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Table of Contents

Table of Contents	i
“Contestation between Global and Local in Manggarai Rap Music”	
Ans. Prawati Yuliantari.....	1
“Ms. Marvel as a Representation of the Struggle for American Identity”	
Ashika Prajnya Paramita.....	10
“Fighting For Women Existence in Popular Espionage Movies <i>Salt</i> (2010) and <i>Zero Dark Thirty</i> (2012)”	
Benita Amalina.....	25
“A Transnational Study on American Hegemony of Indonesian Male Teenagers through SmackDown”	
Dhionisius Gumilang.....	44
“Negotiation of Identity in Diasporic Literature: A Case Study on Amy Tan’s <i>The Hundred Secret Senses</i> and Leslie Marmon Silko’s <i>Ceremony</i>”	
Ken Ruri Nindyasmara.....	54
“Stereotyping African Americans’ Racial Identity on Valerie Martin’s Property”	
Raisah.....	65

CONTESTATION BETWEEN GLOBAL AND LOCAL IN MANGGARAI RAP MUSIC

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Globalization causes the spread of pop culture beyond geographical boundaries. Rap music as a form of pop culture spread around the world in the 1990s through the mass media that was driven by the transnational music industry. Its popularity was not just happened in big cities, but in peripheral regions like in Manggarai of East Nusa Tenggara as well.

This article uses the transnational concept in American studies and theory of landscape advanced by Arjun Appadurai. The concept of Transnational American Studies is used to analyze the influence of American culture beyond its territory, while the theory of landscape is used to analyze the conflicts that occurred between the global and the local rap music in Manggarai music spaces.

This analysis shows that the process of appropriation carried out by local rapper against global rap music is a form of negotiation to adapt to local tastes as well as of creativity to face global music. The strategies undertaken in the struggle for spaces of music can be seen in the form of themes, language, dialect, or mode of production. Contestation between the global and the local is always transformed through the development of music consumers in the area.

Keywords: Contestation, Rap, Transnational, Globalization

Introduction

Globalization that happened in the twentieth century led to the development of transnational relations which is encouraged by the progress of information technology through the mass media and the Internet. Music as a product of pop culture has spread beyond conventional geographical boundaries by the media and internet technology. These transnational music industries cause conflicts between global and local music in the local music spaces.

United States controls ninety percents of world music product through several international recording corporations (Negus, 2004). A genre that popular in the late 1980s throughout the world was rap. The music which is coming from the urban

black culture in the Bronx United States has appropriated as a result of differences of the socio-cultural background with the affected countries (Motley & Henderson, 2008). American rap appropriation in many countries become an integral part of the global rap and emerged as a diaspora form of expression. Rap which was originally part of the American culture of the black community to resist the hegemony of the dominant culture (Lipsitz, 2004; Rose, 1994), turned into a means of displaying solidarity among young people and a form of local identity.

Rap music to be known in Manggarai in 2008. The attraction of the music elements (sonic) and local themes made rap music popular among young people of Manggarai. Those localities can be seen from the title of the song that talks about

the region or use Manggarai language such as: "Ruteng is da City", "Wa Mai Tana", and "We are Ruteng Clan".

Rap together with other genres such as punk and hard rock attract young people in Indonesia in the 1990s as an alternative music from the domination of Indonesian pop music with its love themes (Bodden, 2005a; Wallach, 2003). The popularity of rap music attracted and draw criticism from various party such as B.J. Habibie, who served as Minister of Research and Technology at the time, said that rap music is rough and not in accordance with the values of the nation (Bodden, 2005a), while for the rapper, rap music was considered suitable to convey the aspirations to the government which was controlled by New Order regime. Rap became a medium to convey the aspirations of young people, at the same time a weapon of protest and expression of social desirability, or simultaneously both, in order to create distinction of environmental and social identity and reject the identity or social behavior imposed by governments or social groups that dominate the society (Bodden, 2005b).

