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**Master's Thesis**  
**Housework as Love Labor:**  
**Inherited Notion of the Traditional Sexual Division of Labor in**  
**Contemporary Japanese Shōjo Manga**

by

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## **Abstract**

This paper explores the dynamics of sexual division of labor (SDL) under the Japanese popular culture by examining contemporary shōjo manga. Although recent scholars have discussed the Japanese popular culture focusing on existing gender issues, the studies addressing the issue of SDL through examining popular culture texts are relatively few. We show how the depictions of housework in shōjo manga are represented in the context of love and sexuality, and how they are ideologically interpreted in relation to the traditional notion of SDL in contemporary society. The method involves visual narrative theory which especially focus on Japanese Visual Language (JVL) in examining 62 panels depicted housework in 36 shōjo manga magazines. Results reveal that shōjo manga ideologically inherits the traditional notion of SDL in which the depictions of housework function as an “gendered ideological state apparatus.” The paper concludes that the representation of housework as “love labour” in shōjo manga provides young female readers a myth of “heterosexual imaginary” (Ingraham, 1994) and leads them to internalize traditional gender norm which revives as a way of expressing femininity in the contemporary society where the border of masculinity and femininity have been obscured.

Keywords: The sexual division of labor, shōjo manga, gender, media

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## 1. Introduction

### 1.1 Background of the research

While the Japanese government has recently been promoting gender equality in the workplace under the slogan of “women’s empowerment” (The New York Times, 2015), it has been generally acknowledged, that contemporary Japan lags behind in the field of gender labor equality in comparison to the rest of the developed world. Many researchers have witnessed that Japanese society still maintains the traditional notion of Sexual Division of Labor (henceforth SDL) which is regarded as a “*core of gender discrimination*” (Frey, 2015, p.64) in work environment as well as housework allocation (Osako, 1978; Masuda, 2001).

Previous scholars have discussed a number of gender issues focusing on the relationship between SDL and societies around the world. In general, the traditional notion of SDL refers to a hierarchical labor structure with men as dominant and women as subservient, which was suggested to have a connection with the economic development after capitalism emerged in the 15<sup>th</sup> century (Hartmann, 2010, p.54). Later, the economic system shifted from family-centered mode of productions to factories and assembly lines that further excluded women from the workplace and the public sphere, and further developed the new form of labor distribution with “*men as breadwinners, women as housewives*” (Hartmann, 2010, p.61). In comparison with current modern Japanese society, there are claims that we are more likely influenced by postmodern ideas where women’s attitude for the SDL has become pluralistic and fluid due to different variables such as economic and historical factors (Yamato, 1995, pp.109-110). However, Yamato (1995) confirms that the current Japanese women, despite having been educated about gender equality, are still maintaining or reinforcing the traditional notion of SDL by supporting the view that housework is a “*reproductive labour in the name of love*”(pp.109-110). Other scholars have recognized that the traditional SDL is strongly connected with ideological aspects embedded to a cultural doctrine of “*in the name of love*” (Ben-Ze’ev & Goussinsky, 2008, p.2).

This paper would like to initially identify where does the ideological idea that maintains and reinforces the traditional notion of SDL coming from? Also, how does it operate in the Japanese society? Jiang and Okamoto (2014) claim that media is one of the significant factors that conveys ideology through text, it becomes an ideology that is not only imposed, but also is actively reproduced (p.96). For example, Jessamyn Nuhaus's publication, *Housework and Housewives in American Advertising* (2011), clearly illustrates how the representations of housework in contemporary American advertising reproduce and naturalize the traditional notion of SDL ideologically. Nuhaus (2011) also argues that the representations of housework in contemporary media remain attached to gendered norm where "*housework as a female activity*" in changing its form from the Marxian idea of "domestic labor" into a "labor of love" (p.13).

## 1.2 Research Question and Research Objectives

In contemporary Japanese society, although many researchers have been focusing the relationship between media text and gender issue (Toku, 2007; Unser-Schutz, 2015), there are comparatively few known researches which explores the traditional notion of SDL by applying Japanese media texts. Especially, the research addressing the texts from the view of the depiction of housework has not been discussed previously. Based on these observations, this study mainly aims to explore the dynamics of SDL through Japanese popular culture texts that provides a lot of academic interests ranging from history, international relations, and business; to class, gender, and notions of home (Freedman, 2018, p.2). Moreover, this paper will address how the depictions of housework are represented in contemporary shōjo manga (Japanese comics) based on gender perspective. The research objectives and the research question of this paper are as follows:

### **Research objectives:**

- 1) To understand the dynamics of SDL in contemporary Japanese society through media

texts in popular culture;

- 2) To examine how the depiction of housework is represented in the narrative of shōjo manga;
- 3) To explore the issue of SDL from social and ideological aspects which attached love and sexuality.

**Research question:**

How does contemporary shōjo manga represent the idea of SDL in relation to the depictions of housework?

To achieve this goal, this paper conducts a narrative analysis of 62 panels related to housework from 36 long-running shōjo magazines: *Nakayoshi* (Best Friends, published by Kodansha), *Ribon* (Ribbon, published by Shueisha), and *Chao* (Ciao, published by Shougakukan). These shōjo magazines are mainly targeting Japanese school girls aging from nine to thirteen years old. This study meets these twin researches through an extensive study of relevant literature and narrative analysis of contemporary shōjo manga magazines which particularly focuses on visual grammar of Japanese Visual Language (JVL) discovered by Neil Cohn (2007). Moreover, this research applies a theoretical concept of “Gendered Ideological State Apparatus” (Allison, 1991) and “Love Laboring” (Weeks, 2017) to examine the representation of housework in shōjo manga.

## 2 Literature Review

### 2.1 Sexual division of labor in Japan

#### 2.1.1 Social structure of SDL in contemporary Japan

While previous researchers have frequently examined about the relationship of labor force between women and men, as so-called Sexual Division of Labor (Shelton, 1992, p.5), no clear definition has been universally used for this term because of its wide array of perspectives from different academic fields. In general, the term Sexual Division of Labor (SDL) refers to a preconception where “workers are divided according to certain assumptions about ‘men's work’ and ‘women's work’” (Sexual Division of Labor, 2019). The term also has a lot of other synonyms replacing gender for sex, such as “*Gender Division of Labor*” (Ferree, 1991) or as “*Gender Segregation of Tasks*” (Bianchi et al, 2000). Another term used is “Housework Allocation System” proposed by Geerken and Gove (1983), asserting that the system of SDL is involved in the larger socioeconomic structure (p.26). However, the basic common concept common between these different terms is that SDL itself is not seen as a “natural phenomenon” but as “somewhere other than natural” (Rubin, 2009, p.179), which is variable and subject to change (Shelton, 1992, p.9). To avoid ambiguous phrase in later discussion, this paper will consistently apply the term “Sexual Division of Labor” which includes the meaning of gender, following the argument of Rubin (2009) that gender is already a socially imposed division of the sexes (p.179).

Previous researchers have historically argued how the idea of SDL emerged and developed. Hartmann (2010) suggests that the notion of SDL emerged with shaping the hierarchical form that categorizes “*men as dominant and women as subordinate*” in the early stage of universal social development (p.54). The typical social change is exemplified as the emergence of capitalism in the fifteen century which divided our world into the public and private sphere, and which maintain job segregation by exercising men’s dominant power over women in

the labor market under a new social mechanism (Hartmann, 2010, pp.54-55). Industry based system developed in the seventeenth century also changed the working structure from the family-centered to factory based, which made women more excluded from the public sphere. As a result, the SDL is characterized as a “natural” way of labor allocation of “*the men as breadwinners, women as housewives*” (Hartmann, 2010, p.61). In the process of the SDL development, Bianchi et al (2000) argue that there are four dominant factors formulating the traditional SDL: (a) the amount of housework, (b) the time availability, (c) the relative resources, and (d) the gender ideology (Bianchi et al 2000, pp.193-195; Matsuda, 2001, p.42). Gornick and Meyers (2003) also claim that the invention of labor market and modern family system bring some challenges to developed countries in which they make great effort to reduce unfair divisions of labor within the household as well as to balance time between the labor participation and childrearing (pp.1-2).

In Japan, the traditional notion of SDL was developed in a slightly different way with the western countries, which only began from the formulation of economic and political measures after World War II. Ono (2006) observes that economic development which established the lifetime employment system allowed men to take advantage of working in the public space over women, whereas the Japanese tax benefit system, which is eligible only to the spouse earning under 1.3 million yen of annual income, kept married women away from working as fulltime workers (Ono, 2006, p.5). Ono (2006) also argues that not only did the political measure fail to achieve the original aim to protect the welfare for housewives, but it also force wives to engage in low-paid jobs as well as to rely on their husbands’ income (p.5). From the historical point of view of legislation and gender issue in Japan, we conclude that these economical/political measures consequently reinforce the traditional pattern of SDL which offers men a more advantageous position than women (Ono, 2006, p.371).

However, recent statistics have revealed that the work situation surrounding Japanese



women is changing positively. According to the report made by *The Gender Equality Bureau Cabinet Office on Gender Equality in 2017*, women's labor participation has remarkably increased in recent years. The statistical data shows that the employment rate of 25-44 year old women, those who belong to the child-rearing period, increase its point from 57.1 in 1984 to 72.7 percent in 2016 (The Gender Equality Bureau Cabinet, 2017) Another statistic regarding women's employment rate by age group made by The Daily Yomiuri (Inazawa, 2013) also indicate that all age groups increase the rate from five to 10 percent. From looking into the figure of the M-shaped curve which indicates "the rate of women in the workforce declines for childbirth and child care, and peaks before and afterward" (The Daily Yomiuri, 2013). Therefore, the curve becomes flatter than before, which suggests that the number of working mothers who engage to childrearing are gradually increasing (Matsuda, 2001, pp.38-39).

