

BEYOND THE FRAMES: UNVEILING THE DEPTH OF EARLY 2000S SOUTH AND  
SOUTHEAST ASIAN FEMALE CHARACTERS

by

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## **ABSTRACT**

The early 2000s was a time of Juicy Couture, iPods, Beyblades, and more, but it was also when multiculturalism was starting to be reflected more in English-language films and shows. South and Southeast Asian women were a group who began to be showcased but were only authentically portrayed on occasion. This research uses framing theory to see how early 2000s media depicted and viewed South and Southeast Asian women through stereotypes and archetypes. To explore further, this study analyzes how Jess Bharna from *Bend It Like Beckham* and London Tipton from *The Suite Life of Zack and Cody* are framed through feminist and critical race theories and compares them to broadly known stereotypes and archetypes derived from those theories such as “the nerd,” “the comedic relief”, and the “exotic other.” Before going further, it is important to note that this project is severely limited as South and Southeast Asians, especially women, were not given lead roles in English-language media as often, especially with character traits that differed from common stereotypes, so when Jess and London were, audiences perceived them as exceeding the norm. This research compares these characters, stereotypes, and archetypes to identify whether Jess’s and London’s individuality beyond stereotypes is surface level, fully developed, or a little bit of both. These results then discuss how the characters socially mirror the creator’s worldview, which can further reflect collective societal and individual perceptions and give a lens into a fragment of the early 2000s.

## **DEDICATION**

I dedicate this work to Asian girls who feel like they don't fit into the society that they were born into. My childhood experience in that role sparked this project. And I hope that those girls find their place in the world and within themselves.

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## I. PROLOGUE

Growing up in the early 2000s, I had a hard time understanding the Indian American part of my identity. It was always changing due to the little understanding that others and I had about it. Many related my identity to 9/11 or Mia Khalifa or Disney's Princess Jasmine because of the color of my skin, but this is due to the few to no depictions of South Asian women present at the time. Soon, I began to distance myself from that part of me due to the negativity or "exoticism" around it that people used against me. However, I understand, now, that was all they understood about being South Asian and that little collective understanding leaks into how society depicts these groups. It's a cycle.

Society and philosophers have debated this cycle: does life imitate art or does art imitate life. Even so, there is a bit of truth to both. Affecting personal identity and views of others, life and art, in this case, film and shows, depend on each other while also being independent forces on their own. People base their ideas of themselves and others on external factors, including cultural and feminist depictions in film or TV shows, a process called social mirroring (Piñeiro-Naval et al., 2018). However, these depictions, or framed narratives, can be based on individual ideas of society as well (Scheufele, 1999). Certain portrayals can cement negative or positive stereotypical views of distinct social groups that endlessly loop between one's internalized perceptions and society's norms (Kidd, 2016). A group of people that have been affected by this is South and Southeast Asian women in the English-language film industry in the early 2000s. As I saw growing up, representation was limited and often inauthentic. However, two characters that stood out were Jess Bharna, from the movie *Bend It Like Beckham*, and London Tipton, from the show *The Suite Life of Zack and Cody*. They were seen as characters that weren't framed with the same stereotypes or archetypes that Asians typically get such as "the nerd" or

"the villain." To see how they are truly framed, Jess and London are analyzed through stereotypes/archetypes that share themes with post-colonial and feminist theories. This process helps us understand if their framing is surface level or profound and exceeds common stereotypes/archetypes, which could reflect society's perceptions of South and Southeast Asian women during the early 2000s. To answer that query, I first needed to understand framing theory, stereotypes/archetypes as they relate to theories, early 2000s Asian depictions, and Jess's and London's stories.

## II. SEEING THROUGH FRAMING THEORY

On a base level, framing is known as a “construction of social reality,” meaning a frame is the conceptualized idea of something with specific inclusion and exclusion of ideas and topics (Scheufele, 1999). Many attribute Erving Goffman for establishing the sociological basis for news framing and coining the term “frame” in his book *Frame Analysis*. However, Paul D’Angelo of the College of New Jersey said this did not encompass how journalists use framing. Framing theory is typically used when discussing how news is framed as an extension of journalistic agenda-setting and priming, meaning it is typically focused on how news media depicts reality (Scheufele, 1999). It often looks at what views and biases are put into agenda setting and what they are trying to project about their topic into society. For example, if you look at an article about abortion clinics, you can use framing theory to dissect the article and see if it is framed through a pro-life, pro-choice, or neutral lens. Pushing away from news, this study operationalizes framing to analyze entertainment. It uses media and individual frames to evaluate and explore why certain cultural and feminist frames were used in media and what that reflects about society in the early 2000s. Individual and media frames in the context of news are internal perceptions and depictions of political/societal discourse, respectively (Scheufele, 1999).

In terms of news, individual frames, which can be seen in audiences or the journalist, are the internal constructions of reality, while media frames are the central idea and meaning that a journalist and their organization are telling through a story. In terms of entertainment, individual frames are the viewers and the creators' internal perceptions, and media frames are what ideas and meanings are behind and shown through the entertainment source. When discussing both, identity-related frames are vital to understand as well. Identity-related frames are frames that relate to concepts that develop identity, such as ethnicity-racial identity and gender roles

(Piñeiro-Naval et al., 2018). These affect the media frames because often what a director, writer, or creator identifies with will go into the show or film. Identity-related frames can also be translated to describe what goes into character identities. Identity-related frames are likely present in the individual and media frames for this analysis, as they relate to depictions such as representation, stereotypes, and society. Researchers discussed that individual and media frames form a bridge between society and understanding social interactions (Scheufele, 1999). Dietram A. Scheufele further showcased how individual and media frames can be both independent and dependent frames. Meaning in analysis they can both affect each other in a cycle. While the independent frames of the creators and audience will be discussed and hypothesized on later, we mainly look at media frames in the context of the post-colonial and feminist stereotypes and archetypes concerning characters and plotline, as both independent and dependent.

To understand the concept of frames more thoroughly, frame building must be discussed as well. News frames are often influenced by three areas: (1) attitudes, values, and professional norms, (2) organizational routines, and (3) external forces of influence (Scheufele, 1999). In news, organizational routines are the political biases that the medium or news organization has (Scheufele, 1999); translating this to film, organizational routines would be based on the views and biases of the producers/creators. External forces of influence include elites that influence the content such as presidents, celebrities, etc. (Scheufele, 1999). These factors influence media frames, which influence audience frames, and audience frames influence the journalist/creators frames, so the whole process of frames loops around, cementing certain ideas, representations, and depictions into societal norms (Scheufele, 1999).