Rap in Indonesia reached popularity in the early 1990s through rappers such as Iwa K. and Denada. The popularity of the genre encouraged the emergence of rap singers and music groups in various areas with local identities such as language, tunes, lyrics, and style of dress. Local identity was combined with themes that contain social, economic and political conditions in the region of a rapper. In Manggarai rap, Lipooz and some rap groups describe the situation of the society and voiced criticism of the existing conditions as well. Lipooz considers rap as a mean to show

the condition of Manggarai community in the midst of change (Allin, 2012c).

The entry of rap music to Manggarai can not be separated from the role of the global music industry in cooperation with local music company. This global music power caused local musicians contestation through reterritorialization which is involved local elements and marketing strategies in the local spaces. This article discusses two important things in the context of contestation between the global and the local in Manggarai rap namely: why do the contestation between the global and the local occur in Manggarai rap? And what are the global and local strategies in the dispute?

Methodology

To answer the research questions above it uses transnational American Studies approach, which is a concept to see America from the perspective of peoples outside the United States that gives two-way interaction. This view change the concept of American Mind focusing on American experience within its own borders into Hemispheric Mind, the views on the US from other nations, as well as American influence on countries bordering with it (Fisher, 2006; Fishkin, 2005; Rowe, 2010 ; 2012). One of it is the influence of American cultural products in the perspective of nations outside the United States.

To see the conflict between global influence and local power analysis is conducted by the concept of landscapes proposed by Arjun Appadurai (1996; 2006; Wise, 2008). Appadurai's theory is effective to analyze the dynamics of contestation between the global and the

local through mediascape which is part of technoscape and driven by the finanscape of multinational corporations. The entry of popular culture products brings new ideoscape to the local sphere, while the strength of the local etnoscape tries to contests against new ideoscape through cultural reterritorialization. Lull's concept (1995) on cultural reterritorialization affirms that the culture is continuously reshaped by social interaction, creative forms of personal communication, technology and the mass media, so that the product of that culture loses its original form as a result of a new interpretation and understanding of the local context.

This study is a qualitative research, a study which was based on the interpretation of everything seen, heard, and understood by the researcher (Creswell, 2012). To make an interpretation it uses thick description methods which is raised by Pontoretto, namely 'thick interpretation' of social actions which is undertaken by the object so that it can provide a 'thick meaning' to reach an understanding and at the same time inner situation of the readers (Pontoretto, 2006). The data in this study come from three sources, namely literature study, observation, and interviews.

Literature data are in the form of audiovisual such as DVD / VCD, internet sites (ReverbNation and youtube), and MP3 as well as literature such as books, journals, newspapers, and magazines. Observations carried out on radio, television, video clips and direct music events (live performance). While interviews were obtained from informants consists of rappers, radio broadcasters, members of the rap community, and

students who are members of some art studios.

Discussion

The emergence of rap is inseparable from a variety of socio-cultural conditions that occur in major American cities. Among the various Afro-American residential areas across the country, Bronx was famous as the worst slums in the United States (Price III, 2006). In addition to the social, political conditions in mid-1960-1970-an also affect the domestic condition of United States. Cold War between the United States and the Soviet Union led the American's conscription, including African-Americans who are fighting for equal rights, to various countries. Emmett G. Price III (2006) describes the position of Afro-American community as people who do not have full legal rights as citizens, but were obliged to defend the country in the name of the applicable law. These conditions aroused various movements, including The Black Art Movement, a movement spearheaded by young Afro-Americans to express their views through various forms of creative activities that teaches the art in the perspective of blacks.

In terms of its history, rap music originated from the activities carried out by Clive Campbell who was then known as DJ Kool Herc in the 1970s in various block party (Price III, 2006). They play the music that relied on the creation of rhythm by using two turntables containing pieces of music which is taken from songs that were famous in that time. Themes of rap songs that depict the realities of city life in the form of street violence, crime, racial discrimination, poverty, and drug use, have

drawn criticism from the mainstream music industry and society. The use of vulgar language and expression of black youth resistance against authorities led to negative reaction from many people, but the controversies made rap genre as a global phenomenon in the late 20th century (Bennett, 2001).