But is the statistical data sufficient to prove that the issue of the SDL was already heading for a solution in Japanese society? Unfortunately, Japanese government foresees that this social change may force working women into more difficult situations with a local contextualized concept of "*New Sexual Division of Labor.*" According to the report on Health and Welfare in 1998, the new sexual division of labor refers to the women's situation when they are situated to play the role of both housewife and breadwinner, which replaced for the traditional idea of SDL. Surprisingly, statistics indicate that the mothers over their forties are likely to select this working pattern of new sexual division of labor, while the women under thirties mostly choose the traditional pattern of SDL (Matsuda, 2001, p.46). Another statistic shows that working women are heavily taking the responsibility of the household, which is apparent from the fact that the allocated time of housework distributed between husbands and wives has not changed regardless of the working status of the wife (Matsuda, 2001, p. 40; Ueno, 1998, p.118).

Although the Japanese government has been addressing the issue of women's labor

participation in response to the wave of gender equality from outside Japan, Takahashi (1994) argues that several legislative amendments related to Japanese women's working circumstance seems debatable though effective for gender equality (p.27). Since the Equal Employment Opportunity Law (EEOL) was enacted in 1985, women's work environment has changed by prohibiting to discriminate against women in the workplace. However, the law also enables companies to find an escape route for maintaining the inequality between sex by differentiating women's career track between a careered track, *sougoushoku*, and the non-career, *ippanshoku* (Urszula, 2015, p.62). Urszula (2015) also points out that although the *Child Care Leave Act* enacted in 1992 gives great impact to the Japanese society for gender equality, in which the act was "the first attempt to make men and women equal on a social level" (pp.64-65), this law was used however, "in a gendered way" (p. 65). This argument is supported by the statistical data from the Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare that the ratio of child care leave by men is only 3.16 percentage in the fiscal year of 2016 in comparison to the women's rate which reaches 81.8 percent, at an all-time high (Nikkei Inc., 2017).

It is noteworthy however, that the contemporary Japanese society still requires women to take the initiatives of housework including childrearing and elderly care, even though many are already participating in the work places also as full-time workers (Yamato, 1995, pp.9-110). Geerken and Gove (1983) once argued that the issue of house allocation and its behavior was ignored by the sociologists as it was regarded that it is like "tastes," compared to other topics such as an economics (Geerken and Gove, 1983, p.49). For this academic bias, Geerken and Gove (1983) also argue that "the commitment of family members to cultural norms concerning family role behavior must be included in any analysis of work/housework allocation" (p.15). Matsuda (2001) asserts that the traditional notion of SDL embedded to the idea that "*a household affair is a wife's work*" is firmly rooted as a woman's fixed role even in the contemporary Japanese society

(p.40). Thus, the next section will focus more on how the traditional notion of SDL has been developed and influenced on the contemporary Japanese society.

### 2.1.2 Ideological development of Japanese SDL

While previous researchers have discussed that development of some ideological concepts became important factors to the traditional notion of SDL (Matsuda, 2006; Shima, 1999, Yamato, 1995), Takahashi (1994) assumes that some ideologies such as *ryosai kenbo* (good wife and good mother), *shuhu* (housewife), and *bosei* (motherhood) are strongly related to maintain the traditional notion of SDL. Especially, *ryosai kenbo*, it is one of the important concepts discussed about women's behaviors in the Asian society. The *Ryosai kenbo* ideology, which generally refers to the ideal concept of "good wife, wise mother," has developed in various region of East Asia (Koyama, 2007, p.2). It originated from the emergence of the Confucian ideology, Japanese society historically developed the concept of *ryosai kenbo* with the Family-Nation-Ideal thought which affirms the divinity of the Emperor, the "unity of loyalty and piety," and the "spirit of Japanese group harmony" (Koyama, 2012, p.2).

The Meiji era is one of the key periods where the traditional notion of SDL has been formulated by nation state. Under the regulation of the prewar Civil Code, the Meiji government started to reform women's social status under the minimum unit of *ie*<sup>1</sup>(household) and developed the notion of *ryosai kenbo* as representing "women's proper role in imperial Japan" which emphasized female responsibility in house management and education (Freiner, 2012, pp.66-67).

In the postwar period, women who associate with women's social group began to utilize the *ryosai kenbo* status to influence the political sphere for a proper image of "a housewife, mother, neighborhood activist, and guardian of the home" (Freiner, 2012, p.70). In the era of economic

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<sup>1</sup> "At any one time, the Japanese household may look rather similar to a domestic unit in any number other societies, but an ideological level, this unit is better described using the indigenous term *ie*" (Hendry, 2013, p.24).

rebuilding and national mobilization after the WW2, the *ryosai kenbo* ideology has transformed into the awareness of *kyoiku mama* (education mother) and *Charisuma shufu* (Charismatic housewife) with educational reformation (Freiner, 2012, pp.97-98). *Kyoiku mama* is a phenomenon that mirrors prewar structuring of the education as a location of primary importance in the development of Japanese society. Similarly, the *Charisma shufu* refers to the housewives who “professionally” organizes the home managing and childrearing. In other words, *ryosai kenbo* ideology survives in our society as a various interpretation of “motherhood.”

While some scholars emphasize the connections and continuation between *ryosai kenbo* ideology and the Confucian ideology (Koyama, 2012, p.4), Japanese researcher Shizuko Koyama (2012) points out that “the framework on *ryosai kenbo* thought needs to be examined as the same context of formation between the formation of the modern citizen-state and the modern family,” criticizing that “the previous research is misleading to which they highlight the specific past nature of the issue, while obscuring the continuations with the present” (p.7). Despite witnessing some similarities in both virtues between Confucianism and modern family system, Koyama (2003) also claims that there is a distinctive difference between them, arguing that “the educational goals of cultivating women who could support the household (*ie*) and of cultivating women as citizens of the nation marked the views as completely different” (p.50). Moreover, Koyama concludes that a variety of policy reform based on the *ryosai kenbo* thought was proposed by the nation-state to utilize women's power, though the result failed to solve practical problems in many cases (pp.185-186). In other words, it should be noted that the norm of the division of labor has been maintained as the necessary condition for the formation of the present day status quo (Koyama, 2013, p. 50). Ueno (1987) assumes that the rapid acceleration of Japanese social change since 1960 was the completion of modern sexual segregation of businessman-husband and housewife because women were isolated from each other in tiny nuclear households.

According to Ueno (1987), Japanese society in 1960s was the period that the number of nuclear family started to increased, which affected women in two ways: (a) “the completion of the modern sexual division of labor,” and (b) the “diversities in women's lifestyle” (Ueno, 1987, p.587).Ueno (1987) also assumes that the completion of Japanese modernization brought up the rapid social change in the relation between the SDL and modern family system (p.582).

In contemporary Japanese society, statistics reveal that Japanese women tend to show a positive attitude for the traditional SDL in comparison to those of other countries (Ohinata, 2015, p.214; Takahashi, 1995, p.38). Regarding this social reality, some researchers provide a new light in relation to the women’s attitudes and to the traditional SDL. It asserts the situation surrounding us has become more diverse in response to the fluidization of SDL in contemporary household (Yamato, 1995, pp.122-123) since the nuclear family system shifted into the “individualization” and the “post-modern family” (Shima, 1999, p. 26). Yamato (1995) claims that there are two dimensions of their attitudes for the SDL, one that affirms the “fixed role divided by sex,” and the other as “the reproduction role under the name of love” (pp. 122-123). According to her argument, although the former dimension has been rejected by the current Japanese women who are familiar with the concept of gender equality, the latter will end up maintaining the traditional idea of SDL “in the name of love” for justifying women's marginalized status as the unpaid care worker (pp.122-123). Ogasawara (2009) also claims that their multidimensional attitude for the SDL added the third dimension regarding masculinity that many fathers have heavily taken responsibility on working. The research conducted by Ogasawara (2009) revealed that fathers would hardly accept to be promoted in his career slowly by participating in housework rather than housework itself (p.41).

## 2.2 **Housework as love, sexuality**

### 2.2.1 The representation of housework in gender perspectives

In recent sociological field, many researchers have aggressively discussed the representation of housework and its meaning in the perspective of gender. Dalla Costa and James (1975) described the term housework as a “place as protagonist in the struggle,” especially, a “higher subversiveness in the struggle” (p.36). Hartman (1981) assumes that “the family can be a locus of internal struggle over matters related to production or redistribution” regarding housework and this struggle brought by the family members can also become a source of dispute with larger institution out of the private sphere (p.369). Bianchi et al (2000) define housework as a “contested terrain” which requires the members of the household to cooperate and negotiate, and sometimes conflict among them (pp.191-192). The housework as the subject also offers the place of intellectual contestation among scholars, which has varieties of debates related to the SDL (Bianchi et al, 2000, pp.191-192).

The argument that sees housework as the contested terrain has mainly been discussed in the sociological field. In capitalism, housework represents the household production which consists in “purchasing commodities and transforming them into usable forms,” which also involves the gendered role of the reproduction and maintenance for the family member (Hartman, 1981, p.373). Dalla Costa and Selma James (1975) argue that capitalism confines women into a “condition of isolation” described as follows:

“Capital established the family as the nuclear family and subordinated within it the woman to the man, as the person who, not directly participating in social production, does not present herself independently on the labor market. As it cuts off all her possibilities of creativity and of the development of her working activity. So it cuts off the expression of her sexual, psychological and emotional autonomy” (pp.30-31).

In other words, the emergence of capitalism gives women who are struggling with the issue a new question, and so it is called as a “*woman question*” (Hartmann, 1974).

