

# How do Social Environments Drive Youth Groups to Consume Cool Cultural Products Such as *The Glory*, Which in Turn Affects the Construction of Their Self-identity?

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**Abstract:** Netflix series such as *The Glory* swept the world from the end of 2022 to early 2023, becoming an important part of the "cool culture" of youth. This essay aims to analyze how social environments drive young people to consume such products and to explore how they cater to or shape their self-identities. It also warns of the risk of malignant incidents (such as bullying). The research reveals the dual influence of cultural products, emphasizing empowerment and the consciousness of justice, and it should also pay attention to the treatment of serious issues and the urgent needs of young audiences.

**Keywords:** Cool Culture; Youth Groups; Social Environment; Self-identity and Construction

## 1. Introduction

Between late 2022 and early 2023, the Netflix series *The Glory* has become a global hit amongst a variety of smash hits and has been widely distributed and discussed amongst the youth demographic. In today's rapidly evolving media landscape, youth are continually bombarded with an array of cultural products deemed cool and worthy of their attention and wallets. The "cool culture" continues to be extended and popularized, and continues to have an impact on youth. Among these products, Korean dramas, such as *The Glory*, have seen a dramatic rise in popularity and have become an important part of youth culture worldwide. This essay explores the intricate ways in which social environments drive youth groups to consume such products. Specifically, it examines how these products not only cater to the existing tastes of young audiences but also actively shape these tastes and contribute to the construction of youth

identities. On the other hand, it also needs to be scrutinized for its irrationality, especially for the attitudes it conveys and the way it handles vicious incidents such as school bullying. While satisfying people's spiritual and psychological needs, cool culture may also make teenagers maintain an over-optimistic attitude towards vicious incidents, including whether the female protagonist in *The Glory*, who sets her life's goal as revenge because of school bullying, is desirable for the growth of the youth group, and these are the parts that I will pay attention to as well as discuss.

Through analyzing the interaction between youth and cultural products such as *The Glory*, this essay aims to answer the pivotal question: How do social environments influence youth consumption of cool cultural products, and what impact does this have on their identity formation? This essay contends that while cultural products like '*The Glory*' are instrumental in shaping youth identity by resonating with themes of empowerment and justice, they also risk perpetuating less desirable attitudes toward serious issues such as bullying. By examining the interaction between youth and media within various social environments, we aim to uncover the dual impact of these cultural products, assessing both their potential to empower young audiences and the critical need for responsible content that does not trivialize serious societal issues.

## 2. Literature Review

### 2.1 The Influence of Media on Youth Identity and Social Behavior

Media consumption occupies a very important place in the formation of youth identity and behavior, constituting one of the major roles as a powerful agent of socialization. Smith and

Duggan (2016) aver that media, especially social media, has a big influence on the social interaction and tendencies of identity exploration among youth. To further that, Wilson and Park (2019) explain that what stirs Korean dramas is the emotional and psychological engagement with the storyline that impacts viewers to change perceptions of morality and self. The media presentation of matters such as bullying, Morrison and Greene (2018) argue, can serve to harden or question the social stigmas, highlighting a dual role of media in affecting youth perceptions and behaviors.

To make the discussion richer, Jones et al. (2018) found that the medium content mostly inspires adolescents to imitate the behaviors shown through it, thereby directly relating media content to personal identity development. This is supported by Patel and Singh (2022), who make very clear arguments about the complex reception of narratives centered on themes of revenge, which they depict as at once empowering and morally equivocal. The media reflects and actively constructs the societal value system, social behaviors, and even ethical frameworks of young people.

## **2.2 Cultural Products as Extensions of Media Influence**

Cultural products, particularly those emanating from globally influential markets like Korea, serve not just as entertainment but as powerful vehicles for cultural and social influence. Lee (2020) explores how Korean dramas transmit unique cultural values that become part of the global identity narrative, affecting how non-Korean viewers perceive and assimilate these values. Thomson and Jackson (2017) further argue that the 'coolness' factor of such media significantly dictates youth trends and consumption patterns worldwide.

