CHAPTER II

This chapter presents the theoretical frameworks for analyzing *Everything Everywhere All at Once*, using both intrinsic and extrinsic approaches. The intrinsic approach examines narrative elements such as character, setting, and conflict, while the extrinsic approach considers sociocultural, historical, and ideological contexts. Together, they form the basis for interpreting the movie's portrayal of Asian female gender roles.

2.1 Intrinsic Theoretical Frameworks

This section focuses on the internal elements of *Everything Everywhere All at Once* that are essential to understanding its storytelling and thematic depth. It examines both narrative and cinematography elements, explaining how these components work together to construct meaning, develop characters, and convey the movie's central ideas related to gender roles.

2.1.1 Narrative Elements

Bordwell and Thompson (2020:75) define narrative as "a chain of events linked by cause and effect and occurring in time and space." Narrative elements include character, setting, plot, and conflict, which work together to organize the story and shape the audience's understanding of its themes.

2.1.1.1 Character & Characterization

Character refers to the individuals who drive the plot and interact within the movie's world, while characterization is the way in which the moviemaker presents and

develops these characters (Bordwell & Thompson, 2020:99). Characterization in movies is achieved not only through dialogue but also through the visual aspects of moviemaking, such as costume, makeup, and body language, as well as actions that reveal motivations and internal conflicts. Character development is crucial to understand how these roles evolve and how the characters interact with each other within their familial and social context.

2.1.1.2 Setting

Setting is the time and space in which a movie's narrative unfolds, encompassing both physical environments and temporal contexts that establish the story's world (Bordwell & Thompson, 2020:115). settings serve a symbolic function, reflecting the psychological struggles and emotions of characters". The movie's setting frequently provides visual clues to a character's inner turmoil or desires, reinforcing narrative themes. For example, contrasting settings can represent opposing aspects of a character's life, such as duty versus personal longing, increasing the story's emotional and thematic resonance.

2.1.1.3 Conflict

Conflict is a narrative element that drives plot progression and character development through opposition. There are two primary types of conflict in movies: external conflict and internal conflict. External conflict involves struggles between characters or between characters and their environment, while internal conflict refers to the psychological battles within a character's mind (Bordwell & Thompson, 2020:87). Bordwell notes that effective movies use conflict to propel the narrative,

deepen character development, and engage the audience emotionally. The resolution or escalation of these conflicts, whether resolved externally or internally, is key to the character's arc and the story's progression.

2.1.2 Cinematography Elements

Cinematography, defined by Brown (2020:3) as "the process of capturing moving images on movie or digital media through the creative and technical use of camera and lighting," involves visual and auditory techniques that shape how a story is perceived. In this study, it focuses on three key aspects: shots, which frame and sequence the visual narrative; lens height, which affects perspective and power dynamics; and sound, both diegetic and non-diegetic, which enhances atmosphere and emotional impact.

2.1.2.1 The Shots

Shot in movie refers to a single continuous take, which can range from a few seconds to several minutes (Bordwell & Thompson, 2020:215). In cinematography, the choice of shots is crucial for storytelling. There are different types of shots—such as close-ups, medium shots, and long shots—serve distinct narrative functions. Close-ups can reveal a character's emotions, while long shots can establish the setting and context of a scene. The arrangement and sequencing of these shots can manipulate the audience's perception of time and space, guiding their understanding of the narrative flow (Bordwell & Thompson, 2020:185).

2.1.2.2 Lens Height

Lens height in movie refers to the position of the camera's lens in relation to the subject (Bordwell & Thompson, 2020:187). Lens height, or the camera's position relative to the subject, plays a significant role in shaping the audience's perception of characters and events. Bordwell and Thompson note that low-angle shots can make a character appear more powerful or imposing, while high-angle shots can render them vulnerable or insignificant. This manipulation of perspective does not only affects the visual composition, but also it influences the emotional response of the audience. Thereby it enhances the narrative impact (Bordwell & Thompson, 2020:187).

2.1.2.3 Sound

Sound in movie refers to the auditory elements that accompany the visuals, including dialogue, music, and sound effects (Bordwell & Thompson, 2020:263). Sound can be categorized into diegetic (sounds that originate from within the story world) and non-diegetic (sounds that come from outside the story, such as a musical score). The effective use of sound can create atmosphere, build tension, and deepen emotional engagement, thereby enriching the overall narrative experience.

2.2 Extrinsic Theoretical Frameworks

This section explores the external factors that influence the creation and meaning of the movie. It draws on relevant theories to analyze how sociocultural and ideological contexts inform the depiction of gender roles and the broader themes presented in the movie.