Heidi I. Hartmann (1974) gives a new light on Marxist feminist analysis based on the concept of “woman question” in her notable work, *The unhappy marriage of Marxism and feminism: Towards a more progressive union*. The main concept of woman question is that Marxist analysis of women’s position should be considered in the structure of capitalism and patriarchy. Thus, the woman question refers to a discourse that discusses women’s position in the economic system in capitalism while “feminism question” is generally regarded as one that focuses mainly on inequality between men and women (p.2). The woman question is also discussed by many Marxist feminists in the context of “sexual division of labor,” “everyday life,” and “housework” under the system of capitalism (Hartmann, 1974. Pp.2-3).

According to Hartmann (1974), focusing on housework and its relationship with capitalism is one of the interests for the Marxist feminists in which they argue that “housework produces surplus value and that houseworkers work directly for capitalists” (p.3). These feminists argue in general that the representation of housework discussed in relation to the division of “public” and “private” sphere in Capitalism. Also that housework is categorized as women’s “private” work at home which contributes not to men but to capitalism itself (Hartman, 1974, p.4). However, Hartman (1974) criticizes this dominant idea asserting that “woman women’s work in the family *really* is for men – though it clearly reproduces capitalism as well” and suggests reconsidering this issue along with the relationship between men and women and capitalism (p.5). Hartmann (1974) also argues that Della Costa (1973) <sup>2</sup>contributes to our understanding of the social nature of housework in a way of which she claimed that “women should demand wages for housework” and brought some women's movements for that (pp.7-8). On the other hand, the significant critique discussed that Marxism cannot solve the problem of “why women are

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<sup>2</sup> Mariarosa Dalla Costa, "Women and the Subversion of the Community", in *The Power of Women and the Subversion of the Community* by Mariarosa Dalla Costa and Selma James (Bristol, England: Falling Wall Press, 1973; second edition) pamphlet, 78 pps.

subordinate to men inside and outside the family and why it is not the other way around” (Hartmann, 1974, pp.7-8).

Another concept that should be noted here is “*Patriarchy*.” Hartmann (1974) claims that patriarchy is the most useful way to explain “woman question” under capitalism (p.11). According to Hartmann (1974), patriarchy is not the issue within the family but a set of social structure which “establish or create interdependence and solidarity among men that enable them to dominate women” (p.11). Patriarchy also functions as an institution of state in which “men are dependent on each other to maintain that domination,” in turn for controlling over women (Hartmann, 1974, p.11). Hartmann (1974) also argues that heterosexual marriage under this social system creates a separation of SDL by identifying “sex/gender system” ideologically, which also “helps direct their (women) sexual needs towards heterosexual fulfilment” (Hartmann, 1974, p.12). It develops further that patriarchy which ends up maintaining the dominant system of heterosexuality which includes the legitimacy of heterosexual marriage, childrearing and housework by women, women’s economic disadvantages and others (Hartmann, 1974, p.13).

### 2.2.2 Housework as a metaphor of love and sexuality

Housework also possesses a metaphorical meaning as love and sexuality. Modern society also privatizes women into housework where “women reproduce the labor force and provide an island of intimacy in a sea of alienation” (Hartmann, 1979, p.4). Ochiai (2012) describes the housework as the “intimate work” in which has a lot of similarities with the terms such as “reproductive labor,” “shadow work,” “unpaid work,” and “care” (p.4). It is also said that these words are strongly attached to “the sexual connotations” (Ochiai, 2012, p.7) just as Hallam (2012) exemplified that a nurse’s uniform is stereotyped as “connotations of eroticism, vocational duty, and housework” (p.23).



Some scholars address to clarify the relationship between housework and emotional aspect, which is as the most dominant way to enhance the intimate relationship so that it plays a significant role for the gendered expectation and inequality in heterosexual partnership (Umberson et al. 2015, p.4). For example, Ochiai (2012) assumes that housework such as care offered at home is represented as the original form of “emotional labor” and is regarded as an unpaid labor “hidden behind the euphemism of ‘love’” (p.7). Similarly, Arlie Russell Hochschild (1974) coined the term “emotion work” which refers to the “efforts involved in managing personal emotions in an attempt to promote positive emotions in others” (Umberson et al. 2015, p.4). Hochschild (1979) not only distinguishes emotion work with emotion control and emotion management, but it also has broader meaning that connotes evocation and suppression in one’s cognitive level of desire. Other researchers have observed that women in the heterosexual couples are more likely to promote intimacy and lessen boundaries between partners by doing emotional work than men (Umberson et al. 2015, p.5). From these facts, housework can be an alternative as intimate work which women consciously or unconsciously promote intimate heterosexual relationship with men.

Lynch (2007) defines housework as the “love laboring” to explain the relationship of love, care, and solidarity in terms of human self-preservation and self-realization (p.550). The term love laboring refers to the emotionally driven work required to sustain the relation embedded to high interdependency between care givers and care takers. According to Lynch’s (2007), love labour is described as the realization of love through “strong attachment, interdependence, depth of engagement, and intensity” (p.555). Love labor emphasizes not only the sense of belongingness and trust in primary care relations, but also the potential to benefit mutually with the relationship (Lynchm 2007, p.pp.558-559). Lynch (2007) also claims that “the centre of love labour relations is also a relationship of power and control exercised through the medium of care” (p.559). In the

traditional SDL, a wife and husband mutually control/be controlled under the relationship of a care giver and care taker in household. According to Weeks (2017), feminists commonly criticize that the romantic love ideology tends to obscure two social realities of the “operations of patriarchal inequality” and a “labor of love,” asserting that the romanticism contributes to reinforce the traditional system of SDL by concealing the class hierarchies that subtend the ostensible equivalence of the parties (pp.43-44).

Anne Allison’s (1991) literature *Japanese mothers and obentos: The lunch-box as ideological state apparatus* clearly illustrates how housework as love laboring is exercised its power/control in Japanese society. In this argument, Allison (1991) interprets the representation of *obento* (boxed lunch) and *obento* making in Japanese nursery school function as a gendered state ideological apparatus (p.201) by applying Louis Althusser’s (1971) concept of Ideological State Apparatus. As *obento* is not recognized as just a food but cultural product filled with “the meaning of mother and home” (Allison, 1991, p.199), *obento* making in childrearing indoctrinate Japanese mothers into love laboring as common acceptance of our society. Allison (1991) describes the process how *obento* making is institutionalized as a gendered ideological state apparatus as follows:

“ I sensed the women were laboring for themselves apart from the agenda the obento was expected to fill at school. Or stated alternatively, in the role that females in Japan are highly pressured and encouraged to assume as domestic manager, mother, and wife, there is, besides the endless and onerous responsibilities, also an opportunity for play.”  
(p.203)

To sum up, these literatures assume that housework function as a metaphor of love labour exercised by the power and control in the social dynamics, which is also a significant key concept for discussing the women question in the academic field.

## 2.3 **Shōjo manga as gendered text**

### 2.3.1 Gendered development of shōjo manga

The term “*manga*”, Japanese comics or graphic novels, has recently been known as part of Japanese popular culture. Having its specific image of character “with big eyes, spikey hair, and school uniforms” and long narratives focusing on human concern, manga is becoming a “genre of global popular literature (Prough, 2018, p.277). MacWilliams (2014) has focused on the potential of Japanese manga, arguing that manga is designed for providing not only enjoyment and fantasy but also “a source for political, ethical, or existential critical reflection” (p.10). Japanese pop culture, especially the fields of manga are now influencing worldwide, not only children’s interests but also other social and cultural aspects in different directions (Toku, 2015, p.21).

The difference between manga and other comics outside Japan, is that Japanese manga are clearly distinguished into boys’ (shōnen) manga and girls’ (shōjo) manga which is based on gender categorization. This publishing system is hardly seen in western comic industries. Japanese manga magazines are mainly divided into *shōnen-muke komikkushi* (boys’ comics) for boys, *shojo-muke komikkushi* (girls’ comics) for girls, *dansei-muke komikkushi* (men’s comics) for men, and *josei-muke* (women’s comics) for ladies, which reflect their gender perspective respectively. Alexandria Gueydan-Turek (2014) assumes that Japanese manga has reinforced gendered categorization of shōjo and shōnen manga with its opposite characteristics shaped by social and cultural norm, aiming for targeting boys and girls respectively (p.87). On the other hand, the influence which the manga brings to the readers is also significant and sometimes it has been a researched issue in the academic field (Unser-Schutz, 2014, p.133).

Gendered categorization of manga between shōnen and shōjo manga developed different characteristics in visual and narrative structures. According to Toku (2007), while shōnen manga generally favored a hero's story, shōjo manga emphasized the visual image of

characters and these stories are simply influenced by love (Toku, 2007, pp11-12). Many researchers point out that the male characters in shōjo manga are extremely depicted as *bishounen* (beautiful boy) but not in the shōnen manga, thus the differences between two are apparent, especially regarding the depiction of main characters and narrative. Unser-Schutz (2015) argues gender imbalance in manga asserting that “yet shōjo-manga clearly does not depict a world that is exclusively made up of women... This is a major point of difference with for-boys, by-boys, about-boys shōnen-manga, which feature a larger cast of characters and a very high ratio of male-to-female characters” (p.144). Usher-Schutz (2015) also observes that although shōjo manga has recently diversified narrative structure, most stories even in the boys love genre limit female characters in developing romance (p.144).