To discuss this loop in context with how South and Southeast Asians are depicted in media, I will start with analyzing what stereotypes and archetypes are being used to build the

media framing around Jess and London. While characters have their own identities and therefore would have to undergo a process of identity-building from the writers and directors, I am going to classify the characters' frames as media frames because at the end of the day, they are the media that audience members are internalizing for their own identity-building frames. In other words, I want to see what stereotypes and archetypes influenced the character's personality and traits that audience members could internalize and/or connect with.

### III. STEREOTYPES AND ARCHETYPES

Stereotypes are a fixed collective idea of what a certain group, individual or thing is. They are also frames that people put on others and characters. It is common to see them in media like television or films. Research shows that media is part of a macrosystem that encompasses life from daily activities to cultural contexts that impact one's sense of self and others (Besana et al., 2020). In media, the representation of different social groups is important because this influences how individuals will collectively view distinct groups, positively or negatively (Kidd, 2016). And, if stereotypes are how groups are represented or framed, this may also influence how others view them, which also further influences how others portray them in media in the overarching cycle. For example, in *The Hate You Give*, the central point of the film focuses on Khalil being killed by a police officer, but the film adaptation, which was produced by white screenwriters, blurs the police officer's fault and pushes a victim-blaming agenda that society often puts on Black men (Dowie-Chin et al., 2020). People of color often face underrepresentation or lack of representation. This can lead to individual people of color not knowing how they fit into society or other people not accepting that individual in society due to ERI (Besana et al., 2020). Yet, groups that do have representation can often experience stereotypical portrayals that will yet, again, negatively affect them (Kidd, 2016). An example of this would be women being used as sexual beings that play supporting roles to a male lead (Columpar, 2002). This role only perpetuates the male gaze and the stereotype that women are meant to be supporting men over themselves. Research shows that negative stereotypes of certain groups, that lack the depth of cultural distinctions, will cause audiences, who don't normally encounter different social groups, to think these groups act negatively in reality (Kidd, 2016).

This process can also reign true for archetypal depictions in media, which go hand in

hand with stereotypes. While stereotypes are based on cultural depictions from society, archetypes are typically mental models of different characters and storytelling tools such as “the hero,” “the villain,” “the lover,” etc. (Kidd, 2016). Archetypes are derived from the Grecian word “arkhetypos,” which means first or original imprint. While the first ideas of this came from Plato with the Theory of Forms, archetypes were later popularized by Carl Jung. Jung believed that archetypes are part of a collective unconscious that humans all share (Malhotra & Singh, 2022). His theories continue to say that these archetypes are images that “recur freely in the course of fantasy, essentially referring to a free thought of a folkloric figure” (Malhotra & Singh, 2022). Lily Yuan (2023) says there are 12 Jungian archetypes that were popularized in the 2002 book *The Hero and The Outlaw*: Creator, Caregiver, Explorer, Hero, Innocent, Jester, Lover, Magician, Member, Outlaw, Ruler, and Sage. However, there are other common archetypes present in today’s media such as the tomboy, dumb blonde, new girl, school girl or boy, rebel, emo, nerd, and more. Archetypes are often “married” to stereotypes as producers would cast “the villain” as the African American or “the nerd” as the Asian American which continues negative typecasting (Kidd, 2016). In modern times, producers and directors have moved away from this practice; an example of this is *Hamilton*, the Broadway musical, which utilizes archetypes without typecasting people of color for distinct roles (Kidd, 2016). Having a wider range of roles available for minorities and different social groups will help normalize their identities and others’ views of them (Kidd, 2016).

These stereotypes and archetypes, while enigmas in their own rights, relate to themes present in feminist and post-colonial theories. Jess’s and London’s frames are imbued with stereotypes and archetypes that are further analyzed through the lenses of these theories.

## **Feminist Theory**

Understanding the perceptions and ideas of things has always been interesting to me. So, analyzing the female experience has always been fascinating because of the many juxtaposed ideas in feminist theory. And, since I want to focus on how female Asian characters are framed, it felt unfit to not use this theory because the female experience and portrayals shown through characters has been vastly different than the male experience. Showcasing this conundrum, feminist theory often focuses on binaries like that: men vs. women, western vs. third world, independence vs. oppression. In film specifically, feminist theory was brought to light with Laura Mulvey's 1975 essay, "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema," focused on the male gaze in opposition with how they viewed women (Columpar, 2002). Specifically, the imbalance was that film was "catering the male (unconscious) pleasures" and "structured by a sexual division of labor," meaning men were meant to have the power of looking and women were meant to be an image or object of sight (Columpar, 2002, p.27). This idea translates to women being seen from the male gaze and characters framed to match that view. Common examples of the male gaze in media are hyper-feminine characters that are just the submissive love interest, girls being dumbed down in comparison to men, and women being in full makeup and dressed up when doing menial tasks. Additionally, this idea can be also linked all the way back to Freud himself. In Freud's article, "Femininity" the men are discussed in relation to activity while women were discussed in relation to passivity (Columpar, 2002). These ideas often lead female characters to be sexualized, procured for male wants, or as a supporting role to progress the story. This can be seen most visibly in archetypes like the "manic pixie dream girl" and the "cool girl." The manic pixie dream girl is a quirky, artsy girl who is meant to guide the lead male protagonist to his destiny. On the other hand, the cool girl is usually an attractive woman who satisfies a man's want for someone down to Earth, sexual, and helps them to their goals. Another way of looking

at this is by comparing the theories of “Western” values, associated with independence, freedom, and careers (masculine, and “Third World” values, which are associated with traditional values (feminine) (Columpar, 2002). For instance, *The Feminine Mystique* by Betty Friedan outlines how women want something more in life than traditional, western values (Thomas and Rothing, 2017). Yet, at the end of the day, feminist film theory often tries to look at media through “psychoanalytic terms of sexual difference” which makes masculine and feminine an opposing binary (Gaines, 1986).

