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KOREAN-AMERICAN TRANSNATIONAL CINEMA CULTURES

A Master's Thesis

by

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To the Outsiders

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ABSTRACT

KOREAN-AMERICAN TRANSNATIONAL CINEMA CULTURES

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This thesis targets Korean-American Transnational Cinema Cultures that particularly explore the cinematic representation of the Korean-American collective diaspora and one of its independent filmmakers'—Justin Chon—position in the industry. By adopting Hamid Naficy's (2001) framework of Accented Cinema and Critical Transnationalism approach by Will Higbee and Song Hwee Lim (2010), this study investigates the films namely; *Seoul Searching* (2015) by Benson Lee, *Spa Night* (2016) by Andrew Ahn, *Minari* (2020) by Lee Isaac Chung, *Gook* (2017) and *Blue Bayou* (2021) by Justin Chon. After exploring the representation of cultural identity on-screen, this study presents a case study on Justin Chon's constructed celebrity image through a content analysis of his (social) media presence. To understand Chon's filmmaking practice, his cultural capital of awards, festivals, and prestige also will be investigated through Pierre Bourdieu's sociology of culture, including

cultural capital, habitus, and the field theory. Through a close reading of diasporic characters and narratives in five films and a content analysis of Justin Chon's case, this thesis ultimately aims to find what Korean-American American Transnational Cinema is.

Keywords: Transnational Cinemas, Korean-American Diaspora, Independent Cinema, Film Festivals, Justin Chon

ÖZET

KORE-AMERİKAN ULUSÖTESİ SİNEMA KÜLTÜRLERİ

Eda Güven

Yüksek Lisans, Medya ve Görsel Çalışmalar

Tez Danışmanı: Dr. Öğr. Üyesi Colleen Kennedy-Karpat

Ağustos 2022

Bu tez, özellikle Kore-Amerikan kolektif diasporasının sinematik temsilini ve onun bağımsız film yapımcılarından biri olan Justin Chon'un sektördeki konumunu araştıran Kore-Amerikan Ulusötesi Sinema Kültürlerini hedeflemektedir. Bu çalışma, Will Higbee ve Song Hwee Lim'in (2010) eleştirel ulusötesilik yaklaşımını ve Hamid Naficy'nin (2001) aksanlı sinema çerçevesini benimseyerek Benson Lee'nin *Seoul Searching* (2015), Andrew Ahn'ın *Spa Night* (2016), Lee Isaac Chung'ın *Minari* (2020), ve Justin Chon'un *Gook* (2017) ve *Blue Bayou* (2021) filmlerini incelemektedir. Kültürel kimliğin ekrandaki temsilini keşfettikten sonra, bu çalışma Justin Chon'un (sosyal) medya varlığının içerik analizi yoluyla inşa ettiği ünlü imajı üzerine bir vaka çalışması sunmaktadır. Chon'un film yapım pratiğini anlamak için, ödüller, festivaller ve prestijden oluşan kültürel sermayesi de Pierre Bourdieu'nün kültürel sermaye, habitus ve alan teorisi dahil olmak üzere kültür sosyolojisi aracılığıyla araştırılacaktır. Beş filmdeki diasporik karakterlerin ve anlatıların

yakından okunması ve Justin Chon vakasının içerik analizi yoluyla, bu tez nihai olarak Kore-Amerikan Ulusötesi Sinemasının ne olduğunu bulmayı amaçlamaktadır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Ulusötesi Sinemalar, Kore-Amerikan Diasporası, Bağımsız Sinema, Film Festivalleri, Justin Chon

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

"Perhaps home is not a place but simply an irrevocable condition"

(Baldwin, 2000, p. 92).

Is home the place we are born and raised? Do we call home where our parents live, or where our ancestors come from? Feeling at home is more of an enigma than definite answers. Belonging to somewhere or something can come in many different ways. It is psychologically examined that people can show their belonging in both abstract and concrete ways such as their connection to certain locations, memories, and experiences alongside sensory attachments to particular smells, textures, and sounds (Allen, 2021). Furthermore, the sense of belonging derives from the need for approval by a certain group and emotional attachment through which people surround themselves with a safe unity (Lähdesmäki et al., 2021). Therefore, it can be

regarded as an act of self-identification to the whole humanity or a particular group, nationality, and community where people commonly share goals and interests. According to Yuval-Davis (2006), belonging contains the complexities of several analytical factors like social locations, emotional attachment, and political value regimes. Particularly, "the politics of belonging" targets the hierarchically constructed intersections located in social spaces like gender, class, race, nationality, ethnicity, and religion (Yuval-Davis, 2006, p. 27). What draws my attention especially is how migrants and their ethnicity generate a sense of belonging in both national and transnational ways and how their emotional attachments create a diaspora that passes from one generation to another.

The phrase "diaspora" is often relevant to the dispersion of Jews and Greeks. Rawle (2018) describes the term as follows: "The word diaspora, from the Greek, diaspeirein (meaning disperse), and comprising dia (across) and speirein (scatter) refers to groups of people who have been dispersed or spread from their original homeland" (p. 109). However, the term's meaning expanded over time. According to Tölölyan (1991), diaspora shares "meanings with a larger semantic domain that includes words like immigrant, expatriate, refugee, guest-worker, exile community, overseas community, ethnic community" (p. 4). Even today, we still witness exilic and diasporic communities all over the world like Syrian refugees and Ukrainian asylum seekers. Therefore, the constant displacement of people because of war, safety, and better future is one of the biggest struggles of humanity that has been unresolved. Many people live in diaspora because of their in-between position as insider and outsider. They feel isolated because they lost their support networks like colleagues, friends and communities. Clifford (1994) indicates that diaspora is also a

signifier of "political struggles to define the local, as distinctive community, in historical contexts of displacement" (p. 308). Therefore, diaspora can be seen in different ethnicities, nationalities, and communities by emphasizing their movement, transnationality, a common sense of loss, and belonging from their original homeland to the new destination. These struggles of migrants and ethnic identities are visible in mainstream media and they have been portrayed in many diaspora and exilic films by targeting different nationalities. Even though diaspora of race and ethnicity can be examined through various methods and disciplines like politics, sociology, and history, situating diaspora in transnational cinemas can expose the transnational linkages between film production, consumption, and cultural identity.

Since diasporic films represent fluid identities and home-seeking journeys, they can be situated in transnational cinemas. The reason is that the transnationalization of possible imaginings and the collective notions of belonging transcend the national territories of people. Moreover, it offers an understanding of the outcomes of globalization and the global circulation of money and information. However, Berry (2010) also mentions that "no transnational cinema exists without encountering and negotiating national spaces and cultures" (p. 112). Therefore, the old national cinema model is neither something suppressed by transnational cinema nor indicates a disappearance of national cultures or states. Berry (2010) believes that both the old cinema and transnational cinema have continued and grown based on the new transnational order. Based on this transnational order, in 2010, Taylor and Francis Group launched the journal *Transnational Cinemas* by dealing with the transnational flows which affect the world cinemas (Ezra & Rowden, 2006; Higbee & Lim, 2010). Using transnationalism located in diaspora, this thesis focuses on the border-crossing

nature of feeling “at home”, and it explores the Korean-American ethnicity, identity and diaspora through the film narratives of Korean-American filmmakers. Since the filmmakers are the subjects of diasporic identification themselves, their self-reflexivity of post-migratory experience and determination to promote diversity in production and circulation within the industry will be explored.

My motivation for choosing the cinematic representation of the Korean-American collective diaspora has four-layered relevance. First, Asian-American cinema is in its golden age. There are many successful films with an Asian-American cast like Lee Isaac Chung’s *Minari* (2020), Marvel’s film *Shang-Chi and the Legend of the Ten Rings* (2021) directed by Destin Daniel Cretton, and recently *Everything Everywhere All at Once* (2022) directed by Dan Kwan and Daniel Scheinert. These films are recognized by local and international audiences, they received positive reviews and achieved a high box office record. On the other hand, they have the significance of representing Asian culture and promoting new Asian-American talents. For instance, *Everything Everywhere All at Once* (2022) is a genre-bending film, as a mixture of science-fiction with action and comedy. On the other side, there is narrative of a Chinese immigrant family, who struggle to maintain their laundromat business and family responsibilities. Although Asian-American community bear a wide range of ethnicities, they gather around the similar racial melancholia related to immigration, displacement, and diaspora. Hence, the broad category of Asian-American ethnicities is interrogated through Asian American cultural productions, including films. They provide similar yet different aspects of this racial melancholia. Furthermore, they contribute to the lack in Asian-American representation.

The reason is that Asian-American characters are either misrepresented or poorly portrayed in American movies. Chong (2017) interrogates the increasing need for Asian-American representation by asking these questions: “If the problem with racist misrepresentation is racial invisibility, then the solution seems to call for some kind of forced integration of American popular culture in order to claim visibility. And what might that cinema look like?” (pp. 130-1). This brings my second motivation to particularly focus on Korean-American transnational cinema because Korean-American diasporic filmmakers, especially Justin Chon, respond to Asian-American misrepresentation by producing films that target Asian-American stories. These filmmakers not only bring racial visibility through narratives but also put themselves into a minority practice that promotes Asian-American talents, writers, and producers. By emphasizing the symbolic importance of cultural industry and economic aspects, these filmmakers stand against “the box office” excuse and they provide jobs for other Asian-Americans within the industry who have been invisible because of the paucity of jobs. Furthermore, the research on Korean-Americans within the industry have been understudied in terms of their film narratives and independent filmmakers’ position. Therefore, this thesis aims to contribute this research gap as well.

Thirdly, the selected films are produced in years between 2015-2021. They are contemporary and relevant when it comes to examine the current state of Korean-American filmmakers’ minority practice and their cultural identity within the United States. Regarding the golden age of Asian-American cinema, the selected independent films are produced in last eight years. Increase in producing Korean-American diasporic films and the rise of new Korean-American filmmakers is the

another reason that encouraged me to research. The chosen films *Seoul Searching* (2015) by Benson Lee, *Spa Night* (2016) by Andrew Ahn, *Minari* (2020) by Lee Isaac Chung, *Gook* (2017) and *Blue Bayou* (2021) by Justin Chon are also recognized in prestigious films festivals like Sundance and Cannes. These filmmakers, particularly Justin Chon, use the independent cinema as a social field to increase their cultural capital and make their filmmaking practice visible. Lastly, being a researcher who was not born into Korean culture or ethnicity but can understand the Korean language puts me in a position where I am not totally an outsider. Understanding culture via its language brings the larger contexts of words. Therefore, my motivation for choosing the ethnic group, Korean-Americans, is boosted by the language since I could critically be engaged with their diaspora. In the light of these motivations and significance, the research questions for Korean-American Transnational Cinema Cultures have been formulated as follows:

RQ 1: What is Korean-American Transnational Cinema?

RQ 1A: How do the films of Korean-American filmmakers express the "particular" transnationality through diasporic experience?

RQ 1B: What are the patterns that the collective experience of the Korean-American diaspora on-screen creates?

RQ 1C: How does Justin Chon situate himself in the discourse of ethnicity, race, language, power, and social action through his (social) media presence?

RQ 1D: How do the cultural capital of festivals, and other agents within the field function in the reproduction of Justin Chon's role as an independent filmmaker?

The overall aim is to find what Korean-American Transnational Cinema is. To reach this goal, the four sub-questions above will be discussed. To answer these questions, CHAPTER 2 firstly will introduce the literature related to indie cinema, transnational cinemas, and the history of Korean-American ethnicity, identity, and diaspora. Following this literature, the methodology part will be presented and explained how to conduct this study overall. In CHAPTER 3, I will use the close reading method to explore the patterns of the collective experience of the Korean-American diaspora by diving the five films into two groupings: the first one targets the Korean-American Dream in the narratives of *Spa Night* (2016), *Gook* (2017), and *Minari* (2020) while the second one addresses Korean-American Adoptees in the films *Seoul Searching* (2015) and *Blue Bayou* (2021). The films will be examined through the concept of Naficy's (2001) Accented Cinema and the critical transnationalism approach by Higbee and Lim (2010).

Lastly, CHAPTER 4 will use a content analysis on Justin Chon's celebrity image and industry recognition. Firstly, I will examine Chon's Instagram posts which are 280 in total by investigating his Instagram strategy and constructed celebrity image. Secondly, I will adapt Pierre Bourdieu's sociology of culture in film festival studies and widen the content analysis on Chon's filmmaking career that has recently been established through the festival circuit. Therefore, I will examine the cultural capital of agents in relation to Chon's filmmaking career through the festivals Sundance, Cannes, and CAAMFest.

The narratives of identification, belonging, and social collectiveness of Korean-American filmmakers offer an interdisciplinary approach by combining cultural

studies with film studies. Therefore, this thesis offers broader research on Korean-American diasporic films by extending its scope through the celebrity study of Justin Chon with film festival studies. Akser (2021, p. 2) states the following:

> [...] the majority of the film/tv business is run by at high, mid and even low levels by white men. This is a showcase industry of white privilege, closed to women, black people, immigrants, namely anybody outside the dominant norm of the last century in terms of industrial relationships.

Therefore, diasporic filmmakers' minority practice and representation matter because they encourage cinema to be diverse and unique. I hope that this thesis puts a spotlight on ethnic minority groups like Korean-Americans that has been neglected and isolated in both real life and within the industry. Ultimately, we all wish to be seen, heard and valued. We want to feel represented, empowered by our heartbreaking experiences.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW AND METHODOLOGY

2.1. Introduction: Diasporic Transnationalism in Indie Cinema

The concept of transnational cinema has been widely recognized in film studies. Even though the transnational cinema can convey various meanings, it mostly emerges as an outcome of the globalization of cinema. In regard to transnational cinema, Berry (2010, p. 114) states the following:

> It can refer to big-budget blockbuster cinema associated with the operations of global corporate capital. Or it can refer to small-budget diasporic and exilic cinema. It can refer to films that challenge national identity, or it can refer to the consumption of foreign films as part of the process of a discourse about what national identity is.

In this regard, the "transnational" is a kind of response to the limitations of national paradigms (Higson, 2000). Since the critical understanding of shifting identifications between global/local, host/home, and national/transnational emerge primarily within the diasporic films, placing a hyphen between words like "Korean-American"

emphasizes a mutual attraction or sometimes an index of alienation. In this thesis, I aim to look at "transnationalism" by locating it in the concept of diaspora. Yang et al. (2020) states that "[...] narratives of migration and displacement engage with the transnational, touching upon social, cultural, and economic concerns which emerge with the crossing of national boundaries" (p. 181).

Even though diaspora could be recognized as concomitant with transnationalism, it is not exactly synonymous with transnationalism. Diaspora addresses the particular movement of people from one or more nation-states to another; this mobility might be forced or voluntary by people who are primarily immigrants or asylum seekers. On the other hand, Braziel and Mannur (2003) states that "Transnationalism may be defined as the flow of people, ideas, goods, and capital across national territories in a way that undermines nationality and nationalism as discrete categories of identification, economic organization, and political constitution" (p. 8). Recognizing the different diasporas in transnational settings could provide an alternative paradigm for national identification, like "transnational" or "postnational" (Braziel and Mannur, 2003). Since ethnicity is the core of identity construction in multicultural societies, diasporic identities promote the multicultural nature of communities in that sense. Diasporic consciousness is not only being Chinese or Korean but also emerges from the need to feel global in a sense that the "transnationalization of possible common imaginings which are particular and specific to a group" is also global in their relevance (Georgiou, 2006, pp. 135-6). Therefore, diasporic identification turns into a process of becoming rather than being if we put it alternatively in the Deleuzian way; so, the diasporic identity does not represent fixed states but fluidity.

This thesis aims to look at the diasporic narratives of Korean-American filmmakers; furthermore, it seeks to go beyond the close reading of films and conduct a content analysis that investigates specific Korean-American filmmaker Justin Chon's industry recognition and prestige cycle. Before presenting the methods that will be used in this thesis, the manifold nature of Korean-American Transnational Cinema Cultures requires the literature review of indie cinema, transnational cinemas, and Korean-Americans' ethnicity, identity, diaspora. Thus, starting with subchapter 2.1.1, I will explain what makes indie cinema as the cinema of the "other" through the value of the indie, its realism, and how it offers a social field to the minority groups. Hence, the category of indie filmmaking is definitely a place to look for because the films to be analyzed in this thesis circulated in film festivals and were directed by indie filmmakers. In subchapter 2.1.2, how the concept of the diaspora can be situated in the scope of transnational cinema will be explained concerning diasporic filmmaking. Using mainly Hamid Naficy's (2001) book, *An Accented Cinema: Exilic and Diasporic Filmmaking*, this section also describes the difference in exilic, diasporic, and ethnic filmmakers in the accented cinema, which will later help me to classify Korean-American filmmakers.

Lastly, in subchapter 2.1.3, a concise history of Korean-Americans will be given to articulate the foundations of the diasporic film narratives later on in the close reading, CHAPTER 3. Since diasporic patterns and particular transnationality in the films of Korean-American filmmakers are built from the identity, ethnicity of diaspora, some historical background to construct the meaning of being a Korean-American needs to be given. Thus, the theoretical framework for indie cinema, diaspora, transnational cinema, and Korean-American history will be covered in the first half of the chapter.

After giving the key concepts and the theoretical paradigms, the methodology part will be introduced to explain how this study will be conducted with shared theoretical paradigms and concepts.

2.1.1. American Indie Cinema: The Cinema of the "Other"

Indie differs from Hollywood in many aspects regarding its style, content, and systems of cultural circulation. In the literature, some attention has been paid to the value of the indie, its realism, and particularly Asian-American cinema as one of the multicultural cinemas (Biskind, 2004; Levy, 1999; Newman, 2011). The chosen films are American productions and transnational within the contexts. Moreover, they were mostly circulated in the Sundance Film Festival. Kennedy-Karpat and Sandberg (2017) state that "The question of *where* a film debut is also critical: a film that opens the Cannes film festival—as opposed to less celebrated festivals, or at the multiplex—is already understood to have achieved something" (p. 7). In this respect, understanding indie cinema and its filmmakers in relation to the festival circuit is, indeed, crucial for this study. Thus, American indie cinema as a film culture and festivals, distributors, and exhibitors should be considered since they share common expectations for their forms and meanings within an indie community.

By means of definition, indie has a positive valence; it is inherently autonomous and authentic. In the scope of cinema, then, indie builds resistance against what is mainstream and Hollywoodized. What makes a difference in indie filmmaking derives from its standing value itself (Levy, 1999; Newman, 2011). By positioning itself in the representation of alternative storylines full of resistance, opposition, and difference, indie films tell the stories of outsiders (Levy, 1999, p. 52). Being an

outsider primarily applies to the character and the filmmaker's multicultural identity. The value of indie cinema lies in the artistic vision of the filmmakers who are often ignored or suppressed by the mass-market Hollywood (Levy, 1999). For instance, the Sundance Film Festival mostly presents the work of filmmakers who are women, gay and lesbian, or ethnic minorities. Thus, the value of the indie not only promotes the production, distribution, and exhibition outside Hollywood but also underscores a dispersed minority practice. Even though this practice took place in every period of American cinema, the Sundance-Miramax era transformed indie into a broader cultural circulation than in prior eras (Biskind, 2004; Newman, 2011). Two particular events gave shape to the history of indie regarding this era. One is the 1989 Sundance film Festival where the notable film *Sex, Lies, and Videotape* directed by Steven Soderbergh turned into "the big bang of the modern indie film movement" (Biskind, 2004, p. 80). The emergence of the Sundance Film Festival brought positive publicity to the totally unknown director. The second event is Disney's decision to shut Miramax in 2010, which had been so influential over more than twenty years in shaping and promoting independent cinema (Biskind, 2004; Newman, 2011).

After these two occurrences, the Sundance Film Festival opened up a network where numerous independent filmmakers, film critics, and ultimately audiences are connected globally. The emergence of the film festival is national in nature, but it also transnational because it creates alternative public spheres in which minority groups could exist together by promoting transnational linkages with each other since those minorities spread on the world map. These two binaries as national/transnational in the emergence of film festivals exist together. Wong (2011) explains the reason as follows: "While national, group, or thematic intentions have

been paramount for many festivals at different times, festival organizers and programmers, nevertheless, also see themselves as the guardians of quality cinema that transcends national industries and their demands" (p. 60). When we consider the major festivals like Cannes, Berlin, Sundance, and Toronto, they have their own national and local contexts but they also in a continuous international exchange and flow with other national cinemas by seeking cutting-edge cinema around the world. Iordanova (2016, p. xiv) points out the following:

> Film festivals are inherently transnational in that no matter what the intention of the festival is—and even where a festival is launched with a nationalist agenda in mind—the diverse content that is being showcased effectively undermines and counter-balances nationalist tendencies.

By providing a space in which multiple agents engage with local, national and transnational relations of culture, power and identity; therefore, we can say that film festivals are transnational.

Besides bringing other works from all around the world, film festivals also curate new names as many filmmakers went on to auteurist careers like Steven Soderbergh, the Coen brothers, and Quentin Tarantino. In this regard, Sundance comes forward as an important "American" festival that is devoted to promoting American independent films and its filmmakers that stand in opposition to Hollywood as a national industry (Wong, 2011, p. 49). Despite the festival seems to look anti-Hollywood, Robert Redford, who is the founder of the Sundance Institute, restates their original goal:

> This festival is about supporting independent filmmakers. We don't want to lose track of that sight. If you want to go to Hollywood, great, we support that. If not, we support that too. The *New York Times* called us the last stop before Hollywood. But we're not. Nor are we anti-Hollywood. We're a bridge. (Levy, 1999, p. 43)

By giving a chance to no-name filmmakers with limited budget features, then, the Sundance focuses on less financial profit than Hollywood and ensures its continued productivity by the filmmaker's personal vision.

The independent filmmaker's vision is motivated by the narratives about ordinary people's day-to-day lives. The typical lived experience of quite common people derives from the daily struggles and complex relationships; therefore, indie films allow a realistic version of America on screen. Moreover, the narratives based on daily lives are "relatively cheap to produce" and "lend themselves to the kinds of performances that win accolades and impress festival and art-house audiences" (Newman, 2011, p. 88). Thus, indie realism sets its own expectations and patterns within indie cinema and differs from plot-driven Hollywood. Investing in the characters and characterization, the distinct feature of indie detaches itself from the canonical and mainstream narrative. Newman (2011) states that "Understanding character-centered realism as a rhetorical appeal rather than a genre defined strictly by textual characteristics allows us to see the functions of the realist text in relation to its audience's appreciation of it, and more generally of the cultural circulation of media" (p. 95). Adopting off-Hollywood narrative practices, indie films carry their political valence by offering an alternative form of cultural power.

Concerning my thesis focus, Korean-American filmmakers' racial background, as Asian-Americans, validates "the indie's claim to multiculturalism in both ideology and practice" (Levy, 1999, p. 315). Like other ethnic groups, Asian-Americans are portrayed poorly, not like round characters, in American movies. For instance, Anna May Wong was the first recognized Chinese-American Hollywood actress notably

known for her role in *Shanghai Express* (1932). Wong was stereotyped by playing characters of sexuality and mystery in which she is one of "either lotus blossoms or dragon ladies" (Levy, 1999, p. 326). On the other hand, Philip Ahn, who was the first Korean-American actor to appear in Hollywood films, went to the same school as Anna May Wong and they were neighbors as childhood friends. After Ahn got his first leading role with Wong in *Daughter of Shanghai* (1937), he and Wong disassembled Asian stereotypes by playing, respectively, an FBI agent who solves a murder case together and becomes a romantic couple (Chung, 2006, p. 48). In the case of the Asian-American director, the pioneering director Wayne Wang promoted the ethnic variety in his films and opened up new possibilities for Asian-Americans within the industry.

Wang, who established himself in the hyphen of Chinese-American identity, turned into the first of Asian-American indie filmmaker; he offered a new representation for Asian-American identity by gathering the cast and crew of all Asian-Americans in his solo debut *Chan Is Missing* (1982). Wang took the initial steps for "multicultural cinema" before the term itself appeared (Levy, 1999, p. 328). In this regard, Wang turned into an off-screen symbol who portrays the complexity of the Chinese-American experience and encouraged other Asian-American indie filmmakers in their own multicultural cinemas. It can be said that Chinese-American actors and directors were more rooted than Korean-Americans in both Hollywood and American indie film culture. However, it might suggest that any attempt to represent a diverse range of portraits of the Asian-American community contributes to all ethnic minority cinemas within the US film industry at the same time. Remarkably, the literature assigned to the Korean-Americans' placement within the industry is quite a novice

and limited in the scope of Asian-American cinemas; therefore, this thesis addresses the research gap that targets particularly Korean-American indie filmmakers and their films.

2.1.2. Situating Diaspora in Transnational Cinema Cultures

The concepts of transnational cinema in film studies are various, sharing different approaches in regard to politics, economics, and ideologies. The perfect fit for this thesis is related to identity and ideologies; therefore, the paradigm of the national will be used "as a means of understanding production, consumption and representation of cultural identity (both individual and collective) in an increasingly interconnected, multicultural, and polycentric world" (Higbee & Lim, 2010, p. 8). For instance, if we consider cultural identity and production, the Chinese situation in the United States regarding cinema is studied by Chris Berry (2010). It is suggested that filmmakers present their agency by various, often "ambivalent", forms of "exchange" with Hollywood rather than simply relying on their back to Hollywood (Berry, 2010, p. 121). Thus, the national exchange between the film industries, just like the situation of Chinese Cinema, allows conveying cultural signs that portray transitional imagery of "de-Westernization" based on the blockbuster strategy.

When theorizing the question of transnationalism, Higson (2000) uncovers the problem behind the assumption of that the national identity and tradition are already entirely constructed and steady in place. Higson (2000) states that "The cinemas established in specific nation-states are rarely autonomous cultural industries and the film business has long operated on a regional, national, and transnational basis" (p. 61). In this regard, when we consider the border-crossing nature of transnationalism

within the film industry, two broad levels need to be considered. The first way is to consider "the level of production and the activities of filmmakers" because filmmakers' moving position from one production base to another and their experiences from different nation-states assign a transnational identity upon those filmmakers (Higson, 2000, p. 61). The second level is about how cinema functions on a transnational basis in regard to the "distribution and reception of films" (Higson, 2000, p. 61). In this thesis, my approach mostly concerns the first level in which Korean-American independent filmmakers' experiences from United States to South Korea determines the multinational nature of their films.

I will particularly investigate how their transnationalism and experiences reflected on their diasporic narratives. The main reason is that many of the transnational productions emerge especially from "the narratives of migration, exile, and displacement" since the cinematic representation of cultural identity challenges Eurocentric narrative formations of national culture (Naficy 2001; Marks 2000). These studies are profoundly influenced by the theoretical paradigms derived from *cultural studies*, *globalization studies*, and *postcolonial* theory. Having a considerable number of channels and sorts of local and transnational media; moreover, a remarkable number of people who became the victim of exile or lived the displacement from their origin, have challenged the notions of national culture and identity. These facts within history turned into transnational productions in cinema and naturally affected national cinemas, genre, author's vision, and film reception. In a mediated world like this, the filmmaker's imagination itself has turned into social practice. The primary shift in the "global cultural order" produced by media including cinema, television, and video, is derived from the imagination in social life

(Appadurai, 1996, p. 53). Emphasizing the key factor, the imagination, then, the biographies of ordinary people, just like the narratives in indie realism, turn into a fabrication in which the imagination generates new sorts of collective expression. As this thesis focuses on the collective expression on-screen, Korean-American filmmakers and their characters' identities fall into the same category which is diaspora.

Hamid Naficy (2001), as a highly influential scholar in diaspora cinema studies, divides "accented filmmakers" into three categories namely; *Exilic*, *Diasporic*, and *Postcolonial Ethnic and Identity Filmmakers*; he makes a clear distinction between identifications derived from exile and diaspora. As exile basically refers to banishment as an outcome of some offense, it can be internal, including restrictions and censorship upon filmmakers' works depending on the location; or can be external in which filmmakers voluntarily move to the West to have political freedom and speech. Naficy (2001) mostly refers to the "external exiles" as people who "maintain an ambivalent relationship with their previous and current places and cultures" (p. 12). Therefore, we can say that filmmakers who want to refuse to work in an internal regime of exile choose to produce works outside of their origin countries as external exiles in order to escape from forced authorial style. On the other hand, diaspora mostly starts with a rupture from the origin by a desire to have a better life standard (Naficy, 2001). Although the diasporic identity is built upon an already existing identity before the departure from the homeland just like the exile, the expression of them differs from each other. Naficy (2001) points out that "[...] unlike exile, which may be individualistic or collective, diaspora is necessarily collective, in both its origination and its destination" (2001, p. 14). Thus, based on this distinction, the

selection of the films represents the Korean-American diaspora which is more likely to be collective.

Mostly, this collective memory is related to the Korean War and post-Cold War migrant flows to the US (Chang & Park, 2019). A more accurate way to describe an accented film is to understand its true nature, which is derived from border crossing nationalities and migrant identities. The reason is that an accented film often tells a story of people who are stuck in between two cultures, two identities; their identities are so ambivalent that they do not strongly belong to a single nationality or identity. This is valid, especially for the Korean-American filmmakers "who had experienced the discontinuous course of modern Korean history, from the colonial period to the division of the country"; therefore, the "heterogeneity of collective identity was inevitable" for them (Kim, 2013, p. 551). These kinds of filmmakers' films are often multilingual and mixed aesthetic choices from the filmmaker's home and host countries. The subject matters are usually in a process of becoming, desiring to return to the homeland, belong to a homeland, or complete the lack in their identity.

These double connotations are because of the collapse between first and second-generation Korean-Americans. Diasporic identifications of Korean subjects also share a common theme in which two generations of Korean-Americans are disconnected from each other. Even though this chapter will later dive into its historical background, the first generation refers to more diasporic experiences than the second generation. The first arrivals in the United States regarded themselves as "Korean nationals" for a while, hoping to go back to their homeland, Korea, which was colonized by Japan at that time around 1910 (Chang & Park, 2019). As they settle

down later on by establishing small businesses and organizations, the second generations find themselves in conflict with the first generations due to the expectations of the Korean traditional families. In the context of Korean films, celebrities, and popular media, David C. Oh (2015) integrates the intrapersonal process of identification based on social identities and conducts an audience reception study where he tries to understand the relationship between second-generation Korean-American teenagers' diasporic identification and transnational Korean popular culture and media. The findings suggest the following (Oh, 2015, p. 143):

> *Koreans* believe that they are more similar to Koreans, who live in Korea, than FOBs (means "fresh off the boat" refers to the first-generation KAs) are. They created an imagined fiction that Koreans in the homeland would act in similar ways as them and would embrace an acculturated identity if in the United States. This is a blatant critique of *FOB*s, who are thought to not adapt to US culture and who are, therefore, ironically considered not truly Korean.

The second-generation Korean Americans hold a special place in my research because the directors of my chosen films fall under this category of generation but also their narratives are built upon this clash between the generations; therefore, studies like Oh's (2015 and 2017) demonstrate an exclusive examination of second-generation Korean American identity, reception, and social uses of transnational media even though our objects and methods are quite different than each other.

Regarding the hyphen as hybridized identity, Naficy (2001) informs that "Each hyphen is, in reality, a nested hyphen, consisting of a number of other intersecting and overlapping hyphens that provide inter-and intraetchnic and national links" (p. 16). This suggests that the function of disjunction refuses the collapse to any nationalism. On the other hand, the bracket between the hyphens also might create some problems eliding the diversity and particularity. For instance, Asian-Americans

consist of people from culturally diverse origins such as; Vietnam, Japan, India, China, Thailand, Indonesia, and Korea, etc. that emerges unpractical terms like "Southeast Asian diaspora" (Naficy, 2011, p. 16). Thus, this thesis' aim is not to fall on this kind of unwieldy categorization of Korean-Americans as just the Asian-Americans. Even though their sense of community within the industry functions itself from being an Asian-American, Korean-Americans' collective expression of diaspora and ethnicity differs just like other diverse roots. As the imagination is the main impulse for the indie filmmakers' vision, Korean-American diasporic transnationalism on-screen is "less about the boundary and more about imagination" (Georgiou, 2006, p. 135). To understand the transnational networks not only content-wise but also within the industry, then, the diaspora could be a useful concept. The meaning of identity and community should be considered in the framework of "continuous inequalities and of growing political and social exclusions in national and transnational spaces" in order to understand those transnational linkages (Georgiou, 2006, p. 48).

2.1.3. Ethnicity, Identity, and Diaspora: Korean Nationals or Korean-Americans?

To understand the collective memory of Korean-Americans that situates indie realism in the narratives, some significant historical background is required. The specific films within their "sociocultural contexts and the impact of historical events and their legacies—Japanese colonialism, the Cold War and Korean Conflict, and U.S. neocolonialism—" need to be mentioned (Gateward, 2007, p. 6). The narratives of the chosen films in this thesis are mainly categorized into two groups: one targets the Korean-American Dream, while the other is about Korean-American adoptees. As the

narratives continuously refer to the diaspora emanated from the first and second-generation Korean-Americans, the particular states and places like California and Koreatown, events like LA riots in 1992, and Korean War that broke out in 1950 need to be discussed in detail. Since the Korean-American diasporic filmmakers, particularly Justin Chon, turn their stories into both artistic and personal journeys engaged with ideological functions, they bring awareness to their Asian-American community and promote the diversity in production through their films that are affected by these historical occurrences. Therefore, understanding the multiplicity of being Korean-American in relation to memory, history, and community will help this thesis to contribute to the never-ending debates about ethnicity and multiculturalism in the United States.

The history of Korean-Americans is closely linked to Korea. The phases of Korean immigration to the United States can be divided as; Korean immigration before 1965 when the call for cheap labor in Hawaii emerged and after 1965 when the great number of Koreans arrived with the Immigration Act. (Chang & Park, 2019; Hurh, 1998; Park, 1997). The history is rooted back to 1882, when "the Treaty of Peace, Amity, Commerce, and Navigation" was signed by the Kingdom of Korea and the United States of America (Chang & Park, 2019, p. vii). The first attempt to document the Korean immigration stories was written by Wayne Petterson in 1988. According to Petterson (1988), Koreans who arrived in Hawaii differ from already established Chinese and Japanese immigrants because Korean immigrants came from the cities like Seoul while Chinese and Japanese immigrants mostly came from rural areas; thus, Korean plantation workers were the mix of both high and low-class men (pp. 443-4). The first arrivals consist of *insam* (ginseng) merchants, political exiles, and a

small number of Korean students (Park, 1997, p. 9). Hawaii is the first place where the pioneering Koreans lived and worked in sugar plantations and pineapple farms. Attaining a better life through education, political rights, and religious freedom is the main motivation of these people's emigration to Honolulu, Hawaii (Chang & Park, 2019, p. 4). Also, it is essential to note that Christianity played an important role in Korean emigration to the U.S and also formed a supportive community within the new country where they settled down. The churches functioned not only as establishing missions for spiritual reasons, but also used as a center to network with other Koreans who could advocate the Korean independence movement together (Chang & Park, 2019, p. 40).

After the colonization of their homeland Korea, Ahn Chang Ho and Syngman Rhee, who are ideologically different Korean leaders, headed to the United States. Their life in the U.S consists of Korean Independence activities (Chang & Park, 2019, p. 12). Rhee was chosen as "prime minister of the Korean Provisional Government (KPG)" when he came to the U.S. from Shanghai in 1922; he founded the Korean Christian church and other organizations and schools during his time in Hawaii (Chang & Park, 2019, p. 13). On the other hand, Ahn Chang Ho, who is also the father of the first Korean-American Hollywood actor Philip Ahn, moved to Riverside, California, and built Pachappa Camp in 1904. Pachappa is a significant settlement for Korean-Americans since it was the first Koreatown USA. Unlike other labor camps, "this first Koreatown consisted of men, women, and children and had strong activities based on family and cultural identity" (Chang & Park, 2019, p. 18). Just like his activist father, Philip Ahn also advocated his father's legacy and maintained the Korean-American community. Philip established the first Korean American youth group to supervise

the social activities of immigrant children regarding assimilation in 1920 (Chang & Park, 2019; Chung, 2006). Apart from being an activist in the Korean Independence movements, Philip worked at Paramount Studios part-time and Fairbanks gave a chance for a screen test which eventually took him further to his first audition for the musical *Anything Goes* (1936) directed by Lewis Milestone. Afterward, his acting career was shaped by the collaboration with Chinese-American actress Anna May Wong who challenged the Asian stereotypes together on-screen.

When World War II broke out in 1939, three of Ahn Chan Ho's children, including Philip Ahn, enlisted in the U.S Army and fought for both their countries. Until the end of World War II, "early Korean American identity, from 1905 to 1945, as defined by Korean nationalism"; they were Koreans without a homeland. (Chang & Park, 2019, p. 6). After the war, Korea was a nation freed from Japanese forces and divided in two where Syngman Rhee became the president of the Republic of South Korea while Kim Il-Sung in the north turned into a leader of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (Chang & Park, 2019, p. 48). Afterward, there was no reason left to invest Korean Independence movement, so Korean-American nationalistic identity began to change. Many of them attended schools and trained in jobs like lawyers, doctors, and even some of them represented the USA in the Olympics and won a gold medal. (Chang & Park, 2019, p. 48). Then, the Korean War, also known as the "Forgotten War", broke out in 1950 when North Korea invaded South Korea. The war lasted three years and the United States sent American troops to the war. The outcome of the war claimed the lives of many people and it caused the separation of 10 million Korean families through the Demilitarized Zone which is the most heavily guarded border in the world (Chang & Park, 2019, p. 51).

Afterward, the Korean War left countless children as orphans, and mostly the mixed children from U.S. soldiers during the war were abandoned in South Korea.
The adoption of those children, called “G.I. babies”, started in the mid-1950s by the organization titled the Holt International Children’s Services. This organization provided many children to get adopted by Americans. Bruce states that “Since 1955, about 100,000 Korean children were adopted by American families” (As cited in Chang & Park, 2019, pp. 52-3). However, those children, who were adopted years after the Korean War ended, faced the possibility of deportation from the U.S. Even today, those who were brought illegally have issues related to citizenship; or neglect toward naturalization of children, many of them deal with hardships to live with their new families because of lacking proper paperwork. Consequently, after the great number of both “G.I babies” and “G.I. War brides’ arrival in the U.S., the Korean-American community grew during this time.