In the concept of Appadurai (1996; 2006; Wise, 2008), the inclusion of hip hop elements through films such as "Wild Style" or "Flashdance" in the 1990s to various countries through the power of Mediascape in the form of radio, television, and cinema sparked interest in other elements. The adoption of the hip hop culture by the Youth led to an influx of new ideoscape in the realm of their ethnoscape. The entry of new ideoscape caused contestation between local ethnoscape with Afro-American ethnoscape inserted by international corporations as owners of capital or financialscape. The process of distribution and promotion through Mediascape was inseparable from the network of international corporations that has given the flexibility to work with the national corporations by local government (Sen & Hill, 2007; Sen & Hill, 2007). The process of deployment and distribution of pop culture products occur because of the power of technology (technoscape) driven by the financial ability of the industrialists.

Nonetheless, according to the theory of hegemony of Hall in Storey (2012), viewers or consumers of cultural products has its own perception of the products of culture that are shown. Different perceptions arise from different ethnic backgrounds and collective experience. Hip hop ideology which is a product of the collective experience of Afro-American

community then co-opted by corporate of international music deals with local ideoscape. In this encounter the appropriation process occurred so ideoscape of American rap adapted to local ideoscape.

Based on the concept of pull and push in the hip hop culture (Motley & Henderson, 2008; Trapp, 2005), push factors in local hip hop is the strength of technoscape and financialscape to market new music by using Mediascape as agents such as radio, television, and cinemas. The ideology (ideoscape) of resistance and freedoms within the spirit of hip hop then transformed in accordance with idioscape and ethnoscape of the receiver. This transformation occurred because of the perceptions of rap in each country is different.

Pull factors in local hip hop are local themes, language, and samples of local music. These elements are used to attract music consumers in the region. Means for local rapper to distribute cultural products is a community network, distro stores, local radio, social events, and art festivals.

The concept of push and pull in rap music appears in the contextualization of rap authenticity by the rapper in each region. American rap's contextualization to local conditions occurs in various elements. Contextualization of musical styles presented by Jogja Hip Hop Foundation of Yogyakarta (Bonaventura, 2013) by incorporating elements of Javanese music, Sundanis of Bandung incorporate elements of Sundanese music (Adhityo, 2012), the Turkish rappers incorporate traditional songs in local samples of his music (Solomon, 2005a; Solomon, 2005b), hip hop in Kenya coast uses samples of Arabic

music and Lebanon because the roots of Arab culture which comes from their parents (Eisenberg, 2012), and Desi rap of South Asia includes elements of Baghra music as part of the music (Bennett, 2001).

Rap songs began to be known by Ruteng's community through radio (Randu, 2015; Sandre, 2012). The song "Ruteng is da City" created by Lipooz became famous and favored by youth. The song was also the beginning of the movement of hip hop in Ruteng in particular and Manggarai in general. Lipooz as a role figure who popularized rap music Manggarai recognized by other rappers. Just like in any other region in the world and Indonesia (Androutsopoulos & Scholz, 2003; Bennett 2004; Bodden, 2005a; Condry, 2007; Eisenberg, 2012; Hellenon 2006; Hutnyk, 2006; Liu, 2010), the interest of young people in Manggarai on rap music emerged because it has a different format than previously existing music and synonymous with music for young people (Platoz, 2015; Radu, 2015; Sandre, 2012; Tribe, 2015; V-Lee, 2015).

Contestation between the global and the local is located on each element of rap. Essential element in rap is music. The use of samples in rap music gives leeway to the musicians to combine a wide variety of music into a new composition. At this level, various types of music that have existed in Manggarai music spaces become references and influence the composition of rap created by the rapper. Selection of the music based on various considerations, among others: the artist's perception of the tastes of consumers, the trend of global music, or the background of the musicians.

Considerate of consumer tastes led some Manggarai rappers to mix various types of

music. The passion of Manggarai youth to dance caused the choice of samples adapted to the rhythm suitable for dancing. Nevertheless they do not include certain types of music that comes from outside the region dominantly, due to connectivity with local elements remains a major attraction for local music fans.