“Why not stop using one theory for this study?” you may ask. Feminist theory is too limited on its own accord. Unfortunately, on its own, it is not equipped to discuss content that includes race because when it formed, it reinforced more white middle-class values (Gaines, 1986). This is because much of the ideology was derived from a post-colonial standpoint and a white Westerner view due to the dominant ideologies in the original period feminist theory originated (Columpar, 2002). The feminist analysis often focuses on the condition of white middle-class women, excluding the variations in different racial and social classes (Gaines, 1986). For example, while women are sexualized, Asians, especially East and Southeast, often face that differently through fetishization and sexual violence depicted in media (Yi, 2023). Marxist feminists say that race and sexual preferences are “loose ends” because oppression from these categories does not fit in the feminist framework (Gaines, 1986). However, this study still utilizes feminist theories since the movies were presented in American and European-dominated environments, meaning that many Westerner values are implemented in characters themselves. Modern American and European films often focus on those Western values, and with globalization making it one of the dominant ideologies, there has often been a struggle between traditional and modern feminist theories (Chakraborty, 2019). This is also true for some

producers when trying to balance cultural heritages and Western feminist theories, as seen when it comes to South Asian women being homemakers but also free-spirited (Chakraborty, 2019). Many of these intersecting ideas have similar themes to post-colonial theories, so discussing feminist theories in a media study relating to race would not be complete on its own.

### **Post-Colonial Theory**

Choosing post-colonialism as a theory to look through was a hard decision for me. I debated heavily between critical race theories and post-colonial theories. However, many of the racial stereotypical and archetypal frames placed around Asians deviate from colonial times. This is because European (specifically British) and American views dominated the world's perceptions from colonial times to now even (Merchant, 2023). Almas Merchant (2023) discusses how anthropologist De Sousa Santos questioned if cultures can be recognized when the dominant culture pronounced them and their histories as “unpronounceable.” In this case, the colonial superpower of Britain and the American colonies had lasting impacts of the ideologies globally, especially in English-language content. As the dominant view, they often wiped out other ones, so people who were different racially or ethnically were seen through the eyes of the dominant view. For example, Indians were often framed in relation to British spiritual journeys in the British Indian colony since Indians are stereotypically associated with fortune tellers, mystics and more (Davé, 2013).

Intersecting with feminist theory, this also translated to “otherness” in relation to comparing colonialist ideals to other cultures or Western ideals to Third World ideals (Pham, 2013). This leads to Asians to be framed as an other to white characters through tools such as comedic accents, exoticization, or exaggerated cultural emphasis. This can also manifest in stereotypes like the forever foreigner, the villain, the mystic, and more. For example, in *Indian*

*Jones and The Temple of Doom*, Indian people were portrayed as primitive and villainous in contrast to the white savior stereotype of Indiana (Spielberg, 1984). Post-colonial theory also intersects with feminist theory because much of history was dictated by white men. Since colonial times, the most normalized group in media was even white men (Columpar, 2002). This is evident because white men are not celebrated when they play different roles as it is normalized for them to play many different archetypes; however, people of color or women often get praised for this since it is an oddity in the film industry (Kidd, 2016).

This colonial mindset also pushed on into the American Dream. The American Dream focuses on how American land is a place for opportunities such as economic growth, job security, and freedom. This is derived from colonial times when America was seen as the land for opportunity and exploration. For many Asians, this ideology came with a “promise of privilege” or assimilation (Yi, 2023). The model minority stereotype also shares themes with this as well. While a “positive” stereotype, the model minority pushes assimilation and growing into whiteness as a “non-threatening” person of color (Yi, 2023 and Davé, 2014). This is an effect from colonialism times because as the colonial superpowers became the dominant culture, the idea that European or American culture was the most desirable took over. These ideals then effected what perspective is shown in English-Language films. Entertainment was originally framed for the white man and by the white man, and since frames cement over time, many of the frames made for white men still affect us to this day (Columpar, 2002).

#### **IV. LIMITED MEDIA WITH ASIANS**

While this study is focused on South and Southeast Asian women in English film industries, often Asians and Asian Americans, while being an encompassing term for over 50 groups, are classified into homogenized perceptions, so talking about South and Southeast Asians would be incomplete without a discussion of the entire group (Besana et al., 2020). Furthermore, throughout my research, finding specific studies on Asians in films in early 2000 English-language media is also limited since the lens of English-language has been primarily dominated by American and European perceptions. Being one of the fastest-growing populations in America, Asian Americans should have film representation that would reflect that fact numerically (Besana et al., 2020).

However, there is a trend for stereotype-confirming representation that lacks the depth and diversity that Asians and Asian Americans have (Besana et al., 2020). This trend has been evident in the American English industry since the 20th century; however, stereotypical and negative depictions of Eastern Asians were more evident during this time (Davé, 2013). In fact, one of the most notable South Asian characters before the early 2000s in American networks was Apu, on *The Simpsons*, which utilizes accents and exoticism for comedic relief (Davé, 2013). Furthermore, the depiction of Southeast Asians was and is still severely limited. This can be known as concurrent invisibility which is when groups are simultaneously ignored with a lack of authentic and full representation (Besana et al., 2020). This rise of more Asian depictions in the Hollywood film industry in the early 2000s, which Minh-Ha T. Pham noted as the “Asian Invasion”, was promoted and framed by globalization and multiculturalism (2013). However, she also noted that this shift was more Asian Americans being allowed into films, under very specific roles (Pham, 2013). And, for an Asian to play the lead was a rare occurrence unless the role

specifically needed it for a plot device. This can be seen as hypervisibility. Hypervisibility represents when negative stereotypes are perpetuated and upheld because of media representation (Besana et al., 2020). This idea also supports the idea of the illusion of inclusion in society for Asian Americans, when inclusion is not possible when representation is lacking. In a research study comparing the top grossing films in America from 2010-2019, only 5.6% of supporting characters were Asian or Pacific Islanders (API) and only 4.5% API played leads/co-leads (Geena Davis Institute, 2023). While this rise has diversified the film industry, it has also continued to perpetuate the homogenous views of all Asians. In other words, stereotypes about Asians in the English film industry plagued the communities for years, especially in the early 2000s.

As stated previously, the portrayals of Asians in film often lacked depth and diversity and stuck to a series of stereotypes, including but not limited to the model-minority, perpetual foreigner, and submissive/helpless female (Besana et al., 2020).

The model-minority, or privileged minority, can be linked to norms stemming back to British colonialism for Asians (Davé, 2013). Perceptions that trace back are the ability to read, write, and speak in English, specifically British-English, an educational upbringing in colonial/British systems (leading to middle-class or high-class wealth), Asians typically being thought to be in higher-paying jobs like medicine or engineering, and historical ties to British imperialism (Davé, 2013). In media, this stereotype reigns true for many Asians and is often depicted as the “nerd” archetype. Typically, though, audience will see East and South Asians portrayed in this way more so in media (Geena Davis Institute, 2023). For example, Ken and Kyle Katayanagi in *Scott Pilgrim vs. the World* and Dylan from *Akeelah and the Bee*, are all male Asian characters who are mostly defined by their intelligence and nothing more (Atchison,

2006; Besana et al., 2020; Wright, 2010). Also related to this stereotype is the family-oriented trait of having strict parental figures and pressure to follow their restrictions and/or career goals (Besana et al., 2020). While this may reign true for some Asian families, this view restricts the perceptions of what Asian families can be. This is even evident in *Bend It Like Beckham*, as Jess's parents try to restrict her from living her dream of being a soccer player (Chadha, 2002).