Prough (2018) claims that manga magazines are indispensable for the gendered development of manga industry, arguing that “gender and age demographics have shaped the production of manga magazines from the start” (p.278). In Japanese publishing system of manga, nearly all manga are first released as a serialized episode in manga magazines which have already been categorized between the girls’ and boys’ division. As a result, this publishing convention forces comic writers and editors to create gendered narratives based on the demographics (Prough 2018, p.278). Manga magazines reflect aesthetical desires and dreams of female readers (Toku, 2007, p.20) through the way of which “editors and artists converse about the content and characters, incorporating readers’ feedback (Prough, 2018, p.279). In other words, manga magazines function as one of the texts in examining the relationship between gender and Japanese society.

History in manga industry also witnesses how female manga writers contribute to the development of shōjo manga. Although early manga since 1930s has already been targeted on female audience, most creators were not women but men who couldn’t work in the shōnen (boys)

manga's field. Later in the 1950s, some female comic writers who were mainly influenced by these female mangakas like Tezuka started writing shōjo manga from the point of their own views as women and it is often described as “the true dawn of modern shōjo manga in Japan” (Toku, 2007, p.23). In the 1970s, new generation of female manga writers who are called “24-nen-gumi” (The year 24 Group) or “golden age” contribute to further development of the world of shōjo manga (Toku, 2007, p.25). These female mangakas combined in themselves high quality and skill as narrative makers, attracting reader of all ages by depicting any kinds of shōjo manga intellectually and sensitively with regardless of the genre (Toku, 2007, p.25). While the genre and subgenre in the shōjo manga have become more complex in response to social background and the expansion of manga industry after the 1980s, the dominant idea of gender representation in the manga is still problematic, the discussion is ongoing and never fixed.

The visual style of shōjo manga gives a great influence on the dominant image of “shōjo” and its culture. Takehisa Yumeji (1884-1934), a notable illustrator who left a number of *jojo-ga* (the pictures of beautiful girls), firstly contributed to distinguish the ideal shōjo image in the post-war period. The *jojo-ga* style has become common characteristics to portray the shōjo in the way of having “empty, wandering gaze” as if “she were daydreaming” style (Takahashi, 2014, pp.117-119). After the era of Takehisa, shōjo magazines keep promoting the ideal image of girlhood which modeled on the girl from the upper class through not only the painting but also poetry and novels. Takahashi (2014) argues that “the shōjo image that appeared in these magazines can be regarded not only as a modern invention in general but one that was specifically aimed at the urban bourgeois girl. In other words, the shōjo image in media is represented as “privileged body” (p.116) under the social structure of male dominance.

Rapid social changing and cultural responding often make gender norms more complex in terms of popular media and culture (Gueydan-Turek, 2014, p.87). Along with this social change,

the manga also becomes more complicated in the gender context. According to MacWilliams (2014), manga and the fantasies through depicting manga are no longer homogenous within “ever-changing social-historical context” in which “they do not uniformly convey any master narrative or transcendent system of capitalistic values to their audience (p.9). For example, some of the manga writers attempt to feature contemporary social problems such as childcare, nursing, and welfare issues to an extent which depopulation in Japan has given social and cultural pressure more on women who are expected to carry the burden both outside and inside home (Suzuki, 2015, p.53). On the other hand, Guyeydan-Turek (2014) argues that “popular media often rewrites, displaces, and effectively drives gendered identities forward. This is particularly true in the case of young adult and children’s literature, which speaks to an audience that rapidly internalizes norms and will readily reproduce them” (p.87). Sugimoto (2010) claims that shōjo manga is the media text where shōjos’ sensibility can be interpreted by themselves (p.141). Masuda (2015) argues against the common sense that shōjo manga, as the texts for Japanese girls, can contribute them to learn how they should build proper relationship between family and friends, and how they can solve the problem they meet in school (Masuda, 2015, p.30).

### 2.3.2 Love and sexuality in shōjo and shōjo manga

As mentioned above, the representation of “shōjo” has involved gendered meanings through the development of media in Japanese society. Especially in shōjo manga world, the term “shōjo” has been interpreted in relation to the concept of love and sexuality such as elements of *kawaii* (cuteness), naivete, and sexual immaturity (Sasaki, 2013, p.5), which is also described as the symbol of “virgins and idealistic national image” (Sasaki, 2013, p.5). Deborah Shamoons’ notable work *Revolutionary Romance: The Rose of Versailles and the Transformation of Shojo Manga* (2007) clearly illustrates how the shōjo manga genre developed their narratives regarding love

and sexuality based on the girlhood portrayed in prewar shōjo magazines. According to Shamoan (2007), prewar shōjo magazines developed a specific discourse that describes the “closed world of girls that not only embraced close female friendships but avoided heterosexual romance” (p.4). Surprisingly, Shamoan (2007) also claims that it does not mean by *doseiai*, or homosexual in current contents, rather, was a social acceptance in a way which makes girls delay their heterosexual courtship until the time of marriage (p.4). This homosexual relationship within a larger homosocial group such as *joshi-ko* (the all-girls school) encouraged sameness or the feeling of homosocial, “loving the one just like the self” which means not just being with some other girl but maintaining same appearance (Shamoan, 2013, p.5).

In the 1970s, shōjo manga developed to heterosexual narrative focused more on girls' agency. Shamoan (2007) points out that as it is called “Cinderella-Prince Charming story” which emphasized the heterosexual romance dominated the narrative of shōjo manga in the 1970s and one that has been existing even today (p.6). On the other hand, the conventions of homosexuality in prewar shōjo magazine still functioned as a fantasy version of a perfect romance among female readers despite the Japanese manga having already been opened to heterosexual courtship and sex without hesitation (Shamoan, 2007, p.8). This ambiguity is shown in the representation of the shōjo manga series *Berusaiyu no bara* (The Rose of Versailles) (1972-73). These comics gained popularity with teenage girls by Ikeda compromised the teenage world of homosexual and the adult world of heterosexual through representing female protagonist “Oscar” like a man, which created the new narrative of Oscar's heterosexual and homogender romance with a male partner “Andre” (Shamoan, 2007, p.15). However, Shamoan (2007) argues that this narrative remains as a problem for both female writers and readers in relation to equally heterosexual relationship (p.15).

### **3 Methodology**

#### **3.1 Research subject**

The subject of our research is shōjo manga magazines that predominantly targets Japanese school girls aging between nine to thirteen years old. According to Unno's research (2006), most of the readers in shōjo magazines are lower grade students of elementary school and recently has further shifted its demographic to a much a younger audience than the previous decade (p.78). Considering the study of Japanese popular culture, it is generally suggested that shōjo magazines are used as variable in a form of texts because they are rich sources of various topics that ranges thematically from fantasy to the more serious non-fictions (Prough, 2018, p.278). Prough (2018) argues that "shōjo manga magazines developed over the course of the mid-twentieth century, highlighting the ways that manga magazines and the manga published in it have evolved in relation to the wider media trends" (Prough, 2018, p.280). The shōjo manga magazines are also a reasonable subject of my research in terms that manga gives us a powerful effect on developing self-identity (Iegima, 2008, p.99). Moreover, Prough (2018) also uses a term "to sample" as a framework of the research in which explains how sampling shōjo manga stories in shōjo manga magazines make us understand the media landscape surrounding Japanese society (p.277, p.284).

This paper will primarily apply a narrative analysis based on collected quantitative/qualitative data from thirty-six (36) monthly shōjo manga magazines issues which are published from October 2017 to August 2018. The shōjo manga magazines selected for the research are: (a) *Nakayoshi* (Best Friends, published by Kodansha), (b) *Ribon* (Ribbon, published by Shueisha), and (c) *Chao* (Ciao, published by Shougakukan). To examine the narrative related to housework within these magazines, 62 panels of shōjo manga depictions which are related to acts of housework and housework-related visual texts are selected. This research will analyze the collected data based on: (1) kind of housework depicted, (2) most described housework in the text,



and (3) influence of the depictions of housework on the drawings for the main protagonists in the narrative structure.

In the analysis of shōjo manga magazines, narrative analysis would be the most useful method to find out how they represent the traditional notion of SDL in relation to the depictions of housework and main characters' reactions. This method is used because "narratives are often connected to dominant sets of values and feelings" (Branston & Stafford, 2003, p.43) in the texts. Iegima (2008) argues that narratives shown in manga have contributed to the development of self-identity for Japanese people, especially in adolescence, by obtaining pseudo experiences through reading different narratives of manga (p.99). In other words, to examine the narrative of manga can clarify how the narrative ideologically influences our society. As to the comprehension part, this research will also apply the concept of Japanese Visual Language (Cohn et al, 2014) for clarifying the role of housework's depiction in shōjo manga. This research will also explore the relationship between the representation of housework and love/sexuality from the perspective of "love labour" (Lynch, 2007), which embedded some ideological practices typically developed in Japanese society. Thus, applying these theoretical approaches will contribute to unfolding the dynamics of SDL from the view of ideological aspect under shōjo manga as visual text.

### **3.2 Graphic narrative analysis and Japanese visual language (JVL)**

Narrative analysis is one of the popular methods which have been applied by many previous sociologists. The term narrative generally refers to "a sequence of events organized into a story" shaping the "events, charters, arrangement of time, etc" (Branston & Stafford, 2010, p.42). Narrative theories are useful for media studies in which it "offer explorations of devices and conventions governing the stories narrated in media share" (Branston & Stafford, 2010, p.42). Branston & Stafford (2010) suggest that applying narrative theory is effective to clearly analyze

“how media narratives are often connected to dominate sets of values and feelings” (p.43).

Although the narrative theory has been developed by several classical theorists such as Propp, Bathes, Todorov, and Levi-Strauss, who are also known for as influential structuralists in the field of academic, recent scholars also expand the basic theories of narrative into a broader media context (Branston & Stafford, 2010, p.43).