2.2.1 Asian-American Gender Stereotypes

Asian-American women's gender roles are often shaped by patriarchal values derived from both their native cultures and the pressures of American society. These roles are frequently centered on women as caregivers, wives, and daughters, with the traditional model of the self-sacrificing mother being particularly prominent. However, growing up in an immigrant community creates a conflict between these traditional cultural norms and American society's more individualistic ideals. Second-generation Asian-Americans, in particular, face a distinct challenge as they navigate a different set of gender expectations than their parents, often resulting in cultural dissonance and identity conflict. As these women balance family obligations with personal autonomy, they experience pressure to redefine gender roles and forge new identities that reflect their assimilation and integration into American society. (Chou, 2017:120).

Additionally, Asian-American women often face gender stereotypes that limit their roles and opportunities in both family and society. These stereotypes, shaped by both racial and cultural expectations, are perpetuated through media portrayals where Asian women are often depicted as either submissive and docile or as the "exotic" other. The "dragon lady" and "lotus blossom" stereotypes, for example, either portray them as overly sexualized or as passive and fragile, which further limits their agency and identity. These stereotypes not only affect how Asian-American women are perceived by society but also influence their self-perception and the internalized expectations of how they should behave, reinforcing traditional roles while hindering their ability to assert independence and forge their own path (Shankar, 2019:312).

2.2.2 Social Role Theory in the Context of Asian Female Gender Role

The theory of gender role describes the societal expectations, norms, and behaviors that are deemed appropriate for individuals based on their gender. This theory contends that gender roles are socially constructed rather than biologically inherent, and are influenced by cultural, historical, and familial factors. Eagly (1987:3) defines gender roles as the expected and acceptable behavior for men and women in a given society, influencing how people act, dress, speak, and interact with others based on their gender.

According to Eagly's Social Role Theory, gender differences arise when men and women are assigned different roles in society, resulting in distinct social behaviors. Men, for example, are often expected to be assertive, dominant, and self-sufficient, whereas women are encouraged to be nurturing, supportive, and caring. These gender roles are instilled early in life through socialization and reinforced by family, education, media, and peer interactions. Based on Social Role Theory, the division of labor in society influences gender roles, with different expectations for men and women depending on their social positions (Eagly, 1987:4).

Although Eagly's framework was developed to explain gender roles in general, its principles can be applied to specific cultural contexts, including Asian American communities. In such contexts, women often navigate expectations influenced by both traditional Asian cultural values—such as filial piety, modesty, and family obligation—and the norms of Western society that may emphasize individuality and self-determination. This dual influence can intensify role expectations, making the

analysis of Asian female gender roles particularly complex. By applying Social Role Theory to the characters in *Everything Everywhere All at Once*, this study examines how these overlapping expectations shape identity, behavior, and interpersonal relationships.

2.3.1 The Potrayal of Asian Female Gender Roles

The portrayal of Asian female gender roles encompasses how these roles are represented in narratives and media, reflecting cultural expectations, societal norms, and personal identities. In the context of *Everything Everywhere All at Once*, these portrayals illustrate the multiple positions women occupy—ranging from traditional caregivers and dutiful daughters to individuals who expand their roles beyond domestic responsibilities. By identifying and analyzing these portrayals, this study aims to understand how the movie both reinforces and challenges the conventional image of Asian women, particularly within immigrant family dynamics.

2.3.1.1 Communal Roles (Caregiver/Dutiful Mother)

Communal roles refer to the traditional expectations that women take on caregiving and emotional work, which are often linked to being feminine (Eagly & Wood, 2012:458). These roles include caregiving duties such as child-rearing and maintaining family harmony. In immigrant communities, these roles are especially reinforced by the need to preserve cultural traditions, casting caregiving as an essential moral duty for women, rather than simply a personal choice (Eagly, 1987:34). Women are expected to prioritize family care, which leads to their portrayal in media as self-sacrificing mothers and caregivers. For example, a working mother who spends her

evenings caring for aging parents while handling domestic chores may experience chronic exhaustion, illustrating the physical and emotional impact of these expectations.