Another restriction on Asian characters is the perpetual or forever foreigner stereotype. This stereotype can delve into two areas: exoticism and comedic relief. The perpetual foreigner promotes the binary idea of the "other," emphasizing values such as Orientalism, the East meets the West, and exoticism, which negatively impacts Asian Americans by ostracizing them from fitting into English societies and norms (Pham, 2013). A historical example would be the one-sided depiction of South Asians as exotic, spiritual guides in the 60s and 70s, which represented them as being only supporting mystical beings (Davé, 2013). This "othering" can also be seen through Asian people being the binary supporting role to a white lead. However, the perpetual foreigner is often used for comedic relief, as well, through the use of accents, not understanding societal customs, and more (Besana et al., 2020). Coined as "brown voice", South Asian accents, while usually used in a satirical or comedic sense, uphold the idea of the other by distinctly differentiating them based on voice alone (Davé, 2013). This can also be said for Asian accents in general. Accents and cultural backgrounds also are taunted in depictions as a way for comedic relief, confirming the perpetual foreigner stereotype by "othering" them further (Besana et al., 2020, p. 216).

Lastly, there is also intersectionality between gender roles and Asian identities in film representation. Often, Asian women are depicted as the meek, helpless, submissive, and/or romantic, sexualized, exoticized supporting role to the lead, often being a white male (Besana et

al., 2020). For example, in *The Goblet of Fire*, the fourth movie in the Harry Potter series, Padma's and Parvati's, two British Indian girls, main roles were Harry's and Ron's dates to the Yule Ball (Newell, 2005). On the other hand, men are depicted as smart, reserved, and socially awkward (Besana et al., 2020). This can be seen in the portrayal of Baljeet in the show *Phineas and Ferb* (Povenmire & Marsh, 2007). Both are often used as supporting characters rather than leads, but Asian women tend to be more sexualized, conforming to beauty standards as well (Besana et al., 2020). According to Kris Yi (2023), we even currently live in a society that is saturated with the sexualized stereotypes about Asian women that are a part of "manhood" (p. 55). On top of that, while the model-minority stereotype is true, Southeast Asian women face other stereotypes such as "service workers who are nail salon owners or nail technicians, massage therapists or sex workers," which also intersects with othering Asians and the forever foreigner stereotype (Geena Davis Institute, 2023).

## V. WHO ARE JESS BHARMA AND LONDON TIPTON?

From Devi Vishwakumar in *Never Have I Ever* to Emily Fields in *Pretty Little Liars* to Kate Sharma in *Bridgerton*, South and Southeast Asian female characters have been popping up throughout the 21<sup>st</sup> century more and more (Akhtar, 2020; Buckley, 2017; Verica, 2020). But, as discussed previously, the beginning of this century did not have many lead or major characters in this group. Jess Bharma and London Tipton were both rarities in this sense and in English-language media. In their own ways, they also did not follow the most common stereotypes such as “nerd,” “model minority,” “villain,” and more. When choosing these characters, I looked at three qualifications: the piece of media was produced in the early 2000s, the character is a South or Southeast Asian woman, and that the character is a lead/major character that has a fully developed personality. Having these qualities, especially the last one, provides enough content to be analyzed and discussed as reflecting a segment of time. Before analyzing their characters through other stereotypes and archetypes though, understanding their storylines and plots is important. So, let’s dive in.

### **Jess Bharma in *Bend It Like Beckham***

The 2002 movie, *Bend It Like Beckham*, is a sports-comedy film that stars Parminder Nagra as Jesminder Bharma, who goes by “Jess” for short. The film is directed by Gurinder Chundra and written by Chundra, Guljit Bindra, and Paul Meyeda Berges. It was produced in England, where the film takes place, but it was popular in many English-speaking countries. Jess faces the dilemma of either following her strict family obligations and rules or following her dreams of playing soccer. Her family says she is not allowed to play soccer due to not only cultural aspects but also cultural feminine aspects and racial tensions in the father’s past. As the lead in *Bend It Like Beckham*, Jess is a tomboy-coded girl who dreams of playing soccer for the

national England team. She carries similar characteristics to Disney's Mulan, Merida, *Avatar: The Last Airbender's* Toph, and more. In this film, there are many dynamics playing out such as friendship, family, and romance. The movie manages to bring together themes of culture, passion, love, LGBTQIA+, ambitions and more.

#### *Bend It Like Beckham Plotline*

Jess is an 18-year-old girl who lives in Hounslow, London, in a British Punjabi Sikh family who is in the midst of planning her older sister's, Pinky, wedding. She loves soccer, and her idol is David Beckham (Chadha, 2002). However, her parents do not support her dreams of becoming a soccer player/star and playing for the national team (Chadha, 2002). Her mom would rather Jess become an auditor, a good homemaker, and look for a suitable husband (Chadha, 2002). Despite this, Jess plays pickup games with boys in the park during her free time (Chadha, 2002). During one of these matches, Jules Paxton, played by Kiera Knightly and a member of the Hounslow Harriers, a women's soccer team, sees Jess playing and convinces her that she should try out for the team (Chadha, 2002). Jules quickly became her counterpart and best friend (Chadha, 2002). After Jess tried out, Coach Joe accepts Jess onto the team. It is also hinted that Jules is in love with Joe, but not revealed (Chadha, 2002). Her parents forbid it, but she plays anyways (Chadha, 2002). To hide it, she tells her parents she got a part-time job (Chadha, 2002). However, Joe finds out she is playing without her parents' permission and decides to talk to her dad (Chadha, 2002). But, here her dad reveals that he wanted to play cricket when he was younger but was forced out due to anti-Indian sentiments (Chadha, 2002). Her dad just doesn't want Jess to go down the same path (Chadha, 2002). Despite her father not allowing her, she continues with the help of Pinky who covers for Jess as she travels to Germany for a game (Chadha et al., 2002). The Harriers lost this game because of Jess (Chadha, 2002). Her parents