This thesis will apply “*Graphic Narrative Theory*” as a method to examine my subject which is Japanese shōjo manga texts. The graphic narrative generally refers to a “range of types of narrative work in comics” (Chute & DeKoven. 2006, p.1) and it has recently been recognized as a proper theory for exploring comics as literature in the field of popular culture. Gabriele Ripple and Lukas Etter (2013) define the graphic narrative as a combination of word and image to tell stories, and “ideal test cases for a discussion of inter- and transmedial strategies of storytelling” (pp.191-192). Daniel Stein and Jan-Noël Thon (2015) claim the analysis of using graphic approach is indispensable for advancing the field of comic studies so that this narratological approach can cover various types of formal analysis which include “both media-conscious and transmediality-oriented research, historical, political, and cultural investigations; economic examinations, philosophical inquires” (p.2). Considering manga as part of comic literature, applying for the graphic narrative in the framework of my research is valuable. Cohn et al. (2014) assume that image units established in the manga can form a structure which subsequently constitutes the narrative roles (p. 63). While this structure plays a significant role in comprehending visual and, on the level sequences in manga, it is not only dependent to language but also multiple domains such as “sequential units of sound in speech or bodily motions in sign languages, and sequential drawings ordered by a rule system” (Cohn et al., 2014, p.1).

To explain how the depictions of housework are represented in contemporary shōjo manga, this paper will specifically use a method of Japanese Visual Language (JVL) which

functions grammatically and culturally in the nonverbal texts in manga. Derek Parker Royal (2007) argues that “comics rely on a visual language” which compose graphic images “in the form of letters and words, also function as icons of meaning” (p.7). As similar to *kanji* (Chinese characters) and *emoji* (picture characters), manga provide their “visual voice” to the creators for which they can easily learn and acquire the confined system (pp.2-5). The JVLs also function as the symbols in manga which evoke or heighten characters’ emotions and motions with a certain impact (p.7). The JVL system has its true power in the sequentially combined multiple units that establishes a greater meaning than a part of which is depicted alone, one of which that “works in a similar way as any other language, complete with visual ‘part of speech’ (Cohn, 2007, p.11).

Cohn (2007) classifies the JVL into five categories which include: (1) Establisher (E) or “set up an interaction without acting upon it”; (2) Initial (I) or “depict the nascent starting point of an event or action”; (3) Peak (P) or “show the maximal point of tension of an event or action”; (4) Release (R) or “releases the tension of an event or action”; and (5) Refiners (Ref) or “act as modifiers by honing in on information contained in one of the core categories” (Cohn, 2007, p.12). To examine how the depictions of housework within this framework, the research will identify them as a part of JV grammar specific to its role and characteristics in *shōjo* manga text.

### 3.3 Gendered ideological state apparatus and love laboring

Another method this thesis will apply is the combined concepts of “love laboring” and Anne Allison’s (1991) “gendered ideological state apparatus.” As stated in Chapter 2, this paper assumes that the issue of SDL underlying the representation of housework is closely connected to these two concepts. Especially, child-rearing/parenting is one of the most necessary concept of housework that needs to be clarified in relation to the Japanese society. For example, Matthaei

(1982) claims that although people has recognized parenting as a social activity where men and women should equally take their responsibility, parenting remains strongly connected to woman as part of motherhood whereas fathering doesn't become a part of man's work (p.111). Matthaei (1982) also explains that “this fact expressed the paradox of the sexual division of labor as a social division built on a natural difference between the sexes,” defining woman as a “social being” whose biology qualified as the supposedly natural activities of child-rearing and homemaking (p.111). Ueno also (1998) assumes that the current situation surrounding parenting in Japan has become costly and privatized in which many mothers feel burdened for the belief that child-reading needs their hundred percentage attention (p.112). Thus, this paper will focus on how shōjo manga reflect/not reflect the social reality regarding the SDL through examining the depictions of housework.

Furthermore, it should be noted that housework strongly influences us personally, socially, and politically in ways of which they give impact not only at an intimate level but also in other spheres of life (Lynch, 2007, p.554). As mentioned above, Allison (1991) describes Japanese mother's *obento* interpreted as “gendered ideological state apparatus,” in which “the devices that present and inform us of the world we live in and the subjectivities that world demands, knowledge and ideology become fused, and education emerges as the apparatus for pedagogical and ideological indoctrination” (p.198). This term originated by the Marxist theorist Louis Althusser's (2006) concept “ideological state apparatus” refers to “denote institutions such as education, the churches, family, media, trade unions, and law, which were formally outside state control but which served to transmit the values of the state, to interpolate those individuals affected by them, and to maintain order in a society, above all to reproduce capitalist relations of production” (Ideological State Apparatus, 1998). In this sense, housework is represented as the apparatus that woman unconsciously employ in the process of self-seeking which meant “striving

to subordinate herself to the self-advancement of her husband and children” (Mathhael, 1982. P.113). Allison (1991) also argues that many Japanese women should represent *obento* as the product of women themselves as well as the one they produce under this particular ideology system of which they are pressured by being mothers and wives (p.203). This study will thus apply Allison’s theory to examine the relationship between the housework depicted in shōjo manga and the traditional idea of SDL in the next section.

## 4 Findings and discussion

The findings from the 62 panels examined demonstrating housework shows that there are different types of housework described in research subject. As depicted and organized in a descriptive quantitative analysis, housework portrayed in these manga are categorized as: (1) “Cooking,” (2) “Shopping at the supermarket,” (3) “Cleaning,” and (4) “Childrearing and Nursing.” The data reveals that cooking accounts for the largest proportion (62%) among these different types of housework, followed by “making chocolates for the Valentine’s Day” (15%), and lastly by “making lunch box” (11%). The sample data also demonstrates that the gender ratio of the depicted scenes related to housework is sixteen percent (16%) of male protagonist compared to eighty-four percent (84%) of female. Moreover, seventy-nine percent (79%) of the panels shows the emotion of the protagonists drawn within the next 10 panels after the housework is depicted.

Furthermore, this research will analyze the various depictions of SDL from the narratives and texts through two (2) lens: (1) Housework as love labor and with (2) Housework: A JVL as a gendered ideological state apparatus. The first lens focuses on the creation of the image, identity, and conceived traits associated with SDL that is reinforced in shōjo manga. While the second lens focuses on particular material representations that are used as ideological apparatuses that contributes to the validation of housework and SDL status quo as reflected in the narratives of the chosen shōjo manga used in the study.

### 4.1 Housework as love labor

#### 4.1.1 Heterosexual imaginary

The first lens for analysis is looking into the chosen shōjo manga on how it reinforces heterosexual imaginary. This study previously discussed Deborah Shamoons (2007) argument about the relationship between shōjo manga and sexuality, in which the narrative of shōjo manga have

inherited heterosexual romance through its historical development. As identified with Shamoon's argument, the findings of my research clearly shows a similarity. All sampled episodes are related to heterosexual love romance between boys and girls which is mainly composed of a female protagonist, her lover (a male protagonist), and other sub characters such as their rivals and supporters. In the era where gender diversity is seemingly regarded as commonly accepted practice in contemporary society, the result shows that shōjo manga favors to describe only heterosexual romance which suggests that the editors in shōjo manga intentionally promote heterosexuality as a more "natural" preference compared to the rest of other form of sexualities.

The same as the world of shōjo manga fantasy, this normalization of heterosexuality is recognized in the real society. It has been regarded as the standard for legitimatizing and prescribing our daily life in the western society (Ingraham, 1994, p.203). Ingraham (1994) argues that heterosexuality is reproduced by the "heterosexual imaginary." Using this argument, the "way of thinking which conceals the operation of heterosexuality in structuring gender and closing off any critical analysis of heterosexuality as an organizing institution" are reinforced in the texts and narratives (Ingraham, 1994, p.203).

This study also discussed Weeks' (2017) argument on how romantic love ideology encourages us to ignore the realities of the "operations of patriarchal inequality" and "labor of love which underlie the issue of the SDL. Since shōjo manga are supposed to describe similar narratives based on the heterosexual imaginary as maintained in social reality, examining social text in everyday life is crucial for scholars to uncover the issues where the imaginary has concealed these important issues regarding the SDL. There is a sense of normalcy being depicted in these texts that contributes to the notions and concepts of accepted SDL situations in our mundane everyday life.

Under the framework of "heterosexual imaginary," the attachment between housework

and female body has become a “natural setting” that other related studies to domestic sphere are attached. These concepts are those that embody the principles of: “mothering, teaching, childcare, and caregiving.” Unfortunately, these concepts have been ignored and excluded from the mainstream sociology in the name of “woman’s work” (Ingraham, 1994, pp.210-211).

This is similar on how shōjo manga texts had repeatedly produced a number of narratives where female protagonists willingly do household work such as cooking, cleaning, and nursing, it encourages the young readers to accept heterosexual imaginary. It should be noted that the whole narrative of shōjo manga texts naturalized heterosexuality and reinforced the hegemonic process of heterosexual imaginary among Japanese popular culture.

#### 4.1.2 Kawaii and mothering

Interestingly, distinct characteristics of female protagonists shown in the findings are clearly distinguished from two polarized types: (a) those who are good at housework, and (b) those who are *not* good at doing housework. The next section will mainly focus on how the female protagonists are portrayed and interpreted in terms of this polarization.

Some example in the texts describing a type of female protagonist who are not good at housework are analyzed. In the story of *Koishite! Runa Kisu*, (*Let’s Love, Luna and Kiss, Chao*, November issue, 2017), while the main protagonist Runa is characterized as inexperienced in doing housework, the male protagonist responded favorably despite her failure and inability to cook. Another story in *Hikari on steiji*, (*Hikari on stage, Chao*, August issue, 2018) also shows the male protagonist Ritsu still happily eats the chocolate prepared by the protagonist, Hikari. Ritsu even expressed his appreciation by saying, “it’s very yummy,” even though the chocolate looks unappealing and bad. In the story of *Tokyo majo hausu* (*Magical girl in Tokyo, Chao*, November issue, 2017), there are some depictions when the female protagonist can’t manage any



housework despite relying and using her magical powers do so. The story she proceeds with a plot of asking her boyfriend instead to support her work. This shows that the inability of the lead female protagonists to perform housework chores are used as an opportunity in the texts to further pursue their love interest.