Local rap adaptation to the tastes of the local community can not be completely separated from the global conditions. Potash Tribe (2015) find that rap music remains subject to the "tastes of the market," locality that is displayed can not be separated from the construction of musical trends created by the mainstream entertainment industry. "Tastes of the market" or "tastes of the industry" led to the selection of music as a sample of the songs are not set to a specific genres, even though the selection is still on the music that has roots of Afro-American as jazz, Rhythm and Blues, and new-school rap which is more popularly known as West Coast rap. Negotiations of public taste and global trends appeared in theme, language and local dialects.

Negotiations between the global and the local are also shown with the use of the name of the site by any rappers. Based on the opinion of MC Firman, the utterance of a location appears in the name of the group and at the beginning of the song when rappers introduce themselves (Firman, 2015). For listeners of Manggarai district, the utterance of a person's location is part of their cultural identity as it concerns distinctions of various regions in Manggarai in dialect, way of life, and its history as a result of geopolitical construction in the region.

Contestation between the global and the local in Manggarai rap also appear in rap's

lyrics and titles. Most Manggarai rap songs use of English in whole or part of its title, but using Indonesian and Manggarai in the lyrics. The use of English in its titles is a global influence, while the lyrics that use Indonesian or local language as an effort to attract local communities to the song. Manggarai rap songs that use this method are: "Hip Cha Cha" by Lipooz, "Boleng My Place" by Vian Mahon, and "I'm a Bad Boy" by Potazz.

Contestation between local and global music in Manggarai rap not only in the format of the music and the lyrics, but also in aspects of production and distribution. Strategies undertaken by the global power of music among others are using television, radio, and print media to market the products of the music. Local radio stations in Manggarai accept advertising to play specific songs on the demand of music producer. The broadcast of advertising of some products that do not relate to the music shows but using icon of singers indirectly made a promotion for the singer's songs. Some health products, sports, soft drinks, often use a music star as icon of ads.

One example of the entry of the global music industry to the local area was sales of ring back tone (RBT) of Lipooz songs by the provider of telecommunications services in one of the musical events in Manggarai. Sales of music by local artists by national companies, according to Keith Negus (2004) may be a step of cooptation of the global music industry to the local artists who have the potential for raising the profit of the company. Cooptation also occurs in an independent company that use the power of the mainstream music industry's distribution system as happened in the United States.

The efforts to contest against the entry of global rap into Manggarai rap spaces, performed by a variety of strategies such as: community performances by local rapper. Some of the rap community like MBC (Manggarai Barat Community) has held two events, namely Rap Party Part 1 and Part 2, in 2010 and 2012 for fans of rap in West Manggarai. This event is also open to groups or solo rappers across the Manggarai region. Similar events were held by Rappublic Ruteng Clan in the region of Ruteng as well. By cooperating with educational institutions such as colleges and schools, they held performances of local music on special occasions such as the anniversary of the school or certain occasions.

Another strategy is to raise issues that are prominent and popular in the community such as Sail Komodo 2014, which makes Komodo Island as a world tourist destination. This national program is used by the rapper of West Manggarai to create a song that contains places of tourist destinations in West Manggarai like in "Labuan Bajo" by MC Firman, and "Tanahku Labuan Bajo" by the rap group Boyz of West Manggarai. In addition they also invite the community to succeed tourism programs in the area of West Manggarai in a way to preserve the flora and fauna in the region such as found in the song "Naring Cama Ora Komodo" by Z_Lo MBC.

Thirdly, some Manggarai rap groups using a specific figure as the icon for the song. The icon becomes a bond of unity and solidarity as fellow Manggarai. Icon of some Manggarai rap songs is Motang Rua, a local hero who fought against colonial rule in the late 19th century. Respect for

Motang Rua in the lyrics of Manggarai rap songs Manggarai was not only to gain popularity, but also as an honor of the heroes and their predecessors. Respect for Motang Rua contained in songs like "Flores Sound" by Lipooz and "Attack of Motang Ruap" by Irwan To'oz.

Conclusion

The influx of Western music into Indonesia had an impact on local music. Western music which is supported by international music corporation oust the local music that is close to the reality of people's lives. The dynamics of foreign music in Indonesia can not be separated from the social, economic, and political as well as policies that are run by the authorities. As a product of pop culture rap music in Indonesia still has influence in voicing social, economic, political and experienced people.