then see the game in the paper and find out about Jess (Chadha, 2002). However, during this trip, Joe almost kisses Jess while she is drunk, leading to Jules and Jess getting into a fight (Chadha, 2002). But, Jess had other things to deal with as well because when she gets back from the game, her parents are there to pick her up and ban her from soccer (Chadha, 2002). That does not stop Jess yet again, and she continues to play (Chadha, 2002). Her dad then secretly goes to one of her games and sees another player mock Jess with a racial slur but does not stop her from playing (Chadha, 2002). After that game, the Harriers qualified for the championship, but the final match was on the day of Pinky's wedding, so Jess takes it upon herself to leave the team (Chadha, 2002). However, there is an American scout going to the game, so Joe and Jules both try to talk Jess into going (Chadha, 2002). On the day of the wedding, Jess is miserable knowing her team is playing without her (Chadha, 2002). Her dad sees and lets her go (Chadha, 2002). The team was losing, but when Jess rallied, the team won, and Jules and her were offered a scholarship for college (Chadha, 2002). Jules and Jess make it back in time for the wedding, but the next day, Jess is scared to tell her parents about the scholarship, fearing her parents will forbid her from going (Chadha, 2002). Her friend Tony, who is gay, lies to Jess's parents saying that they are engaged but will only continue the marriage if she is allowed to go to college, which they agree to, but Jess immediately confesses in a heartfelt monologue (Chadha, 2002). Her mother got angry with her and her father, but her father says he wants Jess to do what makes her happy (Chadha, 2002). Joe and Jess kiss after she finds out she can go, but she ends it with him because she is moving to America (Chadha, 2002). In the end, Jules and Jess both go off to college, but the movie truly ends on Joe convincing Jess that he will be waiting for her and that they could work (Chadha, 2002).

**London Tipton in *The Suite Life of Zack and Cody***

*The Suite Life of Zack and Cody* is a 2005-2008 sitcom with three seasons, each with 10 episodes. It is a Disney show created by Danny Kallis and Jim Geoghan in Hollywood, California. The show follows the life of two twin boys, Zack and Cody played by Dylan and Cole Sprouse, as they grow up in a Tipton Hotel to a single mother. One of the major characters in this show is London Tipton, played by Brenda Song. She is a Thai-American teenage girl living in Boston in her father's hotel (Geoghan & Kallis, 2005). She is the heiress of the Tipton Hotel chain, based on Paris Hilton, the early 2000s socialite, celebrity, and heiress to the Hilton Hotel chain. Like the Paris Hilton trope, she is characterized as ditzy, spoiled, and privileged but with her kind moments throughout. While she is in *The Suite Life of Zack and Cody*, *The Suite Life on Deck*, and *The Suite Life Movie*, this study will focus on her character growth and changes in *The Suite Life of Zack and Cody* since the second series and movie premiered closer to the 2010s rather than the beginning of the 2000s. London is not the lead of the show, but she is one of the major characters that is a constant throughout both series. She is also often characterized and compared with her blonde and white counterpart, Maddie Fitzpatrick, who was a middle class brainiac (Geoghan & Kallis, 2005). London carries similar characteristics to *Mean Girls'* Karen Smith, *Glee's* Brittany Pierce, *Clueless's* Cher, and *Legally Blonde's* Elle Woods.

#### *The Suite Life of Zack and Cody: London's Plotline*

While present for every episode but two, London was not the leading character in this show, so describing her plotline is a bit different than Jess's. London was born in the 1990s in an unknown location (though, she cites Dubai, Paris, Milan, and Boston as her hometowns). Her birth mother is Thai-American while her father is white (Geoghan & Kallis, 2005). She was always switching between her birth mother and father with his many different wives, but when

she got older, she cemented herself in a suite in the Tipton hotel and lived under the care of Mr. Moseby, who became her constant parental figure (Geoghan & Kallis, 2005). London also grew a love for fashion and shopping, which added to her spoiled rich girl demeanor (Geoghan & Kallis, 2005). However, she revealed to Maddie in season one that shopping was a way to cover up her sadness from her parents never being around (Geoghan & Kallis, 2005). Outwardly, London can be seen as a ditzy heiress in head-to-toe designer-wear with everything she could ever want, but throughout the show, they would sprinkle the plotline of her father never being around for her life events such as her plays growing up, her father-daughter dance, and even when the family lost all their fortune for an episode (Geoghan & Kallis, 2005). This lack of parental figures contributed to her mean and greedy nature that she often showed by insulting Maddie for being “poor” (Geoghan & Kallis, 2005). However, the show explains that when London was seven, her father promised to come home for Christmas but didn’t, and in that instance, London turned mean (Geoghan & Kallis, 2005). Another plotline for London is her intelligence. London never excelled at school, or did she care, in the first series (Geoghan & Kallis, 2005). In fact, she got kicked out of every private school in Boston. She is also known to be illiterate, which plays up her ditziness (Geoghan & Kallis, 2005). The show built this up and continued this on to the next series, as London has to attend sea school due to being expelled from schools in Boston (Geoghan & Kallis, 2005). While more specifics will be delved into while discussing her frames, her overall plotline is that she is an unintelligent rich girl who deals with parental issues, understanding others, and education (Geoghan & Kallis, 2005).

### **Other Characters that were Considered**

I would like to say that there were many other characters I thought about analyzing, but that is simply not the case. In fact, choosing characters was quite a feat. Jess was the first option

that came to mind, but a study with one character felt lack luster and too thin of a sample size. Originally, I aimed for about three to five characters, but other characters I looked at always seemed to be off by just one of the qualifications mentioned previously. First, I thought of Padma and Parvati in the Harry Potter series. While the movies were early 2000s and they are South Asian, the girls are side characters used to advance the story. I also looked at Cece Parikh in *New Girl*. However, the show came out in 2011, which seemed too late into the century. I also remembered that Brenda Song, who plays London, was in *Wendy Wu: Homecoming Warrior*, which would have been a perfect comparison to *Bend It Like Beckham*. However, Wendy Wu is Chinese rather than South or Southeast Asian. While past studies have lumped together Asians, I felt that venturing to East Asia was too broad in my purposes. Other characters that I saw were either male or side characters. Jess and London are the perfect two characters because not only did they meet my qualifications, but they were also both established characters from media that was geared towards younger audiences and characters that were not following the most common tropes for this group.