Around the 1970s, the large popularity of Korean-Americans was in Los Angeles, and still today, the largest population is around 500,000 living in the state. The new urban immigrants arrived the United States after the Immigration act in 1965. The notion of the “American Dream” applied to those new urban immigrants, and they encouraged to open up small businesses like “grocery markets, gas stations, liquor stores, and wig shops in inner-city communities like South Central Los Angeles” (Chang & Park, 2019, pp. 61-2). However, these new urban immigrants found it difficult to adapt to American society; therefore, many of them attended Korean churches and were involved in their homeland politics once again (Chang & Park, 2019, p. 70). Furthermore, they are viewed as the “middleman minority” because of

their failure to adjust to this new country: “Korean-Americans became the buffer between the affluent white and often poorer black and Latino communities” (Chang & Park, 2019, p. 74). As the tension between Korean immigrants and African-Americans grew day by day due to the boycotts of Korean-owned shops, the Los Angeles Riots on April 29, 1992, broke out (pp. 74-82). Many Korean-owned shops were destroyed and this promoted the discrimination of those business owners. During the riots, the Korean-American community had almost no voice in American politics and media; therefore, after the riot, Koreans rethought their identity as Korean-Americans rather than Korean nationals (Chang & Park, 2019, pp. 74-82). Thus, they got involved in both local and national politics to raise their voices as Korean-Americans. Therefore, the 1922 LA Riots triggered political activism in the sense that Korean-Americans reshaped their identity to become more visible. Today, many Korean-Americans serve as mayors and have significant positions in the United States government.

In terms of the Korean-American film industry, actors like “Sandra Oh, Steven Yeun, Grace Park, Justin Chon, John Cho, and others are now included in major Hollywood television shows and films” (Chang & Park, 2019, p. 88). From the early pioneering Hawaiian plantation workers to the 1992 LA Riots, the Korean-American community has shaped and come a long way. While the first generations stand as conservative and mostly nationals, the second generations, as well as the third, underwent a political transformation and liberal ideologies that can bridge between the cultural and generational gaps. They have become more visible in politics, art, and music in which they recognized themselves as Korean-Americans not Korean nationals anymore.

2.2. Methodology

In line with the given historical background and key concepts, this thesis utilizes mixed methodologies to uncover what Korean-American American Transnational Cinema is. The "particular" transnationality lies in the film narratives and diasporic identifications. Therefore, the first attempt is to do a close reading of the characters and narratives built on the diasporic consciousness of being a Korean-American. After the close reading mentioned in subchapter 2.2.1, I will focus on one of the Korean-American filmmakers, Justin Chon, who is hyphenated in both culture and industry in subchapter 2.2.2. Chon's social media engagement increases his publicity; he builds an Instagram strategy for self-branding, aiming to turn his films into political campaigns to enhance the visibility of Asian-Americans overall. Thus, content analysis as a research tool will be used to situate Chon as an ethnic minority celebrity. Since Chon's ethnic celebrity image is not only established through his films but also his (social) media presence, Richard Dyer's (1986, 1998) canonical texts in the stardom field are not enough since he is more of a "celebrity" rather than a "star". Therefore, the literature regarding the modern reading of "celebrity" with the rise of the Internet and social media platforms will be offered (Cashmore, 2006; Gamson, 2011; Marshall, 2014). Lastly, in subchapter 2.2.3, the literature based on Pierre Bourdieu's sociology of culture will be introduced to explore later the industry recognition of Chon as an extension of the content analysis through film festivals, Instagram activities, and popular press.

2.2.1. Diasporic Identifications in the film narratives of Korean-American filmmakers

A close reading reveals encoded instruments of a text by resolving a text's rhetorical effect and coherence. Also, it offers different layers of interpretation for a reader regarding both moving images or written texts and uncovers concealed themes and meanings, if there are any. Analyzing moving image texts is similar to the novel as they both activate plot, characters, and narration; therefore, they both have their own languages and forms. So, why do they call it "text" rather than simply calling it a book or film, then? McKee (2003) emphasizes post-structuralist implications and differences in value judgments that can vary in different cultures. Since each culture has differences regarding its own value judgments, this kind of cross-cultural communication is common, but "differences in sense-making practices in various cultures go much further than this" (McKee, 2003, p. 5). There are differences in abstract, concrete things, and reason and thinking; moreover, the way of seeing things also differs (McKee, 2003). Therefore, film as a medium also differs regarding different cultures and their sense of meaning-making since cinema is full of indicators, explicit meanings, sounds, and images (Monaco, 2009). Textual analysis of films, then, is more than examining its form: "Theoretical foundations for textual analysis within communication scholarship draw on symbolic interaction, phenomenology, critical theory (such as race and feminist theories), and ethnography" (Smith, 2017, p. 3).

By engaging with ethnicity, diaspora, and memory, this thesis will use close reading to explore diasporic identifications that are textually built-in narratives rather than discussing the form of the films. The historical background of Korean-Americans is

manifold, as mentioned before (see 2.1.3.). Hence, the diasporic narratives are built-in particular historical events that Korean-Americans faced throughout history. Those history-based narratives emerge through diasporic characters' experiences and collective expression. The chosen indie films emphasize character over the plot as indie realism situates itself with character-focused storytelling (Newman, 2011). In regard to historical events and diasporic characters, then, the selected films are classified according to two main categorizations: The first one targets the Korean-American Dream, *Spa Night* (2016), *Gook* (2017), *Minari* (2020) and the second one addresses Korean-American Adoptees, *Seoul Searching* (2015), and *Blue Bayou* (2021). The Korean-American Dream consists of the struggles of small business owners, mostly located in Koreatown, and immigrant lifestyles in LA, exposing the clash between the first and second generation of Korean-Americans. Particularly the Immigration act in 1965 and the LA riots in 1992, and their after-effects show themselves in the representation of diasporic identities. Pursuing the American Dream by building a business from scratch is the primary motive for first-generation Korean-Americans. At the same time, the second-generation of KAs feel stuck between the dream of their immigrant families and their own. Therefore, this brings the essence of diaspora, a deep-rooted sense of ethnic consciousness and alienation from others.

Spa Night (2016) is about a Korean-American family, particularly a closeted Korean-American teenager named David Cho. After their family restaurant is closed, David helps his struggling family by working in one of Los Angeles' Korean spas. At the same time, he feels a burden on his shoulders to retake SAT exam so that he can attend college and make a better life for himself as his parents wish. Since he was too

busy helping his family restaurant during the first SAT exam, he now has no better option than to retake the exam after their restaurant closed. Exploring his gay identity at the spa and also trying to meet the requirements of his traditional Korean family, young David portrays a real struggle of being Korean-American. Also, the Korean spa is a setting where the Korean-American family's dreams and also the realities and desires of David conflict with each other. *Gook* (2017) is a film that offers Korean-American perspective on the conflict between Korean and African-American communities set during the LA Riots in 1992. The main characters are two Korean-American brothers named Eli and Daniel who struggle to keep their shoe store because of the violence moving towards them. Two brothers find themselves in the struggle of fulfilling their own personal American dream and responsibilities of the family.

Minari (2020), on the other hand, is a self-reflexive story of the director Lee Isaac Chung. By referring to the economic struggles and memories of his family farm in 1980s rural Arkansas, the story captures the American Dream of the ambitious family of Jacob Yi. By aiming to sell Korean fruits and vegetables, the family tries to set a new beginning in a new country; moreover, in a new city, Arkansas, that is far away from their Korean-American community rooted in California. Since Jacob believes in the potential of Arkansas to build a farm and he could easily own property here, he constantly in a battle with his wife who prefers to live in a city. Another conflict appears in the relationship between the children, David and Anne, and their grandma, who comes to the U.S to take care of them. Therefore, there is also a gap between generations. Consequently, layers of diaspora through different points of view by several characters reveal various aspects of the collectiveness of the Korean-

American diaspora. As it takes its title from the film, water celery, in Korea known as *Minari*, is a herb used in various Asian cuisines. This plant is used to refer to Korean roots; its resilient nature reveals the close-knit family unit. Hence, the story is shaped around family ties and cultural identity emphasizing the metaphor behind the Minari.

The second group targets Korean-American Adoptees and the narratives of mixed children who mostly belong to the second-generation Korean-American. The stories reveal the diaspora that comes after the Korean War (1953) and the immigration policy "enacted by the Obama administration and its rescission by Trump's presidency on September 5, 2017" (Chang & Park, 2019, p. 53). Starting with *Seoul Searching* (2015), it differs from the rest in terms of its setting which is located in South Korea and is based on a true event that took place in 1986. During the 1980s, the Korean government established a summer camp for foreign-born teenagers, also known as "gyopo", in which those teenagers could spend their summer in Seoul to connect with their motherland and ethnic roots. In the film, not only Korean-Americans but also many immigrant teenagers around the globe like Korean-German, Korean-Mexican, etc. collected together. In regard to this thesis focus, one of the teenagers is a Korean-American adoptee, Kris Schultz, who happens to find her biological mother in Korea. The diasporic experience of those teenagers, particularly Schultz, and also the after-effects of the Korean War on these characters will be explored through the narrative. In the latest film *Blue Bayou* (2021), Justin Chon dives into current deportation issues of adoptees in the narrative. The story shapes around the character named Antonio LeBlanc, a Korean-American adoptee, who finds out that he could be deported from the only country he has been raised in. By referring to Korean-American adoptees and other Asian-American adoptees, this film

allies with diasporic experiences of their community, as can be seen at the end credit sequence.

Creating a pattern out of this selection of films has "[...] the potential to both reveal the diasporic experience and challenge the privileged site of the 'national' as the space in which cultural identity and imagined communities are formed" (Higbee & Lim, 2010, p. 11). Therefore, by using Naficy's (2001) Accented cinema and the approach of Critical Transnationalism (Higbee & Lim, 2010) as my theoretical background, I will explore the diasporic identifications in the narratives and try to understand the representation of cultural identity that is collective. By looking at the context and specific characters, then, this thesis tries to examine the collective experience of the diaspora. In this next part Justin Chon, who is also an actor in *Seoul Searching (2015)* and *Blue Bayou* (2021), will be introduced as a filmmaker who functions as a cultural creator for his diasporic Korean-American community.

2.2.2. Justin Chon: Ethnic Minority Celebrity

Justin Chon stands out the most among the Korean-American diasporic filmmakers namely; Michael Kang, So Yong Kim, Benson Lee, Andrew Ahn, Lee Isaac Chung. After the close reading of the films, this thesis will particularly focus on Chon's industry recognition that is hyphenated in both culture and industry as an actor, a filmmaker, a writer, and a producer. Chon followed his career in acting from appearing in minor screen roles to significant roles like the hit Disney Channel film, *Wendy Wu: Homecoming Warrio*r (2006). He reached a wider fan base through his best-known supporting role, Eric Yorkie, in the franchise film *Twilight* (2008) which is a blockbuster supernatural drama. After engaging with the dramas and comedies

like the television sitcom *Just Jordan* (2007) that were not built on his Asian-American background, he became a YouTube personality through his digital short films and afterward directed three films *Gook* (2017), *Ms. Purple* (2019), and *Blue Bayou* (2021). His identity as Korean-American is reflected in those three feature films that aim to create a better understanding of the emotion and life growing up as Korean-Americans. His pattern in producing films that spotlights the diasporic American immigration experience distinguishes him from other Korean-American directors in the United States in that sense. Also, those films made an appearance in prestigious festivals like Sundance and Cannes and consequently offered him a new social space in indie cinema.

The distinctive characteristic of Chon is, then, mainly his media strategy where he establishes his celebrity image. Chon's constructed celebrity persona allowed not only him but also his diasporic community to be more visible in media. Being active on YouTube and Instagram, Chon not only promotes his films but also engages with the Asian-American community that he is a part of. Therefore, his filmmaker identity is mostly built on his Korean-American identity and making him a celebrity who takes his status from the exchangeability of capital; therefore, celebrity itself is commodified. Since the celebrity culture promotes to transfer of individuals as saleable products, they become an embodiment of raw material that can be processed and produced (Cashmore, 2006). Those products eventually turn into a marker of social value. This social value derives from the diverse market that consists of numerous representative groups; therefore, the ethnic minority celebrities undeniably came to rise in accordance with this diversification. Cashmore (2006) highlights that "Ethnic minority celebrities were both agents and effects of the new heterogeneous

marketplace, as well as an expression of a world in which racism was supposedly going or gone" (p. 121). Thus, the ideological, economic, and social structure projected on the screen is reflected through famous individuals, ethnic minority celebrities like Chon in this case so that societies identify themselves through these celebrity figures who could reflect social values that are personalized.

Gamson (1994) points out that famous people are recognized within the entertainment industry as "names"; those names seem to be ordinary and nonsensical since everybody has a name. However, Gamson (1994) emphasizes that "in the context of the celebrity industry, the word 'name' aptly summarizes the relevant commercial characteristic: recognition by consumers as a brand, familiarity in itself" (p. 62). Besides, the audience's response is crucially dependent on those names attained to a specific person who directs or acts in the films they watch; therefore, the audience expects to share something common with those people. In accordance with the current commerce, Corrigan (1998) indicates that audiences demand to engage with authors' or stars' exclusive lives to make a connection with them by interacting with their public personas and personalities. Having self-reflexive narratives in the center of his films, Chon carries this familiarization practice to his narratives. It must be mentioned that the target audience of Chon mostly consists of the Asian-American community who can relate their lives as second-and-third generations of immigrant families to his diasporic identifications in the narrative. Thus, Chon as a public character offers a particular public sphere for people who share a similar collective experience: "the celebrity embodies the empowerment of the people to shape the public sphere symbolically" (Marshall, 2014, p. 7). Therefore, exploring the celebrity "as a sign or a text" offers some of the essential conceptual tools for understanding

the celebrity's constructive power. What makes Justin Chon different from other Korean-American directors is, then, the self-reflexive transformation journey that turns him into an "Ethnic Minority Celebrity" from his initial position as an actor who played Eric in *Twilight* (2008).

Thus, to explore this transformation in the context of Korean-American cinema cultures, this thesis aims to conduct a content analysis on Chon's ethnic minority celebrity. After I chose two of his films, *Gook* (2017) and *Blue Bayou* (2021), for close reading, I noticed a certain pattern of his storytelling which concerns Asian-Americans and their representation. Therefore, the curiosity of his real-life persona led me to his mostly used social media account which is Instagram. Therefore, a content analysis would test whether he indeed is an ethnic minority celebrity or not. To collect the data from Chon's official public account, I did a one month research on how to categorize those posts through a code sheet that I created it (see *Appendix A*). Since I aim to look at his directorial works in the years 2016-2022, I decided to exclude his posts about his personal life to obtain precise results. First, I focused on the format of the posts, hashtags that he used, and captions that he wrote.

As Chon is an independent filmmaker, most of his posts are about his films concerning his own promotion and information like theatrical releases of his films. However, there are also posts which are politically engaged and refer to minority groups both in U.S. film industry and society. Therefore the categorization of his posts are divided into five as thematically and inclusively: *Presenting Self-Image*, *Films, Media Appearance/Popular Press*, P*romoting Asian-Americans within the Industry*, and lastly, *Minority Activism*. After explaining how he positions himself in

the discourse of ethnicity, race, language, power, and social action, this thesis will look at the other agents within the independent cinema who are affiliated with Justin Chon's filmmaking career. To find out how Justin Chon situates himself in the festival circuit later in 4.3., the next section will introduce Pierre Bourdieu's concepts that will be used to understand the industry recognition of the filmmaker in the indie community and also extend the content analysis of Chon's case.

2.2.3. Independent Cinema as a Social Field: Pierre Bourdieu's *Cultural Capital* and *Habitus* and *Field* Theory

Pierre Bourdieu's sociology of culture has an undeniable influence in several fields like mainly sociology, anthropology, education, media, and cultural studies since his works are concerned with the dynamics of power in society. However, Bourdieu wrote relatively little on culture as social practice in film and media fields; he mainly devoted significant space in his work on literature, theater, and painting. Then, what could Bourdieu offer film and media studies in such a visually saturated world? Chris Cagle (2016) in the book called *New Uses of Bourdieu in Film and Media Studies* edited by Guy Austin suggests that "Film studies as a discipline has by now incorporated Bourdieu to address the matter of the consumption of media texts but it has been less concerned with using Bourdieu to understand the production of media" (p. 36). Particularly for the film and media studies, he offers "a model of art as a social field in which artists' placement in social space shapes their aesthetic struggles in productive as well as constricting ways (Bourdieu 1993; 1996). Therefore, this thesis aims to deal with this lack in the use of Bourdieu and will try to adopt the new use by focusing on the agents and fields, particularly in film festivals Sundance, Cannes, and CAAMFest, where Justin Chon's role as a filmmaker is reproduced.

Before adopting Bourdieu's theories in this thesis context, firstly, some Bourdieusian terms and concepts need to be articulated.

Reality is a social concept in which our existence exists socially in relation to others. The modern western reality according to Bourdieu (1986a) has come to be through a process of differentiation into semi-autonomous and increasingly specialized spheres of action; he calls these spheres "fields" and suggests that power relations between and within these fields structure human behavior. Thus, it is important to understand what kind of power relations they take part in to understand how humans behave. The competition in a cultural field builds around power just like any other field since it is destined for the market. However, there is also a reaction against the economic profit in the short term since it disregards the production of "pure" art. De Valck (2014, p. 75) masterfully puts how a work of art exists within two economies a *market economy* and a *gift economy* through the metaphor in Lewis Hyde's acclaimed book *The Gift: How the Creative Spirit Transforms the World*:

> Comparing a gift is a striking metaphor that captures many of the values we intuitively associate with artworks. Gifts are like talent. We cannot buy them or acquire them by an act of will; they are bestowed upon us. And when artists create works of art, part of that process involves inspiration, as if creativity is received by the artist, or so our conventional understandings of art tell us. Without such 'authentic' creativity, artworks are considered formulaic, generic, and commercial.

Receiving art as a gift derives from the feelings it may evoke, giving pleasure through the sense, and its touch on the soul. It is like a gift because it is invaluable and offers an experience that cannot be measured with any price. This typical art view denies art as commodified object, "linking the arts to the gift sphere instead" (De Walck, 2014, p. 75).

Independent Cinema has ideologically linked art to this "gift" circle. As Blewitt (1993) suggests: "The inference from Bourdieu would be that Art House movies require a more sophisticated set of competencies than the mainstream Hollywood product" (p. 368). However, Bourdieu (1996) criticizes this divine sphere of art *for its own sake* by distinguishing two economies as the "anti-economy of pure art" and the "commercial economy". According to Bourdieu (1996), the cultural production actually takes place between these two poles in which "a cultural production specially destined for the market and, partly in reaction against that, a production of 'pure' works destined for symbolic appropriation, the fields of cultural production are organized, very generally, in their current state" (p. 141). Therefore, the notion of the field is a field of sources within which the agents occupy positions that statistically determine the positions they will take with respect to the field. These positions are aimed either at "conserving or transforming" the structure of relations of forces that are constitutive of the field (Bourdieu, 1996, p. 234). After explaining the field of cultural production, it is time to explain the agents. In an individual field, there are agents who occupy positions, and each position carries different dispositions.

The meaning of dispositions consists of the potential courses of action for the agents and these positions are determined by several concepts. The first one is notably known as habitus, "a structured and structuring structure", that organizes practices and their perception of practices (Bourdieu, 1986a, p. 454). The habitus is a concept that builds a bridge between the individual and the collective; it offers a way to understand a particular individual's preferences and actions while also revealing them as collectively transferred and reproduced in the broader structures of society. This is the main reason why a given social structure is resistant to being radically changed.

Korean-American filmmakers' self-reflexivity builds a diasporic habitus in which their personal memories connected to Korean ethnicity are collectively transferred to the independent cinema as works of art. Bourdieu (1986a) indicates that every individual's personal history, preferences, and dispositions, placed in the context of the surrounding social reality from a structure that to certain extent pre-determines that individual's potential courses of action. Even though each film's narrative reveals the filmmakers' own preferences and individuality, their collective diaspora exposes similar patterns on-screen. Hence, their diasporic experience is reproduced in the Asian-American community and reached a wider audience. Hence, social class, education, family upbringing as well as an individual's past choices all form part of this structure and determine in part the behavior of agents in the field (This will be detailed in the CHAPTER 4 through Justin Chon). Therefore, "Agents' diverse capitals, classifications of the world and social practices need to be understood within different fields, or specialized occupational areas" (Fowler, 2016, p. 14).

The second determining variable of the dispositions is called "Doxa". Bourdieu (1986a) defines it as a "universe of tacit presuppositions that organize action within the field" (p. 623). Similar to the rules of a game, like a habitus, rules exercise a limiting influence on the potential causes of actions for the agents in that field. Since agents in the same field tend to share a set of rules, a common "Doxa", insofar as they agree that the game is worth playing. However, agents do not always agree on the Doxa or rules of the game. As mentioned before, Bourdieu (1996) points out agents occupy positions aimed at either "conserving or transforming" the structures of relations of forces in a field (p. 234). Agents who take positions aimed at transforming the power relations try to change the rules of the game to their own

benefit, like Korean-American diasporic filmmakers in this case. In this struggle, agents make use of their power, or "capital" as Bourdieu often calls it, to impose rules that are in favor of them to most. Therefore, Independent filmmakers like Justin Chon try to maximize their personal gain through the film festivals like Sundance. This gain in indie culture shows itself in other types of rewards instead of money. Hence, the awards' symbolic capital brings more currency than money for independent filmmakers to enhance their positions in the cultural field.

To explain the layers of capital, Bourdieu (1986b) proposes three essential guises: *economic capital* that can be directly "convertible into money", *cultural capital* that can be convertible into *economic capital* on some conditions, and social capital that can be institutionalized (p. 243). Cultural capital also situates in three forms that are the *embodied state* "in the form of long-lasting dispositions of the mind and body", the *objectified state* "in the form of cultural goods like books, pictures, instruments" and the *institutionalized state* as "a form of objectification" (Bourdieu, 1986b, p. 243). For instance, Anna Blackwell (2017) discusses Shakespeare's symbolic capital in the case of British actor Ian McKellen. McKellen's ability to "translate theatricality into convincing screen performances", even within the lower prestige of genre of fantasy like *Lord of Rings* (2001), validates his both economic and cultural capital (p. 215). His skill for acting according to "British Shakespearean" identity is an embodied form of cultural capital in that sense. On the other hand, in Korean-American cinema culture, the cultural capital refers to the Korean-American collective diaspora, Korean ethnicity, and Asian-American community. As indicated before, Korean-American filmmakers' self-reflexive nature of diasporic narratives situates itself in indie culture. Those filmmakers benefit from the Korean cultural

heritage, language, and post-memory of migratory experience and turn them into works of art. Since the film is regarded as a reproducible object in multiple forms, it fits in the description of cultural capital where economic capital intersects with symbolic capital (Bourdieu, 1986a). Therefore, Korean-American diasporic filmmakers use their cultural capital by producing films as a tool of cultural influence on both the U.S. and global stage. Consequently, habitus does not function alone but rather has an interactive relationship with other concepts of capital and fields mentioned above. Bourdieu (1986) summarizes this relation as the following equation: [*(habitus)(capital)*] + *field = practice*. This equation can be unpacked as follows: "One's practice results from relations between one's dispositions (habitus) and one's position in a field (capital), within the current state of play of that social arena (field)" (Maton, 2014, p. 50). Therefore, practices of agents are not merely derived from one's habitus but rather of relations between one's habitus and one's current circumstances.

The filmmaking practices of Korean-American filmmakers highly depend on the feeling of collective identity, they are constantly in exchange of cultural capital and credentials with other Asian-Americans within the industry. So to speak, it happens in groups like Asian-American directors who share a collective experience of diaspora. Therefore, their social network is mostly limited to the Asian-Americans within the industry. This leads us to "social capital" based on the network of people. Since the amount of social capital depends on the social network, the rise of Korean-American films find its place in the market nowadays, particularly after Jon M. Chu's *Crazy Rich Asians* (2018) and Korean director Bong Jon Ho's Oscar-winning *Parasite* (2019). However, these successful productions emerged from big film

studios like Warner Bros. Pictures, therefore, their distribution and circulation had been supported. On the other hand, the Korean-American filmmakers in the indie festival cultures already had a place; however, they had less social capital until the awards and prestige brought by other Asian people. Moreover, they are obliged to promote their own films since they lack in commercial status without the support of big film studios. Timothy Corrigan (1998) indicates that "American auteurs are, often and largely, defined by their commercial status and their ability to promote a film" (p. 43). However, others such as "Robert Redford's Sundance Institute" put themselves as alternatives to the blockbuster mentality (Corrigan, 1998, p. 49). Even though Korean-American auteurs put themselves as "alternatives" to the blockbuster mentality, they certainly situate themselves in the prestige cycle mentality through the recognition in particular festivals that serve as transnational social fields. By their social network from Asian-American communities and indie cinema, Korean-American filmmakers, then, exchange social capitals to publicize themselves.

The selected Korean-American films belong to the indie film category. They circulated in the indie film festivals (mostly in the Sundance Film Festival) and received prestigious awards. To name them precisely, *Seoul Searching* (2015) by Benson Lee got the Best Narrative Feature Film at Philadelphia Asian American Film Festival, also Futurewave Youth Jury Award at Seattle International Film Festival. *Spa Night* (2016) by Andrew Ahn received the Special Jury Prize at Sundance Film Festival while *Gook* (2017) by Justin Chon received the Winner Audience Award. Until recently, Justin Chon's *Blue Bayou* (2021), firstly released in the Cannes Film Festival, got the Audience Award at Deauville Film Festival. Being inspired by Bourdieu's theory of capital, James English (2005) also introduces a study in which

the awards function as a spectacle, in other words, as a "spectacular distractions" that conform with "*the new is hot, old is not* temporality of all fashion-dominated fields" (p. 77). Having these "specialized" movies in indie festival culture, Korean-American directors constantly show themselves in the need of redefining ownership in terms of capital.

The position of Korean-American filmmakers in the U.S. film industry depends on the capital of awards, festivals, and prestige. This industry prestige is firstly constructed through the social media presence of those independent filmmakers because they can directly engage with their audience and bring attention to their works. Among Korean-American filmmakers, Justin Chon often uses social media as a tool for publicity and self-branding as an uprising filmmaker. Therefore, the primary unit of my content analysis will be taken from Instagram posts and popular press interviews of Korean-American filmmaker Justin Chon. The diasporic context of the films is derived from the filmmakers' own personal stories of immigration, alienation, and displacement in the society or sometimes even functions as a universal voice for the Asian-American society. For instance, Justin Chon, who is both the director and the actor in his latest film *Blue Bayou* (2021) reveals a broader crisis of Asian-American adoptees by saying:

> These people were brought in in the 1970s and 1980s, adopted by American citizens, and they are discovering at 40 or 50 that they are not citizens and are being deported [...] How you feel at the end of the movie is how I felt reading these articles. I was absolutely destroyed [...] I felt it was very important for people in the United States to know what was going on. (James, 2021)

The ideological functioning of Chon applies not only in the other stories of Korean-American filmmakers but also in other immigrant communities in US history. For instance of Martin Scorsese's "biographical legend as an Italian-American", Paul

Lopes (2017, p. 563) states the following: “The connection between biography, social history, a cinematic tradition, and his films defined Scorsese’s auteur-brand as a filmmaker committed to creating not only esthetically sophisticated films, but deeply personal, honest, and authentic films” (p. 563). Like Scorsese’s auteur-brand, Korean-American diasporic filmmakers are self-reflexive about using their biography and childhood memories with their immigrant parents. Their films are also based on historical occurrences in the U.S and create lonely diegetic characters with deeply personal stories.

Thus, the public story reflects the personal and artistic journey of Korean-American directors like Justin Chon as well as the collective rendition of this journey by them, critics, journalists, and others. In this respect, Bourdieu’s sociology holds the greatest potential for exploring the underlying structures and agents that lead contemporary social reality; therefore, his concept will be used to explore how the habitus is built through the capital and creates a transnational field as *the field of cultural production*. Since “the study of cinema throws up both fertile and problematic areas in the general logic of cultural practice” (Cagle, 2016, pp. 14-37), the concept of the field will help this thesis to discover the relationship between social agents, cultural creators and the cultural object (cinema) itself. In this regard, Justin Chon celebrated auteur image will be discussed through his relationship with social agents, films, and cultural creators. By conducting a Bourdieusian content analysis through Chon’s festival and (social) media presence, this thesis will use other media texts like Instagram posts and press interviews.

2.3. Conclusion

Overall, the chapter overviews the relevant concepts of diaspora, transnationalism, ethnicity, and identity of Korean-Americans. Giving those three different aspects along with mixed methodologies aim to extend this thesis' scope from the film analysis to the celebrity cases study. The close reading of the films will reveal the cinematic representation of a collective identity. On the other hand, the cultural capital of the director Justin Chon and his agency as a celebrity will be explored by Bourdieu's theories on capital, habitus, and the field. Consequently, the theoretical framework that is covered in this chapter will help me to construct Korean-American transnational cinema cultures that lie in the politics of the hyphen. After using the tools of close reading on selected films and content analysis on the celebrity study of Justin Chon then, this thesis will eventually attempt to define the Korean-American Transnational Cinema.

CHAPTER 3

KOREAN-AMERICAN COLLECTIVE DIASPORA ON-SCREEN

"Loneliness is an inevitable outcome of transnationality, and it finds its way into the desolate structures of feeling and lonely diegetic characters" (Naficy, 2001, p. 55).

3.1. Introduction

This chapter challenges the fixed ideas about national film culture by centering transnationalism in a sense that constantly transforms the culture through the presence of diasporic protagonists as well as filmmakers themselves who have been a part of the nation. Ezra and Rowden (2006) inform that "Key to transnationalism is the recognition of the decline of national sovereignty as a regulatory force in global coexistence" (p. 1). Hence, the chosen films not only reveal the particular

transnationality of the Korean-American diaspora on-screen but also create a pattern that transforms the national by framing their difference, displacement, alienation. In regard to this, Higbee and Lim (2010, p. 11) state the following:

> [...] Transnational productions emerge from within a specifically diasporic configuration that, implicitly or explicitly, articulates the relationship between the host and home cultures, and, is aware, at the same time, of the interconnectedness between the local and the global within diasporic communities. Such a cinema can be defined as transnational in the sense that it brings into question how fixed ideas of a national film culture are constantly being transformed by the presence of protagonists (and indeed film-makers) who have a presence within the nation, even if they exist on its margins, but find their origins quite clearly beyond it.

Therefore, this approach to transnationalism can help to define the characteristics of Korean-American Transnational Cinema because the chosen films illustrate "the interconnectedness between local and global" through the diasporic Korean community and filmmakers. Ezra and Rowden (2006, p. 7) indicate the following:

> [...] Migrants and other displaced people acquire the means to insert themselves and their particular experiences of transnational consciousness and mobility into the spaces of cinematic representation and legitimation, necessitating the reconceptualization of naturalized senses of *home* [...] More often than not, transnational cinemas' narrative dynamic is generated by a sense of loss.

The Korean-American collective diaspora in film narratives reconceptualizes the established senses of "home" through the peculiar experiences of characters' transnational consciousness; therefore, I will investigate how the films of Korean-American filmmakers express the "particular" transnationality through collective diaspora in this chapter. In what follows; accordingly, I situate the films in two categories: the first grouping focuses, 3.2.1, on the Korean-American Dream targeting the films, *Spa Night* (2016), *Gook* (2017), *Minari* (2020) while the second grouping, 3.2.2. refers to Korean-American Adoptees in the films *Seoul Searching* (2015) and *Blue Bayou* (2021).

3.2. Ethnic Collectiveness of Korean-American Diasporic Filmmakers

The politics of belonging and identity has become a never-ending story in film narratives and many films have been made about the immigrant experience of different ethnic communities. From Charlie Chaplin's silent short, *The Immigrant* (1917) to many other examples like Elia Kazan's *America America* (1963) about Anatolian Greeks, or Francis F. Coppola's *The Godfather, Part II* (1974) about Sicilians, the story of each immigrant group is unique. Each reflects different social backgrounds, nations, religious and cultural practices, and different circumstances for migrating. The selection of films that I investigate within the Korean-American diasporic narratives is about immigrant stories tied with the American ideology of individual success, the clash between different generations of Korean-Americans, a yearning for belonging and wholeness, and searching for a community within a shared culture.

On the other hand, searching for a community is not only unique to the Korean-American diasporic films and community. It is also acknowledged in other minority groups, particularly other Asian ethnicities in the U.S. like Chinese, Vietnamese, etc. Therefore, framing those ethnicities as Asian-American, might help to refer their all-common motive of feeling one's self at home. Brooks (2009) informs that "Asian Americans were *the* central focus of white supremacist activity in prewar California, where both major political parties and scores of civic organizations fought to exclude them from every facet of life" (p. 2). Hence, in the scope of Asian-American cinema, they commonly experience a similar crisis of identity because their political situation calls them to act together. I use the label "Asian-American Cinema" as a political category here, not implying a single category as Asian-American culture because it might disregard the diversification of Asian cultures. Feng (1999, p. 21) says:

> It is not surprising that Asian American cinema continues to thematize that identity crisis, and that Asian American filmmakers face similar crises when attempting to market their films and themselves. Asian Americans are continually asked to choose either an Asian or an American identity: in cinematic terms, the most successful filmmakers have either submerged their Asian identities to make films about white Americans or have added Asian 'flavor' to Hollywood filmmaking.

For instance, Wayne Wang, the director of *The Joy Luck Club* (1993) and his breakthrough *Chan is Missing* (1981), proved that he could be a prestigious director by casting non-Asian actors like Harvey Keitel, William Hurt, and Ashley Judd in his film *Smoke* (1995). Moreover, he is an Asian director who tackles with the issues of racial melancholia and lack of belonging as Asian-American in the U.S. like in his recent film *Coming Home Again* (2019) starring by Justin Chon.

The selection of the films which will be covered in this thesis are the contemporary Korean-American films produced between 2015 and 2021. Even though the continuity of producing films that represent the particular collective diaspora of Korean-American directors can go back prior to 2015 like Chris Chan Lee's *Yellow* (1998), Michael Kang's *The Motel* (2005), and So Yong Kim's *In Between Days* (2006), their recognition within the industry is triggered mainly by the success of Jon M. Chu's *Crazy Rich Asians* (2018). Chu's film was the first time that a major Hollywood studio like Warner Brothers to feature a film with the majority of the cast as Chinese descent since Wang's *The Joy Luck Club* (1993). Consequently, this film formed an alliance among collective Asian founders and leaders to support Asian-American productions through this box office influence of *Crazy Rich Asians* (2018). As Lopez (2021, p. 145) indicates:

> The framing of *Crazy Rich Asians* as particularly meaningful or even "belonging to" Asian Americans was also bolstered by partnerships with activists who organized to buy out movie theaters for opening weekend. These

> efforts were initiated through a partnership between IW Group and Gold House—a collective started by Asian media and business executives that focuses on using box office influence as a mechanism for supporting Asian American productions.

This support system for Asian-American productions worked in favor of Asian-American filmmakers, like Justin Chon's film Gook (2017), as Gold House "encouraged Asian American celebrities, media professionals, nonprofits, and community organizations to buy out entire theaters on opening weekend" (Lopez, 2021, p. 145). Moreover, Chu alongside Chon is mentioned in the "A100 List" of 2018 by Gold House as one of the most influential Asian-American filmmakers who has impact on culture and society (see the list[1]). The enthusiasm about *Crazy Rich Asians* (2018) is considered as just one of many outstanding accomplishments within the Asian-American entertainment boom (Kang, 2020). Lulu Wang's The Farewell (2019) added a new transnational production, prestigiously recognized in the festivals like Sundance and received awards like Best Performance by the actress Awkwafia at Golden Globe. The film is about a Chinese-American family who faces alienation of being immigrants and strangers not only in America but also in China.

While the majority of these films mentioned above seem to be about Chinese-American diaspora and immigrant stories, they also made other Asian-American features recognized, including Korean-American films, representing different longings but revealing the same thing: a sense of community. Naficy (2001) offers an intriguing overview of the filmmaking of "Third World", "Postcolonial", and other dispersed

[1]This information is taken from Gold House's "A100" List of 2018: *A100 List*. (n.d.). Gold House. Retrieved May 24, 2022, from https://goldhouse.org/a100/?y=2018

individuals who live in the West. Naficy's (2001) work focuses on the cinematic represantation of people's diasporic and exilic experiences: "Accented films are in dialogue with the home and host societies and their respective national cinemas, as well as with audiences, many of whom are similarly transnational, whose desires, aspirations, and fears they express" (Naficy, 2001, p. 6). On contrary to Hollywood films, these films differ in terms of their alternative production and style. As Naficy (2001) calls them "accented", the displacement of the filmmakers creates a certain accent derived from "artisanal and collective production modes and from the filmmakers' and audiences' deterritorialized locations" (p. 23). Therefore, accented cinema not only establishes a transnational cinema, but also it is a constructive part of the national cinemas and identity. As it is mentioned before, Naficy (2001) classifies three distinct filmmakers and filmmaking practices; exilic, diasporic, and ethnic. The films mostly fall under one of these categories but the majority of them commonly share the features of all three in different extents. The reason of the displacement of the filmmakers can be various like political reasons, labor and service possibilities, trade and business possibilities, or education, cultural and family reasons. Therefore, their displacement forms its own particular spectatorial environment by politics of different ethnic representations.

Furthermore, accented filmmakers are interstitial figures as well as empirical subjects within their films, and they exist in different binaries of national as well as cinematic practices. Naficy (2001) indicates that "For accented filmmakers, loneliness has an additional structural basis, which is rooted in their interstitial mode of production" (p. 55). Even though accented filmmakers seem to be freed from the Hollywood classic studio system that controls almost every aspect of film productions, they also lose the

centralized community where they can rely on their back for funding, casting, distributing, and exhibiting their films. Therefore, the freedom of loneliness brings new challenges in their "interstitial production mode". They need to invest in their own films and seek additional funding from other public and private sources. (This particularly will be discussed in CHAPTER 4 through the case of Justin Chon, explaining how he seeks his funding through Kickstarter Campaign and ethnic media and organizations like CAAM). Due to the lack of division in workload, these filmmakers perform multiple roles. Therefore, accented filmmakers are interstitial not only for having double identities but also for taking various roles to produce their films both within the system and also in the cracks of the system. Hence, they are mostly either independent or experimental filmmakers. As Levy (1999) underscores that "Minority directors [...] have found it easier to break into the independent cinema than the mainstream. It's the richly textured work of these directors that justifies indie cinema's claim to multiculturalism in both ideology and practice" (p. 315). In that sense, Korean-American diasporic filmmakers exist within the indie cinema realm and they are quite self-reflexive about using their post-memory of their immigratory experience.