Kim (2021) provides an analysis of the global discussions around Korean dramas, showing how these cultural products foster a shared cultural understanding across diverse populations. The integration of foreign cultural elements into personal identity among international viewers is a testament to the potent social influence of media. This cultural adoption reflects a broader trend of globalization in media consumption, where local narratives become part of a global

dialogue, influencing perceptions of self and others across cultural boundaries.

## **2.3 Comparative Analysis of Media Impact Before and After Exposure**

The impact of media on youth can be observed by comparing attitudes and behaviors before and after exposure to specific media content. Evans and Thomas (2020) provide insight into how prolonged engagement with media, such as Korean dramas, deepens viewer identification with characters and acceptance of portrayed values. This suggests that media not only initiates immediate changes in youth identity but also reinforces these changes over time, solidifying its role in identity formation. Brown and Larson (2021) discuss the long-term engagement with media content and its cumulative effects on youth, highlighting how continuous exposure can lead to a normalization of depicted behaviors and values, including potentially harmful ones like bullying. Davis (2023) further examines the implications of this for youth behavior, suggesting that repeated portrayals of violence or revenge might desensitize viewers and shape their attitudes toward these issues.

## **2.4 Conclusion**

This literature review synthesizes various perspectives on the role of media in shaping youth identity and behavior, underscoring the powerful influence of cultural products in this process. By examining the immediate and long-term impacts of media exposure, as well as the cultural dimensions of media consumption, this review sets the stage for a deeper exploration of how social environments influence youth engagement with media and the subsequent effects on their identity formation and social perceptions.

## **3. Methods**

To explore how cultural products like "The Glory" influence youth identity and consumption behaviors, this study employs a qualitative content analysis of user-generated comments from online platforms hosting videos related to the series. Specifically, the focus is on the comments posted beneath videos of "The Glory," particularly before and after the release of its second season. These comments provide real-time, authentic reactions and perspectives from viewers,

offering insights into how audiences engage with the themes presented in the series, such as revenge and school bullying.

The selection of user comments from video platforms as the primary data source is strategic. First, these comments represent a direct and spontaneous reaction to the content, which is invaluable for understanding immediate viewer perceptions and emotional responses. Furthermore, analyzing comments from both before and after the second season's release allows for a comparative approach to gauge shifts in viewer attitudes and discussions over time. This method aligns with the research objective to examine the impact of "cool culture" on youth, as it provides a window into the evolving dialogue surrounding key themes of the series that resonate with or influence young viewers.

Data collection involves a systematic approach where comments are compiled from selected episodes known for their pivotal moments and themes relevant to the research question. Utilizing content analysis software, comments are categorized based on recurring themes, sentiment, and the frequency of specific discussions related to identity and cultural influence. This analysis not only quantifies the prevalence of certain viewpoints but also contextualizes how viewers interpret and internalize the series' portrayal of complex social issues. By analyzing these discussions, the study aims to elucidate the broader cultural impact of "The Glory" on youth identity formation and their consumption of media.

#### 4. Coding My Data

To systematically analyze the viewer comments, the study employs a rigorous coding process, a key component of qualitative content analysis. This process involves labeling and categorizing the data to identify recurring themes and relationships among them. Initially, the data is read in its entirety to gain a holistic understanding of the content. Subsequently, specific words, phrases, and sentences within the comments that signify important themes related to the research questions are highlighted. These are assigned codes, which are succinct labels that encapsulate the essence of the content. For instance, expressions of empathy or anger toward characters, discussions of cultural elements, and reactions to specific plot

developments are tagged with corresponding thematic codes such as "Empowerment," "Normalization of Bullying," and "Cultural Resonance." This coding is not only performed manually to preserve the nuanced context of viewer reactions but is also assisted by software tools to ensure consistency and accuracy across the large data set. The coded data is then reviewed to refine the codes and merge similar categories, facilitating a clearer thematic structure for in-depth analysis. This methodical approach enables the identification of dominant and subtle themes, providing a structured basis for analyzing the impact of "The Glory" on youth cultural consumption and identity formation, as Fig.1 and Fig.2.