## **VI. FRAMING QUESTIONS**

This analysis has a lot of factors taken into account as just discussed. To better frame Jess and London and focus the previous information, I have created a framework to look at the characters with a set of questions. The questions involved different structures that contribute to their archetypes and values as women and people of color such as family structures, individual personality traits, tropes in other characters that affect them, specific dialogue, and plotlines as they all relate to feminist and post colonial theories. After watching the character's show or movie, I went through and answered these questions about the character. Think of the answers to these questions as the elements contributing to the character's frame building. Then, I will further discuss and analyze the overarching research questions: How are Jess and London framed? Does their framing exceed the common archetype or stereotypes associated with them? What can their framing reflect about the early 2000s?

1. What is the overall surface archetype?

The "overall surface archetype" refers to the main character trope that has been assigned to the character and what is seen without fully analyzing the character. Examples of this would be "the jock," "the mean girl," "the tomboy," "the dumb blonde," the comedic relief," and more. Understanding what archetype each character had is important as an independent variable to compare the further analysis to. The comparison will help answer if this archetype is just what the characters are or if they are more than that.

2. What characteristic and/or plotlines does the character have that either agrees or disagrees with feminist values?

3. What female stereotypes are present?

For both of these questions, feminist theory is used as a lens to analyze characteristics, plotlines and stereotypes around both characters. Much of my research focused on binaries such as masculinity vs. femininity and third world traditional vs. Western modern values. While binaries don't represent the gray areas of reality, they provide a good framework to compare and analyze characters against. With masculinity vs. femininity, I am focusing on ideals that were general seen by the male gaze such as women being sexualized, love interests, not as smart, submissive, and passive. With western modern vs. third world traditional values, I am focusing on ideals that focus on the shift to modernization such as women being educated/career focused vs. homemakers and independent vs. Subordinate while addressing cultural differences for women in these categories.

4. What characteristics and/or plotlines does the character have that either agrees or disagrees with post colonialism?
5. What post-colonial or racial stereotypes or archetypes are present?

Similar to the previous two questions, questions 4 and 5 use post colonial theory as a lens to analyze characteristics, plotlines, and stereotypes around both characters. This research focuses on the ideals that have stemmed from colonial periods and still impact structures in media. The ideals include stereotypes and archetypes such as the model minority and the perpetual foreigner. This section also tackles the use of othering, assimilation, and balancing dominant/individual cultural ideals in Jess's and London's frames. Furthermore, the analysis intersects with feminist theory because many of the post-colonial ideals can be vastly different for men and women of color and there is an aspect of Western vs. Third world ideals that affect post-colonial themes.

## **VII. FRAMING JESS: THE INDEPENDENT TOMBOY**

1. What is the overall surface archetype?
  - “The Independent Tomboy”
2. What characteristic and/or plotlines does the character have that either agrees or disagrees with feminist values?
  - Her love for soccer over typical “girly” things such as shopping.
  - Love triangle with Joe, Jess and Jules
  - Being career driven rather than a homemaker or interested in love
3. What female stereotypes or archetypes are present?
  - “Not like other girls” girl
4. What characteristics and/or plotlines does the character have that either agrees or disagrees with post colonialism?
  - Dream to go to America to play soccer
  - Battling English culture and Indian culture in herself
  - Having a white counterpart in comparison
5. What post-colonial or racial stereotypes or archetypes are present?
  - Othering
  - Dominant culture vs. Personal culture

From the get go, Jess is framed as a tomboy from the decorations in her room being fully soccer/David Beckham posters to her clothing choice of t-shirts and jumpers. Throughout the film, this trope is continuously emphasized while she tries to still honor her parents' wishes and the traditional feminine roles from her culture. This notion also pushes her into the “not like others girls girl” trope, meaning her characteristics are very opposite to the “average” girl (as

defined by the male gaze). Her as a tomboy emphasizes her push from femininity or traditional views which contributes to her whole frame. This archetype tends to agree with feminist theory ideals as it highlights the shift to modernized women but can reinforce post-colonial values.

However, when thinking about feminist theory further, I notice the binaries present when Jess is contrasted against other characters. Compared to her sister, Pinky, Jess is the masculine and Pinky is the feminine. This is emphasized from the beginning of the movie with Pinky needing to shop and Jess complaining with “do I have to go shopping again?” (Chadha, 2002, 3:42-3:45) Compared to her parents, Jess represents western/modern values and her parents represents traditional values. This is emphasized throughout the movie with her parents constantly pushing back against soccer to protect her from what they don’t know and promoting learning home skills. However, compared to Jules and Jules’s family, Jess almost represents traditional values while Jules is the modern, western ideals. This is showcased in many scenes throughout the film as Jules encourages Jess to live her dreams against her family’s wishes while Jess does not see how that is possible. The western modern versus third world traditional values binary also intersects with post-colonial theory when talking about Jess. Jess battles internally with following her career dreams, which is both emphasized in the shift towards feminist and dominant western culture and following her cultural and familial ideals. This internal struggle is shown with her breaking down to her friend and saying how she is never “Indian enough” for her family (Chadha, 2002, 23:36). These binaries contribute to building her frame because they emphasize different aspects that contribute to her individuality.

In this analysis, looking at the aspect of romance in the film is important as well. Often, in media about the female experience, romance is a prevalent part of it. While romance is a part of real life, it can be emphasized a lot as a defining factor of what it is to be a woman. Agreeing

with a shift to independence and modernization in feminist theory, the love triangle between Joe, Jules, and Jess does not take over Jess's personality and interests. She is career-driven rather than fully interested in love. Yet, the ending of this film juxtaposes this ideal by Jess holding out for Joe even after rejecting him previously to follow her dreams. Looking at this from an entertainment aspect, it happily fulfills all the conflicts in the film. But, it almost combats the feminist ideals that have been built into Jess's frame throughout the movie by saying this is only a truly happy ending for Jess because she and Joe were able to work out. To her overall frame as a career driven tomboy though, this does not denote the feminist ideals she exhibits, but it is interesting to note.

A big aspect of post-colonial theory that is built into Jess's frame is the American Dream. One of her bigger motivations in this film is to get a chance to play women's soccer in America. As discussed previously, the American dream has themes derived from colonial times that saw America as an opportunity for success and freedom. Her want for the American dream plays into her character as she fights against traditional ideals to achieve her goals. This is emphasized towards the end when she gets a scholarship to play for Santa Clara in California and is determined to explain to her folks that this is what she needs despite it going against her family's wishes. The film also ends with Jess and Jules heading off to America, which further emphasizes how this fulfillment is important to Jess's overall story.