The chosen diasporic films by Korean-American filmmakers commonly share the characteristics of premiering first in the Sundance Film Festival or in other prestigious independent film festivals like the Cannes. They have the character-driven narratives, tackling with the issues of immigration and racial melancholia through the "indie cinema's character-centered strain as a style that appeals as realism, understood as character-focused storytelling set in recognizable, familiar locales, within the context

of indie culture" (Newman, 2011, pp. 96-7). Since indie cinema in the United States has functioned "as an alternative to American national cinema", the indie culture particularly comes from the reliance on indie films that "invest great significance in characters who are to be read as emblems of their social identities" (Newman, 2011, pp. 17, 246). Even though the indie culture does not necessarily have the concern of thematizing national identity (since it is also transnational and global), it promotes a significant degree of American national culture. In this thesis, the Korean-American diasporic indie films, therefore, portray the characters that firstly situate in American national culture as an extension of national identity.

There is a continual focus on the deterritorialization of the individual or group, a lack of belonging, through displacement that validates the subject matter and theme of Naficy's (2001) *Accented Cinema*. The common themes in accented films take on the form of a journey. Even though this journey does not have to be a physical one, it is either a homecoming or home-seeking journey. Moreover, Naficy (2001) informs that "In the accented cinema, westering journeys are particularly valued, partly because they reflect the filmmakers' own trajectory and the general flow of value worldwide" (p. 33). The filmmakers collectively represent this cinematic journey where incomplete characters are in a continual search for wholeness overall. Continuing search for wholeness, or a process for the split and hybridized identity to be healed or made whole highly depend on the feeling of *home* (Georgiou, 2006, p. 136):

> Home is no longer one place, it is locations; diasporic continuity is as much about the imagining of a common origin and a common fate as it is about the transnationalization of possible imaginings, which are particular and specific to a group but also global in their relevance. Diasporic continuity is about the interrelation between universalism and particularism- it is about the global and the transnational as much as it is about the particular identity and community.

Feeling oneself at home and completing the lack in their identities; hence, are particular to Korean-American diasporic films and global in their relevance. By showing Naficy's (2001) Accented cinema-style characteristics, the films will expose transnationalization of possible imaginings in relation to historical discourses.

3.2.1. The Korean-American Dream: A Dream with A Suitcase

The American Dream believes in the equality and liberty of all people to pursue happiness. Nevertheless, the phrase underwent changes over time by obtaining various meanings but the ethos that promotes freedom and equality remained the same for many U.S. citizens to create a better life for themselves. The core element of the American Dream is through hard work and perseverance by becoming financially strong and socially mobile. It is not certain whether he actually coined the term or not but the original concept of the American Dream was notably popularized by historian and writer James Truslow Adams in the best-selling book *The Epic of America* (1931). Adams (1931, as cited in Adams, 2012) indicates that the "American dream is full of a better, richer, and happier life for all our citizens of every rank which is the greatest contribution we have as yet made to the thought and welfare of the World" (pp. xii-iii). After Adams (1931) invoked the term "American Dream" many times in his writings, the phrase not only expeditiously joined in the everyday life of his country as a byword for the national identity but ideologically transcended from the United States and was acknowledged in the rest of the world. The notion turned into an aspiration for people who immigrate to the United States since it promises the potential to earn a good living regardless of social status or place of birth.

However, when it comes to the practice, this notion, unfortunately, fails for the majority of immigrants who are mostly working-class citizens because the American immigration experience has been quite diverse and the background of each immigrant family does not fit into a single category. Even though some immigrants might have other push factors such as violence, poverty, and persecution that prompt their migration to the United States, the majority of immigrants have multifarious socioeconomic backgrounds alongside different family patterns so the prospects for a better life for their family often turn into an experience of dehumanizing living and working conditions in a hostile environment (Chang & Park, 2019). Being in the state between surviving and thriving, many immigrants contribute to economic growth, provide creativity and innovation, and enrich the art of America. Eventually, some immigrants managed to get out of low-paying jobs and become successful, even millionaire entrepreneurs; however, this success is not secured. Some could never reach the level of prosperity and cultural integration within the U.S. society. In the pursuit of this vision, the stories of immigrants who aim to achieve this "American Dream" often wake up from this dream. This is mainly because of the barriers that the first-generation immigrants fail to overcome like the language that helps to exchange cultures in both workplaces and communities.

When their social assimilation fails, they create new ways to survive by working harder or building a space for the next generations to achieve their American dream that is unaccomplished. As an outcome of this, each generation of immigrant families carries their diaspora into another. The topic of immigration and the outcomes of this experience could not possibly represent a monolithic experience since those experiences portray a different spectrum; mainly, it has been the case for ethnic

communities such as Asian, Latino, and African immigrants. Particularly, the racial integration through the alignment with whiteness concerns the "identity capital". Pande & Drzewiecka (2016) state that "Identity capital consists of tangible resources such as academic credentials, group membership or a green card" (p. 117). Besides the intangible skills such as multiple languages and cultural knowledge, the identity capital allows immigrants "access to social and institutional environments" (Pande & Drzewiecka, 2016, p. 117). Therefore, the outcomes of both tangible and intangible resources are tightly linked to the proximity to whiteness that is measured both socially (e.g. economic success, religious compatibility) as well as racially (skin color, other ethnic distinctions).

In this thesis' focus, the Korean-American dream emerges from a harsh reality. Korean immigrant readjustment is derived from the ideology of self-help; they acknowledge a particular connection between surviving in America and entrepreneurial activity (Park, 1997). Generally speaking, the urge to establish one's own small business to maintain stability and security has a forceful impact on the activities of the Korean-American community. This ideological orientation eventually sets certain criteria for working conditions, political activities, religious practices with the embrace of Protestant Christianity, and gender roles alongside familial relations within the community. Especially, the adaptation of Korean immigrants to the American ideology of individual success applies to middle-class Koreans who gain a new status as minority immigrant shop owners in the United States. Since Korean immigrants came to the U.S. with their own version of an American dream, "a dream shaped by their experiences in Korea as well as their subjective perceptions of America" (Park, 1997, p. 35), the film narratives will reveal the conflicts emerged from this particular version

of American dream. By particularly focusing on the characters David in *Spa Night* (2016), Eli in *Gook* (2017), the Yi family in *Minari* (2020), the first group of films, then, will investigate the diasporic identifications through the framework of Korean-American Dream.

3.2.1.1. A Model Minority Teenager in Koreatown: Andrew Ahn's Spa Night (2016)

Andrew Ahn's first feature film, *Spa Night* premiered at the 2016 Sundance Film Festival. The film firstly stands out as a reflection of his Korean-American and queer identity and it thematically matches with his previous two narrative short films, *Andy* (2010) and *Dol* (2011). Capturing the life of eighteen-year-old David Cho, played by Joe Seo, *Spa Night* (2016) portrays an intermingling state of a Korean-American teen where his queerness entangled with other aspects of difference like sexuality, ethnicity, class, and diaspora. David's queer identity also shapes his Korean-American diaspora at the same time. Being a model minority kid, David helps out his mother Soyoung (Korean actress Haerry Kim) and his father Jin (Korean actor Youn Ho Cho) who run a small restaurant in the Koreatown in LA. After their family business had to close, his working-class Korean immigrant family is forced to find part-time jobs and re-evaluate their priorities. Particularly, David's immigrant parents set certain expectations for him to retake his SATs exam (a Scholastic Aptitude Test for university applicants in the United States) because, in the first one, he was too busy helping his family business. Since there is now no chance to take over the business after they closed the restaurant, his family insists that he needs new career plans. On the other hand, David as an obedient son quietly tries to explore his gay identity that is stuck in between his Koreanness and Americanness.

The film starts in a Korean spa where David spends a relaxing time with his family. The immediate conversation between David and his mother is about a possible marriage of David to a pretty Korean girl. David curiously questions what if he will marry a white girl and the mother responds as follows “But how would your father and I communicate with her? How would we talk to her? To our grandchildren? You should marry a Korean woman and have Korean kids” (Ahn, 2016, 04:20-04:30). The language has already been an established barrier for his immigrant parents to communicate with the future generation but also within the American society as well. In this regard, David becomes a bridge for his parents that connects them to the American culture; he acts as a translator for them and sometimes even speaks in a different language than Korean and English. For instance, when a delivery man arrives at their restaurant to drop their orders, David responds to him in Spanish and also translates it into Korean for his mother. Naficy (2001) explains that “Accented films inscribe other amphibolic character types who are split, double, crossed, and hybridized and who perform their identities” (p. 32). David, in that sense, as a multilingual teenager performs both the double and crossed life of an outsider who cannot find a place to fit in.

After their business went bankrupt and was sold to a young couple, the family looks for spiritual relief and hope in their Korean ethnic church. After the service, the family has a chance to communicate with other Korean immigrants in town. One of the church acquaintances of the family, Mrs. Beak, offers a full-time position, a waitress job in their own family business, to David’s mother Soyoung after hearing the news about

their closed restaurant. Hurh (1998, p. 106) describes the function of the church as follows:

> The Korean ethnic church has become the center of the Korean American community by providing not only spiritual (Christian) fellowship but also *ethnic* fellowship, cultural identity, and social services. Beyond a place of religious worship, the Korean church has thus functioned as a social center for promoting a communal bond among fellow immigrants, preserving Korean cultural traditions (language, family values, food, etc.), and providing social services (e.g., counseling, job referral, help with language and legal problems).

Thus, the church goes beyond to representation of their spiritual relief but also offers them a social space to bond with fellow Korean immigrants with whom they could exchange information and opportunities. Afterward, Mrs. Beak is curious about David's future plans and Soyoung tells her that his son will go to college before David even opens his mouth. As Mrs. Beak's son Eddie and David were such good friends at church, she wants to help David by bragging about his son who is a college student, going to the University of Southern California. Mrs. Beak mentions if David wants to get into USC, he has to have good SAT scores just like his son; therefore, she suggests David an SAT prep class that Eddie took.

Upon the arrangement, David finds himself at USC to visit Eddie and experience college life for a couple of days but his visit starts to turn into the beginning of a self-discovery journey. David astonishes when Eddie offers him the bed of his roommate who stays with his boyfriend. After spending his time in college with the courses, gym, and parties, David has a chance to interact with his peers, mostly other Korean-American young people. After a party, when they all end up in a male-only Korean spa to get rid of their drunk state and bodies covered in puke, David's sensational feelings towards his friend Eddie become obvious upon seeing him naked. Then this

friendship and college experience ends with an awkward moment between Eddie and David by witnessing the teenage dream of David where he could discover his sexuality and identity for a short time. He returns to his reality when his father brings him to the part-time job, where they move furniture, arranged by another Korean acquaintance. After David witnessed how hard his dad tries and earns less money in exchange for his huge effort, he wants to help his parents by working another part-time job.

However, his father says that they did not move to the United States so that David could move furniture. His parents only want him to focus on the SAT exam and a college degree. Hurh (1998, p. 94) confirms the importance of education for Korean immigrants as follows:

> One of the most important motivations for Korean immigrants to come to the United States was to seek better educational opportunities for their children. This passion for education originally comes from the Confucian emphasis on learning as the best way to attain the wisdom and virtue needed by the ruling class in China… This historical legacy of attaining social mobility through education is deeply rooted in the Korean consciousness. Whether in Korea or in the United States, Korean parents' primary concern is to provide their children with the best education available.

With this rooted Korean consciousness for education, David's parents' passion for their son's education gets stronger when they could not pursue their own dream of running a business. The racial melancholia within the family particularly displays itself when they lose a physical space whether this is their restaurant or their first home; it is a space where they dreamed big for their future. Eng and Han (2000, pp. 679-80) associate "racial melancholia" with a mourning process in the case of the experience of immigration as follows:

> The experience of immigration itself is based on a structure of mourning. When one leaves one's country of origin—voluntarily or involuntarily—one must mourn a host of losses both concrete and abstract. These include

> homeland, family, language, identity, property, status in the community—the list goes on. In Freud's theory of mourning, one works through and finds closure to these losses by investing in new objects—in the American dream, for example.

For instance, in *Figures 1 & 2* below, David and his mother walk by their first-ever home in this country. The emotional weight becomes heavier by facing with past through the building.



Figures 1 & 2. In *Spa Night* (2016), David (Joe Seo) and Soyoung (Haerry Kim) walk by their old house and nostalgically remember their first memories in the United States.

From teary eyes and sadness from his mother's face, one can understand that the dream is already failed and shifted to David's future where his parents' American dream is bonded to their son's success in college. Eng and Han (2000, p. 680) point out the following:

> If the losses suffered by first-generation immigrants are not resolved and mourned in the process of assimilation—if libido is not replenished by the investment in new objects, new communities, and new ideals—then the melancholia that ensues from this condition can be transferred to the second generation

Since the losses suffered by David's first-generation immigrant parents are not resolved because of their failed business, the racial melancholia that follows from this condition mentioned above can be carried to the second generation as we see in David's case. Hence, sacrificing all the family sources for their children's success consequently put pressure on the scholastic achievement of those immigrant children like David who indeed become a model minority. On the other hand, David is not exactly keen on the idea of going to a college and silently tries to hide his forbidden thrills in the midst of the spa. Secretly working in the male-only spa, David witnesses some queer activities and says nothing about it to Korean spa owner for a while. Korean Spa, is a transitory place where David can both be Korean and also gay without feeling any guilt to be less Korean or less gay. He both helps his parents financially and escapes from them at the same time where two cultures collide with each other.



Figure 3. In *Spa Night* (2016), a close-up shot that exposes the shift in David's (Joe Seo) mentality; he finally comes face-to-face with himself in the mirror as queer Korean-American

Until this “true mirror” scene toward the end (*Figure 3*), as the audience, we barely witness his feelings. Carrying all the shame and loneliness, David’s identity is divided into individualist exploration versus family responsibility. When he performs a cathartic self-recognition at the spa, he scrubs himself so hard that he cries and damages his skin. As if cleaning himself from his sins or punishing himself as a failure, consequently, his self-actualization resolves at the end as an embodiment of diaspora both as race, class, sexuality, and mobility. The core of the social unity for Koreans is the family and kin relations, not the individual, therefore, they came along to the U.S. with their traditional family values and structures (Chang & Park, 2019; Hurh, 1998; Park, 1997). As one can imagine, the later generations as their offspring caught up between this old and new system in which their individualistic explorations were blocked by the collectivism of their particular community. David’s individuality as a gay man, in that sense, is blocked with his racialized body as a Korean man that is connected to the traditional gender roles within the collectivism of his immigrant parents and Korean community.

Although David is more socially adjusted in the U.S culture than his parents as he translates for them when there is a need, he still struggles to communicate with his peers. When we go back to the scenes where he visits Eddie at USC to get a college experience, he barely speaks English but understand it perfectly. This can either be interpreted as a shy manner or lack of fluency in English. Therefore, he has to individuate not only coming out as gay but also improve his soft skills to relate to people in his possible college life within the U.S society. The film illustrates that the model minority is a myth by portraying the character David who does not fit in the ideal of model citizenry. It mocks the generalization of Asian-Americans as

academically and economically successful and promotes the diversity of individuals by rejecting stereotypes of Asian-Americans. At the end of the film, there is no attempt to overcome those barriers of David; his attendance to Korean church continues the same as before. However, it ends with a mobile framing with tracking shots of David where he fastly runs on streets as if leaving his burden away behind him. As he moves through the streets, he perhaps moves on to the next chapter of his life.

3.2.1.2. Inherited Korean-American Dream: Justin Chon's *Gook* (2017)

Justin Chon who is the writer, director, star, and executive producer of the film *Gook* (2017), portrays the character named Eli. The film's black and white aesthetic was compared by the critics to the early works of Spike Lee, like the films *She's Gotta Have It* (1986) and *Do the Right Thing* (1989) (Yamato, 2017, para. 23). However, in the interview, Chon expresses the following (Yamato, 2017, p. 24):

> A bigger influence was *La Haine*, pointing to Mathieu Kassovitz's 1995 drama, set in Paris in the aftermath of rioting over racially fueled police violence. But if critics say this is derivative of *Do the Right Thing*, I can live with that.

Using all the inspiration, the film is set in 1992's Los Angeles. Eli (Justin Chon) and Daniel (David So) are two Korean-American brothers who try to survive and make the shoe store left by their father afloat in Paramount. These brothers are friends with an 11-year-old Kamilla (Simone Baker) who is an African-American girl living in their neighborhood. Kamilla secretly hangs out with them because of her brother Keith who is hostile to the Korean-American brothers. This friendship gradually builds the tension of the story which eventually will lead to the climax where Kamilla's brother Keith (Curtiss Cook Jr.) tries to take revenge on them. The revenge is motivated by the day when the Rodney King verdict is announced.

The historical background of the plot goes back to the date March 3, 1991, when motorist Rodney King was pulled over by four policemen on a high-speed pursuit. The policemen used their batons and taser guns on him while beating King. This is recorded as a video and went viral even in an age without smartphones, and numerous news stations repeatedly broadcasted it. As we still witness similar cases like George Floyd, who became one of the victims of police brutality in Minneapolis/Minnesota, in 2020, King's footage "would incite the anger of the African American community, who demanded justice for King. The four officers involved in the beating would later go to trial. This incident would later directly affect the Korean American community" (Chang & Park, 2019, pp. 76-7). Thirteen days after he King's incident, another incident occurred by the shooting of Latasha Harlins who was an African-American 15-year-old girl murdered by Korean shop owner Soon Ja Du. Even though Harlins denied shoplifting a bottle of juice, the heated argument was recorded on footage where Du pulled out a gun and shot Harlins (Chang & Park, 2019, p. 77). Those two events triggered the racial tension and anger between black and white communities, deepened the mistrust between the Korean and African American communities, and consequently led to the LA riots in 1992. Chon as a filmmaker was deeply inspired by those events and wanted to narrate a personal story from a Korean-American perspective. The film is based on his childhood memory where his father's small business alongside other Korean shops was destroyed by the riots. By recalling his memories, Chon says the following (Yamato, 2017, para. 13):

> I was home watching the news, knowing that my dad was there. I remember going to church that Sunday with my sister and they asked if anyone's family had been affected by the riots, and I remember being embarrassed [...]

From this perspective, the characters, Eli and Daniel, and the Korean-American dream shared by their father and other Korean shop owners in southern California like Mr. Kim's unfolds its diaspora through the interracial tension between ethnic communities.

The film both starts with the definition of the "Gook" and also reveals its layered meaning later on in the conversation between Eli and Kamilla when someone spray-painted it on Eli's car as an act of hatred (see *Figure 4* & *5* below). The first meaning at the opening scene with a black screen describes the term *Gook* as follows: "A derogatory term for East and Southeast Asians. It was originally predominantly used by the US military during wartime, especially during the Korean and Vietnam war" (Chon, 2017, 00:24). Afterward, when Kamilla asks what does it mean (*Figure 4 & 5*), Eli describes it as "country" in Korean, for example, Hanguk is Korea while Yeonguk is England. When Kamilla asks for America, he points out himself, saying "Miguk" in a satirical way (see *Figure 5* below). Indicating himself as *Miguk* almost tells that he feels American, not a *Hanguk* (Korean) person. In this respect, Eli's cultural identity situates itself in the American culture and nationality but also denies itself from the self-perception related to his ethnicity as Korean.



Figures 4 & 5. In *Gook* (2017), Kamilla (Simone Baker) and Eli (Justin Chon) see the hate comment on the car and carry the conversation inside where Eli explains the meaning of "Gook".

The neighborhood where Eli lives with African-Americans recognize them as outsiders and they are bothered by Eli's Asianness. On the other hand, Eli insists on his Americanness and he tries to defend his rights to live in the only country that he feels belongs. Eli's self-denial of his ethnicity represents the cultural identity surrounded by diaspora. Stuart Hall (2003, p. 223) suggests the following:

> There are at least two different ways of thinking about cultural identity. The first position defines 'cultural identity' in terms of one, shared culture, a sort of collective 'one true self', hiding inside the many other, more superficial or artificially imposed 'selves', which people with a shared history and ancestry hold in common.

Eli's Korean cultural identity in that sense challenges the common historical experiences and shared cultural codes of Korea. On the other hand, the second way

recognizes an important difference that establishes what we really are. Hall (2003) indicates that "Cultural identity, in this second sense, is a matter of 'becoming' as well as of 'being'. It belongs to the future as much as to the past" (p. 225). As cultural identities like Eli's carry their histories within but they also undergo ongoing transformation at the same time. Eli is subject to the continuous play of Korean-American history, culture, and power; therefore, we can understand his complex character by the interplay between Hall's (2003) two approaches of cultural identity. His Korean ethnicity allows some continuity with the past while his self-conception as an American turn into an experience of a profound discontinuity. Hence, his doubleness exceeds the binary representation of being a Korean-American and turns into otherness.

Furthermore, his alienation mostly exposes itself in the relationship with Mr. Kim who is a Korean liquor store owner across the street from their shoe store. Mr. Kim (Sang Chon) is actually the real-life father of the director Justin Chon. His father was an actor back in South Korea; therefore, it is almost a paradox in itself to see the dynamics between a father and son, who are Asian Americans, in the actor-director relationship. Chon, in an interview in regard to *Gook* (2017), says (CAAM, 2017b, para. 24):

> I'm proud to be Asian American. I'm proud to be Korean American. And I'm proud to be Korean. But you know, our parents come to this country and they expect us to stay in this '70s and '80s mindset that is even, in their home countries, archaic. It's like a time capsule. I feel like now, a lot of parents have to, but for the longest time, I didn't feel like they were following the times. We can get deep about this but Korea took Confucianism to the max. Filial piety, respect for elders, all that other stuff. It's so embedded in the culture and embedded in elders' pride that as a rebellious teenager I had huge problems with. I had huge problems with my dad, with my mom, anyone who tried to stifle or press me down… But on the flip side, stepping inside the older generation's shoes, they're saying no we do understand. We came from

> really hard times, we came here for you guys. It's a very cyclical sort of thing. The intergenerational conflict is just as important as the interracial conflict, in my opinion.

Thus, Mr. Kim represents that first Korean immigrants' mentality who regarded themselves as Korean nationals rather than Korean-Americans. Mr. Kim is a character who always speaks in Korean, accuses people, particularly Kamilla, of stealing, and he occasionally gets in heated arguments with Eli because of his disrespectful behaviors and impolite language. When Mr. Kim judged him for speaking only English, Eli angrily replies "Because this is America" (Chon, 2017, 40:24). Their conflict resolves towards the end when Mr. Kim nostalgically tribute his late father and reveals that they were in the Korean Marine corps together and also started the shoe store business.

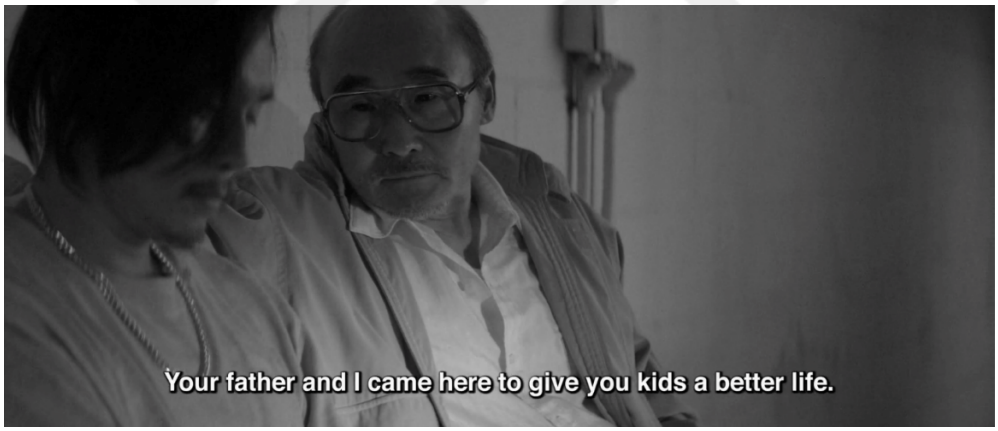


Figure 6. In *Gook* (2017), Mr. Kim (Sang Chon) and Eli (Justin Chon) nostalgically tribute Eli's late father in front of their shoe store.

He helps Eli to connect with his past in a fatherly gesture by reminding their initial motive (see *Figure 6*) to come to the U.S. that is to give a better future for future generations just like I discussed in relation to David's case in *Spa Night* (2016).

Keeping their father's legacy by protecting his shoe store for the sake of his father's past hardships put pressure on Eli and restrains him from his own individualism. On

the other hand, as an aspiring R&B singer, Eli's brother Daniel has already been trying to pursue his own dream but unfortunately finds himself caught up in interracial violence. When he wanders around and tries to record his song, he gets beaten because of his Asian appearance. In his case, his personal American dream contradicts reality. After Kamilla's brother finds out about their secret friendship, he does not repress his anger anymore and wants to take possessions of their shoes in the store as an act of revenge. The main reason for hostility is because Eli's father and their mother were shot in their shoe store and died together and he blames this family for his mother's death. Even though Eli chooses to let go of their father's legacy and support his brother's dream to be a singer, this decision eventually breaks Kamilla's heart because she does not want them to leave this neighborhood and her.



Figure 7. In *Gook* (2017), a medium shot long that shows Eli (Justin Chon) and Daniel (David So) in front of their father's shoe store that is on fire.

This betrayal eventually leads to a scene where Kamilla accidentally got shot by a gun and becomes a gunshot victim. Afterward, upon grief and sadness, Eli sets the store on fire on purpose (see *Figure 7* above). As Park discusses (1997), emphasizing family interest, duty, and mutual dependence on kin-based ethnic community versus the individual rights, independence, and intimacy ideologically and practically have existed in Korean-Americans' everyday life. This tradition-

oriented family system is shaken by the new society; they had to undergo modifications as the new generations of Korean-Americans wish to live independently. These two brothers have been living with the ghost of their father even he is dead; they could not let go of their family duty but also try to fight for their individual rights and independence within the country. The fire scene (*Figure 7*), in a cathartic way, sets them free. Destroying their father's legacy could possibly foreshadow a new future full of possibilities for these young Korean-Americans who break the chains of the past by letting go of the inherited Korean-American dream behind them.

3.2.1.3. Grandma Smells Like Korea: Lee Isaac Chung's *Minari* (2020)

The writer-director Lee Isaac Chung, born in Colorado in 1978, spent his childhood years on a farm in Arkansas. Before attending Yale to study biology, Chung made his debut feature *Munyurangabo* premiered at Cannes in 2007 followed by his second feature *Lucky Life* (2010). His career breakthrough was Minari (2020) which premiered at the Sundance Film Festival in 2020. The film received many awards like Grand Jury Prize and Audience Award at the Sundance in 2020. Moreover, it was nominated six times at the 93rd Academy Awards and won the Best Motion Picture (Foreign Language) award at Golden Globes 2021. The outstanding story of *Minari* (2020) is based on Chung's own childhood remembrance in Arkansas in the 1980s. Following Jacob's (Steven Yeun) dream to own a property and build a farm, the Yi family decides to move from California to their new home in rural Arkansas. As an expert chicken sexer back in California, Jacob could earn a living wage but he believes that having a piece of property will not only provide a better life for his family but also make his American dream come true. The high hopes of Jacob eventually conflict with

the matrimony and family struggles where his survival of marriage with Monica (Korean actress Ye-ri Han) almost depends on the success of their new farm. Since Monica already lost his Korean-American community in California and continues to work as chicken sexer in Arkansas to help family income, she feels so isolated in their new property. Jacob promises that if their farms succeed, Monica does not have to work anymore and they would live in wealth without worrying anymore. However, the problem for Monica is to live in a rural place which is far away from the facilities and familiar people from Korean church. On the other hand, their children, David (Alan Kim) and Anne (Noel Cho), approach this new landscape as a new playground where they can run and explore freely. However, their perspectives as second-generation Korean-Americans immediately shift to exploring their ethnicity with the arrival of their grandmother Soonja (the veteran Korean actress Youn Yuh-jung) from Korea.

Each character vividly portrays the feelings of loneliness, sacrifice, and the longings of modern migrants. Chung as a filmmaker here alters us through the point of view of all of the family members and illustrates how they battle with micropolitical movements both as individuals and as a family. Naficy (2001) points out “Accented filmmakers are not just textual structures or fictions within their films; they also are empirical subjects, situated in the interstices of cultures and film practices, who exist outside and prior to their films” (p. 4). Thus, Chung’s *Minari* (2020) performs some extent of his individual and collective identity as Korean-American. By challenging his childhood memories, Chung not only transcends his own personal memory but also tells the story from both perspectives of children and parents alongside the grandmother. Even though the story represents the collective experience of the Korean-American diaspora, each of them offers a different aspect of this

collectiveness. Therefore, I would like to take a closer look at this collective diaspora by dividing it into two relationships that expose diasporic identifications distinctively. The first one ties with the marital conflict of Jacob and Monica where their survival of marriage depends on the success of their farm; the second one is between the grandmother Soonja and children where we can witness the generational gap and language barriers.

To carve out *Minari* (2020), Chung's main inspiration particularly derives from Roberto Rossellini's works. Chung mentions Rossellini in an interview as follows (Lucca, 2021, para. 9):

> Roberto Rossellini was a huge inspiration for me as I was trying to figure this story out, specifically *Stromboli* (1950) and *Journey to Italy* (1954). He ties in a lot of spiritual wrestling with marital relationships in those: both films start with an already married couple, and the effort of the film is to see if their relationship can survive […]

However, Chung combines Monica's spiritual searching with Jacob's ambitions which eventually creates a distance in the marital relationship between Jacob and Monica. The conflict starts from the beginning when the Yi family arrives at their new mobile home in Arkansas. Even from the beginning, we can see the separation in the perspectives of Jacob and Monica. In *Figure 8*, Jacob enthusiastically represents their new habitat as their "new home" without seeing Monica's condescending look on her face. Jacob is very keen on pursuing his own dream which he will use "The best dirt in America" to build a garden as he calls it "Garden of Eden" (Chung, 2020, 04:10- 04:38).



Figure 8. In *Minari* (2020), The Yi Family arrives at their new mobile home in Arkansas

Even though he is an expert chicken sexer who worked for more than 10 years and earn good enough money back in California, they had nothing as property, therefore, he aims to succeed by running his own business. In the later conversation with his daughter Anne, we find out Jacob's another motivation to grow Korean vegetables; he wants to provide products for Koreans who immigrate to the U.S. so that they would not miss Korean food. Jacob invests, in terms of location, in Arkansas rather than California because even though many Korean immigrants live in California, new arrivals from Korea choose to move to Oklahoma City. The Korean products come from mainly California, therefore; Jacob takes this as his advantage by being only five hours away from Oklahoma. He convinces Korean market owner in Oklahoma by saying the products that comes from California arrives in bad shape and do not taste as good but his closeness to Oklahoma City will solve this problem.

On the other hand, Monica is not fully immersed herself in the American ideology of individual success; she longs for stability in a big city where she is surrounded by other Korean immigrants who share the same kind of hardships in life. While she starts to feel total alienation in this new territory, her disconnection from her husband

also grows at the same time. Even though children seem excited when they see the wheels of the home, Monica cannot help to express her disappointment to her husband when she sees their new home almost like a site of exile. Monica, as a city girl back in Korea, dislikes the provincial, poor conditions of their new house mainly because of the heart disease of their son David. Their isolated property is far away from the hospital and also the Korean community that could possibly help them to adapt. Therefore, they continuously go through heated conversations, sometimes fights, about their future both economically and romantically. Morse (1999, as cited in Naficy, 1999, p. 63) states the following:

> Since 'home' is not a real place, (though it always once upon a time), feeling at home is, in essence, a personal and culturally specific link to the imaginary. Feelings and memories linked to home are highly charged, if not with meaning, then with sense memories that began in childhood before the mastery of language

Different approaches to "home" by David and Monica reveal this imaginary feeling where Monica does not feel at home because she is not culturally connected to this new space without her Korean immigrant community.

When Monica's mother Soonja arrives to take care of the kids; Monica's loneliness unfolds as she could finally connect something familiar to her past and community as a Korean. As Monica's father died during the war and she has no brothers or sisters, Monica's only connection with her Korean ethnicity reconnects with the arrival of her mother. Reunion of the past happens mostly with Korean food. Gochugaru (the Korean chili powder), a bag of myeolchi (dried anchovies), and minari seeds (that will turn into both a metaphor and title of the film) were brought by Soonja from Korea. These are key ingredients in several classic Korean dishes; they are also very hard to find in many American cities. Even if they could possibly find it in America,

they drive for hours to buy them, so it makes Monica cry with joy by seeing her mother's gesture of love. Also, they have some objects from the homeland like the VHS tapes marked as "Korean Drama Series". They watch Korean TV shows as well as the house is decorated with Korean ornaments (see *Figure 9* below). As Naficy (2001, pp. 23-5) suggests the following:

> Accented films emphasize visual fetishes of homeland and the past (landscape, monuments, photographs, souvenirs, letters), as well as visual markers of difference and belonging (posture, look, style of dress and behavior), they equally stress the oral, the vocal, and the musical—that is, accents, intonations, voices, music, and songs, which also demarcate individual and collective identities.

TV-related tapes and decorations in the Yi family's house then turn into fetishized objects and motivated props, which symbolize icons of homeland and past, so they help the Korean immigrant Yi family to keep up with South Korean entertainment and feel nostalgic about their homeland.



Figure 9. In *Minari* (2020), The Yi family watches a Korean TV show

On the other hand, Jacob also makes some efforts to Monica feel at home. Even though he is not very keen on going to a church, he says: "You must be lonely here without friends. Even with Mother here, it's not the same thing. I thought we might go to church" (Chung, 2020, 43:41- 44:09). This makes Monica happy because she

hopes that she will meet other Koreans in church and create a community in Arkansas where she feels less lonely. As stated in *2.1.3* before, family migration to the United States was particularly motivated by the Immigration act in 1965 (Chang & Park, 2019; Hurh, 1998; Park, 1997). Particularly, Korean immigrant families built a familiar network that could be found in Korean ethnic churches. The director Chung confirms this in an interview by saying the following: "Among Korean immigrants, the majority tends to be Christian because that was the way they immigrated to America - through the support network of churches […]" (Lucca, 2021, para. 17). Church, in that sense, becomes a place for many Korean-Americans like Monica where they can find faith alongside a community on a shared cultural identity so that they might help each other, socialize together, and find jobs for their acquaintances. Naficy (1999, p. 20) points out this sense of community as follows:

> Diaspora suggests real or imagined relationships among the dispersed. Exile suggests pining for home; diaspora suggests networks among compatriots. Exile may be solitary, but diaspora is always collective. Diaspora suggests real or imagined relationships among scattered fellows, whose sense of community is sustained by forms of communication and contact such as kinship, pilgrimage, trade, travel, and shared culture.

Thus, Monica wants to find Korean friends for her children as well as for herself with whom she can communicate in their shared culture and community as immigrants.

However, when they go to church, Monica and even the children encounter with feelings of being an outsider. Since the church is not a Korean Methodist Church, the Yi family suddenly draws the attention of other people; particularly when children meet new friends, all the stereotypical Asian clichés about their appearance and language came to life in the conversations. Thus, Monica's attempt to feel attached to

somewhere and her sense of belonging fails again. Upon the failure to adapt to her new territory, Monica wants to move somewhere else where she belongs but Jacob insists that they stay on their farm. In their later conversation right after they took David to a hospital for a check-up of his heart, Jacob says: “Life was so difficult in Korea. Remember what we said when we got married? That we’d go to America and save each other. Instead of saving each other, all we did was fight” (Chung, 2020, 1:33:43-1:35:12). However, Monica insists that their life in California was much better, she believes that if they continue to live in here, they will go broke. Upon this, Jacob wants to show his kids that he succeeds at something for once. Monica replies “For what? Isn’t it more important that we stay together?” (Chung, 2020, 1:33:43-1:35:12). Eventually, Jacob becomes aware that if the farm fails, Monica will break up from with him since she does not want to have a life in Arkansas.

The second conflict is related to Soonja and her grandchildren. Even though Soonja’s arrival makes Monica very happy, the children, especially David, are not so happy by meeting his grandmother. David thinks she does not fit in a typical grandmother image because Soonja likes playing cards, a classic Korean card game known as Hwatu, and watching wrestling shows rather than baking cookies. As second-generation Korean-Americans, children, particularly David, never had a chance to get to know his other side of Korean descent. Since this is the first time for David to meet with Korean culture and also his ethnicity, Soonja, who came from Korea, appears as an embodiment of Korean culture, food, and language, or so to speak, as a root that David could connect to his ancestors. However, David and Soonja are not the same even though they are closely related to each other. When Monica arranges for them to stay together in David’s room, Soonja asks whether David would be

bothered to share his room by saying “I heard American kids don’t like sharing their rooms” but Monica replies as “He’s not like that. He’s a Korean kid.” (Chung, 2020, 31:14-31:22). Nonetheless, David rejects the idea of being Korean; he finds bizarre almost everything about his grandmother and constantly says that “She is not a real Grandma” and “Grandma smells like Korea” (Chung, 2020, 35:26).

Especially, when David is forced to drink a dark color drink called *Hanyak*, “which is widely considered a cure-all various illnesses in Korea” (No, 2021, para. 14), his attitude toward the drink, as well as Soonja, becomes quite judgmental. This traditional Korean medicine, which is very expensive, is brought by Soonja for David to drink one cup every day. David, instead, prefers to drink his favorite drink, the Mountain Dew. He dislikes the smell of the Hanyak and secretly pours it to sink (*Figures 10 & 11*).



Figures 10 & 11. In *Minari* (2020), David is forced to drink hanyak, and later he secretly pours it to sink.

Even though he has never been to Korea before and he associates its stranger smell with Koreanness. Since his first bond with his grandma is over a shared love of Mountain Dew drink where Soonja thought it is actually water from the mountain; he playfully replaces the Hanyak with his urine to gives his grandma as Mountain Dew. Therefore, his favorite drink, Mountain drew, symbolizes his Americanness; his aggression against Soonja is a kind of act of rejection to the old country that he does not know (Cheng, 2021). It can be said that his diaspora is different from his parents because of the excesses of his American experience as born-and raised in the United States.