2.3.1.2 Submissive Roles

Submissive roles refer to the expectations that women should be passive, deferential, and obedient to male authority figures, particularly within family structures (Eagly & Karau, 2002:575). In many Asian cultures, patriarchal structures idealize female obedience, associating it with virtue and family harmony. Submissive roles are, thus, defined by strict behavioral boundaries that expect women to avoid open disagreement, prioritize others' needs above their own, and maintain silence or acquiescence in family decision-making. These parameters reinforce limited autonomy, where women's opinions and desires are secondary to male authority. Role constraints limit women's autonomy by rewarding compliance (e.g., praise for being a "dutiful daughter") while punishing assertiveness (e.g., labeling independent women as "disrespectful" or "rebellious") (Eagly, 1987:28)..

2.3.1.3 Role Expansion

Role expansion refers to the combination of both traditional caregiving and paid labor responsibilities that women take on, especially in immigrant families (Eagly & Wood, 2012:464). Providers and protectors exemplify this dual responsibility, as women do not only care for their families emotionally and physically, but also contribute economically by working outside the home to support household needs and ensure family security. For example, a first-generation immigrant woman running a

laundromat by day and handling all household chores by night embodies this struggle. As a provider, she takes on financial responsibility for her family (often in physically demanding jobs), while as a protector, she maintains the home—ensuring children are fed, homework is done, and cultural traditions are upheld.

2.3.2 The Factors of Asian Female Gender Roles

This section examines the cultural, social, and historical factors that shape Asian female gender roles in the movie. It considers how traditions, family expectations, migration experiences, and societal norms influence the characters' roles and identities.

2.3.2.1 Intergenerational Role Norms

Intergenerational role are the gendered expectations passed down through families, ensuring cultural continuity (Eagly, 1987:52). From a young age, girls observe and mimic the behaviors of female caregivers, learning to prioritize domestic duties and emotional labor. This is reinforced by role modelling, in which children mimic gendered behaviors observed in same-sex careers, thereby incorporating traditional norms into their developing identities (Eagly & Wood, 2012:467). This socialization process is critical in determining Asian female gender roles in family and community settings.

2.3.2.2 Immigrant Role Strain

Immigrant role strain is the experience of tension that arises when traditional gender roles conflict with the economic realities faced by immigrant women, creating a mismatch between cultural expectations and their actual work situations (Eagly &

Wood, 2012:468). Many Asian immigrant women experience underemployment due to challenges, such as language barriers or non-recognition of their professional credentials. This forces them into jobs that do not align with their education or career aspirations. At the same time, role discontinuity arises as their children assimilate into Western culture, adopting more flexible gender norms that conflict with their mothers' traditional expectations (Eagly, 1987:58).

2.3.2.3 Role Ambiguity in Cultural Conflict

Role ambiguity in cultural conflict refers to the uncertainty and stress women experience when navigating between traditional expectations and personal choices (Eagly & Wood, 2012:470). Norm violation stress emerges as women face anxiety from defying conventional roles, such as pursuing careers, delaying marriage, or refusing caregiving responsibilities. This stress is often accompanied by a role identity crisis, where women struggle to integrate their cultural roles with their individual desires and identity (Eagly, 1987:63).

2.3.3 The Effects of Asian Female Gender Roles

This subchapter presents theoretical insights into the consequences of gender roles for women's identities, self-perceptions, and interpersonal relationships. It draws from sociological and gender studies literature to explain how such roles can impact both individual well-being and social dynamics.

2.3.3.1 Role Strain

Role strain refers to the psychological tension and stress that arises when an individual faces conflicting demands from multiple social roles they occupy

simultaneously (Eagly, 1987:72). For women, this often occurs when the expectations attached to their roles—such as caregiver, worker, and family member—clash or become overwhelming. When these conflicting role demands are not managed or relieved, the strain can develop into chronic emotional and physical health problems, including anxiety, depression, and somatic symptoms. This emotional burden significantly impacts women's overall well-being and can reduce their ability to function effectively in any of their roles (Eagly & Wood, 2012:472).

2.3.3.2 Role Innovation

Role innovation refers to the process by which women redefine and transform traditional gender roles to better suit their lived experiences, often through rejecting restrictive societal expectations (Eagly, 1987:80). This process, sometimes called role rebellion, allows women to challenge limiting cultural norms and develop new ways of behaving that promote empowerment and self-expression (Eagly & Wood, 2012: 474).

2.3.3.3 Role Integration

Role integration is the harmonization of multiple social roles and identities into a coherent self-concept that balances societal expectations with personal goals (Eagly, 1987:85). Successfully integrating various roles enables women to honor their diverse responsibilities without completely abandoning any. This balance fosters psychological well-being and strengthens social relationships by facilitating adaptive coping with societal demands and personal aspirations (Eagly & Wood, 2012:476).