Further along the lines of post-colonial theory, having Jules as her best friend almost introduces her as a white counterpart to compare to. This can promote othering in the film and showcase how Jess is different from the dominant culture. However, in this case, othering is an important building block in Jess's frame to show her internal struggles and growth into her dream. This movie also uses this concept in a flipped way, disagreeing with post-colonial theory.

While South and Southeast Asians were often used as the side character to the white lead, this movie flips it and makes Jess the lead and Jules the best friend. This flipped concept is important to Jess's frame as it elevates her over the typical archetypes and stereotypes of the perpetual foreigner or the comedic relief. It sets her up to be her own full character while her differences and othering can still be a part of her frame.

But what is Jess's frame? Her overarching title is "the independent tomboy," but there is so much more that goes into that. To sum up the previous information, the building blocks of Jess's frame that I noticed are as follows: career driven, the American Dream, internal struggle of dominant culture and personal culture, othered in a good way, modernized values competing with familial traditional obligations, and comparisons/binaries with other characters.

## VIII. FRAMING LONDON: THE DITZY HEIRESS

6. What is the overall surface archetype?
  - “The Ditzzy Heiress”
2. What characteristic and/or plotlines does the character have that either agrees or disagrees with feminist values?
  - Her love for shopping and fashion over everything.
  - Her love for romance.
  - Being academically unintelligent
3. What female stereotypes or archetypes are present?
  - “The dumb blonde” format
  - “Mean girl” trope
4. What characteristics and/or plotlines does the character have that either agrees or disagrees with post colonialism?
  - Comparison to her white counterpart.
5. What post-colonial or racial stereotypes or archetypes are present?
  - Complete Assimilation

From the beginning of the show, London is immediately introduced as the “ditzzy heiress” trope. This is evident from dialogue, actions, dressage, and even mannerism that she has. As said previously, London Tipton is based off of Paris Hilton. This recreation of Paris is satirical to a point, especially in this first series, *The Suite Life of Zack and Cody*. Along with being the “ditzzy heiress,” she exhibits the “mean girl” trope as seen in many coming of age high school show or movies. This show also flips the “dumb blonde” trope to be about an Asian character while having a smart blonde, Maddie, as well, which is important to London’s frame. When analyzing

London, these archetypes and frames seem to have similar themes to feminist theory but lack in post colonial theory.

Her character, while a parody for Paris Hilton, can be discussed as a proponent of the male gaze. She fits into the description of an “average” girl that used to be portrayed in media and art: an unintelligent girl into fashion and romance. These characteristics fit into the masculine vs. feminine binary as the feminine side. While I am not saying femininity is bad, she represents a view of woman that was very popular during this time. The side of fashion is emphasized through the show with costuming but also with her shopping sprees, her huge closet with escalators and multiple floors, and many of her plotlines being focused around fashion. Her love for romance is also emphasized throughout the show, especially with her being more interested in dating than education. While these aspects are largely focused on femininity, they can also fit into the modern vs. traditional binary. Her characteristics can be seen as a traditional woman with interests but also modern with her being a rich girl that is served and taken care of. Her being a rich heiress also fits into modern standards because this gives her power that women do not have in traditional standards, which she exhibits with her control in the hotel. This also combats stereotypes that many Southeast Asian women have as service workers by putting her on the top of the corporate world as an heiress. These aspects are important because they build and emphasize her frame throughout the entire series in a feminist aspect.

Looking at London through post-colonial themes is a fascinating topic. The world of *The Suite Life of Zack and Cody* does not have race as a structural system, but that is specifically inside the show, so there are not many plotlines relating to this topic like *Bend It Like Beckham* has. However, from an outside perspective, there are aspects that relate. Just like Jess, London also has her white counterpart, Maddie. Unlike Jess, Maddie and London are both equal level

main characters which disagrees with post-colonial structures since London is not a supporting character to Maddie. Yet, I can see them used as juxtaposes to each other in the many scenes together. They are shown this way together emphasizing their differences with Maddie, the smart blonde, and London, the dumb Asian, that steps away from common stereotypes and post-colonial themes.

Yet, London represents another theme in post-colonial theories: assimilation. While living in a world where internal racial power dynamics do not exist, she still is a woman of color in power as an heiress. In this role, she has many privileges and is assimilated into Boston culture because of her rank. This building block in her frame can promote the idea of promised privilege in the American Dream. However, this combats the model minority stereotype and, as stated earlier, the service worker stereotype because London as a character is taking a role often exhibited by those in the dominant culture. She has the power to be the dominant culture rather than a model minority. With this factor, London's frame represents a different perspective for Asians in general as she was able to be fully assimilated and receive that promise of privilege.

Before pushing on to discussing London and Jess's frame depth as characters, it is interesting to note that her character is very spoiled and sheltered. While a part of her frame, this point does not fit into this study because that does not share themes with either theory that I am utilizing. Another aspect of her personality that is emphasized heavily is her lack of a father figure. This is one of her main sources of conflict because her father continuously doesn't show up. While this is a big part of her frame, this conflict does not fit into theories in my research. I also looked at her in a comedic relief aspect that many Asians get thrown into. However, this show is a sit-com, so most of the characters are comedic in this nature, so it would be unreasonable to assume London was made just for comedic relief because she is Southeast Asian.

Similar to Jess, London's frame is a little complex despite the overall title. Her overall frame is the "ditzy heiress," but that involves many factors: fashion driven, a love for romance, unintelligence, the male gaze, modern vs. traditional ideals, comparison to a white counterpart, and assimilation.

## IX. DO THEY BREAK THROUGH THE SURFACE?

In this study, I found that Jess broke through typical surface, stereotypical portrayals for South Asian women in the early 2000s, but her story also authentically portrays the internal struggle many first-generation immigrants go through when battling the culture of the society they are in versus their traditional familial culture. She is not portrayed in the typical sense that thematically represents dominant (western or European) ideologies. For South Asians, this could be seen through being a “nerd,” model minority, or negatively othered through comedic relief or exoticism. Jess’s character turns away from that as a serious lead character with many complexities focused on career goals. She also presents different ideals for South Asian women at the time as a different stereotype from the “traditional homemaker.” For the time period, Jess was an unique female character that was breaking boundaries of common stereotypes that share themes with feminist theory such as sexualization, exoticism, and submissiveness. In modern times, we see more and more characters like her such as Devi from *Never Have I Ever* or Kate Sharma in *Bridgerton*, but Jess was one of the first of her kind (Akhtar, 2020; Verica, 2020).