Another conflict between the children and grandmother, Soonja, is the language barrier. Even though children could understand Korean, they always chose to speak in English among themselves. This eventually shows itself as Soonja's little knowledge of English and her accented way of speaking that David could not stand. For instance, in one of the memorable scenes when Soon-Ja calls David "pretty boy", David gets angry. The dictionary defines the Korean word "yeppeun" (예쁜) as follows: "If you describe someone as *pretty*, you mean that they are attractive" (Collins Dictionaries, n.d.). Hence, David corrects his grandma by saying "I'm not pretty. I'm good-looking" (Chung, 2020, 50:19-50:24). Characters in accented films often speak "the dominant language with an accent" (Naficy, 2001, p. 290). They are multilingual by speaking not only the language of the host country (sometimes with broken English) alongside the language of their homeland (Korean). Therefore, we see David as a multilingual kid while Soonja pronounces English words in a very broken way with a Korean accent.

Chung does not end the film with a resolution for the conflicts that we witness in two relationships. Instead, he gives the Yi family a start-over where they continue to be a family but their American dream is still ambiguous and unaccomplished. The open ending of the film conforms to the state of incomplete characters situated in both indie and accented filmmaking. After Soonja accidentally sets the farm's produce on fire, they lose everything they dreamed of, particularly, Jacob's American dream is destroyed. Therefore, the story ends with an uncertain future for the family. However, minari metaphor here might foreshadow new possibilities and carry positive connotations. Even though minari seems to be just a plant that effortlessly grows on a creek without a human touch and care, it is also known for growing abundantly after dying off in the first season. Maybe the Yi family will move forward and grow out because their dying season has already been passed by the fire. Who knows? They might become much stronger both as a family and individual and eventually become successful in pursuing their own American dream.

3.2.2. Korean-American Adoptees: Desire for Wholeness

The second group of films, *Seoul Searching* (2015) and *Blue Bayou* (2021), represents a different type of collective diaspora that differs from the previous ones in terms of pursuing the American Dream. In this collective representation of diaspora, protagonists are in a search for something familiar to their past. However, this past is already lost and unknown for them. They are born in South Korea but adopted by American foster families in very young ages that they have almost no memory and connection with their Korean past. In reality, Oh (2015) indicates that "More than sixty years of continuous Korean adoption has created a diaspora of more than two hundred thousand Koreans who have grown up in adoptive families overseas" (p. 2). The home-

seeking journey is not really about coming home for adoptees but rather a homeland tour or untold truths that uncover parts of their past; they pay a visit to the old wounds and try to make peace with them. Their identities are always in motion rather than returning to their Korean identity. Feng (2002) states the following: "[...] Korean American adoptive identity is represented in its complexity, the desire for wholeness that seems to motivate the search for biological parents suggests a longing for an essential subjectivity" (p. 211). The characters' journey is firstly motivated by the need for answers. However, they ultimately turn their outward journey into an inward journey of consolation. By particularly focusing on the characters Kris in *Seoul Searching* (2015) and Antonio in *Blue Bayou* (2021), the second group of films will investigate how this outward journey to South Korea, where the memories of their birth mother are, turns into an inward journey, or so to speak, a self-discovery.

3.2.2.1. Meaning of being Korean: Benson Lee's *Seoul Searching* (2015)

Seoul Searching (2015), indeed, is a story of searching for one's roots and ethnicity, an attempt to reconnect to their past. The film stars Jessika Van, Rosalina Leigh, and famously Justin Chon who is the director of other chosen films in this thesis *Gook* (2017) and *Blue Bayou* (2021) as well as Korean actors like Teo Yoo, Byul Kang, and In-Pyo Cha. It is a comedy-drama film that firstly premiered at Sundance Film Festival in 2015 and later Netflix acclaimed the streaming rights of the film in 2016. The film's transnationality slightly differs from the other films previously covered in terms of its production location. It was shot in South Korea as a joint production by the United States, South Korea, and China. It is set in the 80's Seoul, the capital of South Korea, where a group of foreign-born teenagers arrives at the summer camp that is arranged by the government-sponsored summer program to reconnect with their Korean

heritage. The self-reflexive nature of Korean-American diasporic filmmakers apply to Benson Lee's case as well. Based on his own experiences as a teenager, Lee offers a coming-of-age film where diasporic teenage experiences are captured both collectively and individually.

Each foreign-born teenager represents a different type of hyphens like Korean-German, Korean-Mexican, or Korean-British. In relating their childhood histories, the characters often spoke of their own languages like English, German, Spanish, and partly Korean; however, they all share a common experience where they both create fun memories with each other as well as attempt to look for their Korean identity that has been lost or replaced. Going back to this thesis' focus, growing up both as Korean and American suggests the ideas of living in two realms that are not completely different but at the same time opposed to each other where the ethnic-self conflicts with the American one. I take a closer look at this collective diaspora but also particularly focus on the Korean-American adoptee girl Kris Schultz (Rosalina Leigh) whose diaspora and the interaction with her ethnicity differs from the rest.

The film starts by going back in time nostalgically; a voice, possibly a second-generation Korean-American, suddenly narrates over the images, real footages of Korean people from during/after the Korean War. The narrator explains the main reason why there was the government-sponsored summer program in the 80s as follows (Lee, 2015, 00:02-00:50):

> My parents taught me the worst thing that ever happened to their country was the Korean War. Millions of people died, the entire country was devastated, and, most tragic of all, it divided a nation and its people. After the war, a large exodus of Koreans emigrated to different parts of the world with a suitcase and a dream, inspired by the hope their children would never

> have to suffer the way they did during the war. But there was an unforeseen problem. These parents weren't prepared for their children to fully adapt to their new culture and understand very little of their Korean heritage. In some cases, their children became strangers to them. In the early 80s, the Korean government responded to this cultural travesty by creating a special summer school for Korean teenagers from around the world where they could visit their motherland and learn about their Korean heritage.

Their childhood memories were built around the narrative traditions, symbols, and the language, since "childhood marked the beginning of an awareness of the difficulties of being American, given an Asian racial identity," the teenage memories of these characters, whether they are American or not, deals with the common racial identity as Korean descent. (Kibria, 2002, p. 64). In this summer camp, located in a Korean school, teenagers take classes on Korean culture lecture series like the language, the traditional dance, and martial arts like taekwondo. One of the Korean teachers asks them what it means to be Korean for them. One can understand from their answers that the majority had never thought about their Koreanness.

Among the foreign teenagers, Klaus, who is German-Korean, only knows how to speak Korean and helps occasionally others as a translator, significantly to Kris when she finds her birth mother. Among themselves, they speak in English but do not know how to communicate in Korean with Korean people. In that sense, Klaus is more *Korean* than his friends in terms of displaying some characteristics of traditional Korean behaviors and values like bowing to others when greeting them, or speaking the language like a native person. Back in Germany, his immigrant family owns a bratwurst company. When a Korean-British girl asks him whether he will take over the company or not someday because it is good money, Klaus says he will not take his father's business and explains the reason by saying "Because I am not an immigrant" (Lee, 2015, 27:52). He has much bigger goals because his immigrant

parents worked so hard that he does not have to do such work. He wants to prove that "Koreans can be successful in finance and that they are not just laborers" (Lee, 2015, 27:52). I formerly discussed the character David from *Spa Night* (2016) who does not want to go to a college and live the future that his immigrant parents wish to achieve. Klaus in that sense, differs from the character David because his future plans justify the dream of Korean immigrant parents who want for their children better education not a laborer life.

Kris Schultz, on the other hand, is from Fairborn, Ohio; she is adopted when she was around four. She neither speaks Korean nor has a Korean name that she knows. Even though her friends at the camp have a glimpse of Korean culture through their parents, she is a total stranger to this culture, and nothing knows about her roots either. From the letter that was intended to be sent by her birth mother to Kris when she was thirteen, we find out that her Korean name is Joo-eun and she is adopted because her mother wanted to give her a better life. When she finally finds her birth mother, they do not understand each other since they do not know each other's mother tongue, therefore, Klaus helps out Kris to translate for them to communicate with each other (see *Figures 12 & 13* below). When she asks whether she likes Korean food, Kris says that she never tried it before until she came to Korea. She shows the picture (*Figures 12 & 13*) of her family in the U.S. and wants to find more about her birth mother's family in Korea. However, her real father is not the current husband of her birth mother and she does not want introduce Kris to her family because she never told them that she had a daughter before.



Figures 12 & 13. In *Seoul Searching* (2015), a picture of Kris (Rosalina Leigh) with her American foster family on the top and a scene where she meets her birth mother and cannot communicate with her because of the language barrier on the bottom.

Upon finding that she is a secret child of an unknown father, Kris becomes very angry and never wants to meet her mother again. However, toward the end after she finds out from Klaus that her mother gave her child up for adoption because of the abuse of his birth father, she changes her mind and meets her again but this time without the help of Klaus. She tries to communicate in English although she knows that her mother cannot possibly understand her. Since this may be the last chance that they see each other, Kris reveals her feelings and her perception of the world as an adoptee. She says, "I hoped that it would be this wonderful reunion that turned into a discovery of an unknown past. I never expected that I would be denied that again"

(Lee, 2015, 1:26:26-1:26:39). Imagined homeland of Kris crashes with the experience in Korea. As Naficy (2001, pp. 5-6) suggests:

> Accented films cross many borders and engage in many deterritorializing and reterritorializing journeys, which take several forms, including home-seeking journeys, journeys of homelessness, and homecoming journeys. However, these journeys are not just physical and territorial but are also deeply psychological and philosophical.

Homecoming journey of Kris is a psychological rather than a physical one in that sense. She tells her mother that seeing her face answers all the questions that she ever wanted to ask.

She considers studying Korean in college so that they can have a real conversation someday. In her speech, Kris only uses one Korean word which is (umma), meaning "mom" in English, and her mother bursts into tears and hugs her afterward hearing it. Naficy (2001) asserts that "One of the greatest deprivations of exile is the gradual deterioration in and potential loss of one's original language, for language serves to shape not only individual identity but also regional and national identities prior to displacement" (p. 24). Even though Naficy (2001) points out this in regard to exile, this suits in Kris' case as well. Since she does not know how to speak Korean, as a Korean-American adoptee, her individual identity has already been shaped in the United States. She lost her national and racial identity as a Korean in a situation similar to exile, where she had to leave unintentionally from her original homeland, South Korea. Then, their emotional reunion, a homecoming, happens when she says "umma" for the first time, using a Korean word that her mother could understand and hears for the first time. This word is emotionally charged and it enhances their mother-and-daughter relationship. When the summer camp ends with a costume ball, everyone in the room wears something different than usual where they impersonate someone else.

Kris chooses to attend the party as a traditional Korean girl in “hanbok” (see *Figure 14* below), a Korean traditional cloth, borrowed from her Korean mother. The transnational belonging of Kris eventually turns into a home-coming journey where she becomes not only Kris but also Joo-eun, a Korean girl in a traditional outfit. In the end, Kris decides to stay in Korea for a while together with her romantic interest Klaus so that they can explore Korea together.



Figure 14. In *Seoul Searching* (2015), Kris (Rosalina Leigh) at the costume ball with her traditional Korean outfit

3.2.2.2. The Family We Choose: Justin Chon’s *Blue Bayou* (2021)

The latter released film Blue Bayou (2021) premiered at the Cannes Film Festival in 2021, and Focus Feature productions distributed the film locally and globally. This film affirms Chon’s continuous willingness to produce works that tell unique Asian-American stories. The film almost stands as a social commentary on America’s Immigration System; targeting the injustices within the system. The protagonist Antonio LeBlanc, portrayed by Justin Chon, is a family man as well as a tattoo artist who lives in New Orleans. His white American wife Kathy, played by Alicia Vikander, is pregnant with their second child. Starting with a rough beginning, Antonio moved

from one foster family to another in his childhood years and has no memories of his motherland Korea, except secretly remembering his birth mother. Trying to be the best father to Jessi who is their daughter from Kathy's previous relationship with a policeman named Ace, Antonio deals with lots of problems like financial stability, racism, and deportation to Korea. Upon being involved in a fight with the police, including Ace and his racist partner Denny, Antonio draws the attention of ICE authorities, the U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement. He finds out that his adoptive parents never officially made his citizenship official even though he lives in the United States since he was three years old. Since he looks like a Korean immigrant with a criminal record, they want him to leave the country. The struggle to stay in the country and the story behind his adoption starts to evolve when he meets a Vietnamese-born woman, Parker, who is about to die of cancer.

Meeting for the first time in the hospital, Parker and Antonio instantly bond with each other. Their friendships start on a shared Asian American identity as Jessie says "You look like my daddy" (Chon, 2021, 06:27). At the terminal stage of cancer, Parker wants Antonio to do a tattoo of a fleur-de-lis, a water lily that she always wanted. At first, Antonio finds this tattoo very cliché but later Parker explains that the fleur-de-lis reminds her of Vietnam as well as her late mother. Furthermore, it also contains a layered meaning in itself explained toward the end. She explains why she likes the fleur-de-lis as follows, "Because water lilies look like they have no roots. But they do. They can't survive without them" (Chon, 2021, 1:24:16). This metaphorical connotation of water lilies is similar to Antonio's adoptee life which has no roots. Parker always reminds him that even though he looks like he has no kinship and community, or roots that he belongs to, he does have one, which is the

shared Asian-American identity, because he cannot survive without one. Parker invites Antonio and his family over a family dinner that she does with her family once a month.

Upon the invitation, Antonio finds himself in a community that he never encountered before; there is a lot of Asian food, music, and people, particularly Vietnamese with whom he shares a different kind of affinity and familiarity. He says to Parker, "Being in here make me feel like I'm somewhere else. Like I'm in Asia or something" (Chon, 2021, 1:01:09-1:1:20). Antonio is overwhelmed with feelings of loneliness and envies this community that he has never had; therefore, he steps inside the house from the backyard for a while to spend some time alone. He carefully examines the family pictures and finally stops in front of a memorial corner devoted to Parker's late mother. Parker joins him and explains her life story in which she escaped to the U.S. from Vietnam with her family as refugees in two split boats, and her mother and older brother did not make it and died in the other boat. The exilic and diasporic experiences of both of these characters create a bond between them. Before Antonio leaves the party, he confesses to Parker that he lied to his wife Kathy about not remembering his birth mother and also says that Parker reminds him of his Korean mother. Each of them claims that the other reminds them of a parent. Since they both lost their mother in an exilic and diasporic state, their grief and racial melancholia bond together. Therefore, their bond is like an imagined mother-son relationship where Antonio feels at home when he hangs out with Parker.

As the audience, we witness his memories with her mother through dream-like flashbacks that constantly appear in the film. The scenes where his estranged Korean

mother appears are the only times that film uses Korean language; even the film starts with its opening scene of his birth mother singing a Korean lullaby (*Figures 15 & 16*).



Figures 15 & 16. In *Blue Bayou* (2021), the opening shot of the film where Antonio's (Justin Chon) birth mother sings a Korean lullaby on the top; and she tries to drown her baby on the bottom.

In the later conversations with Parker, Antonio reveals that he actually had a letter from his Korean mother when he was thirteen but could not read it for a while because he thought his foster dad destroyed it but later, he finds and reads it. Just like Kris' birth mother in *Seoul Searching* (2015), the "letter", or epistolary, is significant to the accented films' style (as cited in Naficy, 2001, p. 101):

> Epistolarity, defined as 'the use of the letter's formal properties to create meaning (Altman 1982, 4), is an ancient and rich genre of imaginative and critical literature. As Derrida (1980), Altman (1982), and Kauffman (1986,

> 1992) have demonstrated, epistolarity involves the acts and events of sending and receiving, losing and finding, and writing and reading letters'.

The hope that adoptees like Antonio and Kris invest in a letter that could possibly reveal the desire to be with another in that sense with their roots, to reimagine an elsewhere and other times that they never been before. The dreamlike flashbacks resolve by the truth that Antonio reveals in which his mother tried to drown him (*Figures 15 & 16*). However, he could only presume why she had to do that because it was written in a broken English that he did not understand.

Antonio's Eastern Asian features and its disconnection from his Western surname "LeBlanc" are always questioned by others and become a barrier for the bike mechanic job he seeks. Until Antonio faces the deportation issue, Kathy thinks that his adoptive family is also dead and the fact that he grew up all alone with a criminal record for stealing motorcycles. When he needs any ailing relatives that he can prove a good reason to stay, he finally reveals that his foster mom Susanne is still alive. The reason why Antonio never told his wife about his mom, Susanne, is based on a traumatic memory of his past. Since he needs to prove himself as a valued member of society, he goes to see Susanne again, however, he also thinks that his foster mom will not help him since she did not help him before when he tried to escape with her from his father's abuse. When he faces with her, he tells Susanne to show up and talk to the judges that all he needs but she says nothing. In their conversation, Antonio's painful adoptee memories revive once again; he reveals why he left them while crying and says "Cause when we used to get beat up together, I always tried to project you. And the day I asked you to leave me with me, you stayed. You never chose me. That's all I wanted" (Chon, 2021, 1:21:33-1:22:08).

However, he and Jessi chose each other and deeply connected as father and daughter even though Antonio is not her biological father. When they say to each other “I choose you daddy” and he replies “I choose you too” (Chon, 2021, 1:51:02), it is time for Antonio to leave the country. Even though he wants to fight for his family and stay, he could not stop his deportation process.



Figure 17. In *Blue Bayou* (2021), a scene where Antonio (Justin Chon) and ICE policemen on the left and his wife Kathy (Alicia Vikander) and ex-husband Ace (Mark O’Brien) on the right, try to apart him from Jessi (Sydney Kowalske) who wants her dad to stay.

Airport as a transnational space (*Figure 17*) also plays an important role since it both separates him from the U.S and also opens a new space where he is about to return to his “homeland” that has no familiarity with him. The airport in that sense represents his international homelessness and statelessness that he has been rejected by both countries. Naficy (2001) indicates the following: “Border spaces such as airports not only fire the imagination of people who are caught in repressive societies but also fuel the longing of the exiles for home, particularly of those who cannot return” (p. 245). Antonio’s diasporic adoptee life ends with an exilic state where he cannot live in the U.S. legally anymore even though it has been the only “homeland” that has ever known.

The film ends with no resolution for the incomplete character Antonio since there is still no solution for these kind of deportation issues in real life. The real pictures of adoptees who deported from the U.S. are given before the end credits and it validates Justin Chon's social commentary since it informs the audience on a black screen as follows (Chon, 2021, 1:57:58):

> No official statistics are available on how many adopted people face deportation. The Adoptee Rights Campaign estimates that 25,000 to 49,000 children who were legally adopted by US citizens between 1945 and 1998 may lack citizenship. That number is increasing to a new total of 32,000 to 64,000 adoptees without citizenship between 2015 and 2033, as children adopted between 1999 and 2016 reach their 18th birthdays.

Justin Chon's social commentary through his cultural capital of films and ethnic celebrity image will be discussed in the next chapter in detail, but it can be said that this film will not certainly be the last of his work that deals with the issues like racism, ethnicity, and alterity.

3.3. Conclusion

Overall, selected films in this chapter show the characteristics of Naficy's (2001) Accented-style of filmmaking; they are multilingual by speaking Korean and English as well as accented. Self-reflexivity applies for all the filmmakers since they are semi-autobiographical films derived from the filmmakers' post-memory of migratory experiences as second-generation Korean-Americans. Historicization of the narratives also supports the transnationality of the story that accounts for both national and personal past based in the U.S. and Korea. The overall narrative of the films often drives from flashbacks, character actions, nostalgia of childhood and homeland. The collective diaspora articulated by the home-seeking journey; this is

either a journey where characters discover their individuality that has been oppressed by being a model minority, or is a journey of self-discovery where they explore the meaning of being Korean. In the first grouping of films linked to the Korean-American Dream, *Spa Night*'s (2016) David, *Gook*'s (2017) Eli, and *Minari*'s (2020) David are pulled by two cultures as second-generation Korean-Americans and try to revive their individualism. On the other hand, in the second group of films, *Seoul Searching* (2015) and *Blue Bayou* (2021), the characters Kris and Antonio's identities are in constant motion. They feel the urge to be in a community that they have never been before and start the re-discovery journey of their true selves. These characters are all in the difficulty of achieving closure or completion at the end and emphasize the incompleteness of both indie film culture as well as diasporic Korean-American characters. Thus, the characters are either alienated, alone or outsiders; they are hybrid and portray the double living of Korean-Americans which is unique to them but also global with their diasporic identifications.

CHAPTER 4

INDUSTRY RECOGNITION & PRESTIGE CYCLE OF JUSTIN CHON

"Note to self: I will not rest till my Asian American stories are told. I will not stop until they are real. No one can dissuade me. Nothing will stop me" (Chon, 2017c).

4.1. Introduction

Justin Chon is a multi-hyphenate director, writer, and actor. From his directorial debut, *Gook* (2017) to the latest feature film *Blue Bayou* (2021), his recognition within the film industry immediately catapulted him into the upper echelons of indie Asian-American filmmaking. As an independent filmmaker, he actively promotes his films on social media and builds a public image as an ethnic minority celebrity. Hence, this chapter first conducts a content analysis by investigating a selection of

his Instagram posts to discuss Chon's celebrity image. The total number of posts on Chon's official public account is 1728, but this thesis covers only 280 posts out of 1728 by targeting his directorial works in the years 2016-2022, including the films *Gook* (2017), *Ms. Purple* (2019), and *Blue Bayou* (2021). Also, it must be mentioned that his posts which are about his personal life are excluded from 280 posts even though there are more posts in the years 2016-2022. Therefore, my findings only derive from 280 posts in total. This elimination provides a concise measurement for five categories that I am investigating in section 4.2.2, namely; *Presenting Self-Image*, *Films, Media Appearance/Popular Press, Promoting Asian-Americans within the Industry*, and lastly, *Minority Activism*. I capture direct screenshots of the posts including their likes, comments, captions, and hashtags which help later to uncover my claim that Chon positions himself in the discourse of ethnicity, race, language, power, and social action. In the part, 4.3., Chon's ethnic minority celebrity image will be expanded through Pierre Bourdieu's sociology of culture, including cultural capital, habitus, and the field theory. Particularly, the cultural capital of three festivals, the Sundance, Cannes, and CAAMFest, will be explored to understand how they were essential in establishing Justin Chon's filmmaking practice. Before doing so, Korean-Americans within the industry and their transnational linkages with other Asian-Americans as well as the South Korean film industry will be discussed to understand Justin Chon's network circle within the industry.

4.1.1. The Broad Category of Asian-American Cinema

When I say "Asian-American" films, I do not intend to restrain them under one type of cinema as "Asian-American" cinema since it might disregard the ethnic varieties and representations beyond different narratives. However, Asian-American

filmmakers' motivation to bring Asian-American representation on-screen as well as to curate new Asian-American talents in Hollywood serve a common aim that reflects the diversity and transnationality in both the production and culture industry. Moreover, numerous film festivals collaborate with each other and seek out sponsorships (Chong, 2017, p. 133):

> Many film festivals seek out corporate sponsorship, promoting investment in Asian American cinema as a way to reach a desirable demographic group while at the same time helping these businesses signal their progressiveness—a kind of 'yellow washing' just as distasteful as the 'whitewashing' of Asian American roles.

Particularly, this investment happens at the film festivals where the films may find their distributor, or sometimes those distributors may collaborate with the production companies (this will be exemplified in section 4.3, where I explore film festivals as "the site of struggles" and social field for exchanging capitals).

As mentioned in the previous chapter, the recent big studio film with the majority of the cast of Asian descent is Jon M. Chu's *Crazy Rich Asians* (2018). Chu's film started Asian careers for many people like Awkwafina, Constance Wu, and Henry Golding. On the other hand, there are other influential Asian-American films and directors like Lulu Wang's *The Farewell* (2019) and Justin Lin's *Better Luck Tomorrow* (2002). Lin is also best known for his *Fast & Furious* franchise work. Furthermore, if we consider Wayne Wang's other high acclaimed films like *Dim Sum: A little Bit of Heart* (1985), *Eat a Bowl of Tea* (1989), or Ang Lee's early success trilogy, *Pushing Hands* (1992), *The Wedding Banquet* (1993), and *Eat Drink Man Woman* (1994), it is clear that the majority of Asian-American filmmakers and actors who have made a significant impact in Hollywood are of Chinese descent. These successes are not only limited to these filmmakers and consist of many others

like Mabel Cheung's *The Illegal Immigrant* (1985), Peter Wang's *A Great Wall* (1986), and Ann Hui's *My American Grandson* (1991). These films have been produced starting from the mid-1980s by Chinese-American filmmakers and they increased the recognition of Chinese-Americans through narratives of Chinese immigrant families (Han, 2017). From the dominance of Chinese-American visibility and the broad category of Asian-American, then, where can we situate Korean-Americans and their particular but collective self-representation within the industry? Before answering this question, the recognition of the South-Korean film industry and its ambivalent relationship with the United States needs particular attention since it also increases the likelihood of the success of Korean-American filmmakers within the industry.

As stated, before in the section 2.1.3., the relationship between the United States and South Korea has been built around the political, military and economic connections. These ties endorsed a close alliance between these two countries. The United States was a host country for many immigrants and Korean nationals like Syngman Rhee who returned to Korea and was elected as "the first president of the Republic of Korea" in 1948 (Chang & Park, 2019). Also, the U.S. military presence cannot be disregarded during the Korean War (1950-1953) that supported the preservation of the Republic of Korea. As an outcome of these political and military interventions, South Korea's economy and eventually the modern South Korean film industry developed under this larger relationship. Bearing all the distinctive characteristics of an assemblage of cultural policy, infrastructural investments in digital technologies, and transnational influences, including Hollywood, contemporary Korean Cinema is heterogeneous. However, the renaissance for Korean Cinema did not begin until the

mid-1990s, it went through a dark age due to the lack of real film history at the end of the 1980s. As this burden to come out from a dark age put on the shoulders of the Korean film industry, Im Kwon-taek, also known as the father of Korean cinema, as well as the diverse experimental spirit of other directors like Hong Sangsoo and Kim Ki-duk appeared in international film festivals as gaining more recognition outside by representing Korean auteurism.

On the other hand, there was the rise of commercial auteurism through the "New Korean Wave". Hallyu, also known as the "Korean Wave", consists of television dramas, movies, K-Pop, dance, fashion, tourism, and language. The globalization of the Korean Wave has been considered a pop culture; or so to speak, a policy that aims to improve Korean public and cultural diplomacy by creating a national brand. However, the characteristics of the Korean Wave are not a pure imposition of Korean culture. As Jang and Paik (2012) suggest that "First, the Korean Wave is not a true 'Korean' Wave, rather it is a hybrid of the traditional Korean cultures and Western cultures, particularly American" (p. 200). Thus, the Korean film market has been shaped by its relationship with transnational forces, particularly with Hollywood. A new group of directors emerged like Ryoo Seung-wan with *Die Bad* (2000), Kim Jee-Woon with *A Tale of Two Sisters* (2003), Park Chan-wook with *Oldboy* (2003), and Bong Joon Ho with *The Host* (2006). They tried to carve out their visual styles in the frame of genre films. Consequently, Korean cinema received global recognition thanks to these directors who appeared at various prestigious film festivals like The Cannes and the Venice Film Festivals.

This brings us to the groundbreaking success of Bong Joon Ho and his Oscar-winning film *Parasite* in 2019. It must be mentioned that Bong's transformation into the symbol of transnational Korean cinema has been boosted even before *Parasite* (2019). His early works like *Okja* (2007) and *Snowpiercer* (2013) received a positive reception because of their transnational production and distribution. Famous Hollywood actors like Tilda Swinton, Chris Evans, Ed Harris, Octavia Spencer, and Steven Yeun alongside well-known Korean actors like Song Kang Ho and Go Ah-sung took place in the cast of these films. Furthermore, Bong's representation of Korean history and identity within the framework of Hollywood conventions is quite successful at the same time. As Klein (2008) states that "Bong thus occupies a middle ground in his relationship with Hollywood, neither blindly emulating its conventions for the sake of profit nor wholly rejecting them in favor of some notion of cultural authenticity or art" (p. 873). In this regard, Bong's reworking of Hollywood genres made him successful because he uses a unique aesthetic of blending genres of melodrama and crime, presenting a social commentary on Korean society as we see the clash between the rich-Westernized Park family and the poor Kim family in *Parasite* (2019).

What I want to emphasize in this section is that there is not just one aspect to situate Korean-Americans and their particular self-representation in the industry. The ongoing political, economic, and military relations between the United States and South Korea, forms of exchanges through the Hallyu (Korean Wave), and the huge boom of K-dramas, K-pop groups, and language, following Bong's achievement in Hollywood all have given attention to any Korean-related productions, from Netflix TV series like *Squid Game* (2021) to Korean-American filmmaker Lee Isaac

Chung's *Minari* (2020). A year after *Parasite* (2019) took Hollywood by storm, Chung's *Minari* (2020) made waves in the Oscar Awards season. The Korean-American Hollywood actor Steven Yeun got nominated for Best Leading Actor, and Korean actress Youn Yuh-Jung received an Oscar for Best Supporting Female for her outstanding role in *Minari* (2020).

It must be noted that Bong's spotlight is not, indeed, the only reason by itself for the recognition of Korean-American works. Moreover, two films, *Parasite* (2019) and *Minari* (2020) are completely different than each other in terms of their productions and narratives. I intend to show Bong's success as an extension of growing enthusiasm for Korean productions as well as the attraction of Korean-American names within the industry. Even though Korean-American actors have a significant place in Hollywood, which will be mentioned in the next section, Korean-American filmmakers position themselves outside of Hollywood and exist mostly within the indie cinema culture. Even if their cultural heritage and narratives are closely linked to Korea, their community has always existed with other Asian-Americans in American culture. Their experiences, derived from being second-generation Korean-Americans with immigrant parents, are similar to other Asian-American filmmakers who struggle with the same kind of alienation and hardships in life, yet their experiences and narratives are different from one another when we consider this ambivalent relationship between countries.

4.1.2. Korean-American Community Within the Industry: Actors, Filmmakers, and Writers

Since this thesis tries to put emphasis on Korean-American cinema cultures, other Korean-Americans within the film industry require some recognition to understand Justin Chon's position as a diasporic filmmaker. A great number of Korean-Americans have existed for over a decade in U.S. film and TV history. As mentioned before in 2.1.3., Philip Ahn (1905-1978) was the first Asian-American film actor who received a star on the Hollywood Walk of Fame, for example. Even though they all share the same kind of background as second-generation Korean-Americans who have immigrant parents, it does not mean that all Korean-Americans have the concern of representing their collective diaspora of living a double life as Korean and American. Just like Chinese-Americans who made it to Hollywood, Korean-Americans have been recognized by a wide range of agents from actors to filmmakers within and outside their community. Many of them took part in popular TV series and blockbuster films, portraying a wide range of characters that has nothing to do with being Korean-American since they are recognized as American actors. For instance, Ken Jeong, who portrays Leslie Chow in the trilogy *The Hangover* (2009-2013), took part in the NBC sitcom series *Community* (2009-2015). However, he later wrote and produced the ABC sitcom, *Dr. Ken* (2015-2017) which is about a Korean-American doctor. Also he had a role in Jon M. Chu's *Crazy Rich Asians* (2018).

Another example is Canadian-American actress Sandra Oh who is best known as Cristina Yang on the ABC medical drama series *Grey's Anatomy* (2005–2014) and lately as Eve Polastri in the spy thriller series *Killing Eve* (2018–2022). Oh is also a lead actor as well as one of the executive producers on the ongoing Netflix comedy

series *The Chair* (2021). Moreover, Oh's filmography includes other leading performances in the films like *Bean* (1997) by Mel Smith, *The Princess Diaries* (2001) produced by Walt Disney Pictures, and *Mulan II* (2004) as a voice actor. John Cho, on the other hand, appeared mostly in Asian-American productions like Cris Chan Lee's *Yellow* (1998), Justin Lin's *Better Luck Tomorrow* (2002), and Kogonada's hit indie film *Columbus* (2017). The thriller film *Searching* (2018) by Aneesh Chaganty made Cho the first Asian-American actor in a mainstream Hollywood thriller. In *Forbes*' article, it is mentioned as follows:

> Sony's Searching has earned $20m domestic from off a $5m Sundance acquisition purchase. It has also earned $26.3m overseas thus far, including $13.1m in South Korea. That's a global total of $46m and counting. In some ways, the under-the-radar success of Screen Gems' Searching is even more of a win than Crazy Rich Asians. (Mendelson, 2018, para. 1)

Hence, the domestic and foreign box office receipts foreshadow upcoming opportunities for Jon Cho's other leading role opportunities in the future. The examples of Korean-American actors expand with Arden Cho as Kira Yukimura in the supernatural teen drama *Teen Wolf* (2011-2017), Awkwafina's leading role in *The Farewell* (2019), and Sung Kang's role as Han Lue in the *Fast & Furious* franchise.

Furthermore, the interest in K-Pop, TV series, and films like Bong Joon Ho's turned the tables where these people take advantage of being not only American but also Korean. They engaged with the productions not only within the boundaries of the United States but also with Korean productions; therefore, the transnational linkages of Korean-Americans with the industry are in favor of both Hollywood and the South Korean film industry. Being able to communicate and interact with both cultures and the recognition of Korean productions in the American film industry has started to

increase their visibility and prestige overall. The most relevant example of this can be given in the case of Steven Yeun. Most of us know Yeun as Glenn Rhee in the television series *The Walking Dead* (2010-2016) but he took roles in many films from Joe Lynch's *Mayhem* (2017) to Boots Riley's *Sorry to Bother You* (2018). After engaging with other Korean directors and films like Bong Joon Ho's *Okja* (2007) and Lee Chang-dong's *Burning* (2018), Yeun's transnational exchange with his Korean ethnicity brought him even more recognition on both local and global levels. It is a fact that this interaction eventually brought him a nomination for Best Actor for *Minari* in Academy Award 2021.

In the filmmakers' case, Asian-American representation and collective expression of the Korean-American diaspora is more dominant in production. Except for Lee Isaac Chung's recent recognition in Hollywood with *Minari* (2020), most of them remain exclusive in the framework of indie cinema and produce self-reflexive works about their own experiences of living as Korean and American. For instance, the writer/director Michael Kang's debut feature *The Motel* (2005) is a coming-age film about a thirteen years old Ernest (Jeffrey Chyau) who is a Chinese-American kid working in his family's motel. In the film, Sung Kang also plays a father-like figure by representing Asian-American masculinity. So Yong Kim's *In Between Days* (2006), on the other hand, tells a story of a Korean girl in a foreign environment and her coming-of-age feelings. These films, *The Motel* (2005) and *In Between Days* (2006), both premiered at the Sundance Film Festival. *The Motel* (2005) received the reputable Humanities Prize and was named best narrative feature at three of the country's most important Asian-American film festivals: the VC Filmfest, the San

Diego Asian Film Festival, and the San Francisco Asian American Film Festival. *In Between Days* (2006) also won the Special Jury Prize at Sundance.

Kogonada's role within the industry is slightly different than the rest since he is also a video essayist who has video essays on influential filmmakers from Stanley Kubrick to Koreeda Hirokazu. Most of Kogonada's video essays are commissioned by companies which include BFI's *Sight & Sound*, *The Criterion Collection*, and *Samsung*. As a filmmaker, on the other hand, he is the director of the films *Colombus* (2017) and *After Yang* (2021). Additionally, Joy Dietrich, who is an American adoptee filmmaker and writer, has a film called *Tie a Yellow Ribbon* (2007); it is about a Korean adoptee in America, who struggles in building relationships. Most of these filmmakers are not only filmmakers but also writers, creating stories out of their own experiences and childhood memories. In CHAPTER 3, this thesis covered the other Korean-American diasporic filmmakers' works like Lee Isaac Chung with *Minari* (2020), Benson Lee with *Seoul Searching* (2015) and Andrew Ahn with *Spa Night* (2016) and Justin Chon with *Gook* (2017) and *Blue Bayou* (2021). These filmmakers also produced films focused on Korean-American immigrant family life, the conflict between generations, and the hardships of living as an adoptee in the United States.

4.2. Director As Ethnic Minority Celebrity

In this section, firstly, Justin Chon's multiple roles as an actor, a writer, and a director will be explained to explore his distinctiveness from other Korean-American filmmakers and actors. As mentioned above, there are few Korean-American diasporic filmmakers, and they all use independent cinema as a social field.

Nonetheless, none of them indicates the determination of producing other works on the representation of being Korean-American like Justin Chon. Even though most of them are also the writers of their films, Chon stands out the most as being not only a writer-director but also an actor within the industry; his determination to tell Asian-American stories is the main motivation for him to produce films. After understanding his multiple roles in the film industry, this section will conduct a content analysis where I investigate Chon's media presence on Instagram and how he stands as an ethnic minority celebrity.

4.2.1. Being Hyphenate Both in Culture and Industry: Justin Chon's Multiple Roles as Actor, Writer, and Director

Before turning into a filmmaker, Justin Chon started acting first in 2005 at the age of twenty-three. He appeared in shows like *Jack & Bobby* (2005) which is an American drama television series. As previously mentioned, his role as Peter Wu in the Disney Channel film *Wendy Wu: Homecoming Warrior* (2006) brought him fame. In the Nickelodeon sitcom *Just Jordan* (2007-2008), he portrayed Tony Lee as Jordan's best friend and sometimes rival in the case of competing for girls. The series had to be canceled with the decision of Nickelodeon. Afterward, Chon appeared in the *Twilight Saga* film series (2008-2012) which stars Kristen Stewart and Robert Pattinson. This screen adaptation, which is based on Stephenie Meyer's novel *Twilight* 2005, brought a shining success with the final film *Twilight Saga: Breaking Dawn Part 2* (2012). It is stated that "The final film in the *Twilight* series has debuted with the highest opening of the series so far, an impressive $340.9m (£214m) worldwide" (Child, 2012, para. 1). In parallel with the film's success, Chon's recognition as an actor was also enhanced; he had a role as Eric Yorkie who

is Bella Swan's (Kristen Stewart) friend in high school in the three films of the series which are *Twilight* (2008), *The Twilight Saga: New Moon* (2009), *The Twilight Saga: Eclipse* (2010), and *The Twilight Saga: Breaking Dawn – Part 1* (2011).

Afterward, Chon became one of the main characters in the film *21 & Over* (2013) directed by Jon Lucas and Scott Moore. Also, he was involved in the indie film *Innocent Blood* directed by D.J. Holloway and Sun Kim in the same year 2013. As one of the lead characters, Chon portrayed Sonny in the crime drama film *Revenge of the Green Dragons* (2014) directed by Andrew Lau and Andrew Loo, who mixed the Hong Kong action cinema with the twisted American Dream. As it is noted, *Revenge of the Green Dragons* (2014) is "[...] a movie that plays in part like a fast-and-loose homage to Scorsese's *Goodfellas*" (Chang, 2014, para. 2). Hence, Martin Scorsese, as an executive producer of the film, gave a commercial boost. By referring to New York's Chinese immigrant problem and major crime wave around 1989, this film could be even the inspiration for Chon's later directorial works like *Gook* (2017) which tells the story of the LA Riots in 1992 from a Korean-American perspective. Chon also plays in one of the films that I discussed in CHAPTER 3. In Benson Lee's *Seoul Searching* (2015), Chon plays the main character Sid Park who is a rebellious Korean-American teenager who came to South Korea for a summer camp with other mixed second generations from various countries to discover his Korean heritage and culture that has been lost.

