경험 탐색 - 포스트 식민주의 페미니즘의 관점에서 -

김 윤 정

서울대학교 대학원

체 육 교 육 과

본 연구의 목적은 한국 여성의 건강운동 경험과 미디어 자료를 탐색하여 에스테틱 건강운동(aesthetic exercise)의 형성과 특징을 이해하고 여성들의 건강운동 참여 현상을 포스트 식민주의 페미니즘의 관점에서 해석하고자 한다. 총 12명의 한국 여성들이 연구참여자로 선정되었으며 그들의 경험을 내부자(insider)의 관점에서 심층면담과 참여관찰을 통해 자료수집이 진행되었다. 참여대상자들은 요가, 필라테스 혹은 폴댄스에 참여하는 20대-30대의 여성으로 구성되었다. 또한 한국의 여성잡지를 선정하여 미디어 텍스트와 이미지들 수집하여 참여자들이 생활하는 문화적 배경을 이해하고자 하였다. 이 현상을 서양이 아닌 (non-Western) 사회와 문화의 여성들의 특성과 사회·문화·경제 배경을 고려한 포스트 식민주의 페미니스트 관점에서 본 연구를 해석하고자 한다.

연구참여자들은 살을 빼기 위한 목적으로 운동을 시작했으며 과거에 운동경험의 부족으로 “여성에게 적절한”(female appropriate) 운동을 선택한 것을 알 수 있었다. 그들에게는 “여성에게 적절한” 운동은 접근성과 미디어의 영향으로 요가, 필라테스 혹은 폴댄스에 참여하게 되었다. 그들은 아름다움과 외모의 사회적 기준에 도달하기 위해 다이어트에 참여하는 것으로 나타났으며 미디어와 셀레브리티의 영향을 크게 받았다. 반면에 SNS를 통해 보여지는 한국의 미적 노동(aesthetic labor)에 대한 저항과 여성 운동(women's movement)은 연구참여대상에게 깊은 영향을 미치지 않았으며 여성 운동에 참여하지 않았다.

본 연구는 서양이 아닌 사회의 여성에 초점을 맞추고 사회·경제적 지위를 고려한 포스트 식민주의 페미니스트 접근을 통해 연구참여자가 참여하고 있는 운동의 의미를 살펴보았다. 연구참여자들은 본인의 운동은 경제적 지위를 상징하는 것으로 나타났다. 각자 참여하고 있는 운동의 특성에 따라 연구참여자들은 운동이 상징하는 가치를 다르게 표현했다. 예를 들어, 요가 참여자들은 몸의 변화와 명상에 초점을 맞췄으며 필라테스 참여자들은 개인의 운동능력을 향상시키고 자격증

프로그램 과정에 참여를 했고, 폴댄스 참여자들은 폴댄스의 참여로 본인을 empower할 수 있는 방법으로 생각했으며 대회 참가에 보람을 느끼는 것으로 보였다. 또한 포스트 식민주의 페미니스트의 관점에서 바라보았을 때 참여자들은 “애플 힙”과 같은 신체 유형은 서양의 영향을 받은 것으로 해석이 되었고 “한국적인 것이 아니다”라는 주장도 했으며 마치 바비인형과 비슷한 몸매를 권유하는 사회적 기준이 형성된 것으로 표현을 했다.

미디어 자료는 셀레브러티의 운동을 활용한 다이어트 비법과 경험을 공유하고 참여대상자들은 미디어에 비취지는 여성의 날씬한 신체를 달성하고자 하였다. 이처럼 “여성 적절한” 운동은 에스테틱 건강운동(aesthetic exercise)을 형성하는 특징으로 볼 수 있었다. 따라서, 한국 여성의 경험과 미디어를 통해 에스테틱 건강운동의 형성과 여성들이 운동에 참여하는 동기, 그리고 이 현상을 기존 서양이 중심이 되었던 페미니즘에서 벗어나 포스트 식민주의 페미니스트 접근을 통해 해석했다.

Keyword : 한국여성의 운동참여, 몸 이미지, 포스트 식민페미니스트 접근, 내부자 접근방식, 미디어 분석

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