London, however, broke through the surface in some ways but in other ways, lacked depth. If looking through the post-colonial theories, she broke through the narratives from an external standpoint rather than in her reality. London is framed in a way that exceeds stereotypes and archetypes from an outside perspective in post-colonial ways as she is portrayed as a fully assimilated rich girl rather than the nerd, model minority, salon/service worker, etc. As stated previously, ethnicity or her Asian culture wasn’t a part of the show, but that doesn’t take away from the outside interpretations related to her ethnicity and culture. Looking at her from the feminist theory lens, she portrays a version of women that has been seen by the male gaze: girly, into fashion, unintelligent, and obsessed with romance. The fact that London is “girly” is not a

negative thing, even if associated with the male gaze. It is more a reflection of one ideology of women that happens to be stereotypical. I recognize that this is a plot choice as a juxtaposition to Maddie, but looking at London herself, it presents in that stereotypical way. London was also a first of her kind being the, for lack of better terms, “dumb Asian,” but her feminine portrayal may have counteracted with her fully breaking through the surface.

## **X. THEORIZING AND FUTURE RESEARCH: SOCIAL MIRRORING AND IDENTITY BUILDING**

Life and art often reflect each other. Media can reflect collective/individual ideologies that people have on different groups. At the same time, society can reflect media portrayals. This cycle is called social mirroring. Social mirroring in specific terms is when one internalizes the views/actions of others and society on their identity (Besana et al., 2020). In other words, this is when an individual's identity or actions are based on and developed by the depictions of their racial identity, gender roles, etc. in media and society. A simple example of this would be when a person lives with other people for a long time, they will pick up certain mannerisms from the other people over time, which I experience with my roommates all the time. Another part of social mirroring is when society or individuals mirror what the media or external factors depict, whether it be through hypervisibility or concurrent invisibility (Besana et al., 2020).

Furthermore, Charles Whitehead (2001) argues that people perceive their thoughts and feelings through societal thoughts and feelings. When talking about media like film and television, this can negatively affect younger generations who are learning how to view themselves and the world as it distorts their views on different identities. This type of media can shape viewers' beliefs and social conceptions, according to Albert Bandura (2001). He goes on to comment that many shared misconceptions of certain groups come from these formed ideologies (Bandura, 2001). Conversely, there is sometimes a positive effect on rare occasions. For illustration, in a study about the movie *Bend It Like Beckham*, researchers witnessed the main character, Jess, reaffirming the female gender roles that many of their high school students related to (Thomas and Rothing, 2017). Still, there is a trend of negative representations present in the film industry

for many groups like South and Southeast Asian women. But this does not seem to be the full case for Jess and London.

Looking at Jess and London, they both can reflect how English-language society in the early 2000s was becoming more multicultural and understanding of other cultures. Jess's portrayals reflect ideologies shifting from common stereotypes as she battles the different roles and expectations in her own world. Her character growth even showcases the shifting ideologies as before she is worried about honoring her parents (individual cultural values) but in the end she pursues her own dreams in America (dominant ideology or American Dream). On the other hand, London's portrayal reflects how societies becoming multicultural was shifting to a norm. Her cultural and ethnic background does not take part in this first series. While I think not showcasing that can make a character less multidimensional, this can also reflect how multicultural societies were becoming a norm as it wasn't singled out as an oddity. However, with their staggering feminist portrayals, this can show how the role of women in society can vary based on the environment. This also shows that the idea of a woman is vast and can shift from independent tomboy to ditzy heiress to even the cool girl or even the manic pixie dream girl. I think further research can go into this topic on a larger scale with more characters. This larger scale project would be able to more authentically reflect on what media mirrors about society and vice versa regarding South and Southeast Asian women. My study can theorize this topic, but because of the small character pool, it is limited.

For other future studies, this can expand to how these characters influenced identity building and how individuals frame real people based on fiction. Identity is an enormous part of human development and self-acceptance. Piñeiro-Naval et al. (2018) quoted Castells and stated that building identity is the “construction of meaning” similar to how framing constructs

reality. This aids individuals in finding a purpose for what they do in life (Piñeiro-Naval et al., 2018). In other words, identity is tied to how a person chooses to live their life. Identity formation, of oneself and others, also tends to start taking place heavily during adolescence, which for Generation Z was during the early 2000s (Besana et al., 2020). However, that “building” can have many internal and external factors playing into it such as media.

One factor of an individual’s overall identity building is ethnic and racial identity (ERI), an identity associated with race, ethnicity, and membership in racial and ethnic groups (Besana et al., 2020). According to Besana et al., research has shown that this is an important psychological and psychosocial part of healthy development, especially for minorities (2020). Their research also suggests that a wavering sense of ERI can lead to negative effects when faced with discrimination, which can be in form of stereotypical representations, microaggressions, and more (Besana et al., 2020). ERI can also be affected by cultural heritage or the views of one’s cultural heritage surrounding them. The distinction of cultural heritage, when compared to other members of society, is “fundamental” for one to “reaffirm” their ERI and overall identity (Piñeiro-Naval et al., 2018). However, this line can either get negatively distinct or blurred with globalization and multiculturalism growing more and more each day. Globalization tends to take factors from different customs and traditions and either combine them, emphasize them, or disseminate them in different institutions, such as media, which can lead to a lack of ERI; this is why researchers believe that acknowledging and promoting a distinct cultural heritage for groups is imperative to ERI (Piñeiro-Naval et al., 2018).

Nevertheless, identity building has other factors that contribute. This includes but is not limited to gender and sex. Society has begun to acknowledge more of a gender spectrum, but this study will be more focused on the binary construct of sex, specifically through a feminist lens.

The feminist lens, in a Western context, showcases the female progression of traditional values to independence and self-efficiency (Thomas and Rothing, 2017). This representation in literature, history, and media can change how an individual, who identifies with feminist theories, identifies themselves, similarly to how ERI is affected by the distinctions of cultural heritage (Kidd, 2016). Many mediums showcase this “want for something more,” and those ideas can affect the identity formation of one’s gender roles if they relate to it. This also normalizes and reaffirms their idea of how they fit into society, gender-wise (Kidd, 2016).

These factors can come from portrayals in film in relation to gender, sex, race, ethnicity, stereotypes, etc. Studying how early 2000s media is a factor can lead to better human interactions, and I believe that human interaction is at the basis of being a human in general. Understanding how these affect identities can be vital especially when understanding ideas and identities which affect the behaviors behind the young adults and adolescents who will soon be corporate leaders, governmental officials, and more. Seeing these perceptions, can help us better understand how to interact with people, educate, and maybe even help with policy changes, but that is for another time.

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