Chon as an actor also involved in other productions like the Korean-American comedy-drama series *Dramaworld* (2016); it sets both in Los Angeles and South Korea and is co-produced by video-streaming platform "Viki", China's "Jetavana

Entertainment", and "US Third Culture Content". Furthermore, in ABC's crime drama *Deception* (2018), he holds a role as Jordan Kwon. I put emphasis on the importance of Wayne Wang's influences on Asian-American representation multiple times before, in sections 2.1.1 and 4.1.1. Chon also portrayed Chang-rae in Wayne Wang's *Coming Home Again* (2019); it premiered at Toronto International Film Festival in 2019. It is an American-South Korean drama film which is about a relationship between mother and son. The film tells the story of a Korean-American named Chang-rae who decides to return to his childhood home to take care of his ill mother on her deathbed. In one of the interviews with *CAAM* (Center for Asian American Media), Chon's gratitude to Wayne Wang is mentioned as follows:

> Working with Wayne Wang, whom he calls the "godfather" of Asian American cinema for pioneering indie films like the 1982 *Chan Is Missing* and Hollywood hits like 1993's *The Joy Luck Club* was a pleasure, and an unexpected one. "I had already shot my film (*Ms. Purple*) and got the call from Wayne about a story featuring a dying parent," he says. "It was a really cool exercise. It was exciting to work with a veteran like that and lean on him and make his art. (CAAM, 2020, para. 6)

Chon's leading role in Wayne Wang's *Coming Home Again* (2019), therefore, bears significance for his career as a diasporic filmmaker and recognition in the Asian-American community. This will be detailed in section *4.3*, where I discuss Bourdieu's social capital through the relationship between Chon and Wang.

Having this background as an actor, Chon also has a YouTube persona. Since 2015, he uploads videos like daily vlogs of his life as well as short comedy videos. Furthermore, he released three short films namely, *You're Stoopid* (2013), *Full Circle* (2013), and *90 Day Visa* (2015) on YouTube. The most interesting outcome of his using YouTube is that his parody K-Pop group called *BgA* (Boys Generally Asian) got recognized in iTunes K-Pop charts which peaked at number two. The

group *BgA* consists of five members namely, Justin Chon, a filmmaker Philip Wang, a YouTube personality Ryan Higa, and two musicians Jun Sung Ahn and David Choi. In their debut song "Dong Saya Dae" (2016), which means "I need to Poop", they describe themselves as boys "who can't sing, dance or really speak Korean" (Nigahiga, 2016, 1:02). With the rise of K-Pop boy bands like BTS, this parody music video actually demonstrates another way of showing the Korean-American diaspora where the second generations engage with the Korean Wave in a comic but foreign way.

When it comes to Justin Chon's role as a filmmaker, the tone gets serious and displays a continuous play of this Korean-American diaspora which brings the main focus of this thesis. Chon has four feature films in total as two of them, *Gook* (2017) and *Blue Bayou* (2021) has already been covered in CHAPTER 3. Even though he is firstly recognized with his indie film *Gook* (2017), Chon's first feature film is *Man Up* (2015) which is co-written with Kevin Wu, who is an American Youtuber and also an actor in *Revenge of the Green Dragons* (2014). As being also a writer, Chon then continued to produce three films two years apart, *Gook* (2017), *Ms. Purple* (2019), and *Blue Bayou* (2021). Since these films premiered in indie festivals as well as received various awards, his new role as a filmmaker transformed his image within the industry and assigned him all the roles including actor, writer, Youtuber, and filmmaker. The discourse on his transformation will be explored in the rest of this chapter.

Recently, he co-directs the TV series *Pachinko* (2022) with another Korean-American director Kogonada; it is a transnational production with South Korea

where it stars famous actors like K-Dramas' indispensable face Lee Min Ho and *Minari*'s (2020) Oscar-winning actor Youn Yuh-jung. The series is premiered on Apple TV and it refers to the Japanese occupation of South Korea, the different social classes, and the tragedies of immigrant people. Using his already established audience and social networks within his respected community, Chon's new take on producing films that tell the stories of Asian-Americans, specifically Korean-Americans, gave new purposes for not only his career but also for other Asian-Americans within the industry. In the following part, I will analyze Justin Chon's Instagram posts where he displays this new purpose of curating new talent from his Asian-American community as well as his social action of making other minority groups visible in the U.S. society.

4.2.2. Building Instagram Strategy and Self-Image in the case of Justin Chon

As an image-driven social media platform, Instagram creates a particular and visually oriented storytelling opportunity for people from the public to celebrities. Also, it offers people to create an online archive where they can display their creative work, so it turns into an open market with emerging job opportunities. In that sense, Instagram is mostly used as a marketing tool for both brands as well as for career-building by celebrities and public people. A new form of identity on the Internet created the notion of self as a "microcelebrity". Senft (2013) suggets that "As a social practice, microcelebrity changes the game of celebrity" because "[...] Audiences desire someone to speak at them; communities desire someone to speak *with* them" (p. 350). The influential film theorist Richard Dyer has been establishing a study of stars in a series of books and articles in which he investigates the relationship between the audience and constructed star image. However, Dyer's

(1986, 1998) concept of celebrity emerges through Hollywood films. Instead of using the name “celebrity”, the identification of persona as “star” is mostly used; stars transcend the films in which they performed and consequently create an aura. Richard Dyer’s works will have a continuous impact on the stardom field as they are canonical texts that offer methodological tools for analyzing stardom. However, the modern reading of “celebrity” across a range of media other than cinema extends Dyer’s analysis as well as reconsiders the dynamics of existing models with the emergence of the Internet, social media platforms, and web 2.0. phenomena (Gamson, 2011; Marshall, 2014, Turner, 2013).

Particularly, social media created the social media celebrities who are also known as microcelebrities. Senft (2013), who also coined the term “microcelebrity”, describes “online identity” in at least three different ways. One of them is about the identities of people who use the Internet: “Just as they do offline, users identify themselves, and are identified by others, through a range of overlapping categories such as gender, sexuality, race, age, religion, language, ability, nationality, and diaspora” (Senft, 2013, p. 347). As a Korean-American diasporic filmmaker, Justin Chon uses Instagram mostly as an extension of his creativeness; his audience has a chance to see his filmmaking life. From behind the scenes to post-production of his films, Chon shares his posts not only to promote his films but also to social network with other people within the industry. Beyond promoting his films, he also uses his cultural and social capital to help and support minority groups like African, Latino, and Asian communities in the United States. Therefore, Chon as an Instagram user as well as a

microcelebrity represents these overlapping categories of race, nationality, and diaspora.

Instafame, on the other hand, is considered "as a variety of microcelebrity as it exists on a particular platform, Instagram" (Marwick, 2015, p. 138). Interested in digital documentation, Chon curates his own portfolio, builds an audience, and attracts new business and social networks. By posting photos, videos, and texts alongside using captions, hashtags, and tags, he builds an Instafame that represents his vision and works. Promoting his films as an independent filmmaker, he also promotes other Asian-Americans within the industry like actors, filmmakers, and films. In the interview with *Deadline*, the reason is explained by Chon as follows: "We need more storytellers, more producers, more writers, and it's my job as a director to curate new talent from my community. All these wonderful actors, they deserve to be seen; they deserve to be noticed" (Grobar, 2019, para. 3). Therefore, my claim is that Chon positions himself within the discourse of race, ethnicity, power, language, and social action as distinctively different from other Korean-American diasporic filmmakers and turns into an ethnic minority celebrity. To justify this, I collect my data by using direct screenshots from Chon's Instagram posts. Furthermore, I divide them into five categories; *Presenting Self-Image, Films, Media Appearance/Popular Press, Promoting Asian Americans within the Industry,* and *Minority Activism*. These categories serve my claim that Chon is an Ethnic Minority Celebrity as well as a Korean-American Diasporic Filmmaker. The findings of my content analysis are discussed under three subheadings, namely: *Single/Multiple Categories*, *Comments/Likes*, and *Hashtags*.

Single/Multiple Categories

As stated before in 2.2.2, the data that I collected is divided into five categories: *Presenting Self-Image, Films, Media Appearance/Popular Press, Promoting Asian Americans within the Industry,* and *Minority Activism*. These categories do not overlap with each other since they all represent different themes and content. However, they might exist together in a shared post. Therefore, a post that belongs to only one category is coded as "1". On the other hand, if a post belongs to more than one category, it is coded as "2" and sometimes as "3" when it belongs to three categories. Before explaining this division of single/multi categories numerically in bar charts, firstly, the definition of each category and what they represent in relation to Chon's self-image and career needs a further explanation. Starting with *Presenting Self-Image*, this category refers to the presence of Chon as both filmmaker and actor. (see *Figure 18* below)

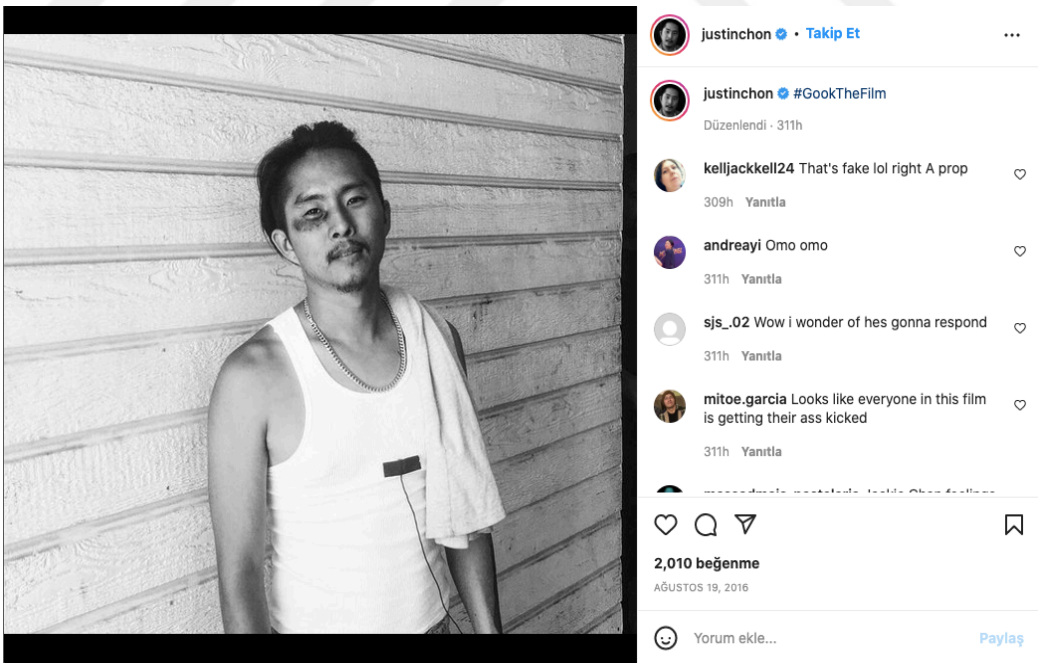


Figure 18. Justin Chon's Instagram post (Chon, 2016b) which reveals his character as Eli in *Gook* (2017).

Since he has multiple roles within the industry as an actor, filmmaker, and writer; he not only promotes his own films but also other films like Benson Lee's *Seoul*

Searching (2015) and Wayne Wang's *Coming Home Again* (2019) in which he took the role as an actor. In his films, *Gook* (2017) and *Blue Bayou* (2021), he is also the lead actor; therefore, he shares posts about his characters like Eli in *Gook* (2017) and Antonio LeBlanc in *Blue Bayou* (2021). Chon shows his characters in these posts but also switches to his filmmaker role and shares a video to raise funds for his films' post-production expenses. Thus, this category includes selfies, images from film sets, and sometimes videos where Chon directly speaks to his audience.

The category of *Films* applies to the majority of posts; this category consists of the film trailers, dates, and places about theatrical releases, cast, production team, and any related news about festivals and award announcements (see *Figure 19* below).

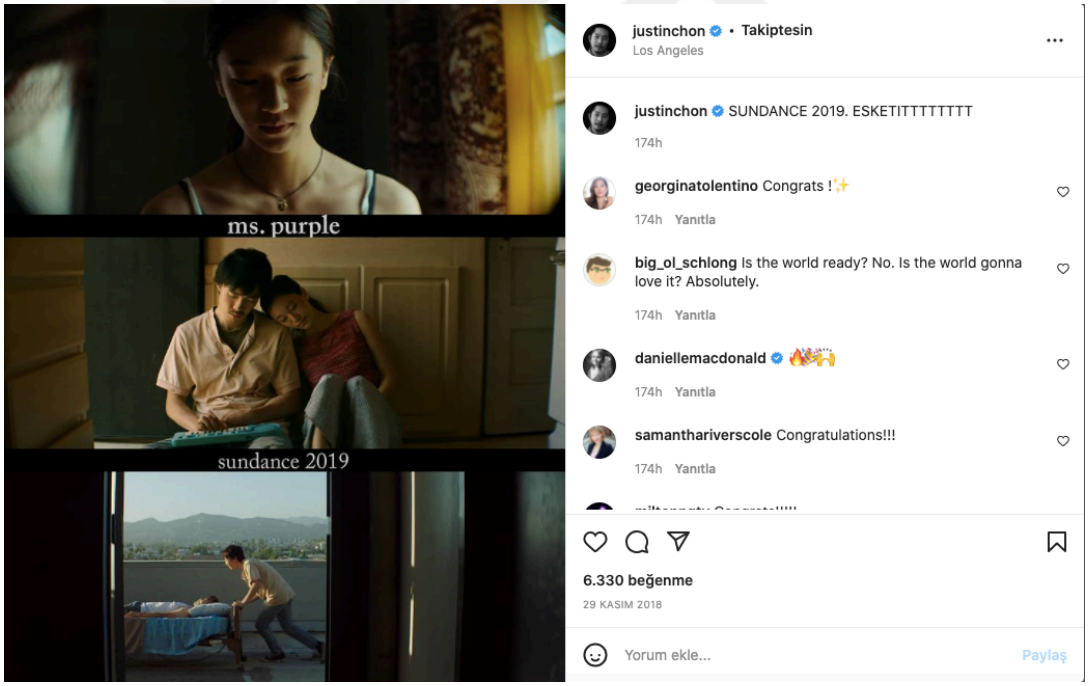


Figure 19. Justin Chon announces on Instagram (Chon, 2018d) that his film *Ms. Purple* (2019) was selected for 2019 Sundance Film Festival.

For each film, Chon starts promoting from pre-production time to post-production and documents every stage, like where the film will be premiered and how the film will be distributed. For each film, he often uses tags and captions that reveal who

contributed to the production and distribution. Moreover, Chon sometimes promotes his films by sharing posts that matches with his film's visual aesthetic. For instance, he uses Black & White-colored posts matching the film *Gook*'s B&W color aesthetic; these posts are in 2016 and refer to the pre-production time of *Gook* (2017). This category is the most used category which is combined with other categories. As an independent filmmaker, Chon takes advantage of using Instagram to display his creative processes in terms of both pre-production, production, and post-production.

In the next category *Media Appearance/Popular Press,* Chon constantly shares posts that are the direct screenshots of his interviews in the popular press (See *Figure 20* as an example). The media appearance of Chon usually is in a form of interviews by *USA Today, Variety*, *LA Times*, *Entertainment Weekly, RollingStone, Deadline, Indiewire, The New York Times, The Hollywood Reporter*, and *Rotten Tomatoes*.



Figure 20. Justin Chon shares *Variety*'s article about his film *Blue Bayou* (2021) as a post (Chon, 2021a) on his Instagram.

Popular Press interviews increase his interaction with his audience as well as his prestige. The findings of this category will be explained in detail through charts; however, this category is always used with at least one other category since the interviews are mostly about Chon's own films and his filmmaking decisions. The third category is *Promoting Asian-Americans within the Industry*; this category cation is essential when we consider the whole Asian-American community within the industry (See *Figure 21*).



Figure 21. Justin Chon's Instagram post (Chon, 2018b) that promotes Jon M. Chu's *Crazy Rich Asians* (2018).

Even though the collective experience of the Korean-American diaspora differs from other minority groups' experiences, they exist together collectively as Asian-American since they can relate to each other. Chon says in the interview with *The New York Times*:

> When I was watching *Minding the Gap* or *The Farewell*, I was just constantly watching the Asian-American characters and comparing notes. Oh, that's what she feels like with her Chinese family in China — how does that compare to how I feel with my Korean family when I'm in Korea? Or when Bing's hanging out with those white skater dudes, he's the only Asian guy —

> now I'm comparing notes about how he's feeling. I'm really reading into the scenes because I can relate. (Yu, 2021, para. 21)

Chon supports other actors like Awkwafina and films like Jon M. Chus' *Crazy Rich Asians* (2018) to Lulu Wang's *The Farewell* (2019).

Lastly, the category *Minority Activism* offers a different aspect of his using Instagram; it reveals an essential part of my claim that Chon is a social activist. This category consists of the posts that refer to minority groups, from African-Americans to Latino people. Sharing posts with hashtags like #blacklivesmatter and #asiansforblacklives (see *Figure 22* below), Chon tries to raise awareness for these communities that face alienation, racism, and inequality.



Figure 22. Justin Chon shares a post (Chon, 2016a) with the hashtag #asiansforblacklives.

Since his film *Gook* (2017) enforces a Korean–American perspective on LA Riots in 1992; he touches on the interracial conflicts between African-Americans and Korean-Americans. Since the *Black Lives Matter* movement is still ongoing activism

all around the world, Chon occasionally uses his film to support this movement as well as for casting unknown African-American actors like Simone Baker who plays 11-years-old girl Kamilla, and Curtiss Cook Jr. who plays Kamilla's brother Keith in *Gook* (2017). Hence, this category also exceeds his main support group which is the Asian-American community and serves to bring awareness to other ethnic minority groups in the United States.

To explore the relations among five categories in detail and support my claim quantitatively, I divide them into years by using two separate bar charts as Single and Multi-Categories. This division will reveal how Chon is building an Instagram strategy by combining different categories for different purposes. Out of 280 posts, only 149 posts are classified under a single category. In *Table 1*, the data set demonstrates each category in each year from 2016 to 2022. *Presenting Self-Image* as a single category only consists of five posts and four of them are in the year 2016 which corresponds to the pre-production time of *Gook* (2017). The self-image in these posts is presented in black & white and shows Chon as Eli, the character that he plays. In the category *Films*, the total number of posts as a single category is 121, which is also the biggest number out of five categories. In 2021 (see *Tables 1* and *2)*, the highest number of posts about *Films* is 47, which is the release time of his latest feature film *Blue Bayou* (2021). This time period refers to an already established image of Chon within the industry after he appeared twice at Sundance Film Festival and won Grand Jury and Audience Prizes; therefore, it can be deduced that in 2021, there may be less pressure to combine other categories to promote his films. There is no data about Chon's follower count that changes over time, but his total follower count reaches 112K.

Year	Presenting Self-Image	Films	Media Appearance/Popular Press	Promoting Asian-Americans within the Industry	Minority Activism
2016	4	3	0	0	1
2017	0	19	0	1	0
2018	1	14	0	3	0
2019	0	35	0	2	0
2020	0	12	0	2	11
2021	0	47	0	0	0
2022	0	1	0	2	1
Total Sum	**5**	**121**	**0**	**10**	**13**

Table 1. This table shows the data set for single category bar chart (see *Table 2)* and uses only "1" codes for the categories that do not exist together.

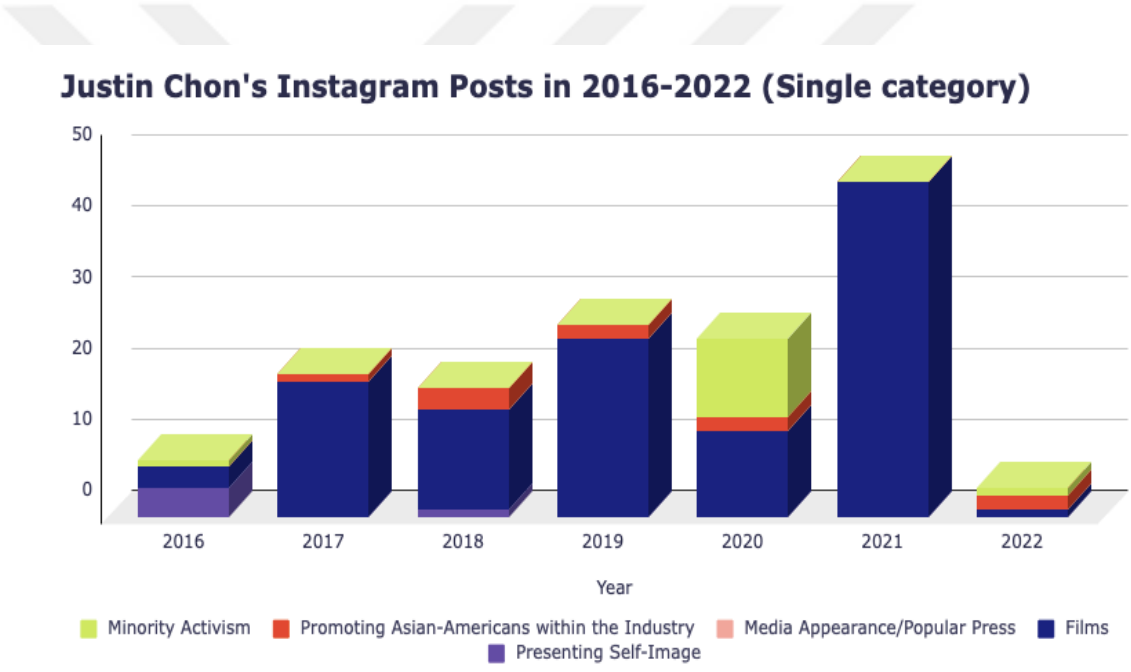


Table 2. According to the years between 2016-2022, this table shows the distribution of five categories that exist by themselves.

The media appearance of Chon starts when the film *Gook* (2017) becomes an official selection of the 2017 Sundance film festival. However, the category of *Media Appearance/Popular Press* does not stand as a single category as can be seen in *Tables 1* and *2*. When it comes to promoting Asian-Americans within the industry, in the years between 2017-2022, Chon shares 10 posts about the Asian-American

filmmakers' works like Jon M. Chu's *Crazy Rich Asians* (2018), Wayne Wang's *The Joy Luck Club* (1993), Lulu Wang's *The Farewell* (2019). Moreover, he shares posts about individuals like actor Awkwafina, his editor Reynolds Barney and cinematographer Ante Cheng by appreciating their success and recognition. Lastly, the category of *Minority Activism* is 13 posts in total and the highest share with 11 posts is made in the year 2020 (see *Tables 1* and *2*).



Figure 23. Justin Chon's Instagram post (Chon, 2020a) portrays the alliance of Asian-Latino-Black communities in regard to the LA riots incident and the BLM movement

Chon's sharing posts draw a parallel with the *Black Lives Matter* movement as it shook the world in 2020:

> During the summer of 2020, the murder of George Floyd at the hands of the police set off one of the largest mass mobilizations in US history, as hundreds of thousands of people protested against systematic racism under the banner of BlackLivesMatter (BLM). (Shuman et al., 2022, p. 1)

Also, many researchers have conducted research about the public emotional response to the BLM; they analyze the hashtag #blacklivesmatter on social media platforms

like Twitter (Patnaude, et al., 2021). Consequently, many people from various ethnic groups like Justin Chon (see *Figure 23*) expressed their support for this movement.

Multicategory, on the other hand, reveals the connection between five categories. Also, it demonstrates how Chon strategically combines them in one post. In the multicategory (*Tables 3* and *4)*, *Media Appearance/Popular Press* takes part in 44 posts in total while there were none in the single category (*Tables 1* and *2*). Chon always combines his popular press interviews and media appearances with *Films* and *Presenting Self-Image*. In his interaction with journalists like *Variety*'s Dave McNary, Digi-cultural trend analysts like Lauren deLisa Coleman, American news anchors like David Ono, and interviews with other filmmakers like Ava Duvernay and Eddie Huang, Chon establishes his self-image as both filmmaker and actor. He talks about his intention behind producing films that develop Asian-American representation and Korean-American perspective within the industry. A selection of his interviews, which are also posted on Instagram, will be used in the section 4.3.

Year	Presenting Self-Image	Films	Media Appearance/Popular Press	Promoting Asian-Americans within the Industry	Minority Activism
2016	24	25	1	0	1
2017	38	46	18	2	1
2018	2	4	3	1	0
2019	12	16	9	5	1
2020	0	8	3	5	0
2021	4	20	9	4	8
2022	0	1	1	0	1
Total Sum	**80**	**120**	**44**	**17**	**12**

Table 3. Data set for multicategory bar chart (*Table 4)*; this table shows more than one category as "2" and "3" codes that exist together with at least one other post.

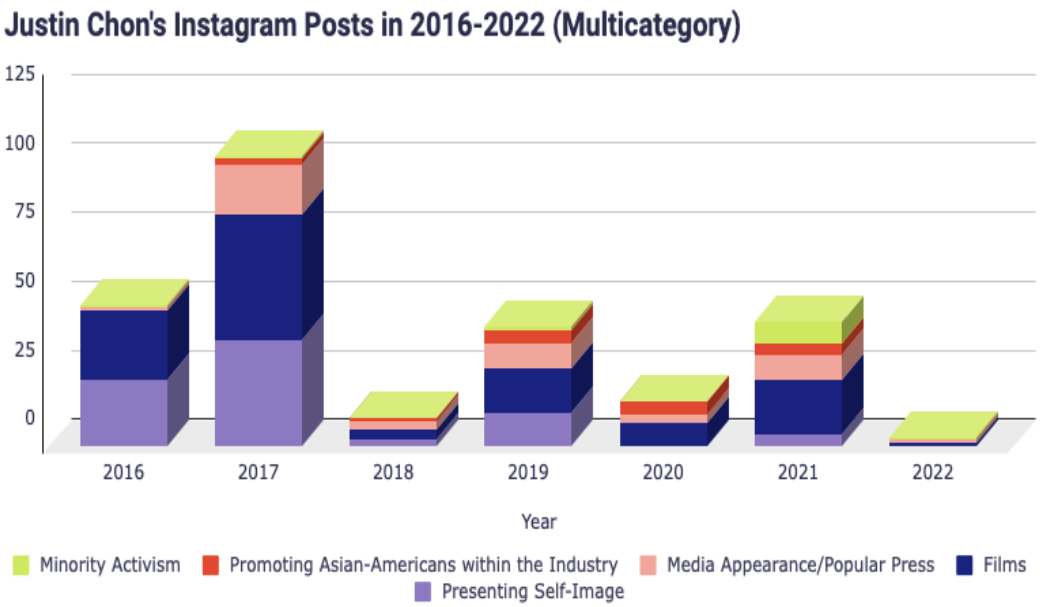


Table 4. The selection of Justin Chon's Instagram posts is divided accordingly to the years between 2016-2022 based on data in *Table 3* to show the distribution of five categories that include each other.

On the other hand, there are other interesting combinations of categories in Chon's Instagram posts. The multiple uses of the category *Minority Activism* enable him to promote both his films and also help to construct his online status as an ethnic minority celebrity. To give an example, the posts about Chon's film *Gook* (2017), which is mostly shared in the years 2016-2017, start to appear in 2020 again with the BLM movement. Since the film *Gook* (2017) is about the LA riots in 1992 and issues like racism and equality in the United States, he shares scenes from the film as well as his childhood photos with his dad, Sang Chon who also portrayed Mr. Kim in *Gook* (2017). By using the same caption three times, he shares these posts as follows: "This my dad and I. We were looted during the 92' LA riots. Listen to @killermike speech. He has powerful things to say about destroying your own neighborhood. Protesting is essential. But bringing your own community to ash...#blacklivesmatter" (Chon, 2020b). As inspired by Killer Mike's speech who is an American rapper,

actor, and activist, Chon shows his support for the BLM and shares his childhood memory in which his father's store got looted during the riots in 1992.

Combining *Minority Activism* with *Films* and *Presenting Self-Image* is not merely about the BLM movement and the film *Gook* (2017). Chon also tries to bring awareness to American adoptees and their deportation issues in the United States through his film *Blue Bayou* (2021). In the year 2021 (see *Tables 3* and *4*), the category of *Minority Activism* is used eight times. One of them is shared in text format; it is about deported and impacted adoptees that helped during the production of the film *Blue Bayou* (2021). In what follows, Chon makes a statement on Instagram:

> During the entire writing process, I spent hundreds of hours doing research, including speaking and listening to 13 adoptees who shared their personal experiences with me. In order to respect their privacy, I agreed with their request to remain anonymous. However, nine of those adoptees believe in the film so much, they have now come forward to provide their names and issued a statement through Adoptee Advocacy in support of the film. This film is not about one person. From the onset, I did not want this film to solely reflect just one individual's details. It's an issue that affects thousands of adoptees in this country. My research also involved speaking with an immigration attorney who is a Korean American adoptee. It was very important for all of us to make sure the depiction of the deportation process was accurate and authentic. Every draft of the script was shared with the core adoptees and their input impacted the entire creative process. As with every film, there are always challenges and changes. I listened to the concerns raised from beginning to end, hopeful that my film could reflect the experiences that many adoptees face. The film is stronger because of everyone's input, and I am grateful for that. I understand that much of many adoptees' lives have been void of choice. The choice of where they would live, the choice of whom their adoptive parents were, even sometimes the choice of when or even IF they wanted to look for their birth parents. This is NOT my story nor do I claim to understand what it feels like to be an adoptee. I made this film because I became aware of an inhumane policy that needs attention. I hope that this film can continue to bring awareness to the impacted adoptees in this country. For those who are asking what you can do to help impacted adoptees, please call your representatives in Congress and tell them that the Adoptee Citizenship Act of 2021 is an important issue for you as a constituent. As we all know, legislation is a matter of exposure. The more we make noise, the more it

> must be dealt with. Let's all do our part to right this injustice and help intercountry adoptees stay in this country. Go to AdopteeRightsLaw.com/action/aca2021/ to learn more. (Chon, 2021b)

This exceptionally long statement of Chon on Instagram is a direct call from a filmmaker to the public to take action about impacted adoptees and an explanation of his producing this film to bring awareness to inhumane policy in the United States.

Comments/Likes

Since the number of likes and comments on Instagram indicates the medium interactivity where users interact with the post and the creator, we can examine the number of likes/comments to measure which category got appreciated and recognized the most on Chon's Instagram. From previous data that I presented, it is clear that the majority of Chon's posts consist of films and their promotion. As shown in *Table 5*, the category *Films* in the "total usage" counted as 241; this is the highest number of usages out of five categories. Also, this category (*Films*) reaches the most numbers when it comes to SUM of Comments (11.442) and Likes (668.777) (see *Table 5*). In the second place in terms of the number of "total usage" count, *Presenting Self-Image* with the number of 85 stands out the most after *Films*.

Categories	Total Usage Count of Each Category	SUM Comments	SUM Likes	AVR Comments	AVR Likes
Presenting Self-Image	85	2865	245660	34	2890
Films	241	11442	668777	47	2775
Media Appearance/Popular Press	44	2946	154748	67	3517
Promoting Asian-Americans within the Industry	27	1022	79261	38	2936
Minority Activism	25	1901	95209	76	3808

Table 5. This table shows SUM Comments/Likes and the Average of Comments/Likes

However, the scenario changes when we accumulate the average of comments and likes. Particularly, the posts that combine *Minority Activism* with *Films* and *Presenting Self-Image*, as mentioned before through the examples of *Gook* (2017) and *Blue Bayou* (2021), got praised the most by his audience. As it can be deduced from the number of likes (3808) and comments (76), the average of comments and likes in the category of *Minority Activism* indicates the most popular posts. On the other hand, the *Media Appearance/Popular Press* category follows the second place with an average of 3517 likes and 67 comments (see *Tables 6* and *7*). These findings demonstrate that Chon's celebrity image is recognized the most when he takes social action about ethnic minority groups and appears in the popular press.

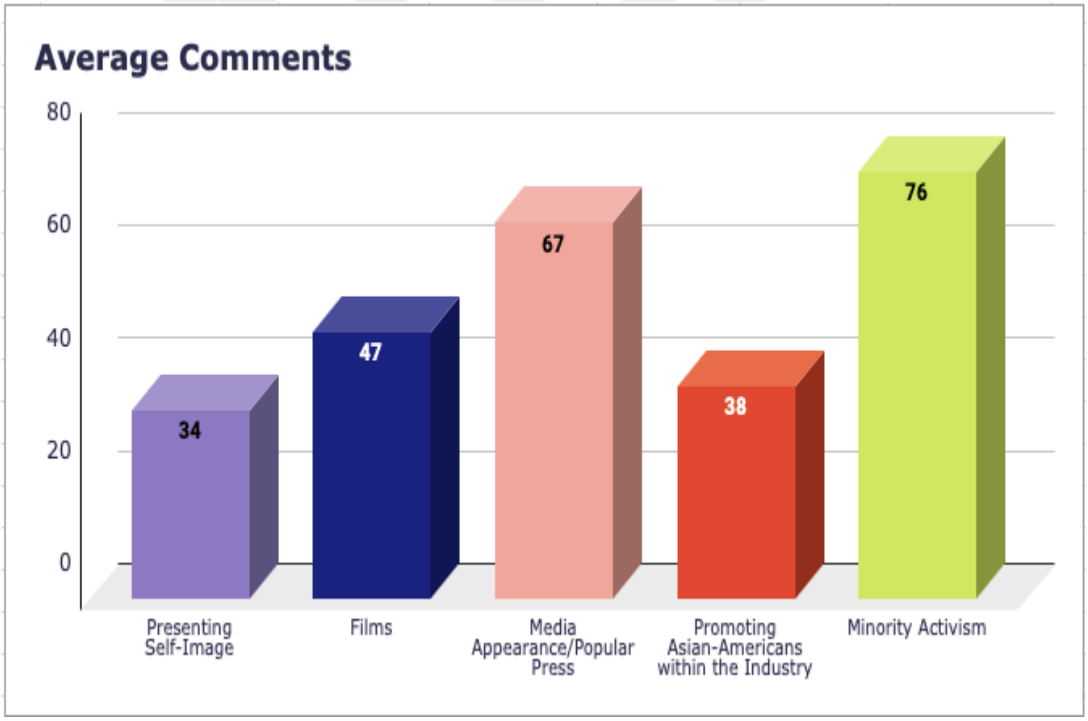


Table 6. The Average of Comments is numerically divided according to five categories

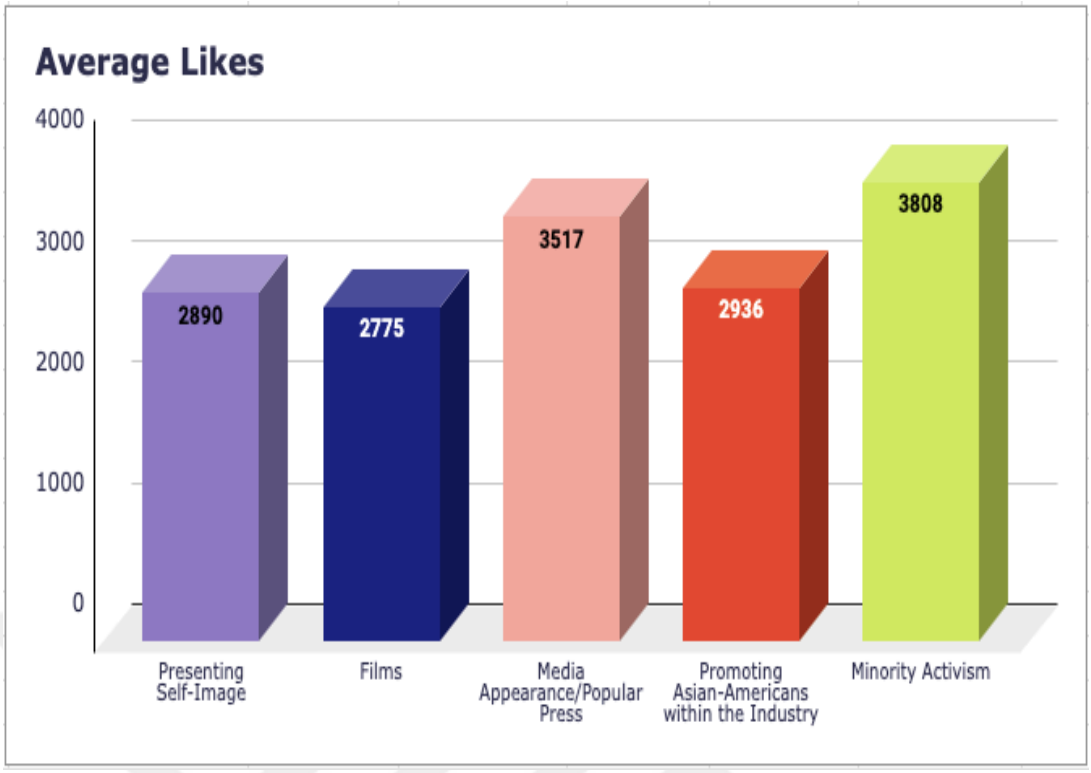


Table 7. The Average of Likes is numerically divided according to five categories

Hashtags

In the selection of posts, Chon uses hashtags 198 times in total. However, each post does not necessarily consist of hashtags. Moreover, Chon's hashtags are not all different hashtags. When we exclude the same hashtags used several times—such as #gookthefilm, #bluebayou, #mspurplefilm, #sundance2017 etc.—there are 64 different hashtags in total. Therefore, I measured the frequency of using hashtags to find which one is used mostly by Chon, the content of those hashtags, and how they might be related to the five categories that I found thematically.



Figure 24. Word Cloud of Instagram Hashtags in Justin Chon's Posts (*see Appendix D*)

*Font size represents the frequency of using hashtags.