This finding suggests that figuring girls who are not good at doing any housework are transformed and interpreted instead to a representation of the *kawaii* (cuteness) culture as a form of Japanese femininity is maintained in shōjo manga. McVeigh (2000) defines the interpretation of *kawaii* not only as a “symbolic in social operation” but also a “best thought of as a key symbol in Japanese society” (p.137). McVeigh (2000) also claims that “being cute” for women is to promote “feminine self-presentation,” aiming for attracting men, while displaying cuteness to one’s subordinates is a method of appearing non-threatening, thereby gaining their confidence, and perhaps more cynically, control over them” (pp.143-147). Choo (2008) observes that shōjo manga has been providing this version of Japanese femininity since its emergence around the 1960’s when a number of manga started to be adopted as live action dramas and films (p.276). Barancovaitė- Skindaravičienė (2009) also argues that both shōjo and *kawaii* culture can hardly be separated from the context of Japanese femininity, asserting that “the image of shōjo representing the ideas of *kawaii* culture confines women into traditional perspective of femininity, but this femininity is attractive only as long as it can be understood as girlish, immature femininity” (p.154). Thus, the finding discussed in this section should support that these arguments are typical pattern of describing female main characters as immature in housework is identified and justified with an ideal shōjo image in association with the *kawaii* culture.

The second type of female protagonists are those who are good at doing housework. The story of *Shuga no hatsukoi* (*Sugar’s first love*, *Ribon*, February issue, 2018) is an example of the typical image used for girls. It shows a female protagonist named Mikan, who is taking care of

her younger brother in place of their hardworking parents. The story later on progressed with the development of her feelings for her first love and boyfriend Sou by using her skill of housework as her primary appealing point. In the whole narrative of *Hidamari no tsuki* (*Moon in sunny spot*, *Ribon*, September issue, 2017 to April issue, 2018), the female main character Hina shows her capability in housework is superior to her working mother. She then uses her skill of cooking to strategically catch the heart of *Gen*, who is her brother-in-law and lover in this step-family situation and narrative setting.

It is also noted that nursing is often depicted as an effective situation for building the love relationship between the characters. This is portrayed in the following titles: (1) *Hachimitsu torappu* or *trapped by honey*, *Nakayoshi*, March issue, 2018; (2) *Fuyuyasumi no koibito* or *The lovers in winter vacation*, *Chao*, February issue, 2018; and (3) *Hikari on steigi* or *Hikari on stage*, *Chao*, August issue, 2018. The common narrative found in these stories is that female protagonists strategically offer nursing aid to the male protagonists who are sick. With the purpose of attracting him or showing femininity towards the boy, this becomes an opportunity to show their feminine caring character as expressed doing nursing related activities. Moreover, the narratives generally described that all female protagonists dedicated themselves to take care of their love interest expecting nothing in return. Thus, without exception the male protagonists are impressed by this selflessness and the love story rapidly reaches its climax. It also gives us a foreshadowing toward the peak of love romance narrative and happy ending. This analysis clearly indicates that these patterns of love story naturalizes to describe the way of which the female protagonists use the power/control of “love laboring” to attract their lover’s attentions.

From these findings, it assumes that the depiction of housework contributes to represent the ideal image of women embedded to the view of a man. Ironically it is with the concepts of “kawaii virgin” and “mothering woman,” first used by Henshall (1999) and developed by

Barancovaitė- Skindaravičienė (2009, p.155) that reinforces these images used for the female protagonists. According to Barancovaitė- Skindaravičienė (2009), both ideal images of women are strongly connected with the specific aspect of Japanese culture called “*amae*,” which is generally described as the relationship between mother and children. The notion of “*amae*” also brings us a contradiction that “a Japanese man either likes to be mothered by his girlfriend or wife and to be forgiven for everything, or to be an older, experienced “initiator” of a young sexy virgin” (p.155). However, the common idea dwelling in these two opposite images is that the female protagonists are always constrained by the male-centered ideal image of *shōjo*, and it cannot overcome the dominant idea, which is “man as a subject and women as an object.”

On the other hand, Choo (2008) argues that the female protagonists in *shōjo* manga strategically embody the opposite image of ‘*shōjo*’ and ‘mother’ in a way of which “adapting to the position of a caretaker may be a conscious role that the females take on to compensate for their lack of social status”; and take on conservative and traditional role of women “to assert their status proportionate to all the Prince Charmings” (p.290). Controversially, looking back at Lynch’s (2007) argument in the mutual relationship between care giver and care taker, women strategically maintain the position of care giver as their master card to exercise the power and control toward male protagonists.

## 4.2 **Housework: a JVL as a gendered ideological state apparatus**

### 4.2.1 An ideological apparatus: *obento* and *choko*

To start the discussion about ideological apparatuses used in the examined panels, it is important to define the significant role of using JVL as a lens for analysis used in this study. According to Cohn et al. (2014), some panels in manga play a significant role as a JVL which conveys a comprehensive meaning embedded to Japanese culture and functions as a trigger to evoke the emotion of main characters (p.63). Through analyzing the depictions of housework and its

relationship with the main characters' emotion from the view of the VL grammatical categories (Cohen, 2007), it reveals that most panels of housework function as the 'initial' or the 'peak' which involves each female and male protagonist to start recognizing/developing the feeling of romance in the narrative, stimulating their actions toward a more intimate relationship.

For example, the story *Honey Days* (*Honey days*, *Chao*, April issue, 2018) starts its narrative from the panel where the female protagonist Haru prepares for her boyfriend's breakfast and then the boyfriend expresses his gratitude later on by gives her a kiss satisfied by her effort. In another story, *Hachimitsu torappu* (*the Honey trap*, *Nakayoshi*, November issue, 2017 and March issue, 2018), the scene where the female protagonist Azu make a great effort in cooking and nursing for her boyfriend Naruse, are described as a climax scene of the narratives, leading them into a romantic atmosphere. In addition to the previous discussion on how the depiction of housework functions as a natural setting in context of heterosexual imaginary, it is assumed that the depiction of housework acts as a grammar of JVL in developing the heterosexual relationship between male and female main protagonists toward the happy ending of the story.

But aside from the outright situational portrayals of JVL in shōjo manga, certain objects are used to reinforce the setting and plot in these narratives. From the perspective that the depictions of housework are recognized as a JVL, it is noteworthy that the depictions of *obento* (Japanese style of lunch box) and *choko* (chocolate) on Valentine's Day play a crucial role in explaining how they function as the JVLs in the shōjo manga text examined. First, they are specifically drawn as a visual icon which zooms up only on visual representation of products with no rhetorical explanation. Secondly, this specific description of food corresponds to Cohn's (2007) categorization of "micro" or "individual parts of environment," is a distinctive characteristic in Japanese comic in comparison to American comics that is favoring the use of macro panels or larger scenes.

Similar to the common usage of *emoji* or *kaomiji* developed around 1990s in Japan, the micro type panel enables manga writers to “use the visual system as a language” which allows “the visuals to express meaning through their own capacities (Cohn, 2007, p.16). Thus, many Japanese readers understands both core meanings of the icons *obento* and *choko* in relation to the literacy of JVL as ideologically grounded in Japanese culture (Freedman, 2018, p.325). Moreover, putting the panel *obento* and *choko* in *shojo* manga is an effective way which the readers understand the heterosexual romance narrative as natural setting in the context of cultural norm.

It is also assumed that the representation of *obento* in manga medium functions as similar to Allison’s (1991) ideological interpretation of *obento*. According to Allison (2000), *obento* is described as a “highly crafted elaborations” or “a multitude of mini-portions artistically designed and precisely arranged in a container that is sturdy and cute” (p. 81). For Japanese people, *obento* is not just a food container but a part of our dairy life where we experience it everywhere, from our homes, train stations, offices, and schools. As discussed in previous chapters, Allison (2000) also argues that *obento* plays a significant role as “a gendered state ideology” (p.81). According to her research, *obento* in nursery school and *obento* practiced by mothers is strongly connected to an ideological and gendered meaning to which the Japanese society has maintained. These objects work as an ideological state apparatus that can manipulate us into a perceived meaning associated with their meaning in the society, although not forcibly but voluntarily (Allison, 2000, p.82). Socialized by the mechanism of modern capitalist society, “we are influenced less by the threat of force and more by the devices that present and inform us of the world we live in the subjectivities that the world demands” (Allison, 2000, p.87).

In addition to Allison’s argument, it assumes that the depictions of *obento* shown in *shōjo* manga are strongly embedded with the specific image of *ryosai kenbo* ideology. As discussed in the previous chapter, this ideology originated in East Asia and developed through the

early civilization of Japan which includes the history of women's education. Allison (2007) describes the meaning of making *obento* for Japanese women as "a double-edged sword". Whereas, "not only do females, as mothers, operate within the ideological state apparatus of Japan's school system that starts semiofficially in the nursery school, they also operate as an ideological state apparatus unto themselves" (p.103). For Japanese women, making elaborate *obento* as an everyday practice indicates a sense of subjectivity, which is not only for taking the responsibility as a manager of home and children but also of proving their capability for motherhood which is attached to the *ryosai kenbo* ideology.