Figure 1. Before the Glory Season 2 aired



Figure 2. After the Glory Season 2 aired

## 5. Results

### 5.1 Theme 1: Empowerment through Revenge

Analysis of viewer comments revealed a significant theme of empowerment associated with the protagonist's pursuit of revenge. Many young viewers expressed a sense of vicarious satisfaction and empowerment as they followed the protagonist's journey. For instance, one viewer commented, "Watching her take control and fight back was strangely uplifting, it felt like a win for anyone who's ever been bullied." This theme aligns with Patel and Singh's (2022) findings that narratives centered on revenge can sometimes serve as cathartic experiences for audiences. However, this theme also diverges from some aspects of previous research, such as Morrison and Greene's (2018) concerns about media

glorifying revenge. The discrepancy could be attributed to cultural differences in the perception of justice and individual agency, highlighting how cultural products can foster complex emotional and ethical engagements with their audiences. The presence of this theme suggests that while revenge narratives can be problematic, they also provide a powerful framework through which youth can explore and negotiate concepts of justice and personal power.

### **5.2 Theme 2: Normalization of Bullying**

Another prevalent theme was the normalization of bullying, evidenced by comments that occasionally showed desensitization to the bullying scenes. Some comments treated the bullying as an expected, almost routine aspect of school life. This finding is troubling yet significant, as it suggests that continuous exposure to such narratives may diminish the perceived severity of bullying. This observation corresponds with Davis's (2023) discussion on media desensitization and aligns with research by Jones et al. (2018), who noted that repeated media portrayals of violence can lead to the normalization of such behaviors.

The casual reactions to bullying scenes highlight the need for media producers to handle sensitive content responsibly, as they possess the potential to influence audience perceptions and behaviors significantly. Understanding this theme is crucial for evaluating the broader societal impact of popular media on youth, particularly in their attitudes toward violence and empathy.

### **5.3 Theme 3: Cultural Resonance and Identity**

The comments also reflected a strong theme of cultural resonance, where non-Korean viewers expressed connections with the cultural elements presented in the series. Many viewers appreciated the insights into Korean culture, with comments like, "It's fascinating to see how universal some experiences are, despite the cultural wrapping." This theme supports Lee's (2020) findings on the global influence of Korean dramas, where the specific cultural settings provide a backdrop for universal themes that resonate across different demographics.

The cultural resonance found in "The Glory"

illustrates how global media products are not only consumed but are actively integrated into the viewers' cultural understanding and personal identity. This suggests a significant role of media in the globalization of cultures and the formation of a more interconnected global identity among youth.

## **6. Conclusion**

This essay set out to explore how social environments influence youth consumption of cultural products like "The Glory" and the impact this consumption has on their identity formation. Through a detailed analysis of viewer comments on the series, this study has uncovered nuanced insights into how youth interact with and are shaped by media narratives.

Our findings indicate that themes of empowerment through revenge, normalization of bullying, and cultural resonance are predominant among viewers. These themes highlight both the positive and negative impacts of media on youth identity. The empowerment theme suggests that media can provide a space for exploring personal agency and justice, albeit within the controversial context of revenge. Conversely, the normalization of bullying observed in viewer comments raises concerns about the potential for media to desensitize audiences to violence and mistreatment, underscoring the need for responsible media portrayals of sensitive issues. Finally, the theme of cultural resonance underscores the role of media in bridging diverse cultures and promoting a globalized sense of identity among youth.

The juxtaposition of these findings with existing literature enriches our understanding of media's dual role as a tool for identity construction and as a mirror reflecting societal values and issues. It also opens avenues for further research, particularly in studying the long-term effects of media consumption on youth attitudes and behaviors across different cultures. Future studies could explore how cultural differences influence the reception and impact of media narratives, potentially leading to varied identity outcomes among global youth audiences.

Moreover, these insights call for action from media producers and cultural critics. There is a clear need for more conscientious content creation that considers the psychological and

social implications of media narratives, particularly those aimed at impressionable youth audiences. Engaging with and addressing the themes uncovered in this analysis can lead to more nuanced and socially responsible media productions.

In conclusion, by analyzing "The Glory" and its reception, this paper contributes to a deeper understanding of the complex interplay between media content, cultural products, and youth identity formation. This exploration not only reaffirms the media's significant role in shaping youth culture but also highlights the critical need for ongoing research and dialogue in this dynamic field.

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