In *Figure 24*, the data visualization of hashtags indicates that the most used hashtag used by Chon is #gookthefilm with 67 times. The hashtag #bluebayou is used 26 times, #mspurplefilm is used 10 times, and #sundance2017 appeared 9 times in his Instagram posts. Hence, the most used hashtags are about his three films, *Gook* (2017), *Ms. Purple* (2019), and *Blue Bayou* (2021), and the Sundance Film Festival in which two of his films, *Gook* (2017) and *Ms. Purple* (2019) premiered. On the

other hand, as an activist, he uses the hashtags #blacklivesmatter (3), #equalitymatters (4), #representationmatters (3), and #justicematters (3). Contrary to the traditional text-based information, using hashtags to describe or label a visual text carries "significant descriptive information of the visual content" (Giannoulakis & Tsapatsoulis, 2016, p. 115). Therefore, the descriptive power of hashtags in Chon's Instagram posts allows users to reach his posts while contributing to the network that supports diversity in production and representation, the need for equality, and justice against racism.

4.3. The cultural capital of Festivals, Awards, and Prestige of Justin Chon

Justin Chon identifies himself with the categories of race, nationality, social action, and diaspora, given his celebrity image on Instagram and a close reading of the diasporic narratives of his films *Gook* (2017) and *Blue Bayou* (2021). As mentioned before, Korean-American diasporic filmmakers use indie cinema as a social field and stand out as independent filmmakers. In the section 4.1.1., I articulate how the broad category of Asian-American Cinema contributes to diversity and representation, both of which sustain transnationality in the culture industry. As an extension of this discussion, it is also important to recognize the institutions like film festivals, distribution companies, and public media within the field. Therefore, I would like to continue to discuss this through the case of Justin Chon, who identifies himself as both an artist and an Asian-American independent filmmaker.

Three important festivals hold significance in Chon's filmmaker career and social network. The first one is the Sundance Film Festival; the second is The Center for Asian American Media's Annual Film Festival (CAAMFest), and the third is the

Cannes Film Festival. It must be mentioned that there are other festivals in which Chon's film got nominated and received awards like Deauville Film Festival, The Los Angeles Asian Pacific Film Festival, and Zurich Film Festival. However, I will narrow down my focus only to three festivals, Sundance, CAAMFest, and Cannes. The reason is that Chon's Instagram posts and popular press highly depend on these three festivals. Each of these festivals offers Chon a different social network; therefore, I will mainly focus on how these three festivals demonstrate Bourdieu's three essential guises of "economic capital", "cultural capital", and "social capital" and construct Chon's practice in the field.

To understand Chon's preferences in producing films that represent the collective experience of the Korean-American diaspora, firstly we should look at his personal history, family upbringing, and education because these pre-determine his potential courses of action and his dispositions (in Bourdieusian terms) within the film industry. To mention briefly, Chon was born in California, and raised by Korean parents. He majored in business at the University of Southern California. Also, he studied abroad at Yonsei University which is one of the distinguished universities in South Korea. On the other hand, filmmaking runs in the Chon family. Chon's father Sang Chon was "a huge child actor in South Korean cinema during the 1960s comparable to Macaulay Culkin. Sang Chon acted from ages 10 to 25, in pictures including a Korean knockoff of Japan's 'Godzilla' franchise" (Hamlin, 2017, para. 4). As mentioned before, his collaboration with his dad occurred in Chon's film *Gook* (2017) where his father played Mr. Kim. In the interview with *The Hollywood Reporter*, Chon mentions his father as follows: "He had acted, but when he met my mother, my mom's family didn't approve of him being an actor, so he quit, and that's

what prompted him to move to the U.S. and start a new life" (Sun, 2017, para. 12). Chon's family also emigrated to the United States to start a new life like the immigrant families who wish to make their American Dream come true in the films *Spa Night* (2016), *Gook* (2017), and *Minari* (2020).

As I discussed before in CHAPTER 3, the second-generation Korean-Americans like the character David in *Spa Night* (2016) mostly live in the in-between state where the individualist exploration is blocked by the Korean community's collectivism that prioritizes academic education. In this regard, we can say that Chon as Korean-American balances being a model minority son of Korean immigrant parents not only by earning a business degree at USC but also by pursuing his own dream where he became an actor, writer, and filmmaker. After exploring his multiple roles (in section 4.2.1.), his recognition within the industry needs further investigation. Since his dispositions as a filmmaker exist through his indie films, his relations with other agents in indie cinema culture should be explored to reveal his practice in the field. The field mentioned here includes mainly the film festivals in which Chon's role as a filmmaker was reproduced. Hence, I will explore how Chon's habitus is built through his economic, cultural, and social capital and created a transnational field of cultural production for him. Bourdieu's work on cultural production is useful for film festival studies because of the local-global dynamics of festivals; moreover, they contribute to the identity politics through the diverse nature of production.

Before exploring Chon's recognition in film festivals, the distinction among film festivals should be made. The reason is that even between festivals there is a struggle for power and their relation to each other, as Bourdieu (1996) suggests that "The

field of power is the space of relations of force between agents or between institutions having in common the possession of the capital necessary to occupy the dominant positions in different fields (notably economic or cultural)" (p. 215). Therefore, we can say that festivals are "the site of struggles" since they consist of different types of capitals, or so to speak, powers. Particularly, Sundance and Cannes with other major festivals like Berlin, Toronto, Venice, and Pusan are well-known "business festivals" as Mark Peranson (2008) calls them (p. 38). Also, there is another model called "audience festivals" which are not concerned with premieres (Peranson, 2008, p. 38). He discusses these two ideal models by looking at their budgets, sponsorships, and competitions although some festivals might combine the elements of the two models. In this regard, the festivals Sundance and Cannes are "business festivals" while CAAMFest mainly designed for Asian-American audiences is one of the "audience festivals".

Sundance

In Chon's filmmaking career, Sundance particularly holds a special place because it expands Chon's career as a filmmaker. Also, Chon's majority of Instagram posts are related to Sundance. If we go back to the word cloud in *Figure 19*, #Sundance2017 is among the most used hashtags by Chon. Therefore, the majority of his festival interviews and social media activities started when *Gook* (2017) became the official selection of 2017 Sundance. It got nominated for the Grand Jury Prize and won the NEXT Audience Award. Afterward, the North American rights of the film got picked by Samuel Goldwyn Films. In the interview with *Variety*, the President of Samuel Goldwyn Films, Peter Goldwyn, says the following (McNary, 2017, para. 4):

> After we saw 'Gook' at Sundance, we were truly impressed by the incredible vision Justin projected as well as the caliber of the actor's performances in creating such an authentic kinship between two brothers and Kamilla (Baker). The core ethos of our company is to offer original voices and uniquely told stories the opportunity to reach a broad audience and we could not be more proud to bring such a relevant film from an emerging filmmaker into the marketplace.

Success at the Sundance film festival allowed Chon to open his film to the marketplace. The alternative network of the film festivals like Sundance evolves around symbolic capital. Bourdieu (1993) defines "symbolic capital" as follows: "Symbolic capital is to be understood as economic or political capital that is disavowed, misrecognized, and thereby recognized, hence legitimate, a 'credit' which, under certain conditions, and always in the long run guarantees 'economic' profits" (p. 75). When Chon got recognized with an award, it also brought him prestige and cultural legitimization. Consequently, the North American rights by Samuel Goldwyn Films got his film distributed on a larger scale audience both in the theaters of the U.S. like the Arclight Hollywood Cinemas and released in other countries like Hong Kong.

On December 12, 2017, Chon announced his second feature film on Instagram by sharing an article screenshot from *Deadline*. The heading writes that "Justin Chon, Filmmaker Behind 'Gook' At Sundance, Will Direct Next Feature For Macro" (Chon, 2017b). MACRO, whose founder is Charles D. King, is a "multiplatform media that represents the voice and perspectives of Black people and persons of color" (MACRO, n.d., About us section, para. 1). Therefore, MARCO's vision matches the content of the second feature of Chon's *Ms. Purple* (2019), which tells the story of Korean-American siblings struggling to live in Koreatown. Before *Ms. Purple* (2019) took place in the U.S. Dramatic Competition section at the 2019

Sundance Film Festival, Chon started a Kickstarter campaign by raising money to cover the expenses of the post-production of the film. Kickstarter is basically the "part of a diverse ecosystem offering new ways for people to connect with one another online, to exchange ideas, stuff, and sometimes hard currency" (Steinberg, 2012, p. 19). By communicating with his audience on Instagram, Chon shares a still from *Ms. Purple* (2019) and makes the following statement before starting the campaign:

> It's really really hard making Asian American films. Mostly because the lack of resources and how difficult it is to raise money for them. The industry still believes that AA films aren't financially viable ventures. Secondly, they don't believe that there are AA talents out there to lead films. I am here to prove both of those ideas wrong. Tonight I finish shooting the most difficult film, to date, I've made and I couldn't be happier. The community that came together to make this tiny film was inspiring. Just when we thought the film would shut down, someone always came through. To the crew that came and worked for next to nothing, I owe you my life. I will do everything within my ability to make you proud! (Chon, 2018a)

Eventually, Chon's intention to prove that Asian-American films and talents are "financially viable ventures" triggers the audience and he manages to reach his goal and raises $73,634. Chon promises his audience to use every penny to deliver a compelling and beautiful film as he eventually pays the song rights for the film through this money.

During *Ms. Purple's* (2019) Kickstarter campaign, Chon always tries to emphasize that his purpose is to deliver authentic Asian-American stories to the world. On the other hand, this is not the first time that Chon raises money through a Kickstarter campaign. In *Gook* (2017), Chon also uses Instagram to communicate directly with his audience to cover his filmmaking expenses. By interacting with his audience constantly, Chon invites people to take action. At the same time, he is aware of his

audience who are the minority groups, or people who support minority people within the industry. He says in regard to the film *Gook* (2017): "For everyone who complains about not having diverse casting in the film. Here is a chance to support a film that is as diverse as it can get" (Chon, 2017a). This support consists of both seeing the film in theaters and contributing to the fundraising campaign. This money eventually leads a path to the Sundance Film Festival. In order to get into this well-known film festival as a filmmaker, you need more than talent, like community and money to cover high submission fees. The main reason behind this is that Sundance, as "one of the most 'premiere heavy' of international film festivals", brings filmmakers' works to a wider audience (Peranson, 2008, p. 41). Moreover, it has a strong tie with the commercial film industry: "It is Hollywood's presence, and the lure of independent, indie, and corporate exchange that has become Sundance's main forte" (De Valck, 2016, p. 107). Hence, getting into the Sundance for the second time, Chon builds up his career as a filmmaker by developing networks and familiarity with the Sundance.

As *Gook* (2017) finds a distributor right after premiering at the Sundance, *Ms. Purple* (2019) also finds its distributor at the festival. In Forbes' article, it is stated that "With Chon continuing to hone his dramatic voice and a possible breakthrough performance by Tiffany Chu, the project shouldn't have any trouble finding a great distributor" (Gaines, 2019, para. 4). This was an accurate estimation because just after the premiere of the film at the 2019 Sundance Film Festival, Chon agreed to work with Oscilloscope Laboratories, founded by *Beastie Boys*' Adam N. Yauch and currently headed by Dan Berger, to release *Ms. Purple* (2019) to a wider audience. The distributors as agents bring the value of work, or so to speak, make art's value

visible to the public. In regard to this, Bourdieu (1996, p. 229) points out the following:

> It must take into account not only the direct producers of the work in its materiality (artist, writer, etc.) but also the ensemble of agents and institutions which participate in the production of the value of the work via the production of the belief in the value of art in general and in the distinctive value of this or that work of art.

Bourdieu (1996) gives examples like publishers, museum curators, collectors, academics and etc. for the ensemble of agents. However, this also applies to the film festival culture as-site-of-exhibition in which public media, critics, audience, and distributors like Oscilloscope Laboratories participate in the creation of the value of the work through their multiple capitals. O-Scope's Dan Berger believes in this film and its filmmaker and says the following: "Justin has created an exceptional film that simultaneously embeds us in a very particular culture and familial dynamic and yet blossoms with universality" (Ramos, 2019, para. 4). Therefore, the faith in "the distinctive value of art" mentioned above reveals itself in the belief in Chon's film *Ms. Purple* (2019) by the distributor Oscilloscope Laboratories.

Cannes

Justin Chon continued to work with MACRO and also starts to work with eOne entertainment company for his latest feature film *Blue Bayou* (2021). However, this film differs from other works by Chon because it premiered at one of the most prestigious European film festivals, Cannes, on July 13, 2021. Although Chon could not receive any award at Cannes, his film was launched under the Un Certain Regard section (a certain glance). This provided him with numerous opportunities and increased his prestige because this section is specially designed for cutting-edge stories by a new generation of filmmakers and their international recognition. As

soon as *Blue Bayou* (2021) was announced to be an official selection of Cannes 2021, Focus Features acquired the rights of the film to distribute not only in the United States but also for international release. Focus Features LLC, is a well-known American distribution company, owned by Comcast; its parent company is Universal Pictures. The chairman of Focus Features, Peter Kujawski, tells *Variety* the following (Donnelly, 2020, para. 6):

> Justin's ability to open our eyes to new perspectives by celebrating our shared humanity is more vital now than ever before. We're so proud to help bring his voice to the world and to reunite with Alicia—Vikander—along with the brilliant teams at eOne and MACRO.

This collaboration can be discussed through the interplay between different agents.

The first one concerns the relationship between Chon and the production and distribution companies of eOne, MACRO, and Focus Features. According to Bourdieu (1993), there is a dilemma when it comes to finding "the true producer of the value of a work"; is it the artist or the dealer? In regard to this, Bourdieu (1993, p. 77) states the following:

> The art trader is not just the agent who gives the work a commercial value by bringing into a market; he is not just the representative, impresario, who defends the author he loves. He is the person who can proclaim the value of the author he defends and above all 'invests his prestige' in the author's cause, acting as a 'symbolic banker' who offers as security all the symbolic capital he has accumulated.

Therefore, the economic investment of Focus Features, eOne, and MACRO on Chon's *Blue Bayou* (2021) introduces his work into the prestigious network of the Cannes Film Festival and the French and international audience; it also determines the film's commercial value by distributing it beyond the national boundaries. On the second level of the relationship, there is another exchange of capital that flows from

one artist to another in which Alicia Vikander's role in the film increases Chon's prestige and helps him to conduct business with Focus Features.

Before *Blue Bayou* (2021), Chon always introduces new actors who are Asian-Americans as he aims to curate new AA talents. However, this time Chon also works with Alicia Vikander, a well-known actor, who portrays his wife Kathy in the film. The Swedish actress Alicia Vikander whom we know from the characters like Ava, an AI robot with human body features, in *Ex Machina* (2014), or Lara Croft in *Tomb Raider* (2018). As mentioned before in the interview of *Variety* with Kujawski, this is not the first time that Focus Features collaborates with Vikander. Tom Hooper's *The Danish Girl* (2015), which stars Eddie Redmayne as Elbe and Alicia Vikander as Wegener, was distributed by Focus Features nationally and Universal Pictures was in charge of distributing it internationally. Eventually, Vikander's performance was critically acclaimed through winning the Academy Award for Best Supporting Actress. Bourdieu (1996) indicates that "The interaction between positions and dispositions is clearly reciprocal. Any habitus, as a system of dispositions, is only effectively realized in relation to a determinate structure of socially marked positions [...]" (p. 265). Therefore, the collaboration of Chon and Vikander as director and actress, moreover, as lead actor and actress since Chon also is the protagonist, reveals this interaction between positions and dispositions. Since Vikander is a star with prestigious awards, she has socially marked positions which already built before her role in *Blue Bayou* (2021). When she appears in Chon's film, she is both the co-worker and also actress of the director Justin Chon; therefore, the networks of relations exchange through their cultural capitals.

It must be mentioned that the film remains in national and foreign theaters (see *Figures 25* and *26*) but is also in demand on the streaming platforms like *Apple TV, Prime Video, YouTube, Vudu*, etc. Streaming platforms are now the determining force in the future of "Cinema" because they turn into agents who create a virtual space for the exhibition of works. Dina Iordanova (2015, p. 7) addresses her previous work and states the following:

> Some festivals have created their own distribution labels, while others have teamed up with TV channels or with specific streaming platforms. These developments have resulted in a situation where the film festival is no longer mainly an exhibition operation.

Hence, this helps the film to reach a broader audience on the transnational level since you only need to subscribe and pay your relatively affordable fee. This can be the quintessential example of Bourdieu's two poles of economies in the sense that indie does not lose its "indieness" when it is streamed on the online world. As cultural production, it emerges from these two edges of "the commercial economy" and the "anti-economy" of pure art. This way, you can easily access any art and further know minority artists whose work could only be seen within their national boundaries before.



Figures 25 & 26. Direct screenshots from Chon's Instagram posts, from left to right; *Blue Bayou* (2021) was released in Germany (Chon, 2022) and South Korea (Chon, 2021c).

CAAMFest and CAAM Community

I have explored two significant "business festivals", which are the Sundance and Cannes, in Chon's career so far. In these festivals, the films, *Gook* (2017), *Ms. Purple* (2019), and *Blue Bayou* (2021) found their distributors and were praised in the popular press interviews. The last noteworthy festival in Chon's career is CAAMFest which is different than the major Sundance and Cannes film festivals in terms of its community-based exhibition and specific target for Asian-American people. CAAMFest runs by the Center for Asian American Media (CAAM); it is a non-profit organization that celebrates Asian-American film, media, and music. The prior name of CAAM was NAATA, "the National Asian American Telecommunications Association" (Okada, 2015, p. 29). It has a rooted history: "For 40 years, CAAM has exposed audiences to new voices and communities, advancing our collective understanding of the American experience through programs specifically designed to engage the Asian American community and the public at large" (CAAM, n.d., About CAAM section, para. 1). Therefore, the festival's importance shows itself in the collectiveness of being Asian-American. The goal is to revive Asian-American voices in the production and culture of the United States, which perfectly matches Chon's Korean-American diasporic narratives and his ethnic minority celebrity image.

Chon's engagement with CAAM dates back to Benson Lee's *Seoul Searching* (2015), where Chon portrays the character, Sid. (See CHAPTER 3 for further details). Also, his first directorial work *Man Up* (2015) screened at the same time as the opening of *Seoul Searching* (2015). Two years later, Chon's *Gook* (2017) won

the *Best Of Next* at the Sundance 2017, CAAM staff and board members were there to "raise the visibility and importance of Asian Americans in media and inclusion" (CAAM, 2017a, para. 1). CAAM organized a panel at Sundance by gathering industry leaders to talk about the future of Asian-American media, "diversity and burgeoning opportunities for collaboration, distribution, and expression" (CAAM, 2017a, para. 3). Justin Chon was one of the panelists with other people like Effie Brown, who is the producer of the film *Dear White People* (2014). Högerle (2019) points out that "CAAMFest is both a transnational and a local event, encouraging movement across diverse borders and cultures, yet firmly grounded in San Francisco, interacting with histories and memories of the city, neighborhood, and specific venues" (p. 40). CAAMFest35 played *Gook* (2017) on March 11, 2017, in San Francisco. Högerle (2021) states that "in creating awareness for an Asian American heritage and history, CAAMFest and SDAFF – along with other of CAAM and Pac Arts' initiatives – continuously make an effort to recall and come to terms with silenced and forgotten political events" (p. 199). Recalling the LA riots in 1992, *Gook* (2017) in that sense offers a Korean-American perspective on political events that even connects to today's ongoing BLM movement.

Even though CAAMFest cannot possibly compete with the internationality and prestige of major festivals, it still produces films for the Center for Asian American Media. Justin Chon, as an actor, involves in one of the works produced by CAAM which is the film *Coming Home Again* (2019) by the acclaimed filmmaker Wayne Wang. As mentioned before in section 4.2.1., the film premiered at the Toronto International Film Festival in 2019. Also, it got a special presentation at CAAMFest at the same time. By sharing a photo of him with Wang and using the hashtags

#COMINGHOMEAGAINFILM and #CAAM, Chon says in the caption the following:

> On this historic *Crazy Rich Asians* opening weekend, I want to pay respects to the OG DAILO, Wayne Wang (Director of *The Joy Luck Club*). I had the honor of making a film with him over the past few weeks and am absolutely astonished at his continued pursuit for truth. I am extremely humbled by his passion and curiosity. This has been the most artistically fulfilling project I have been a part of. Thank you, Wayne. I felt like we were 5-year-old kids building a sand castle together. (Chon, 2018c)

This collaboration where Chon is the lead actor in Wang's film is important for Chon as well as his recognition within his Asian-American community. Wang's far-reaching economic, cultural, and social capital, particularly with the Asian-American community in the film industry, positively impacts Chon's social capital. Furthermore, it elevates his status as a Korean-American diasporic filmmaker because of Wang's power on Asian-American representation. Bourdieu (1986) defines social capital as following (Bourdieu, 1986, pp. 248-9):

> Social capital is the aggregate of the actual or potential resources which are linked to possession of a durable network of more or less institutionalized relationships of mutual acquaintance and recognition–or in other words, to membership in a group– which provides each of its members with the backing of the collectivity-owned capital, a 'credential' which entitles them credit, in the various senses of the world.

Hence, Chon's social network grows in a circle in which there is mutual recognition of the lack of Asian-American representation; his relationship with Wang represents symbolic exchanges of prestige and credentials from Wang to Chon or the other way around.

4.4. Conclusion

Consequently, Justin Chon's multiple roles within the industry as an actor, writer, and filmmaker offer him a wide range of network of people both in Hollywood and

Indie Cinema. When his multiple positions and dispositions combined with his continuous activity on Instagram distinguish him from other Korean-American diasporic filmmakers. Using the tool of self-branding through Instagram, he attracts audiences and business partnerships. As an "Ethnic Minority Celebrity", he builds an Instagram strategy where he exists as not only an actor/filmmaker but also as a social activist. The interviews were shared as posts in the category of *Media Appearance/Popular Press* later used in section 4.3 to explore agents' capitals within the field. This field that reveals Chon's practice concerns indie cinema and three film festivals namely; the Sundance, Cannes, and CAAMFest. Those festivals as social fields are a melting pot of distributors, film critics, audiences, and community. While festivals mean premieres, screenings, and prizes and they now offer film markets combined with a commercial economy. Thanks to the major international festivals of Sundance and Cannes, Chon's films find their distributors and eventually reach a wider audience locally and internationally. The film festival circuit also includes journalists and film critics, who play a crucial role in enriching Chon's prestige. On the other hand, CAAMFest and CAAM community make Chon feel at home where he engages with his fellow Asian-Americans within the industry by exchanging their cultural capital. Therefore, the Sundance, CAAMFest, and Cannes Film Festivals offer a social space where he displays his filmmaking practice for the first time as a Korean-American diasporic filmmaker. The agency of these three festivals reproduces Justin Chon as an independent filmmaker and builds his own transnational agency within the industry.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION

The essential aim of this thesis was to find what Korean-American Transnational Cinema is. To achieve this, transnationalism was situated in the concept of diaspora. The five films, *Spa Night* (2016), *Gook* (2017), *Minari* (2020), *Seoul Searching* (2015), and *Blue Bayou* (2021) were analyzed through Naficy's (2001) Accented film style and critical transnationalism approach of Higbee and Lim (2010). The films all created a pattern that delivers a cinematic representation of the Korean-American collective diaspora and they challenged the fixed ideas about national film culture. Furthermore, indie cinema as a site of minority practice was examined to understand Korean-American independent filmmakers' position in the film industry. Since Justin Chon notably distinguishes from other Korean-American independent filmmakers regarding his social media presence and cultural capital, his minority practice and recognition within the field were specifically investigated.

In regard to the questions related to the five films, two intertwined questions have been discussed. The first one was to find the patterns that were created through the collective experience of the Korean-American diaspora on-screen. The answer to this question also revealed the "particular" transnationalism of Korean-American filmmakers. As visible in the accented film style, mentioned in CHAPTER 3, the recurring themes were built around some sort of journey. This journey could be either a homecoming or a home-seeking journey but it did not necessarily have to be a physical one. In the Korean-American diasporic films, the journey was an emotional journey. The immigrant stories were strongly tied with the American dream, the clash between different generations of Korean-Americans, and a long yearning for belonging and feeling at home. When characters' need for a shared community and desire for wholeness was not met in the U.S. territories, their diaspora began at the same time. In accordance with their emotional journey, two socio-political themes appeared during the analysis of the films.

The first theme concerned the Korean-American dream in the films, *Spa Night* (2016), *Gook* (2017), and *Minari* (2020). As discussed in CHAPTER 2, the first-generation Korean-Americans in the U.S. considered themselves Korean nationals. They were strongly attached to their homeland, Korea. When Japan occupied their country, they ran the Korean independence activities in the United States. Koreans in the United States defended their homeland by joining the U.S. army when their country split into two, North Korea and South Korea in the Korean War. In the wake of these wars and political occurrences, many of them continued to live in the United States by building small businesses from restaurants to grocery stores. In *Spa Night* (2016), David's parents had a Korean restaurant located in Koreatown/LA. In *Gook*

(2017), Eli and his brother Daniel tried to maintain their deceased father's job (a shoe store) in Paramount, California while in *Minari* (2020), Jacob tried to build a farm to grow Korean vegetables in Arkansas by moving out from California. These small businesses of the first-generation Korean-Americans were motivated by the American dream. They wanted to become financially robust and socially mobile through hard work and perseverance.

However, they did not feel they belonged to the new country they called home because their racial integration and social assimilation within the U.S. culture failed. This was mainly because of their language barrier and stuckness in their ethnic community. Particularly, their devotion to the Korean Methodist Church set boundaries of their social network which was only exclusive to Korean-Americans. In CHAPTER 3, David's mother Soyoung in *Spa Night* (2016) and Monica in *Minari* (2020) were the characters that specifically revealed the function of the Korean ethnic church. The church for Soyoung was a place where the Christian fellowship merged with ethnic fellowship. She benefited from the church by bonding with fellow immigrants and eventually found a part-time job. On the other hand, Monica constantly sought religious relief in Arkansas where she felt lonely and an outsider without her Korean community back in California. Although she went to a church in Arkansas, she could not find a community with a shared cultural identity because it was not the Korean Methodist Church. She could not build new relationships with others because of her inadequacy to speak English and unfamiliarity with American culture. Therefore, a sense of belonging could not be found and diaspora emerged.

As a bridge between two cultures and split identities, their children, second-generation Korean-Americans, caught up in their immigrant parents' American dream and stuck with their parents' diaspora. The lack of individualism and responsibilities of Korean traditional families put a burden on the second-generation Korean-Americans. This was seen in David's queer identity in *Spa Night* (2016), Eli's cultural identity located in American culture and nationality in *Gook* (2017), and young David's rejection of the old country Korea through his Korean grandmother Soonja in *Minari* (2020). Therefore, the intergenerational conflict was highly portrayed in these films. The diasporic filmmakers of the five films are second-generation Korean-Americans. Hence, not only the protagonists but also the filmmakers themselves are diasporic subjects because they produced semi-autobiographical films about their childhood memories and experiences.

The second group of films *Seoul Searching* (2015) and *Blue Bayou* (2021) focused on the diaspora of Korean-American adoptees. The emotional journey continued to show itself through the characters Kris in *Seoul Searching* (2015) and Antonio in *Blue Bayou* (2021). The diasporic identifications of these characters were associated with an outward journey to find about their birth mother or ethnicity and turned into an inward journey where they discover their unknown past. Since they did not have any memory of their homeland Korea unlike the immigrants in the first group of films, or any connection with their Korean ethnicity, their diaspora related to the uncanny feelings about home and identity. Kris, who had an American foster family in the United States, tried to explore her cultural heritage in South Korea. When she found her birth mother, she could not communicate with her mother because she neither understood nor spoke Korean. On the other hand, Antonio faced deportation

from the U.S to South Korea. He felt rejected from both countries as he was firstly left by his birth mother in South Korea and then forced to leave the United States where he lived for over 30 years. Both of these characters were almost in a site of exile where their displacement occurred by outside forces. Their diasporic experiences were a part of the collective experience of Korean-Americans because the adoption in real life was prompted after the Korean War, as mentioned in CHAPTER 2. This eventually brought the current issue where many Korean-Americans, alongside other Asian-Americans, faced deportation issues because they were not registered legally by their American foster families.

The cinematic patterns in relation to the Korean-American collective diaspora are therefore related to the historical contexts of displacement that lie in the U.S. national history. However, these patterns also transcended from the United States to South Korea because the cultural identity was full of nostalgia, a sense of belonging to a shared Korean ethnicity, and the struggle to be regarded as a model minority group. Therefore, this research examines the transnational linkages between cultures, nationalities, and cultural productions. The Korean-American independent filmmakers provide alternative stories of "outsiders" who had been neglected in the mainstream media and Hollywood. Their dispersed minority practices are situated in indie culture by portraying a realistic version of America on-screen and representing ordinary people's daily struggles.

To give a glimpse of their minority practice, the last chapter was devoted to Justin Chon, his celebrity image, and his cultural capital of films, awards, and festivals. Justin Chon, among other Korean-American filmmakers, stands out the most against

the misrepresentation of Asian-Americans and supports diversity and equality in production through his films and celebrity image. Two overarching questions have been raised concerning this: the first is to examine Chon's discourse on ethnicity, race, language, power, and social action through his media presence; the second is to investigate his filmmaking practice in the festival circuit to understand the transnational exchanges and capitals between different agents. As investigated in CHAPTER 4, Chon as a multi-hyphenate director, writer, and actor, publicized himself as an ethnic minority celebrity through his media presence on both Instagram and popular press. From the data provided in *Appendix A*, his Instagram strategy to share posts by combining the category of *Minority Activism* with the categories of *Films* and *Presenting-Self Image* showed that Chon not only represented himself as an actor/filmmaker but also as a social activist. His ethnic minority celebrity image demonstrated that he is determined to continue producing films that tell Asian-American stories like in *Gook* (2017) and *Blue Bayou* (2021). Moreover, it revealed that he has a greater purpose of bringing awareness to other ethnic minority groups in the United States.

To understand his filmmaking practice, three film festivals that hold significance in Chon's career were investigated. Sundance and Cannes film festivals were mentioned as "business festivals" regarding their budgets, sponsorships, and premiere-heavy nature. Especially Sundance, as mentioned in CHAPTER 2, offered a social space where multiple agents can exchange their local, global, and transnational connections through culture, identity, and power. Chon's two films *Gook* (2017) and *Ms. Purple* (2019) premiered at Sundance. *Gook* (2017) found its distributor Samuel Goldwyn Films at Sundance and reached a wider audience at both

local and international levels. For *Ms. Purple* (2019), Chon agreed to work with the global media brand MACRO. Moreover, he later agreed to work with Oscilloscope Laboratories to distribute his film after its premiere at Sundance 2019. These collaborations between Chon and production/distribution companies were made in the festival circuit as a site of exhibition. The ensemble of agents also included the public media, film critics, and the audience. Remarkably, agents in popular Press cannot be disregarded because they played a crucial role in Chon's prestige and his social network overall. Particularly, *The Hollywood Reporter, Variety*, *Los Angeles Times*, *Deadline*, and *CAAM* mentioned Chon as an aspiring filmmaker and made headlines about his films. His interviews boosted his ethnic celebrity image and made him visible to a wider audience.

In Cannes, Chon's filmmaking career extended to European territories. When his latest feature film *Blue Bayou* (2021) was a part of the official selection of Cannes 2021, Focus Features collaborated with MACRO and eONE productions and acquired the rights of the film to distribute it for both local and international release. Hence, these collaborations, including the role of the well-known actress Alicia Vikander in *Blue Bayou* (2021), exchanged their cultural capitals with Chon and built his filmmaking practice, and enhanced his prestige in the field. Almost like every independent filmmaker, Chon also found himself in the loneliness of freedom before building these networks of relations. He funded most of his films through the Kickstarter campaign through a direct call from him to his audience on Instagram. On the other hand, Chon had a strong reliance on his Asian-American community, particularly CAAM (the Center for Asian American Media). As mentioned in CHAPTER 4, CAAM's aim to revive Asian-American voices in production and

culture was closely related to Chon's filmmaker vision. Thus, CAAMFest promoted his films and secured him the Asian-American fellowship. Also, CAAMFest, one of the "audience festivals," was specially designated for the Asian-American community and audience Therefore; it played a significant role in Chon's ethnic minority celebrity image. Significantly his association with Wayne Wang, mentioned in CHAPTER 4, demonstrated a mutual exchange of social capital where Wang's strong influence on Asian-American cinema gave credentials for Chon's diasporic filmmaking career and celebrity image.

Overall, this thesis contributes to film studies/transnational cinemas, celebrity studies, festival studies, cultural studies, and Korean-American Cinema literature. It has the strengths of using multiple methodologies and offers new ways of using theories to investigate celebrity image and the festival circuit. Existing studies of celebrities on social media have not focused on film directors, although they have a well-established role to play in contemporary filmmaking as celebrities in their own right (Corrigan, 1998). Furthermore, existing film festival studies have not made full use of Pierre Bourdieu's theories of cultural capital in order to examine independent filmmakers' position within the industry. Therefore, this content analysis can be a framework to be applied to other independent filmmakers' (social) media and director studies. This study only dealt with the particular transnationalism of Korean-American filmmakers. Therefore, it was a small attempt to contribute to multicultural cinemas by investigating Korean-American transnational cinema that has been a growing field.

However, this research can be developed by considering other ethnicities, from Vietnamese to Indian, by combining film studies with Asian-American diaspora studies. Also, the inter-Asian productions and exchanges with rising Asian countries like China and Korea continued to be discussed (Yang et al., 2020). Besides, the concept of the diaspora can be situated in many other world cinemas, film festivals, and cultural productions by diasporic filmmakers. Remarkably, the conditions and experiences of diasporic filmmakers provide the transnational visibility of their cinemas, communities, and cultures. Hence, understanding the production and circulation of diasporic films at both local and global levels reveals the practices of transnational cinema and minority groups.

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APPENDIX A

The code sheet for the content analysis of Justin Chon's Instagram posts.