Similarly, it is assumed that the depictions of *choko* on Valentine's Day involves a specific meaning as a JVL which is associated with the image of *shōjo*. The Valentine's Day is a day for expressing love from men to women which originated from western countries, but the concept also spread in Japan through the development of the concept and practice shown in media. Maekawa (2017) suggests a historical view that the chocolate was firstly introduced by a popular sweet company *Morinaga seika* to Japan in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. Later, the company created an image of chocolate with the ideal image of *shōjo* for advertisement. Maekawa (2017) also argues that this image gradually spread the image of chocolate as a "metaphor of ideal *shōjo*" through *shōjo* magazines (pp.58).

It is suggested that the representation of chocolate is associated with gendered interpretation of love and sexuality. Steel (2008) observes that contemporary culture interprets the food in the context of gender and sexuality that sweet products are often associated with the "feminine vis-à-vis temptation, desire, and exotic otherness," whereas red meat served in the barbecue is associated with masculinity (p.323). Chocolate also functions as a "raw material of gender identity" in which the taste signifies the "submission to temptation" (Steel, 2008, p.323). By looking into manga texts, *choko* is used as a gift when female protagonists try to confess their

feelings of love to the male protagonists. In the *feiku bita: himitu no koigogoko* (*Fake bitter: the hidden feeling of love*, *Ribon*, March issue, 2018), the heroine Lili makes a chocolate cake for her ex-boyfriend in order for them to get back together. She uses this act as a form of declaration of her feelings, “*watasi no ‘suki’ wo watashitai* (I want to give my “love” to him). In this case, it is apparent that the chocolate cake embodies an invisible figure of “love” and the “love labor” exerted includes the process of making a homemade chocolate cake.

In another episode of *Jyunisai* (*the twelve years old*, *Chao*, March issue, 2018), the scene clearly describes the relationship between chocolate on Valentine’s day and the emergence of the emotion of love in which a twelve-years old girl Yui. This occurred when she is suddenly kissed by her boyfriend Taiyo in the park soon after he tasted the chocolate from her on Valentine’s Day. This scene can also be interpreted that chocolate is used as a tool for temptation to stimulate him into kissing Yui, even though she is not aware of that. In other words, the representation of *choko* functions as a JVL evokes the meaning of sexuality and love in reading shōjo manga.

It is also suggested that the term *choko* connotes an ideology of romantic love under the development of advertising strategy used by Japanese sweet companies. As Ryang (2006) argues that love is useful for a “social function and a political technology of the modern national state,” the representation of *choko* applied the “love” for encouraging production and consumption of chocolate products. As a result, the custom of chocolate giving in the Valentine’s day invented variations ranging from formal to private such as: (a) *giri choko* or obligation chocolate (the custom of giving chocolate from women to men, especially co-workers with no romantic emotion); (b) *tomo choko* or *tomodachi* chocolate (the way of sending chocolates to those who considered as friends); (c) and *honmei choko* or true feeling chocolate (giving chocolate to the person who the givers are devoted to).

In shōjo manga, both female and male protagonists are highly influenced by this

hierarchical categorization of the value placed on making a homemade cake which is a kind of *hommei choko*, instead of buying cheaper chocolates as *giri choko*. As described in the story *kuchidoke bita cyokoleto* (*Melty bitter chocolate*, *Nakayoshi*, March issue, 2018) and *feiku bita: himitu no koigogoko* (*Fake bitter: the hidden feeling of love*, *Ribon*, March issue, 2018), the female protagonists' effort to make the chocolate for her lover is considered as "a labor of love". This is based on a feminine mystique that "celebrates the happy raptures of romantic love as the essence of feminine fulfillment" (Weeks, 2017, p.40). Similar to how the icon of bento represents *ryosai kenbo* ideology developed through women's educational institution, it assumes that *choko* also operates as an ideological apparatus embedded to an ideology of romantic love influenced by the late-capitalism.

#### 4.2.2 Inheriting notion of SDL in contemporary shōjo manga

This section addresses how the narratives of shōjo manga reflect the traditional SDL from gender perspective in contemporary society. As discussed in chapter 2, the 21<sup>st</sup> century is the period when Japanese people began to be aware of gender discrimination in their society (North, 2012, p.17). Along with social change such as the increase of women's participation to labor after the enactment of Japan's Equal Employment Opportunity Law (EEOL) in 1985, Japanese men have also changed their lifestyle into a more family-centered way. North (2012) however, observes that while Japanese men's work environment remain stressful or is getting worse through working long hours and getting lower salary, they are becoming more active in childrearing and open to do it in public (p.22). Mass media commonly feature both types of father image in the context of the SDL: (a) participatory fathering, and (b) traditional type of masculinity (North, 2012, p.23). North (2012) argues that although TV commercial and print ad seemingly portrays the image of participatory fathers doing female-typed housework such as cooking and shopping, "the



dominant impression is one of novelty and inexperience, such as men being unable to operate household or kitchen appliances” and “fathers are portrayed as competent when performing tasks that are traditionally masculine areas of specialization” (p.23). North (2012) also argues that “the new concept of fathering is closely connected with class-conscious consumption, aimed at providing children with memorable experiences, while improving marital satisfaction through shared parenting” (p.23).

Some findings give North’s argument a certain guarantee through examining the narrative of the story of *Haro! mai beibi*, (*Hello! my baby, Chao*, started from May issue, 2018). This story starts from a scene where a female protagonist named Koume and a male protagonist named Mao meet a baby named Ai, who suddenly jumped out of the magical mirror when they were looking for their future through the mirror. The story is similar to the classic narratives in which they nurture romantic feelings for each other through the experience of childrearing in the framework of a false family. The whole narrative reveals that it reflects the image of participatory fathering in which Mao as a father-like person who is cooperative with Koume, dedicatedly supporting her to take care of Ai through activities such as bottle-feeding, baby food-feeding, and taking walks outside. On the contrary, the narrative also indicates Mao’s inexperience is another characteristic which clearly describes the traditional pattern of masculinity. The story emphasizes on stereotypical gendered image in which Koume tends to feel nervous whether she is a good mother for Ai. On the other hand, Mao is depicted as a person who is always calm and collected, supporting her in all other aspects. In the scene where Mao saves Koume and Ai from falling off the cliff by covering them with his body, Mao declares his undying devotion by saying, “*Ai mo Koume mo hitorini surutsumori ne kara*” (I will never leave you alone). It is supposedly this sentence that signifies the ideology of patriarchy identified with North (2015)’s argument.

Another finding suggests that current manga writer attempts to challenge the gendered

stereotype of shōjo manga narrative by switching the personalities of main protagonists in a reverse manner. In the story of *Ai to mogumogu* (*Love and eating, Ribon*, started from April issue, 2018), the personality of the male protagonist breaks the stereotypical role of a boy by being described as the head of cooking club at their high school, in contrast to the female protagonist who can't cook by herself. Another story is *kasei hu san wa amakunai* (*The caregiver is not easy, Nakayoshi*, from June issue to July issue, 2018), also created a new pattern of story in which the male protagonist is working as a professional housekeeper in the house of the female protagonist. Ironically, what the findings reveal is that characteristics of male protagonists in these challenged narratives are described more emphasized their masculinity in comparison to the male characters who are generally demonstrated in the shōjo manga narrative.

This finding also assumes that although these stories seem to overcome the typical type of SDL, the challenge is superficial in which the core message of traditional notion of SDL has been maintained through the boy's stereotypical characteristics. They use this reverse notion from the traditional definition of masculinity as a plot and selling point of the manga. Although it creates a challenge to the usual, it is used more as a narrative plot than an actual direct challenge to the SDL in the society. But because these non-stereotypical setting exists in the variety of plots used in these shōjo manga magazines, it also suggests that there is a possibility to make the usual young female readers and subscribers challenge an imprint of the traditional notion of SDL in their early stage more than any other media texts such as novel and movie.

#### 4.2.3 Feminized masculinity

As gender becomes more fluid, several challenges to the traditional notion of femininity and masculinity emerge in the modern society. Driven by the social movement that "the boundaries between masculinity and femininity become vague when a man and woman take up masculine

and feminine traits at the same time” (Adriaens & Van Bauwel, 2014, p.189), not only women but also men are likely to have a negative image for the traditional type of masculinity. As discussed previously, contemporary Japanese society sees an ideal image of man as being kind and soft nature as well as having to play a traditional role of protector and defender of woman (Barancovaitė- Skindaravičienė, 2009, p.169). In other words, it may be said that the Japanese ideal image of men is more feminized by social change in contrast to other societies. Choo (2009) argues that the feminized masculinity is also expressed in shōjo manga *Hana yori dango* in which the male protagonist is depicted as having a more feminized personality than the female protagonist, describing that “in shōjo manga, feminized masculinity is normalized through repeated performances of femininity” (p.291).

This social change also brought about new terms, *Ikumen* and *bentodanshi* both describing the family-friendly image of masculinity. Since *Ikumen* is the new vocabulary invented in media sphere which refers to a family-friendly, the Japanese government has recently promoted *ikumen* project whose purpose is to increase the ratio of fathers who take child leave by encouraging them through the events and advertising (see <http://ikumen-project.mhlw.go.jp/event/>). As the term of *ikumen* is sometimes overused as a buzzword in the media, North (2012) takes this movement positively, arguing that “the pioneering efforts of the *ikumen* will spread the gender-free family model in their workplaces and neighborhoods, influencing both present and succeeding generations to think of men as more than workers (p.29). Hendry (2013) also observes that “there is now more visibility of the *ikumen*-or child-rearing men- than there used to be” (p.162).