Open access to the code sheet:

https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1_QcvltYFR3O4Q2r_7DzeHmVtgHrTrm0R2z7GRXpUzfs/edit?usp=sharing

No	Date	Likes	Comments	Image	Text	Video	Caption	Text's Caption	Hashtags	1)Presenting Self-Image	2) Films	3) Media Appearance/Popular Press	4) Promoting Asian-Americans within the Industry	5)Minority Activism	category sum
total=280	2016-2022									85	241	44	27	25	
1	09.07.2016	3435	32	1	0	0	0	0	#asiansforblacklives	0	0	0	0	1	1
2	11.07.2016	2628	11	1	0	0	Gook film 3	0	#GookTheFilm	1	1	0	0	0	2
3	13.07.2016	2025	3	1	0	0	Gook film 4	0	#GookTheFilm	1	1	0	0	0	2
4	13.07.2016	2140	9	1	0	0	Gook film 5	0	#GookTheFilm	1	1	0	0	0	2
5	13.07.2016	1542	16	1	0	0	Gook film 6	0	#GookTheFilm	1	1	0	0	0	2
6	15.07.2016	1709	7	1	0	0	Gook film 7	0	#GookTheFilm	1	1	0	0	0	2
7	24.07.2016	2421	13	1	0	0	0	0	#GookTheFilm	1	1	0	0	0	2
8	30.07.2016	2698	13	1	0	0	0	0	#gookthefilm	1	1	0	0	0	2
9	21.07.2016	2064	16	1	0	0	*I'm ready*	0	#GookTheFilm	1	1	0	0	0	2
10	03.08.2016	1256	2	1	0	0	*we startin dis*	0	#gookthefilm	1	1	0	0	0	2
11	03.08.2016	1082	10	1	0	0	0	0	#gookthefilm #rosewoodcutters	1	1	0	0	0	2
12	05.08.2016	1976	13	1	0	0	*kr*	0	#gookthefilm	1	1	0	0	0	2
13	05.08.2016	1678	8	1	0	0	0	0	#gookthefilm	1	1	0	0	0	2
14	06.08.2016	1528	11	1	0	0	*day 1*	0	#gookthefilm	1	0	0	0	0	1
15	09.08.2016	1104	9	1	0	0	*Today was a good day*	0	#gookthefilm	1	0	0	0	0	1
16	09.08.2016	1101	8	1	0	0	*Good mornin' los angeles*	0	#gookthefilm #curtiscookjr	1	0	0	0	0	1
17	11.08.2016	1747	7	1	0	0	*Im directing. Sigh*	0	#gookthefilm	1	1	0	0	0	2
18	13.08.2016	2467	16	1	0	0	0	0	#gookthefilm	1	0	0	0	0	1
19	14.08.2016	1988	6	1	0	0	*In-between shots*	0	#GookTheFilm	1	1	0	0	0	2
20	15.08.2016	1839	4	1	0	0	*day 9*	0	#GookTheFilm	1	1	0	0	0	2
21	19.08.2016	2015	9	1	0	0	0	0	#GookTheFilm	1	1	0	0	0	2
22	21.08.2016	1082	10	1	0	0	*day 13*	0	#gookthefilm	1	1	0	0	0	2
23	23.08.2016	2121	14	1	0	0	*day 15*	0	#gookthefilm	1	1	0	0	0	2
24	02.09.2016	1611	14	1	0	0	*This is the final thing I shot for my film, directing this was the hardest thing I've done.*	0	#gookthefilm	0	1	0	0	0	1
25	14.09.2016	1879	13	1	0	0	*Let me out of this editing room!!!*	0	#gookthefilm	1	1	0	0	0	2
26	16.09.2016	2194	14	1	0	0	*Get me outta this editing room.*	0	#gookthefilm	1	1	0	0	0	2
27	08.10.2016	1950	9	1	0	0	*Do I scare you*	0	#gookthefilm	1	1	0	0	0	2
28	12.10.2016	2064	47	0	0	1	*[...] I'm so proud of this film and what it represents. I'm just trying to get over the last hump and finish post production. If you have a second please check out my kickstarter [...]*	0	0	1	1	0	0	1	3
29	18.10.2016	962	10	0	0	1	*[...] so close to our kickstarter goal for our film GOOK. But every extra dollar helps us get other things like the song in this video to make the film even more amazing [...]*	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	2
30	24.10.2016	719	7	0	0	1	*Kamilla and Keith from our film are so appreciative. Please continue to support our kickstarter*	0	#gookthefilm	0	1	0	0	0	1
31	01.12.2016	1445	64	0	1	0	*I'm proud to announce my film GOOK is an official selection of 2017 sundance!!!! [...]*	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	2
32	10.12.2016	1322	32	1	0	0	*Still can't believe "GOOK" is part of the sundance line up*	0	#sundance	0	1	0	0	0	1
33	18.12.2016	1057	4	1	0	0	*ADR in the city*	0	#gookthefilm	1	1	0	0	0	2
34	02.01.2017	1634	17	1	0	0	*Live recording the score for my film so freaking excited!!!!!*	0	#gookthefilm #sundance2017	1	1	0	0	0	2
35	02.01.2017	906	4	1	0	0	0	0	#gookthefilm #sundance2017	0	1	0	0	0	1
36	03.01.2017	1139	21	1	0	0	*I am a very VERY happy camper*	0	#gookthefilm #sundance2017	1	1	0	0	0	2
37	05.01.2017	1659	12	1	0	0	*This last week just feels like one reeeeally long day*	0	#gookthefilm #sundance2017	1	1	0	0	0	2
38	09.01.2017	1394	6	1	0	0	*Thank you shah*	0	#gookthefilm #sundance2017	1	1	0	0	0	2
39	18.01.2017	2364	28	1	0	0	*Ready for sundance2017 gookthefilm Gonna go eat some korean food bc dey aint none in da mountains.*	0	#sundance2017 #gookthefilm	1	1	0	0	0	2
40	20.01.2017	1091	14	1	0	0	*We here with our sales and pr team!*	0	#pmk #cinetic #sundance2017 #gookthefilm	1	1	0	0	0	2
41	22.01.2017	2349	18	1	0	0	*Premier night*	0	#gookthefilm #sundance2017	1	1	0	0	0	2
42	23.01.2017	2093	22	1	0	0	*We got an amazing review in the hollywoodreporter !!!*	0	#hollywoodreporter #gookthefilm #sundance2017	1	1	0	0	0	2
43	24.01.2017	795	3	1	0	0	*Curtis cook jr lookin fly at our vulture interview*	0	#gookthefilm #sundance2017	0	1	0	0	0	1
44	24.01.2017	1818	29	1	0	0	*i look like creepy af in this picture*	0	0	1	1	1	0	0	3
45	29.01.2017	4088	361	1	0	0	*I am absolutely floored gookthefilm won the audience award at sundancefilmfestival tonight!!!! Speechless...*	0	#gookthefilm #sundancefilmfestival	1	1	0	0	0	2
46	31.01.2017	2522	55	0	1	0	*Woke up this morning. Still cannot believe this...ok time to move forward.*	7	0	1	1	1	0	0	3
47	10.02.2017	2031	15	1	0	0	npr kpcc interview for gookthefilm	0	#gookthefilm	1	1	0	0	0	2

48	16.02.2017	3100	51	0	1	0	*Pedo status*	"Attention, Hollywood: It's time to give these 11 Asian stars their due"	0	1	0	1	0	0	2
49	25.02.2017	1605	14	0	1	0	*Amazing write up in the huffingtonpost Thanks lauren!*	"How The Social Tone Around the 2017 Oscars sets the Stage For a Hot Film On Race Relations"	0	1	1	1	0	0	3
50	11.03.2017	1787	20	1	0	0	*Playing today at he alamodrafthouse san fransisco for caam film fest gookthefilm*	0	#gookthefilm	1	1	0	0	0	2
51	19.04.2017	2449	66	0	1	0	*Lets create togother! So stoked*	"Sundance Next Audience Award Winner 'Gook' Picked up by Samuel Goldwyn"	0	0	1	1	0	0	2
52	27.04.2017	5882	35	0	1	0	*latimes article about my families experience during the 92' la riots. Ill put the link in my bio if youre interested*	"They were kids in 1992. Here's how two Korean Americans are telling the story of the L.A. riots"	#gookthefilm	0	1	1	0	0	2
53	27.04.2017	2117	39	1	0	0	*Hey guys. A teaser for my film GOOK just dropped on itunes.*	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	1
54	28.04.2017	4968	39	1	1	0	*latimes supporting SO HARD!!!*	" 'Look what happens when we don't talk to each other': Korean American filmmakers' LA riot stories"	#gookthefilm	1	1	1	0	0	3
55	30.04.2017	5749	36	1	0	0	*What a wonderful night...truly appreciative!*	0	#gookthefilm	1	1	0	0	0	2
56	05.05.2017	3119	14	1	0	0	*am SOOO PROUD of you iamsimonebaker this is what makes the film completely worth making. I know you will go on to do AMAZING things in life*	0	#gookthefilm	0	1	0	0	0	1
57	11.06.2017	3837	12	1	0	0	*Had an amazing time siff2017 thank you for having me. The audience was lit! I love seattle.*	0	#gookthefilm	1	1	0	0	0	2
58	18.06.2017	1359	6	1	0	0	*We are exactly 2 month out from gookthefilm in theaters. Come check it out at sundancenextfest om august 12th! P.s. thats my Dad next to me!!! Happy fathers day*	0	#gookthefilm #sundancenextfest	1	1	0	0	0	2
59	26.06.2017	4527	80	1	0	0	*Its coming!!! August 18 archlight hollywood August 25 regalcinemas Id truly appreciate if you spread the word. Diversity in film matters.*	0	#archlight #regalcinemas	0	1	0	0	0	1
60	27.06.2017	1309	46	1	0	0	*Hey guys. Here are screening dates for GOOK! Please spread the word!!!!*	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	1
61	29.06.2017	3352	80	0	0	1	*For everyone who complains about not having diverse casting in film. Here is a chance to support a film that is as diverse as it can get.*	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	2
62	04.07.2017	2316	60	0	0	1	*Theatrical Release Dates [...]*	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	2
63	26.07.2017	3191	12	1	0	0	Good morning nyc gookthefilm press	0	#gookthefilm	1	1	0	0	0	2
64	26.07.2017	4272	28	1	0	0	*Screening of gookthefilm tonight at asia society on park ave, new york. Ill be doing a Q and A. Thank you originalpenguin for fresh threads.*	0	#gookthefilm	1	1	0	0	0	2
65	27.07.2017	1771	23	1	0	0	*This so unreal! AVA DUVERNAY is moderating the Q and A for my film #gookthefilm at #sundancenextfest speechless...*	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	2
66	08.08.2017	3703	48	1	0	0	The streets is hot gookthefilm August 18th archlight hollywood, August 25th regals limited release	0	#gookthefilm	0	1	0	0	0	1
67	08.08.2017	3182	15	1	0	0	*sundanceorg next fest!!! August 12th. Ace hotel downtown la.*	0	#gookthefilm	1	1	0	0	0	2
68	08.08.2017	3525	9	1	0	0	*I have been a long time listener of theframepodcast with John Horn. It was an honor to be on the show.*	0	#theframepodcast #kpcc #gookthefilm	1	1	0	0	0	2
69	12.08.2017	1383	17	1	0	0	Today at the ace hotel downtown la @4pm	0	#gookthefilm	1	1	0	0	0	2
70	13.08.2017	3021	10	1	0	0	*This happened last night. Grateful and honored. gookfilm out his Friday archlight Hollywood. La live regal.*	0	#gookfilm	1	1	0	0	0	2
71	13.08.2017	3144	20	1	0	0	*Queen bee ava duvernay Thank you sundanceorg*	0	#gookfilm	1	1	0	0	0	2
72	15.08.2017	2436	34	0	1	0	*OUT Friday EW is saying "one of the best films of the year."*	"Racial slur bridges gaps in powerful Justin Chon-directed Gook clip"	#gookfilm	0	1	1	0	0	2
73	16.08.2017	3648	33	0	1	0	*gookfilm in USA TODAY Out in theaters friday!!!*	"Race-related films take on new import in the wake of violence"	#gookfilm	0	1	1	0	0	2
74	17.08.2017	2586	38	1	0	0	*Tomorrow!!! gookfilm Archlight Hollywood, la live regal.*	0	#gookfilm	0	1	0	0	0	1
75	18.08.2017	2656	28	0	1	0	*Thank you everyone who has supported. Truly means so much.*	"One of the Best Films of the year" writen by Joey Nolfi, Entertainment Weekly	#gookfilm #goldfriday	0	1	1	0	0	2
76	19.08.2017	6458	43	1	0	0	*ABCnews interview for gookfilm liv3. Gook out now!!!!*	0	#gookfilm #goldfriday	1	1	0	0	0	2

77	19.08.2017	5624	25	0	1	0	latimes Yesterday! Doing a QandA with jenyamato today at 9pm showing at regal la live!!!!	"For director, riots were personal"	0	1	1	1	0	0	3
78	19.08.2017	1216	9	1	0	0	Tonight! 7pm doing a QandA with the wonderfully smart, talented, brilliant iamfuriosblack EFFIE BROWN ARCHLIGHT HOLLYWOOD	0	#gookfilm	0	1	0	0	0	1
79	20.08.2017	4428	88	0	1	0	We did it!!!! I am truly speechless and in awe of everyone's support. We showed up as a community. It's about time. Gook goes nationwide Friday. Let's go!!!	" 'Gook' robust in LA"	0	0	1	1	0	0	2
80	23.08.2017	3225	40	1	0	0	This is happening tomorrow night.	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	1
81	24.08.2017	4043	55	1	0	0	This week GOOk goes nationwide. Lets show people that our stories matter	0	#gookfilm	0	1	0	0	0	1
82	25.08.2017	3570	17	1	0	0	Thank you mreddiehuang for having a conversation about GOOk at the archlight.	0	o	1	1	0	0	0	2
83	25.08.2017	2394	31	1	0	0	IRVINE.. Ill be doing a Q and A at 4pm and 7pm showing today. FRIDAY. At the UTC Regals. Man...this is full circle for me. I grew up at this theater. I watched who framed roger rabbit, home alone, hook, and desperado here. To be playing my film here has been a life long dream	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	1
84	25.08.2017	2786	83	1	0	0	ITS HERE. GOOK is nationwide THIS WEEKEND.	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	1
85	26.08.2017	3195	31	1	0	0	Atlanta where you at?	0	#gookfilm	0	1	1	0	0	2
86	26.08.2017	2994	44	1	0	0	GOOK is out nationwide!!! Catch it today. I will be doing a QandA at the edwards mira mesa san diego theater for the 7pm showing tonight!!!	" 'Gook' Review: This look at L.A. Riots Is 'Hardass Yet Hypnotically Beautiful' "	0	0	1	1	0	0	2
87	27.08.2017	3633	73	1	0	1	my DAD who plays mr kim in GOOKFILM buys tickets.	0	#GOOKFILM	0	1	0	0	0	1
88	29.08.2017	5147	180	0	0	1	THANK YOU!!! GOOK has been extended and expanding to new cities!	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	2
89	31.08.2017	2484	105	1	0	0	GOOK is playing in ALL these cities. Its labor day weekend. Eat some meat then watch this movie!!! Thank you guys for taking this film this far!	0		0	1	0	0	0	1
90	03.09.2017	4669	26	1	0	0	Thank you everyone for supporting this film. Its been an honor to share it with yall. But its only the beginning. Lets create!	0	#gookfilm	1	1	0	0	0	2
91	15.09.2017	2359	54	1	0	0	e still here! We still in theaters! Unbelievable. Catch gookfilm today. We added New cities!	0	#gookfilm	0	1	0	0	0	1
92	25.10.2017	2886	50	1	0	0	If you can believe it or not Gook is still in some theaters. I wanted to take a moment and thank the entire Asian community for supporting GOOK throughout the Gold Opens! Because of y'all, GOOK was the #1 film at the specialty box office opening weekend, and expanded its theatre settings to even more cities for even more weeks. We even had an official Oscar screening because of the momentum.	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	1
93	08.11.2017	6075	151	1	0	0	Dude how cool is this. GOOKFILM will be in theaters in HONG KONG nov 23rd!!!	0	#GOOKFILM	0	1	0	0	0	1
94	21.11.2017	2180	47	0	1	0	I just got nominated for an independent spirit award! SO STOKED!!!	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	2
95	22.11.2017	5402	47	0	1	0	VOLTRON!	"Asian Americans shine with multiple Independent Sprit Awards nominations"	0	0	1	1	0	0	2
96	05.12.2017	4248	86	1	0	0	GOOK is on itunes NOW!!! They were kind enough to do a film maker spotlight. If you werent able to catch it in theaters heres your chance.	0	#itunes	0	1	0	0	0	1
97	09.12.2017	4043	46	1	0	0	In good company! Wish i could be there sat but im having a baby	"The New Hollywood: Stories of Struggle, Sacrifice, and Success"	0	1	0	1	0	0	2
98	10.12.2017	4983	8	0	0	1	itunes did a new film makers spotlight on me THANK YOU!!!	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	2
99	12.12.2017	6630	115	0	1	0	I could not ask for a better partner than IAmCharlesKKing and everyone at stayMACRO they walk the walk when it comes to diverse storytelling. Beyond EXCITED!!!	"Justin Chon, Filmmaker beyond 'Gook' at Sundance, will direct next feature for Macro"	0	1	1	1	0	0	3
100	14.12.2017	6232	142	1	0	0	I did a film called seoulsearching in 2015 Its going to be on NETFLIX TOMORROW!!!!!!!	0	#seoulsearching	1	1	0	1	0	3

101	21.12.2017	6727	139	0	1	0	0	"Note to Self: I will not rest till my asian american stories are told. I will not stop until they are real. No one can dissuade me. Nothing will stop me."	0	0	0	0	1	1	2
102	29.12.2017	2181	16	0	1	0	*antecheng was still in USC grad film school when he shot my film GOOKFILM heres to many more films together my friend!*	"Congrats to my cinematographer @antocheng. He got his artist visa today and can stay in the country to shoot all of my movies for poverty wages. 1/K Ante. Not Really..."	#GOOKFILM	0	0	0	1	0	1
103	07.01.2018	3325	50	0	1	0	*Thank you filmindependent*	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	2
104	13.04.2018	3514	14	1	0	0	Here we go misspurplefilm	0	#misspurplefilm	0	1	0	0	0	1
105	02.05.2018	5211	36	1	0	0	*Thank you goldhouse for including me in the A100 most influential asians list. Super honored and will strive to continue to make films that bring empathy to our community www. goldhouse.org*	0	#goldhouse	1	0	0	0	0	1
106	16.06.2018	7675	145	1	0	0	*It's really really hard making asian american films. Mostly because the lack of resources and how difficult it is to raise money for them. The industry still believes that AA films arent financially viable ventures. Secondly, they dont believe that there are AA talent out there to lead films. I am here to prove both of those ideas wrong. Tonight i finish shooting the most difficult film to date. I've made and i couldnt be happier [...]*	0	#MISSPURPLE	0	1	0	0	0	1
107	19.06.2018	1873	9	1	0	0	*So this was a backyard that was designed for zero dollars by our super super talented art department Bo and Hyo. And this is the crew from our film.*	0	#misspurplefilm	0	1	0	0	0	1
108	04.07.2018	2380	22	1	0	0	*My favorite still from my new film*	0	#misspurplefilm	0	1	0	0	0	1
109	05.07.2018	2745	13	1	0	0	Love this still as well from my new film	0	#misspurplefilm	0	1	0	0	0	1
110	08.08.2018	9081	138	1	0	0	*Whether or not this is "YOUR" type of film is irrelevant. If you want to see asian american on screen you are obligated to purchase a ticket to this film while its in THEATERS. See yall there august 15th!*	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1
111	19.08.2018	7203	59	1	0	0	*On this historic crazy rich asians opening weekend, I want to pay respects to the OG DALG, Wayne Wang (Director of the Joy Luck Club). I had the honor of making a film with him over the past few weeks and am absolutely astonished at his continued pursuit for truth [...]*	0	#COMINGHOMEAGAINFILM #CAAM	1	0	0	1	0	2
112	23.08.2018	4332	36	1	0	0	*Been a good month for us. Wow was it amazing to rewatch this film again and see the diversity of asian faces.*	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1
113	07.09.2018	5252	36	1	0	0	*Ugh. SO AMAZING!!!! i feel so proud*	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1
114	18.09.2018	3217	34	1	0	0	One of my favorite still from my film misspurplefilm cant wait to share!	0	#misspurplefilm	0	1	0	0	0	1
115	26.09.2018	5630	104	0	0	1	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	2
116	27.09.2018	1515	4	1	0	0	*Another still from the film. Link in bio! Kickstarter is live!!! A*	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	1
117	29.09.2018	3741	12	1	0	0	*THANK YOU for an amazing first kickstarter weekend. We raised 20k!!!!*	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	1
118	31.09.2018	2560	19	1	0	0	*THANK YOU! We reached our goal on kickstarter. But now lets make this movie even better. Help us pay for song rights for the film*	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	1
119	13.11.2018	2171	8	1	0	0	*THANK YOU AGAIN. The kickstarter has been gangbusters. Here is a photo of our father actor. Please continue to share our kickstarter.*	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	1
120	17.11.2018	2177	35	0	1	0	THANK YOU for the mention Indiewire Sundance Wish List: 70 Films We Hope Will Head to Park City in 2019	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	2
121	23.11.2018	2334	16	1	0	0	*TODAY is the last day of our kickstarter campaign. You can still donate if you havent already.*	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	2
122	24.11.2018	1075	6	1	0	0	6 hours left to contribute! Ms. purple kickstarter. mspurplefilm thank you all for your support!!!	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	1
123	25.11.2018	1949	41	1	0	0	*WE DID IT!! Thank you to all who donated. We smashed the goal. Every penny will be used towards making the film amazing. Thank you for the faith in the mspurplefilm team. I promise to deliver a compelling, beautiful film.*	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	1
124	29.11.2018	6330	119	1	0	0	*SUNDANCE 2019.*	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	1

125	29.11.2018	3627	36	0	1	0	*Me and a bunch of young kids made a film. Thank you to my team! MS. PURPLE. SUNDANCE 2019! DRAMATIC COMPETITION*	"Best way to predict the future is to create it"	0	0	1	0	0	0	1
126	06.01.2019	1789	17	1	0	0	MS. PURPLE	0	#sundancefilmfestival2019	0	1	0	0	0	1
127	12.01.2019	3698	61	1	0	0	*We finished our movie. Next stop SUNDANCE!*	0	#mspurplefilm #inclusivefilmmaking	0	1	0	0	0	1
128	22.01.2019	9354	148	0	1	0	*Here we go. Thank you forbes*	"Justin Chon Sets His Sights On Sundance Again"	0	1	0	1	0	0	2
129	23.01.2019	3275	77	1	0	0	*Our SUNDANCE SCREENING schedule!!! So excited!*	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	1
130	24.01.2019	4145	13	1	0	0	*Also. Shoutout to my asian sisters who'll be killin at sundance!!!*	0	#thefarewell #hala	0	0	0	1	0	1
131	26.01.2019	3857	25	1	0	0	*We OCHEA*	0	#sundance2019	0	1	0	0	0	1
132	26.01.2019	3135	35	0	1	0	*Thank you for the wonderful write up in latimes*	"Sundance: In Justin Chon's 'Ms. Purple,' a Koreatown karaoke hostess lives an L. A. story"	#latimes	0	1	1	0	0	2
133	28.01.2019	2432	40	0	1	0	*Thank you deadline for the beautiful write up.*	'Ms. Purple' Director Justin Chon Uses His Platform "To Curate New Talent From My Community"	#mspurplefilm	0	1	1	1	0	3
134	02.02.2019	2658	39	1	0	0	*Last screening of mspurplefilm happening now. Youve been amazing sundancefilmfestival2019*	0	#mspurplefilm #sundancefilmfestival2019	1	1	0	0	0	2
135	04.04.2019	4356	40	1	0	0	*Some favorite moments from sundance2019 Thank you for having us. It was a true honor. Now on to the next. bluebayou*	0	#sundance2019 #bluebayou	1	1	0	0	0	2
136	20.03.2019	4898	140	0	1	0	*Im beyond excited to be working with oscopelabs to bring mspurplefilm to theaters!!! Yes it will be in theaters. I love their punk rock spirit and I am a die hard beastieboys fan [...] Also thank you @dinoray for the beautiful write up in @deadline*	"Oscilloscope Acquires Justin Chon Sundance Drama 'Ms. Purple' "	#beastieboys	0	1	1	0	0	2
137	06.05.2019	4554	42	1	0	0	*Thank you for a wonderful screening yesterday LA.*	0	#laapff2019	0	1	0	0	0	1
138	09.05.2019	3129	25	1	0	0	*Did a facebook watch interview with my lover davidchoimusic*	0	#mspurplefilm	1	1	0	0	0	2
139	14.05.2019	3509	24	1	0	0	Was an honor to be a part of this project. Thank you @zentronix @baomnguyen for including my voice.	0	#equitymatters #justicematters #represetationmatters	1	0	0	0	1	2
140	13.07.2019	4134	22	1	0	0	*thefarewell is in theaters today!!! Its an amazing piece of art. You want us on screen? Prove it.*	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1
141	23.07.2019	3440	44	1	0	0	*We are going to torontointernationalfilmfestival !!! With the film "coming home again" Wayne wang you are a legend!*	0	#torontointernationalfilmfestival #cominghomeagainfilm	1	0	0	1	0	2
142	24.07.2019	2430	21	0	1	0	*Lets go Wayne!*	0	#tiff #cominghomeagainfilm	0	0	1	1	0	2
143	25.07.2019	1874	48	0	0	1	*My film @mspurplefilm comes out in theaters sept 6th at the landmark nuart, santa monica. Then expands to ny sept 13th. Then expands to most major city afterwards.*	0	#mspurplefilm	0	1	0	0	0	1
144	25.07.2019	3535	84	1	0	0	*Folks, my film MS. PURPLE opens sept 6th at landmark's nuart in santa monica. Then expands to ny sept 13th. THEN most major cities the week after! This movie is so important to me. If you have a sibling...*	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	1
145	27.07.2019	3809	56	0	1	0	*Some press!!! Doing a screening tonight in new york if you are around for AAIFF.*	" 'Ms. Purple Trailer: 'Gook' Director Justin Chon Returns to Break Your Heart"	#MSPURPLE	0	1	1	0	0	2
146	01.08.2019	3784	64	0	0	1	*My dear friend @surrealgrace cut this. She's an amazing editor. Please hire her!!!!! #mspurple in theaters sept 6th!!!*	0	#mspurple	0	1	0	1	0	2
147	07.08.2019	2798	23	1	0	0	*Wow, Sundance2019 doesn't seem that long ago but soon #MsPurple opens in actual theaters! Join me in person at landmarktheatres Nuart starting September 6th. Oscopelabs has tickets on sale right now at the link in bio.*	0	#Sundance2019 #MsPurple	0	1	0	0	0	1
148	15.08.2019	1783	20	1	0	0	*DIY - Join me for some QandA's opening weekend for @mspurplefilm on sept 6th Lets get it*	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	1
149	16.08.2019	2026	47	0	1	0	*Letter I wrote for @landmarktheatres Catch @mspurplefilm sept 6th*	Filmmaker Letter	0	1	1	0	0	0	2
150	18.08.2019	1247	14	1	0	0	0	0	#BLUEBAYOU	1	1	0	0	0	2
151	20.08.2019	2133	13	1	0	0	*Most artistically fulfilling time ive had filming as an actor.*	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	2

152	30.08.2019	1221	35	0	0	1	*MS. PURPLE opens a week from today, 9/6 at the @ifcsanpeles Nuart in L.A. This is a film about family, and a film about Los Angeles. Both shown in all their beauty and sorrow.*	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	1
153	31.08.2019	2879	30	1	0	0	Blue Bayou	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	2
154	04.09.2019	1105	19	0	0	1	Where is @tiffanychu going? Ask her yourself this weekend at the Landmark Nuart for special Q&A shows featuring my amazing cast and myself.	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	1
155	05.09.2019	2889	26	1	0	0	*@mspurplefilm opens tomorrow!!! Link in Bio. Here are some beautiful test shots our amazing DP @antecheng shot before the film!*	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	1
156	06.09.2019	2375	39	0	0	1	*Opens today get your tickets.*	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	1
157	06.09.2019	4317	81	1	0	0	*Humbled and honored @mspurplefilm opens today!*	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	1
158	12.09.2019	2022	45	1	0	0	*Ms Purple opens today in NYC!!! come out and hang with me!*	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	1
159	12.09.2019	3166	90	1	0	0	*MS PURPLE JUST GOT NYT CRITICS PICK!!!!!!!!!*	" 'Mr. Purple review: The ties that bind (and sometimes Strangle)	0	0	1	1	0	0	2
160	12.09.2019	1401	15	1	0	0	*LA! Ms Purple opens at the Landmark today in westwood!!! Thank you to everyone who came out premier weekend. Please continue to spread the word. We got moved to a bigger theater. Lets fill these seats.*	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	1
161	13.09.2019	1329	20	1	0	0	*IRVINE. If you live in SOUTH OC checm out my film Ms Purple tonight in my hometown.*	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	1
162	17.09.2019	1666	78	1	0	0	*Ms Purple expands this weekend!!! Coming to your city! Lets go!!!*	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	1
163	28.09.2019	1386	37	1	0	0	*Catch Ms. PURPLE THIS WEEKEND!!! We playing in a theater near you. How crazy is that???*	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	1
164	05.10.2019	1242	29	1	0	0	One last push everyone! Help spread the word and catch Ms. Purple while its in theaters! mspurplefilm	0	#newyork #nevadacity #baltimore #lasvegas #seattle #monterey #scottsdale #santafe #ashland #charlotte #miami	0	1	0	0	0	1
165	14.10.2019	5675	160		1	0	*Lets go!*	"Justin Chon, Alicia Vikander Plus More Star in 'Blue Bayou' Drama from Chon, MACRO, & eOne"	#BLUEBAYOU	0	1	1	0	0	2
166	29.10.2019	5888	45	1	0	0	*Hard day at work*	0	#bluebayou	1	1	0	0	0	2
167	31.10.2019	3926	23	1	0	0	*100 rolls of film*	0	#bluebayou	1	1	0	0	0	2
168	11.11.2019	1156	6	1	0	0	*Day 19*	0	#BLUEBAYOU	0	1	0	0	0	1
169	12.11.2019	3014	43	1	0	0	*How we work on the road Samyang ramen w/ kimchi and egg.*	0	#BLUEBAYOU	0	1	0	0	0	1
170	18.11.2019	1472	9	1	0	0	0	0	#BLUEBAYOU	0	1	0	0	0	1
171	19.11.2019	1373	41	1	0	0	*#MsPurple is now available to watch on the couch from @OscopeLabs! Head to mspurple.oscilloscope.net (@RottenTomatoes Certified Fresh!) to find on your favorite VOD platforms like @AppleTV, @PrimeVideo, and more!*	0	#MsPurple	0	1	0	0	0	1
172	30.11.2019	3912	93	1	0	0	*And THATS A WRAP on principal photography for BLUEBAYOU This has truly been the most magical experience ive ever had on any set of my entire career. Thank you to the cast and crew who tirelessly worked their butts off to make this vision become reality. I am indebted to all of you!!! Now back to my cave to edit the shit out of this film.*	0	#BLUEBAYOU	0	1	0	0	0	1
173	28.12.2019	3596	25	0	1	0	*We'll get em on the next one. Thanks @zsharf for the support and thank you fellow outcast @minhalb for letting me know this list existed hahaha If you want to see the film reserve it on your @netflix DVD cue*	"23 Criminally Overlooked Indies and Foreign Films in 2019: Ms. Purple, Native Son, Hala"	0	0	1	1	0	0	2
174	02.01.2020	1337	16	1	0	0	*This manboy @reynolds.lb is MVP for 2016-2019. Hes edited all of my films and hes loyal as fuck. While everyone has been partying and celebreting during the month of december, this manboy has been putting in 16 hour days. Appreciate you reynolds. Lets get em 2020 style.*	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1
175	04.01.2020	5026	58	1	0	0	*Todays my last night in hawaii. @reynolds.lb and I have been busting our ass during the holidays in hawaii to make our film BLUEBAYOU amazing*	0	#BLUEBAYOU	0	1	0	0	0	1

176	22.03.2020	4817	69	1	0	0	Officially picture locked #bluebayou Thankful in this trying time to have the priveledge to continue making art...	0	#bluebayou	0	1	0	0	0	1
177	01.04.2020	959	21	0	0	1	A scene from @mspurplefilm that was cut. Its one of my favorite scenes but had to cut it. We rehearsed it and shot it renegade style on the la metro. Ms. PURPLE is on @hulu now!!!	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	1
178	01.04.2020	2107	25	1	0	0	Test shots from my film mspurplefilm. Its on hulu The first shot was a full on test shoot on location with full hair, make up, practicals. The second shot was the first time i met mrtaedoo he came in to sit in front of camera not knowing that i waited to cast him.	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	1
179	05.04.2020	2749	17	1	0	0	BLUE BAYOU test shot	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	1
180	08.04.2020	4346	29	1	0	0	In progress. This virus aint gon stop us.	0	#BLUEBAYOU	0	1	0	0	0	1
181	19.04.2020	1618	18	1	0	0	We implemented super high tech special effects. DM me if you want lessons.	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	1
182	07.05.2020	2742	26	0	1	0	0	"I was murderedby two men and both of my killers have not been arrested. Please do not forget me. My name is Ahmaud Arbery"	0	0	0	0	0	1	1
183	08.05.2020	11.879	216	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1
184	26.05.2020	2058	19	1	0	0	We still chugging along on this film. #BLUEBAYOU Getting pretty close to done. Also, i read an article that venice might be happening. Who the hell knows!!!!	0	#BLUEBAYOU	0	1	0	0	0	1
185	27.05.2020	751	12	1	0	0	We did it. WE SHOT THIS BITCH ON FILM 2 DPs 1 cup	0	#bluebayou	0	1	0	1	0	2
186	27.05.2020	1686	6	1	0	0	0	0	#BLUEBAYOU	0	1	0	0	0	1
187	27.05.2020	2424	38	0	1	0	0	"I CANT BREATHE..."	0	0	0	0	0	1	1
188	29.05.2020	5003	66	1	0	0	The La riots were 28 years ago. Looting family owned business is not the answer.	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1
189	29.05.2020	5479	56	1	0	0	DE JA VU The la riots were 28 years ago. The 4 officers that beat rodney king were acquitted. Is this America's cycle forever?	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1
190	31.05.2020	2937	12	1	0	0	This my dad and I. We were looted during the 92' la riots. Listen to @killermike speech. He has powerful things to say about destroying your own neighborhood. Protesting is essential. But bringing your own community to ash...	0	#blacklivesmatter	0	0	0	0	1	1
191	31.05.2020	4443	21	1	0	0	This my dad and I. We were looted during the 92' la riots. Listen to @killermike speech. He has powerful things to say about destroying your own neighborhood. Protesting is essential. But bringing your own community to ash...	0	#blacklivesmatter	0	0	0	0	1	1
192	31.05.2020	6689	68	1	0	0	This my dad and I. We were looted during the 92' la riots. Listen to @killermike speech. He has powerful things to say about destroying your own neighborhood. Protesting is essential. But bringing your own community to ash...	0	#blacklivesmatter	0	0	0	0	1	1
193	01.06.2020	2309	15	1	0	0	Some G shit!	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1
194	02.06.2020	1702	4	1	0	0	You had family looted in the LA riots.. you know how most Korean families feel about BLM	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1
195	04.06.2020	1707	32	0	1	0	love this Thanks for putting this together @outofky Thanks for reposting @londoner150	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1
196	07.06.2020	1252	28	0	0	1	My dear friend baomnguyen directed a beautiful documentary about brucelee that premiers today on @espn Bruce united us through his philosphy, films, and martial arts. But what i loved most about his spirit was his idea of vision. He pursued his dream with a tenacity that made him unstoppable. As an asian american i constantly think about him as i navigate my way through the industry. Watch the doc and be inspired.	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1

197	02.07.2020	4976	256	0	1	0	*So pleased to announce focusfeatures will be distributing my film Blue Bayou.*	"Justin Chon's 'Blue Bayou' Sells to Focus Features Out of Cannes Vitual Market"	0	0	1	1	0	0	2
198	19.07.2020	1082	4	1	0	0	*We finished bluebayou*	0	#bluebayou	0	1	0	1	0	2
199	19.07.2020	1893	45	1	0	0	*We finished bluebayou*	0	#bluebayou	0	1	0	1	0	2
200	19.07.2020	1266	12	1	0	0	*We finished bluebayou*	0	#bluebayou	0	1	0	1	0	2
201	23.07.2020	779	6	1	0	0	*Taiwanese brothers for life*	0	#BLUEBAYOU	0	1	0	1	0	2
202	25.07.2020	531	0	1	0	0	*Sound*	0	#BLUEBAYOU	0	1	0	0	0	1
203	25.07.2020	534	2	1	0	0	*Sound*	0	#BLUEBAYOU	0	1	0	0	0	1
204	25.07.2020	639	3	1	0	0	0	0	#BLUEBAYOU	0	1	0	0	0	1
205	02.11.2020	4152	127	0	1	0	*JUNE 25*	"Justin Chon's 'Blue Bayou' Lands Summer 2021 Release in Theathers"	0	0	1	1	0	0	2
206	29.12.2020	3530	98	0	1	0	*June 25th*	"The 39 Most Anticipated Movies of 2021"	#Bluebayou	0	1	1	0	0	2
207	28.01.2021	1230	11	1	0	0	Today is the first day of SUNDANCE 2021 and I wanted to take a quick moment to introduce someone I think its INCREDIBLY TALENTED. I first met @nataliieachao on the set of Ms. Purple. After we wrapped she had told me she was moving back to Hong Kong and I hoped she would continue to make art. And she has [...] Learn more by following @nataliieachao and you can view the project online during the Festival this week.	0	#SeeItAtSundance #Sundance	0	1	0	0	0	0	1
208	11.02.2021	1914	36	0	1	0	*I was interviewed for the @nytimes with these wonderful film makers about asian american cinema. Link is in bio if youre interested. Thanks for the amazing interview Brandon Yu!*	"A Vision of Asian-American Cinema that Questions the Very Premise"	0	0	1	1	0	0	2
209	08.05.2021	1739	26	1	0	0	*My FAVORITE #mspurplefilm poster EVER!!! Catch it on hulu if you havent seen it*	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	1
210	09.05.2021	1229	13	1	0	0	*One more from @palaceworksinc @mspurplefilm catch it on @hulu*	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	1
211	03.06.2021	3767	146	1	0	0	Since we got into festivaldecannes id like to share some beautiful photos of my cinematographer @antecheng	0	#Bluebayou #Canne2021	0	1	0	0	0	1
212	07.07.2021	3134	84	0	1	0	Lets go!	"7 Most Buzzworthy Titles of Cannes 2021"	0	0	1	1	0	0	2
213	07.07.2021	2471	67	0	1	0	*@vanityfair interview*	"Justin Chon Confronts a Broken American Dream in Blue Bayou"	#davidcanfield	0	1	1	0	0	2
214	08.07.2021	1919	25	1	0	0	*The @bluebayoufilm Director and DP team ASIAN POWER!!!!!!!!*	0	0	0	1	0	1	0	2
215	08.07.2021	8768	145	1	0	0	*International Poster*	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	1
216	09.07.2021	2209	45	1	0	0	*Leaving for Cannes tomorrow!!!! Excited to reunite with the team!*	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	1
217	12.07.2021	4321	68	1	0	0	*Thats about right...*	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	1
218	12.07.2021	2086	52	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	1	2
219	13.07.2021	2516	47	1	0	0	*Let's Go*	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	1
220	13.07.2021	8167	399	0	0	1	*@bluebayoufilm SEPT 17th lets go!!!*	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	1
221	14.07.2021	5919	156	1	0	0	*SEPT 17th!*	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	1
222	15.07.2021	3364	35	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	2
223	16.07.2021	5235	178	0	1	0	*@bluebayoufilm in theaters SEPT 17th*	"Justin Chon Could Direct Himself and Alica Vikander to an Oscar Nomination for the Timely 'Blue Bayou' "	0	0	1	1	0	0	2
224	18.07.2021	3492	74	1	0	0	Sept 17th	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	2
225	19.07.2021	6584	79	1	0	0	*thanks for the photos @baomnguyen @festivaldecannes was beautiful*	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	1
226	09.08.2021	1867	25	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	1
227	13.08.2021	734	10	0	0	1	*This montage for fall films is awesome.*	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	1
228	17.08.2021	1178	30	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	1
229	24.08.2021	3718	72	1	0	0	Lets go @bluebayoufilm in theaters SEPT 17th	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	1
230	25.08.2021	1306	9	1	0	0	*The beautiful and insanely talented Alicia Vikander*	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	1
231	26.08.2021	768	8	1	0	0	*The family we choose*	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	1
232	27.08.2021	1023	11	1	0	0	*SEPT 17th*	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	1
233	30.08.2021	2740	52	0	0	1	*Sept 17th!*	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	1
234	31.08.2021	1422	17	1	0	0	*SEPT 17th in theaters*	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	1
235	31.08.2021	2656	58	0	0	1	*SEPT 17. Only in theaters.*	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	1
236	02.09.2021	1072	17	1	0	0	*2 more weeks! Sept 17th! Only in theaters*	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	1
237	07.09.2021	5574	70	0	0	1	@bluebayoufilm SEPT 17 Only in theaters!	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	1

238	08.09.2021	4097	41	1	0	0	The colors of @bluebayoufilm Always find it interesting how color can seep into the subconscious @tomsipoole is a gangster! In theatres SEPT 17th	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	1
239	09.09.2021	581	5	0	0	1	Links to tickets in Bio! SEPT 17th in theaters	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	1
240	09.09.2021	2677	52	0	0	1	Link to tickets in bio SEPT 17th in theaters	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	1
241	10.09.2021	2912	74	0	1	0	End credits for @entertainmentweekly @bluebayoufilm in theaters SEPT 17th	"Our Stories Matter: Actor, Writer, and Director Justin Chon Praises Hollywood for its progress in Asian American Representation but, as he explains here, it still has 'a long way to go' "	0	0	1	1	0	0	2
242	11.09.2021	1282	27	0	0	1	@bluebayoufilm in theaters SEPT 17!!! Buy tickets now! Link in my Bio!!!!!	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	1
243	14.09.2021	783	24	0	0	1	Lets go!!!! @bluebayoufilm out this friday Link to tix in my bio!!!	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	1
244	14.09.2021	4020	64	0	0	1	This friday @bluebayoufilm out in theaters!!!!! Link to tix in Bio	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	1
245	16.09.2021	3332	74	1	0	0	@bluebayoufilm premier yesterday with @iamsydneykowalske @markobrienforeal SEPT 17th.	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	1
246	16.09.2021	2375	93	0	0	1	Tonight! Screenings will begin for @bluebayoufilm Out tomorrow in theaters!!!!!!	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	1
247	17.09.2021	2240	86	0	0	1	@bluebayoufilm NOW PLAYING!!! In THEATERS!!!!!! LETS GO!	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	1
248	18.09.2021	3785	136	1	0	1	@bluebayoufilm out now IN THEATERS!!! Check it out this weekend. Tix in my bio	0	0	1	1	0	0	1	3
249	19.09.2021	5271	243	0	0	1	Now playing!!! Thank you to the community. Ive felt supported this weekend. @bluebayoufilm in theaters now!	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	1
250	29.09.2021	3620	86	0	1	0	Here is a statement from deported and impacted adoptees that helped during production of @bluebayoufilm	"Statement from the Deported and Impacted Adoptee Community in Support of Blue Bayou […]"	0	0	1	0	0	1	2
251	29.09.2021	9015	461	0	1	0	Here's something Id like to say...	"[…] I made this film because I became aware of an inhumane policy that needs attention. I hope that this film can continue to bring awareness to the impacted adoptees in this country"	0	0	1	0	0	1	2
252	30.09.2021	2784	81	0	0	1	After you watch and you ask yourself what you can do to help impacted adoptees, please call your representatives in Congress and tell them that the Adoptee Citizenship Act of 2021 is an important issue for you as a constituent. As we all know, legislation is a matter of exposure. The more we make noise, the more it must be dealt with. Let's all do our part to right this injustice and help intercountry adoptees stay in this country. Go to AdopteeRightsLaw.com/action/aca2021/ to learn more.	0	0	0	1	0	0	1	2
253	01.10.2021	2193	56	0	0	1	Catch @bluebayoufilm this weekend in theaters!!!	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	1
254	05.10.2021	3111	63	1	0	0	On demand everywhere @bluebayoufilm	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	1
255	05.10.2021	780	19	0	1	0	Also! If you watch @bluebayoufilm and would like to help impacted adoptees in need here is a website where you can donate in 3 ways. Towards legal funds, emergency relief, and advocacy campaigning funds. LINK IS IN MY BIO!	"Adoptees Advocating For Citizenship and Equality"	0	0	1	0	0	1	2
256	05.10.2021	1887	28	0	0	1	Still in theaters and on demand Friday. @bluebayoufilm The amazingly talented @linhdanphamofficial	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	1
257	06.10.2021	9718	22	0	0	1	ALICIA IS THE BEST!!!! @bluebayoufilm in theaters and on demand friday!	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	1
258	08.10.2021	1403	38	1	0	0	On demand tomorrow. Still in theaters folks.	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	2
259	08.10.2021	1002	34	1	0	0	@bluebayoufilm on demand!!! Watch it this weekend at home BUT its also still@in theaters!!!!!	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	1
260	09.10.2021	1532	43	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	1
261	10.10.2021	1594	30	1	0	0	@bluebayou on demand now!!!	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	1
262	12.10.2021	4255	109	1	0	0	@bluebayoufilm out tomorrow in South Korea!!	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	1

263	15.10.2021	905	23	1	0	0	@bluebayoufilm on demand NOW!!!	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	1
264	18.10.2021	1085	47	1	0	0	@bluebayoufilm is on demand. ALSO if you watch the film and it affects you in a way to take action donate to adopteeadvocacy.org	0	0	0	1	0	0	1	2
265	22.10.2021	1471	16	1	0	0	This is my editing partner @reynolds.lb He has edited all my film. I bought this photo for him at benihana so he can remember the good times.	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	2
266	26.10.2021	1336	61	1	0	0	Im very very excited about this website created by @focusfeatures and myself to offer resources to help impacted adoptees. This was something that was planned before the release of @bluebayoufilm Also included in the site is a link to a podcast where several impacted/deported adoptee stories have been highlighted. They share their stories. If you watched the film and are wondering what you can do to help, this website is a good starting point.	0	0	0	1	0	0	1	2
267	29.10.2021	922	27	1	0	0	On demand now!!!	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	1
268	01.12.2021	1298	74	1	0	0	Even being in the conversation is a great honor.	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	2
269	07.12.2021	1034	23	0	1	0	Lets get it Would love to meet you and help out.	"Rising Voices Season 2"	0	1	0	0	1	0	2
270	09.12.2021	2864	50	0	0	1	Amazing Alicia! Blue Bayou is available on demand today	0	#moviescenes #bluebayoumovie #aliciavikander #justinchon	0	1	0	0	0	1
271	11.12.2021	1616	28	0	0	1	Very grateful for everyone who worked on that movie	0	#bluebayou #focusfeatures #aliciavikander #justinchon	0	1	0	0	0	1
272	13.12.2021	1364	22	0	0	1	Kardashian?	0	#bluebayoumovie #bluebayou #aliciavikander #moviescenes #moviescene #justinchon #kimkardashian	0	1	0	0	0	1
273	14.12.2021	1809	36	0	1	0	Couldn't be happier for @antecheng and @mattscope . Congratulations on your Spirit Award nomination. You guys very much deserved it. Hard working, passionate, purposeful, EXTREMELY talented. I've been so lucky to work with such great people.	"Film Independent Sprit Awards Nominee: Best Cinematography"	0	0	1	0	1	0	2
274	15.12. 2021	2405	30	0	0	1	Some B roll footage. And @antecheng behind the camera	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	1
275	17.12.2021	1835	32	0	1	0	Thank you @hollywoodreporter	"Rasing Our Voices: How the Artisans of 'Blue Bayou' Redefined American Identity"	0	0	1	1	0	0	2
276	07.01.2022	5040	101	0	1	0	Thank you @latimes	"In 'Blue Bayou' Justin Chon demands justice for adopted immigrants facing depotation"	0	0	1	1	0	1	3
277	09.02.2022	2629	61	0	1	0	This is incredible	"US House passes bill that grants intercountry adoptees benefits, paths back to US if they've been deported"	0	0	0	0	0	1	1
278	16.02.2022	459	9	1	0	0	Time to write your API stories!	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1
279	24.02.22	703	7	1	0	0	After reviewing over 850 applications, the Rising Voices advisory panel has selected ten films to go into production for debut during #Tribeca2022 Congratulations to the #RisingVoices Season 2 filmmakers. We can't wait to see how you bring your stories to life. Stay tuned!	0	#Tribeca2022 #RisingVoices #WeHelpPeopleGet Jobs #HillmanGradproductions #Venturelard #271Films	0	0	0	1	0	1
280	06.03.2022	2091	55	1	0	0	In Germany now!!	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	1

APPENDIX B

1) Single Category Data Set for *Tables 1* and *2*.

Year	No	SUM / 1)Presenting Self-Image	SUM / 2) Films	SUM / 3) Media Appearance/Popular Press	SUM / 4) Promoting Asian-Americans within the Industry	SUM / 5)Minority Activism	SUM per post
2016	1	0	0	0	0	1	1
2016	14	1	0	0	0	0	1
2016	15	1	0	0	0	0	1
2016	16	1	0	0	0	0	1
2016	18	1	0	0	0	0	1
2016	24	0	1	0	0	0	1
2016	30	0	1	0	0	0	1
2016	32	0	1	0	0	0	1
2017	35	0	1	0	0	0	1
2017	43	0	1	0	0	0	1
2017	53	0	1	0	0	0	1
2017	56	0	1	0	0	0	1
2017	59	0	1	0	0	0	1
2017	60	0	1	0	0	0	1
2017	66	0	1	0	0	0	1
2017	74	0	1	0	0	0	1
2017	78	0	1	0	0	0	1
2017	80	0	1	0	0	0	1
2017	81	0	1	0	0	0	1
2017	83	0	1	0	0	0	1
2017	84	0	1	0	0	0	1
2017	87	0	1	0	0	0	1
2017	89	0	1	0	0	0	1
2017	91	0	1	0	0	0	1
2017	92	0	1	0	0	0	1
2017	93	0	1	0	0	0	1
2017	96	0	1	0	0	0	1
2017	102	0	0	0	1	0	1
2018	104	0	1	0	0	0	1
2018	105	1	0	0	0	0	1
2018	106	0	1	0	0	0	1
2018	107	0	1	0	0	0	1
2018	108	0	1	0	0	0	1
2018	109	0	1	0	0	0	1
2018	110	0	0	0	1	0	1
2018	112	0	0	0	1	0	1
2018	113	0	0	0	1	0	1
2018	114	0	1	0	0	0	1
2018	116	0	1	0	0	0	1
2018	117	0	1	0	0	0	1
2018	118	0	1	0	0	0	1
2018	119	0	1	0	0	0	1
2018	122	0	1	0	0	0	1
2018	123	0	1	0	0	0	1
2018	124	0	1	0	0	0	1
2018	125	0	1	0	0	0	1
2019	126	0	1	0	0	0	1
2019	127	0	1	0	0	0	1
2019	129	0	1	0	0	0	1
2019	130	0	0	0	1	0	1
2019	131	0	1	0	0	0	1
2019	137	0	1	0	0	0	1
2019	140	0	0	0	1	0	1
2019	143	0	1	0	0	0	1
2019	144	0	1	0	0	0	1
2019	147	0	1	0	0	0	1
2019	148	0	1	0	0	0	1
2019	152	0	1	0	0	0	1
2019	154	0	1	0	0	0	1
2019	155	0	1	0	0	0	1
2019	156	0	1	0	0	0	1
2019	157	0	1	0	0	0	1
2019	158	0	1	0	0	0	1
2019	160	0	1	0	0	0	1
2019	161	0	1	0	0	0	1
2019	162	0	1	0	0	0	1
2019	163	0	1	0	0	0	1
2019	164	0	1	0	0	0	1
2019	168	0	1	0	0	0	1
2019	169	0	1	0	0	0	1
2019	170	0	1	0	0	0	1
2019	171	0	1	0	0	0	1
2019	172	0	1	0	0	0	1
2020	174	0	0	0	1	0	1
2020	175	0	1	0	0	0	1
2020	176	0	1	0	0	0	1
2020	177	0	1	0	0	0	1
2020	178	0	1	0	0	0	1
2020	179	0	1	0	0	0	1
2020	180	0	1	0	0	0	1
2020	181	0	1	0	0	0	1
2020	182	0	0	0	0	1	1
2020	183	0	0	0	0	1	1

2020	184	0	1	0	0	0	1
2020	186	0	1	0	0	0	1
2020	187	0	0	0	0	1	1
2020	188	0	0	0	0	1	1
2020	189	0	0	0	0	1	1
2020	190	0	0	0	0	1	1
2020	191	0	0	0	0	1	1
2020	192	0	0	0	0	1	1
2020	193	0	0	0	0	1	1
2020	194	0	0	0	0	1	1
2020	195	0	0	0	0	1	1
2020	196	0	0	0	1	0	1
2020	202	0	1	0	0	0	1
2020	203	0	1	0	0	0	1
2020	204	0	1	0	0	0	1
2021	207	0	1	0	0	0	1
2021	209	0	1	0	0	0	1
2021	210	0	1	0	0	0	1
2021	211	0	1	0	0	0	1
2021	215	0	1	0	0	0	1
2021	216	0	1	0	0	0	1
2021	217	0	1	0	0	0	1
2021	219	0	1	0	0	0	1
2021	220	0	1	0	0	0	1
2021	221	0	1	0	0	0	1
2021	225	0	1	0	0	0	1
2021	226	0	1	0	0	0	1
2021	227	0	1	0	0	0	1
2021	228	0	1	0	0	0	1
2021	229	0	1	0	0	0	1
2021	230	0	1	0	0	0	1
2021	231	0	1	0	0	0	1
2021	232	0	1	0	0	0	1
2021	233	0	1	0	0	0	1
2021	234	0	1	0	0	0	1
2021	235	0	1	0	0	0	1
2021	236	0	1	0	0	0	1
2021	237	0	1	0	0	0	1
2021	238	0	1	0	0	0	1
2021	239	0	1	0	0	0	1
2021	240	0	1	0	0	0	1
2021	242	0	1	0	0	0	1
2021	243	0	1	0	0	0	1
2021	244	0	1	0	0	0	1
2021	245	0	1	0	0	0	1
2021	246	0	1	0	0	0	1
2021	247	0	1	0	0	0	1
2021	249	0	1	0	0	0	1
2021	253	0	1	0	0	0	1
2021	254	0	1	0	0	0	1
2021	256	0	1	0	0	0	1
2021	257	0	1	0	0	0	1
2021	259	0	1	0	0	0	1
2021	260	0	1	0	0	0	1
2021	261	0	1	0	0	0	1
2021	262	0	1	0	0	0	1
2021	263	0	1	0	0	0	1
2021	267	0	1	0	0	0	1
2021	270	0	1	0	0	0	1
2021	271	0	1	0	0	0	1
2021	272	0	1	0	0	0	1
2021	274	0	1	0	0	0	1
2022	277	0	0	0	0	1	1
2022	278	0	0	0	1	0	1
2022	279	0	0	0	1	0	1
2022	280	0	1	0	0	0	1

2) MultiCategory Data Set for *Tables 3* and *4*.

Year	No	1)Presenting Self-Image	2) Films	3) Media Appearance/Popular Press	4) Promoting Asian-Americans within the Industry	*5)Minority Activism*	*SUM per post*
2016	2	1	1	0	0	0	2
2016	3	1	1	0	0	0	2
2016	4	1	1	0	0	0	2
2016	5	1	1	0	0	0	2
2016	6	1	1	0	0	0	2
2016	7	1	1	0	0	0	2
2016	8	1	1	0	0	0	2
2016	9	1	1	0	0	0	2
2016	10	1	1	0	0	0	2
2016	11	1	1	0	0	0	2
2016	12	1	1	0	0	0	2
2016	13	1	1	0	0	0	2
2016	17	1	1	0	0	0	2
2016	19	1	1	0	0	0	2
2016	20	1	1	0	0	0	2
2016	21	1	1	0	0	0	2
2016	22	1	1	0	0	0	2
2016	23	1	1	0	0	0	2
2016	25	1	1	0	0	0	2
2016	26	1	1	0	0	0	2
2016	27	1	1	0	0	0	2
2016	28	1	1	0	0	1	3
2016	29	1	1	0	0	0	2
2016	31	0	1	1	0	0	2
2016	33	1	1	0	0	0	2
2017	34	1	1	0	0	0	2
2017	36	1	1	0	0	0	2
2017	37	1	1	0	0	0	2
2017	38	1	1	0	0	0	2
2017	39	1	1	0	0	0	2
2017	40	1	1	0	0	0	2
2017	41	1	1	0	0	0	2
2017	42	1	1	0	0	0	2
2017	44	1	1	1	0	0	3
2017	45	1	1	0	0	0	2
2017	46	1	1	1	0	0	3
2017	47	1	1	0	0	0	2
2017	48	1	0	1	0	0	2
2017	49	1	1	1	0	0	3
2017	50	1	1	0	0	0	2
2017	51	0	1	1	0	0	2
2017	52	0	1	1	0	0	2
2017	54	1	1	1	0	0	3
2017	55	1	1	0	0	0	2
2017	57	1	1	0	0	0	2
2017	58	1	1	0	0	0	2
2017	61	1	1	0	0	0	2
2017	62	1	1	0	0	0	2
2017	63	1	1	0	0	0	2
2017	64	1	1	0	0	0	2
2017	65	1	1	0	0	0	2
2017	67	1	1	0	0	0	2
2017	68	1	1	0	0	0	2
2017	69	1	1	0	0	0	2
2017	70	1	1	0	0	0	2
2017	71	1	1	0	0	0	2
2017	72	0	1	1	0	0	2
2017	73	0	1	1	0	0	2
2017	75	0	1	1	0	0	2
2017	76	1	1	0	0	0	2
2017	77	1	1	1	0	0	3
2017	79	0	1	1	0	0	2
2017	82	1	1	0	0	0	2

2017	85	0	1	1	0	0	2
2017	86	0	1	1	0	0	2
2017	88	1	1	0	0	0	2
2017	90	1	1	0	0	0	2
2017	94	0	1	1	0	0	2
2017	95	0	1	1	0	0	2
2017	97	1	0	1	0	0	2
2017	98	1	1	0	0	0	2
2017	99	1	1	1	0	0	3
2017	100	1	1	0	1	0	3
2017	101	0	0	0	1	1	2
2018	103	0	1	1	0	0	2
2018	111	1	0	0	1	0	2
2018	115	1	1	0	0	0	2
2018	120	0	1	1	0	0	2
2018	121	0	1	1	0	0	2
2019	128	1	0	1	0	0	2
2019	132	0	1	1	0	0	2
2019	133	0	1	1	1	0	3
2019	134	1	1	0	0	0	2
2019	135	1	1	0	0	0	2
2019	136	0	1	1	0	0	2
2019	138	1	1	0	0	0	2
2019	139	1	0	0	0	1	2
2019	141	1	0	0	1	0	2
2019	142	0	0	1	1	0	2
2019	145	0	1	1	0	0	2
2019	146	0	1	0	1	0	2
2019	149	1	1	0	0	0	2
2019	150	1	1	0	0	0	2
2019	151	1	0	0	1	0	2
2019	153	1	1	0	0	0	2
2019	159	0	1	1	0	0	2
2019	165	0	1	1	0	0	2
2019	166	1	1	0	0	0	2
2019	167	1	1	0	0	0	2
2019	173	0	1	1	0	0	2
2020	185	0	1	0	1	0	2
2020	197	0	1	1	0	0	2
2020	198	0	1	0	1	0	2
2020	199	0	1	0	1	0	2
2020	200	0	1	0	1	0	2
2020	201	0	1	0	1	0	2
2020	205	0	1	1	0	0	2
2020	206	0	1	1	0	0	2
2021	208	0	1	1	0	0	2
2021	212	0	1	1	0	0	2
2021	213	0	1	1	0	0	2
2021	214	0	1	0	1	0	2
2021	218	0	1	0	0	1	2
2021	222	1	1	0	0	0	2
2021	223	0	1	1	0	0	2
2021	224	0	1	1	0	0	2
2021	241	0	1	1	0	0	2
2021	248	1	1	0	0	1	3
2021	250	0	1	0	0	1	2
2021	251	0	1	0	0	1	2
2021	252	0	1	0	0	1	2
2021	255	0	1	0	0	1	2
2021	258	0	1	1	0	0	2
2021	264	0	1	0	0	1	2
2021	265	1	0	0	1	0	2
2021	266	0	1	0	0	1	2
2021	268	0	1	1	0	0	2
2021	269	1	0	0	1	0	2

2021	273	0	1	0	1	0	2
2021	275	0	1	1	0	0	2
2022	276	0	1	1	0	1	3

APPENDIX C

The data taken from the code sheet (*Appendix A*) to measure the Sum of Comments/Likes and the average of Comments/Likes of Justin Chon Instagram posts (280) (for *Tables 5*, *6*, and *7*).

Year	Date	No	Likes	Comments	1)Present Self-Image	2) Films	3) Media Appearance/ Popular Press	4) Promoting Asian-Americans within the Industry	5)Minority Activism
2016	09.07.2016	1	3435	32	0	0	0	0	1
2016	11.07.2016	2	2628	11	1	1	0	0	0
2016	13.07.2016	3	2025	3	1	1	0	0	0
2016	13.07.2016	4	2140	9	1	1	0	0	0
2016	13.07.2016	5	1542	16	1	1	0	0	0
2016	15.07.2016	6	1709	7	1	1	0	0	0
2016	24.07.2016	7	2421	13	1	1	0	0	0
2016	30.07.2016	8	2698	13	1	1	0	0	0
2016	21.07.2016	9	2064	16	1	1	0	0	0
2016	03.08.2016	10	1256	2	1	1	0	0	0
2016	03.08.2016	11	1082	10	1	1	0	0	0
2016	05.08.2016	12	1976	13	1	1	0	0	0
2016	05.08.2016	13	1678	8	1	1	0	0	0
2016	06.08.2016	14	1528	11	1	0	0	0	0
2016	09.08.2016	15	1104	9	1	0	0	0	0
2016	09.08.2016	16	1101	8	1	0	0	0	0
2016	11.08.2016	17	1747	7	1	1	0	0	0
2016	13.08.2016	18	2467	16	1	0	0	0	0
2016	14.08.2016	19	1988	6	1	1	0	0	0
2016	15.08.2016	20	1839	4	1	1	0	0	0
2016	19.08.2016	21	2015	9	1	1	0	0	0
2016	21.08.2016	22	1082	10	1	1	0	0	0
2016	23.08.2016	23	2121	14	1	1	0	0	0
2016	02.09.2016	24	1611	14	0	1	0	0	0
2016	14.09.2016	25	1879	13	1	1	0	0	0
2016	16.09.2016	26	2194	14	1	1	0	0	0
2016	08.10.2016	27	1950	9	1	1	0	0	0
2016	12.10.2016	28	2064	47	1	1	0	0	1
2016	18.10.2016	29	962	10	1	1	0	0	0
2016	24.10.2016	30	719	7	0	1	0	0	0
2016	01.12.2016	31	1445	64	0	1	1	0	0
2016	10.12.2016	32	1322	32	0	1	0	0	0
2016	18.12.2016	33	1057	4	1	1	0	0	0
2017	02.01.2017	34	1634	17	1	1	0	0	0
2017	02.01.2017	35	906	4	0	1	0	0	0
2017	03.01.2017	36	1139	21	1	1	0	0	0
2017	05.01.2017	37	1659	12	1	1	0	0	0
2017	09.01.2017	38	1394	6	1	1	0	0	0
2017	18.01.2017	39	2364	28	1	1	0	0	0
2017	20.01.2017	40	1091	14	1	1	0	0	0
2017	22.01.2017	41	2349	18	1	1	0	0	0
2017	23.01.2017	42	2093	22	1	1	0	0	0
2017	24.01.2017	43	795	3	0	1	0	0	0
2017	24.01.2017	44	1818	29	1	1	1	0	0
2017	29.01.2017	45	4088	361	1	1	0	0	0
2017	31.01.2017	46	2522	55	1	1	1	0	0
2017	10.02.2017	47	2031	15	1	1	0	0	0
2017	16.02.2017	48	3100	51	1	0	1	0	0
2017	25.02.2017	49	1605	14	1	1	1	0	0
2017	11.03.2017	50	1787	20	1	1	0	0	0
2017	19.04.2017	51	2449	66	0	1	1	0	0
2017	27.04.2017	52	5882	35	0	1	1	0	0
2017	27.04.2017	53	2117	39	0	1	0	0	0
2017	28.04.2017	54	4968	39	1	1	1	0	0
2017	30.04.2017	55	5749	36	1	1	0	0	0
2017	05.05.2017	56	3119	14	0	1	0	0	0
2017	11.06.2017	57	3837	12	1	1	0	0	0
2017	18.06.2017	58	1359	6	1	1	0	0	0
2017	26.06.2017	59	4527	80	0	1	0	0	0
2017	27.06.2017	60	1309	46	0	1	0	0	0
2017	29.06.2017	61	3352	80	1	1	0	0	0
2017	04.07.2017	62	2316	60	1	1	0	0	0
2017	26.07.2017	63	3191	12	1	1	0	0	0
2017	26.07.2017	64	4272	28	1	1	0	0	0
2017	27.07.2017	65	1771	23	1	1	0	0	0
2017	08.08.2017	66	3703	48	0	1	0	0	0
2017	08.08.2017	67	3182	15	1	1	0	0	0
2017	08.08.2017	68	3525	9	1	1	0	0	0
2017	12.08.2017	69	1383	17	1	1	0	0	0
2017	13.08.2017	70	3021	10	1	1	0	0	0
2017	13.08.2017	71	3144	20	1	1	0	0	0
2017	15.08.2017	72	2436	34	0	1	1	0	0
2017	16.08.2017	73	3648	33	0	1	1	0	0
2017	17.08.2017	74	2586	38	0	1	0	0	0
2017	18.08.2017	75	2656	28	0	1	1	0	0
2017	19.08.2017	76	6458	43	1	1	0	0	0
2017	19.08.2017	77	5624	25	1	1	1	0	0

2017	19.08.2017	78	1216	9	0	1	0	0	0
2017	20.08.2017	79	4428	88	0	1	1	0	0
2017	23.08.2017	80	3225	40	0	1	0	0	0
2017	24.08.2017	81	4043	55	0	1	0	0	0
2017	25.08.2017	82	3570	17	1	1	0	0	0
2017	25.08.2017	83	2394	31	0	1	0	0	0
2017	25.08.2017	84	2786	83	0	1	0	0	0
2017	26.08.2017	85	3195	31	0	1	1	0	0
2017	26.08.2017	86	2994	44	0	1	1	0	0
2017	27.08.2017	87	3633	73	0	1	0	0	0
2017	29.08.2017	88	5147	180	1	1	0	0	0
2017	31.08.2017	89	2484	105	0	1	0	0	0
2017	03.09.2017	90	4669	26	1	1	0	0	0
2017	15.09.2017	91	2359	54	0	1	0	0	0
2017	25.10.2017	92	2886	50	0	1	0	0	0
2017	08.11.2017	93	6075	151	0	1	0	0	0
2017	21.11.2017	94	2180	47	0	1	1	0	0
2017	22.11.2017	95	5402	47	0	1	1	0	0
2017	05.12.2017	96	4248	86	0	1	0	0	0
2017	09.12.2017	97	4043	46	1	0	1	0	0
2017	10.12.2017	98	4983	8	1	1	0	0	0
2017	12.12.2017	99	6630	115	1	1	1	0	0
2017	14.12.2017	100	6232	142	1	1	0	1	0
2017	21.12.2017	101	6727	139	0	0	0	1	1
2017	29.12.2017	102	2181	16	0	0	0	1	0
2018	07.01.2018	103	3325	50	0	1	1	0	0
2018	13.04.2018	104	3514	14	0	1	0	0	0
2018	02.05.2018	105	5211	36	1	0	0	0	0
2018	16.06.2018	106	7675	145	0	1	0	0	0
2018	19.06.2018	107	1873	9	0	1	0	0	0
2018	04.07.2018	108	2380	22	0	1	0	0	0
2018	05.07.2018	109	2745	13	0	1	0	0	0
2018	08.08.2018	110	9081	138	0	0	0	1	0
2018	19.08.2018	111	7203	59	1	0	0	1	0
2018	23.08.2018	112	4332	36	0	0	0	1	0
2018	07.09.2018	113	5252	36	0	0	0	1	0
2018	18.09.2018	114	3217	34	0	1	0	0	0
2018	26.09.2018	115	5630	104	1	1	0	0	0
2018	27.09.2018	116	1515	4	0	1	0	0	0
2018	29.09.2018	117	3741	12	0	1	0	0	0
2018	31.09.2018	118	2560	19	0	1	0	0	0
2018	13.11.2018	119	2171	8	0	1	0	0	0
2018	17.11.2018	120	2177	35	0	1	1	0	0
2018	23.11.2018	121	2334	16	0	1	1	0	0
2018	24.11.2018	122	1075	6	0	1	0	0	0
2018	25.11.2018	123	1949	41	0	1	0	0	0
2018	29.11.2018	124	6330	119	0	1	0	0	0
2018	29.11.2018	125	3627	36	0	1	0	0	0
2019	06.01.2019	126	1789	17	0	1	0	0	0
2019	12.01.2019	127	3698	61	0	1	0	0	0
2019	22.01.2019	128	9354	148	1	0	1	0	0
2019	23.01.2019	129	3275	77	0	1	0	0	0
2019	24.01.2019	130	4145	13	0	0	0	1	0
2019	26.01.2019	131	3857	25	0	1	0	0	0
2019	26.01.2019	132	3135	35	0	1	1	0	0
2019	28.01.2019	133	2432	40	0	1	1	1	0
2019	02.02.2019	134	2658	39	1	1	0	0	0
2019	04.04.2019	135	4356	40	1	1	0	0	0
2019	20.03.2019	136	4898	140	0	1	1	0	0
2019	06.05.2019	137	4554	42	0	1	0	0	0
2019	09.05.2019	138	3129	25	1	1	0	0	0
2019	14.05.2019	139	3509	24	1	0	0	0	1
2019	13.07.2019	140	4134	22	0	0	0	1	0
2019	23.07.2019	141	3440	44	1	0	0	1	0
2019	24.07.2019	142	2430	21	0	0	1	1	0
2019	25.07.2019	143	1874	48	0	1	0	0	0
2019	25.07.2019	144	3535	84	0	1	0	0	0
2019	27.07.2019	145	3809	56	0	1	1	0	0
2019	01.08.2019	146	3784	64	0	1	0	1	0
2019	07.08.2019	147	2798	23	0	1	0	0	0
2019	15.08.2019	148	1783	20	0	1	0	0	0
2019	16.08.2019	149	2026	47	1	1	0	0	0
2019	18.08.2019	150	1247	14	1	1	0	0	0
2019	20.08.2019	151	2133	13	1	0	0	1	0
2019	30.08.2019	152	1221	35	0	1	0	0	0
2019	31.08.2019	153	2879	30	1	1	0	0	0
2019	04.09.2019	154	1105	19	0	1	0	0	0
2019	05.09.2019	155	2889	26	0	1	0	0	0
2019	06.09.2019	156	2375	39	0	1	0	0	0
2019	06.09.2019	157	4317	81	0	1	0	0	0

2019	12.09.2019	158	2022	45	0	1	0	0	0
2019	12.09.2019	159	3166	90	0	1	1	0	0
2019	12.09.2019	160	1401	15	0	1	0	0	0
2019	13.09.2019	161	1329	20	0	1	0	0	0
2019	17.09.2019	162	1666	78	0	1	0	0	0
2019	28.09.2019	163	1386	37	0	1	0	0	0
2019	05.10.2019	164	1242	29	0	1	0	0	0
2019	14.10.2019	165	5675	160	0	1	1	0	0
2019	29.10.2019	166	5888	45	1	1	0	0	0
2019	31.10.2019	167	3926	23	1	1	0	0	0
2019	11.11.2019	168	1156	6	0	1	0	0	0
2019	12.11.2019	169	3014	43	0	1	0	0	0
2019	18.11.2019	170	1472	9	0	1	0	0	0
2019	19.11.2019	171	1373	41	0	1	0	0	0
2019	30.11.2019	172	3912	93	0	1	0	0	0
2019	28.12.2019	173	3596	25	0	1	1	0	0
2020	02.01.2020	174	1337	16	0	0	0	1	0
2020	04.01.2020	175	5026	58	0	1	0	0	0
2020	22.03.2020	176	4817	69	0	1	0	0	0
2020	01.04.2020	177	959	21	0	1	0	0	0
2020	01.04.2020	178	2107	25	0	1	0	0	0
2020	05.04.2020	179	2749	17	0	1	0	0	0
2020	08.04.2020	180	4346	29	0	1	0	0	0
2020	19.04.2020	181	1618	18	0	1	0	0	0
2020	07.05.2020	182	2742	26	0	0	0	0	1
2020	08.05.2020	183	11.879	216	0	0	0	0	1
2020	26.05.2020	184	2058	19	0	1	0	0	0
2020	27.05.2020	185	751	12	0	1	0	1	0
2020	27.05.2020	186	1686	6	0	1	0	0	0
2020	27.05.2020	187	2424	38	0	0	0	0	1
2020	29.05.2020	188	5003	66	0	0	0	0	1
2020	29.05.2020	189	5479	56	0	0	0	0	1
2020	31.05.2020	190	2937	12	0	0	0	0	1
2020	31.05.2020	191	4443	21	0	0	0	0	1
2020	31.05.2020	192	6689	68	0	0	0	0	1
2020	01.06.2020	193	2309	15	0	0	0	0	1
2020	02.06.2020	194	1702	4	0	0	0	0	1
2020	04.06.2020	195	1707	32	0	0	0	0	1
2020	07.06.2020	196	1252	28	0	0	0	1	0
2020	02.07.2020	197	4976	256	0	1	1	0	0
2020	19.07.2020	198	1082	4	0	1	0	1	0
2020	19.07.2020	199	1893	45	0	1	0	1	0
2020	19.07.2020	200	1266	12	0	1	0	1	0
2020	23.07.2020	201	779	6	0	1	0	1	0
2020	25.07.2020	202	531	0	0	1	0	0	0
2020	25.07.2020	203	534	2	0	1	0	0	0
2020	25.07.2020	204	639	3	0	1	0	0	0
2020	02.11.2020	205	4152	127	0	1	1	0	0
2020	29.12.2020	206	3530	98	0	1	1	0	0
2021	28.01.2021	207	1230	11	0	1	0	0	0
2021	11.02.2021	208	1914	36	0	1	1	0	0
2021	08.05.2021	209	1739	26	0	1	0	0	0
2021	09.05.2021	210	1229	13	0	1	0	0	0
2021	03.06.2021	211	3767	146	0	1	0	0	0
2021	07.07.2021	212	3134	84	0	1	1	0	0
2021	07.07.2021	213	2471	67	0	1	1	0	0
2021	08.07.2021	214	1919	25	0	1	0	1	0
2021	08.07.2021	215	8768	145	0	1	0	0	0
2021	09.07.2021	216	2209	45	0	1	0	0	0
2021	12.07.2021	217	4321	68	0	1	0	0	0
2021	12.07.2021	218	2086	52	0	1	0	0	1
2021	13.07.2021	219	2516	47	0	1	0	0	0
2021	13.07.2021	220	8167	399	0	1	0	0	0
2021	14.07.2021	221	5919	156	0	1	0	0	0
2021	15.07.2021	222	3364	35	1	1	0	0	0
2021	16.07.2021	223	5235	178	0	1	1	0	0
2021	18.07.2021	224	3492	74	0	1	1	0	0
2021	19.07.2021	225	6584	79	0	1	0	0	0
2021	09.08.2021	226	1867	25	0	1	0	0	0
2021	13.08.2021	227	734	10	0	1	0	0	0
2021	17.08.2021	228	1178	30	0	1	0	0	0
2021	24.08.2021	229	3718	72	0	1	0	0	0
2021	25.08.2021	230	1306	9	0	1	0	0	0
2021	26.08.2021	231	768	8	0	1	0	0	0
2021	27.08.2021	232	1023	11	0	1	0	0	0
2021	30.08.2021	233	2740	52	0	1	0	0	0
2021	31.08.2021	234	1422	17	0	1	0	0	0
2021	31.08.2021	235	2656	58	0	1	0	0	0
2021	02.09.2021	236	1072	17	0	1	0	0	0
2021	07.09.2021	237	5574	70	0	1	0	0	0

2021	08.09.2021	238	4097	41	0	1	0	0	0
2021	09.09.2021	239	581	5	0	1	0	0	0
2021	09.09.2021	240	2677	52	0	1	0	0	0
2021	10.09.2021	241	2912	74	0	1	1	0	0
2021	11.09.2021	242	1282	27	0	1	0	0	0
2021	14.09.2021	243	783	24	0	1	0	0	0
2021	14.09.2021	244	4020	64	0	1	0	0	0
2021	16.09.2021	245	3332	74	0	1	0	0	0
2021	16.09.2021	246	2375	93	0	1	0	0	0
2021	17.09.2021	247	2240	86	0	1	0	0	0
2021	18.09.2021	248	3785	136	1	1	0	0	1
2021	19.09.2021	249	5271	243	0	1	0	0	0
2021	29.09.2021	250	3620	86	0	1	0	0	1
2021	29.09.2021	251	9015	461	0	1	0	0	1
2021	30.09.2021	252	2784	81	0	1	0	0	1
2021	01.10.2021	253	2193	56	0	1	0	0	0
2021	05.10.2021	254	3111	63	0	1	0	0	0
2021	05.10.2021	255	780	19	0	1	0	0	1
2021	05.10.2021	256	1887	28	0	1	0	0	0
2021	06.10.2021	257	9718	22	0	1	0	0	0
2021	08.10.2021	258	1403	38	0	1	1	0	0
2021	08.10.2021	259	1002	34	0	1	0	0	0
2021	09.10.2021	260	1532	43	0	1	0	0	0
2021	10.10.2021	261	1594	30	0	1	0	0	0
2021	12.10.2021	262	4255	109	0	1	0	0	0
2021	15.10.2021	263	905	23	0	1	0	0	0
2021	18.10.2021	264	1085	47	0	1	0	0	1
2021	22.10.2021	265	1471	16	1	0	0	1	0
2021	26.10.2021	266	1336	61	0	1	0	0	1
2021	29.10.2021	267	922	27	0	1	0	0	0
2021	01.12.2021	268	1298	74	0	1	1	0	0
2021	07.12.2021	269	1034	23	1	0	0	1	0
2021	09.12.2021	270	2864	50	0	1	0	0	0
2021	11.12.2021	271	1616	28	0	1	0	0	0
2021	13.12.2021	272	1364	22	0	1	0	0	0
2021	14.12.2021	273	1809	36	0	1	0	1	0
2021	15.12. 2021	274	2405	30	0	1	0	0	0
2021	17.12.2021	275	1835	32	0	1	1	0	0
2022	07.01.2022	276	5040	101	0	1	1	0	1
2022	09.02.2022	277	2629	61	0	0	0	0	1
2022	16.02.2022	278	459	9	0	0	0	1	0
2022	24.02.2022	279	703	7	0	0	0	1	0
2022	06.03.2022	280	2091	55	0	1	0	0	0

APPENDIX D

The frequency of hashtags is visualized by a word cloud (see *Figure 24*).

The frequency of Justin Chon's Instagram hashtags was measured by the free generator *Word Cloud* from https://www.wordclouds.com/

Frequency of Use	Hashtags
67	gookthefilm
26	bluebayou
10	mspurplefilm
9	sundance2017
5	mspurple
4	equitymatters
3	aliciavikander
3	blacklivesmatter
3	cominghomeagainfilm
3	justicematters
3	justinchon
3	represetationmatters
3	sundance2019
2	bluebayoumovie
2	goldfriday
2	moviescenes
2	sundance
2	sundancefilmfestival2019
1	271Films
1	archlight
1	ashland
1	asiansforblacklives
1	baltimore
1	beastieboys
1	CAAM
1	Cannes2021
1	charlotte
1	cinetic
1	curtiscookjr
1	davidcanfield
1	focusfeatures
1	goldhouse
1	hala
1	HillmanGradproductions
1	hollywoodreporter
1	inclusivefilmmaking
1	itunes
1	kimkardashian
1	kpcc
1	laapff2019
1	lasvegas
1	latimes
1	miami
1	monterey
1	moviescene

1	nevadacity
1	newyork
1	pmk
1	regalcinemas
1	RisingVoices
1	rosewoodcutters
1	santafe
1	scottsdale
1	seattle
1	SeeItAtSundance
1	seoulsearching
1	sundancenextfest
1	thefarewell
1	theframepodcast
1	tiff
1	torontointernationalfilmfestival
1	Tribeca2022
1	Ventureland
1	WeHelpPeopleGetJobs