In the text that the paper examined, a male protagonist shows his characteristic of *ikumen* which is overlapping with the ideal male image in contemporary society. Mao in *haro mai baibi* shows a typical *Ikumen* figure in the overall narrative, which suggests that *Ikumen* become

popular in contemporary culture. *Danshi* is also new term invented recently, which refer to the men who willingly make bento themselves and bring to their school and workplace, (see <http://zokugo-dict.com/29he/bentoudansi.htm>), which is also clearly described in the text. In the first episode of the story *Ai to mogumogu* (*Ai and munching*, *Ribon*, April 2018), the narrative starts with the scene that a male protagonist Sou, hand his homemade bento to a female protagonist Huku and continues contact with her through bento making. As discussed previously, this story frequently represents bento as a metaphor of rhetorical love. For example, the cover page of the episode is the picture describing that Sou feed *tamagoyaki* (a soy-flavored omelet) to Huku directly from his chopstick to her mouth and put a sentence of “*sore wa shiawase no aji*” which means “it is a flavor of happiness.” By suggesting that the relationship between Sou and Huku resemble that of a mother and a small child, it can describe the hybrid of masculinity and femininity by showing Sou’s motherhood characteristics. Another scene is when Sou teaches Huku on how to make bento in the kitchen and later on indirectly declares his feelings by saying, “*ryouri wo tsukuru koto wa aisurukoto, taberukoro wa aisarerukoto* (cooking is to love, and eating is to be love).” It clearly shows the dominant image of cooking embedded to the ideology of romantic love. Thus, *bento-danshi* possess another type of feminized masculinity.

While most feminists see contemporary society as the era when “women are asked to focus on their private and consumer lives as a way of self-expression while being the part of the “discourses of capitalism and neoliberalism” (Adriaens & Van Bauwel, 2014, pp.178-179). Women’s lifestyle is also regarded as a “pluralistic and contradictory” that “has been influenced by the academic world, media, popular culture, and consumer culture” (Adriaens & Van Bauwel, 2014, p.179). Taking into consideration these arguments, our findings reveal that current shōjo manga are reflecting some of social realities regarding this notion such as the work life balance policy, family-friendly childrearing, and feminized masculinity as discussed previously.

The main point of our findings emphasize that the depictions of housework in contemporary shōjo manga play a crucial role of conveying heterosexual imaginary and function as the ideological apparatus embedded to the ideologies which maintain the traditional notion of SDL. Ryang (2006) claims that the SDL is “systematically imposed by the nation-state in various guises, such as through the educational apparatus, the popular cultural promotion of “happy” homes and families, and via legal institutions such as laws relating to marriage and nationality” (p.74). In another words, promoting shōjo manga with the depiction of housework maintains the traditional notion of SDL embedded to “love in modernity” which require “acknowledging the nation-state as biopower” (Ryang, 2006,p.129).

Another important finding is that current shōjo manga are likely to express women’s certain dilemma on how to prove their femininities in the atmosphere of “choiceoisie” in contemporary society. While also shōjo manga challenge old and gendered narratives to reflect a certain social reality such as feminized masculinity. Oshiyama (2013) argues that women in contemporary society tend to internalize traditional gender norm which is embedded to the male-centered idea, and remains to be faithful in the stream of legitimization of gender equality (p. 171). Choo (2012) also observe the current Japanese women as follows:

A [a]s Japanese women gained more social power through increased participation in the public domain, a nostalgic romanticisation seemed to be surfacing in relation to the domestic role.[...] This would be through positioning themselves in a role that even feminised males cannot perform that of a traditional mother who is bound to domesticity (P.293)

In another words, dominant gender perspectives influenced by various elements such as “agency, freedom, sexual pleasure, fashion, consumer culture, hybridism, humor, and the renewed focus on the female body” ironically have lost the way of expressing women’s femininity but depending on the traditional gender role such as the SDL (Adriaens & Van Bauwel, 2014, p.188).

## 5 Conclusion

In contemporary Japanese society where many people believe that women can work with men as equal since the EEOL was enacted in 1985, it is also common knowledge that the traditional notion of SDL still remain the same in our society. Statistics reveal that the typical pattern of SDL referring to “the men as breadwinners, women as housewives” (Hartmann, 2010, p.61) is decreasing in contemporary Japanese society as the working rate of women in the middle of parenting are also rising. However, some scholars point out that this social change brought women a “second shift” (Hochschild, 1989) or another type of SDL (NSDL) which demonstrates that women should take both responsibilities in the workplace and household (Matsuda, 2001, p.40; Ueno, 1998, p.118).

Starting with initial inequities where the traditional notion of SDL comes from and how the notion keeps on living in our society, chapter one firstly gave several overviews on social structure in how the traditional notion of SDL developed historically in Japan as well as in the world. Some researchers have discussed that ideology is the key factor to understand how the traditional notion of SDL is continuing in contemporary Japanese society even though perspectives had become plural and fluid in current women’s attitude for the notion of gender. Koyama (2003) argued that *ryosai kenbo* ideology is one of the ideologies underlying the traditional notion of SDL which is developed through the modernization of Japanese society and the formation of the educational system for female citizens. Yamato (1995) also points out the duality of current women’s attitude for the traditional SDL, arguing that whereas contemporary women are rejecting the traditional notion of SDL from the view of “gender equality,” they are likely to accept it from another viewpoint of “the reproduction role under the name of love” (pp. 122-123).

The literatures secondly identified the connotations of the terminology, “housework”,

from the perspective of sociology and gender studies, especially focusing on love and sexuality. Previous sociologists defined the term housework as the “contested terrain” (Bianchi et al., 2000, pp.191-192) as same as the “place as protagonist in the struggle” (Dalla Costa & James, 1973). These definitions suggest that the term housework is sometimes debatable in the context of capitalism in which “housework” represents a product involving “the gendered role of the reproduction and maintenance for the family member” (Hartman, 1981, p.373). Similarly, some feminists also argued that the term housework should be discussed as specific to “women question” (Hartmann, 1974, p.2). Hartman (1981) argued that capitalism formed the “women question” which finally give priority to housework as the reproduction in Capitalism. Hartman (1981) also claimed that patriarchy is the most underlying notion of “women question” because it “establish or create interdependence and solidarity among men that enable them to dominate women” (p.11). Other scholars have debated that the term housework also functions as the metaphor of love and sexuality. The term “Love labor “discovered by Lynch (2007) clearly shows how housework is used as a tool for controlling the power of primary relationship mutually and inter-independently. Weeks (2017) claims that an ideology of romantic love functions to obscure the social reality brought from “love labor,” which reinforces the traditional notion of SDL.

Finally, the literature clarified how manga and shōjo manga had developed as one of the useful texts for the field of Japanese popular culture from the perspective of gender. Common understanding by the researchers addressing manga studies was that manga gains a certain popularity not only as an entertainment but also as an academic literature, which influence the world as a source for political, ethical, or existential critical reflection” (MacWilliams, 2014, p.10; Prough, 2018, p.277). Specifically, manga genre has been developed with the gendered categorization which was clearly divided into shōjo manga and shōnen manga. While shōjo manga genre was initially dominated by male staffs including writers and editors, the female

writers called 24-nen gumi (The Year 24 Group) contributed to develop shōjo manga in the aesthetical and narrative ways. The world of shōjo manga surely influenced on shōjo bunka (girls' culture) used by a gendered text for girls in which they learned how to identify themselves as a female body, how to handle their facing problem in school life (Takahashi, 2014, p.114; Masuda, 2015, p.30). The shōjo and shōjo bunka symbolized in shōjo manga has a close relationship with love and sexuality. Shamoan (2007) discovered that although shōjo bunka started with describing homosexual friendship between girls, the girls' culture gradually shifted to heterosexual narrative with the influx of heterosexual romance from the Western world (pp.4-6). Shamoan (2007) also argued that contemporary shōjo manga witness some controversial narratives regarding how girls' subjectivity is described in the context of love and sexuality (p.15)

This paper was able to understand the dynamics of the SDL by focusing on Japanese popular culture, especially on shōjo manga texts. The research was able to clarify how the depictions of housework are related to the traditional notion of SDL in the narrative of shōjo manga. Our findings firstly identified that these shōjo magazines targeting younger readers constitute all narratives based on heterosexual romance derived from the normalization of "heterosexual imaginary" (Ingraham, 1994, pp.201-211). The finding also discussed that there are two polarized characteristics of female protagonists represented in the text, which demonstrates that they are identified with a typical ideal shōjo image of "kawaii virgin" and "mothering woman" (Henshall, 1999; Barancovaitė- Skindaravičienė, 2009); both of which functions as the strategy of female heroines for asserting "their status proportionate to all the Prince Charmings"(Choo, 2008, p.290).

The study also concludes from our findings that applying the concept of JVL led to a notion that the scenes describing food making plays a significant role as a "gendered ideological state apparatus" to convey some ideologies developed by Japanese society. In support to Allison's



argument (2007) that the icon of *obento* functions as a “gendered state ideology” (p.81), this paper discussed that *obento* can be interpreted as a symbol for the *ryosai kenbo* ideology which contributed to the emergence of the traditional SDL. Similarly, this paper also discussed that *choko* is symbolized as a product from “love laboring” which is embedded to an ideology of romantic love influenced by capitalism. It also has a crucial role as the ideological apparatus for embodying love and sexuality which the female protagonists strategically promote themselves to their targets.

Lastly, this research concludes that contemporary shōjo manga have involved the traditional notion of SDL by describing the scenes of housework in gendered way which closely attached to both ideologies of *ryosai kenbo* and romantic love. This paper noted that shōjo manga can be used as an attempt to express certain dilemma where modern women are trapped in contradiction of the atmosphere of “choiceoisie” in a gender perspective dominating in contemporary society. In the context of women’s agency, the traditional notion of SDL regains power for contemporary women to promote femininity.

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