The entry of rap to Manggarai led the contestation between local and global music in the Manggarai music spaces. Global forces represented by rap music that came from abroad or the mainstream music industry which use the mass media to spread their products, while the local rap music is rap music produced by the rapper of Manggarai using an independent production system. Global and local contestation was also present in the local rap through the use of foreign languages in the title and lyrics, as well as the use of slang that comes from American rap.

There are several strategies undertaken in the contestation that include: using the format of rap global but using local content, encouraging people to know their music by performing a show at the local level, market their products use the indie community network, and raised local

issues which attracted audience's attention. Rap global strategies carried out mass media, direct promotion by using non-music products, and sales of local rap music ring back tones. Contestation of both runs continuously in Manggarai music spaces and transformed in accordance with the development of local communities.

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MS. MARVEL AS A REPRESENTATION OF THE STRUGGLE FOR AMERICAN IDENTITY

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Abstract

In early 2014, Marvel Comics released a new series called *Ms. Marvel*. The main character of this series is a Pakistani-American Muslim girl named Kamala Khan. Her story is a breakthrough against the negative representation of Islam in the Western world, especially after 9/11. This research examines five issues taken from the first volume of the *Ms. Marvel* comic book series. The paper discusses the reason why this series is substantial in the struggle of Muslim immigrants to survive as a minority group in the United States. The results show that Ms. Marvel serves as a medium of communication for the under-represented American Muslim community. Furthermore, by accepting the new superhero, the American society itself has also transformed and it is beginning to adapt to the idea that Muslim immigrants are members of their society.

Keywords: Muslim, superhero, comic book, identity, popular culture

Introduction

Muslims have a long history in the United States of America, dating from the transatlantic slave trade long before the country was established. During hundreds of years of interaction, the relationship between the United States and Islam and American Muslim's identity has experienced many transformations. This relationship is mainly influenced by "the impact of slavery, the emergence of unusual forms of Islam in America, the power of traditional Islam, and the ideological pressures created the world events" (Beverley, 2003, p. 40). These factors also help in shaping Western ideas of Muslims.

The fact that Islam was practiced on the continent by African slaves long before the country was founded establishes that Islam is, in fact, not a foreign religion for the United States. Still, that Islam was initially practiced by African slaves could be a major contributing factor in assumption that Islam is a backward religion as well as the failure of Islam to establish itself in the United States throughout the many years it has silently existed there.

For modern Muslim Americans, the most significant historical parameter is perhaps the bombing tragedy of the World Trade Center, a symbol of American superiority, on

September 11, 2001 by Islamic extremists. The act of terrorism did not only attack American soil, but also the American Muslim community. Post-9/11, there has been a rising negative sentiment in the United States about Islam in general. The attack “catapulted Muslims into the American spotlight” and as a result, “concerns and fears over their presence and assimilation remain at an all-time high” (Read, 2008, p. 39). After the tragedy Islam was dubbed the fuel of the ‘war on terror’ and the term ‘Islamophobia’ was coined. The word ‘Muslim’ has certain bad reputations and connotations attached to it. The lives of the Muslims inside and outside the United States changed overnight, and the nation established a new stance in its relations with Muslim countries under Bush’s administration.

For the unenlightened Americans, Muslims are aliens. These Americans assume that for Muslims, the religion of Islam is the sole doctrine by which they conduct their lives, and that it restricts them from committing to a secular democracy. Regardless of the fact that Muslims in America are ordinary Americans, and Islam is only part of their identity as Americans, the word ‘Islam’ itself is often associated with the Middle East and terrorism, among others.

American Muslims must, nevertheless, endure stereotypes and images rooted in ignorance and prejudice. Since then, Muslim Americans have not only been treated as ‘the Other’ but also as ‘the enemy’, and the situation between the non-Muslims and Muslims in American turned into ‘us’ versus ‘them’. Inevitably, products of popular culture became an effective means by which animosity against, and distorted images of Muslims were spread. (Read, 2008, pp. 39-40; Rashid, 2000, pp. 75-77; Sirin & Fine, 2008, pp. 11-12)

As Jack Nachbar and Kevin Laue (1992) state in their book *Popular Culture: An Introductory Text*, the “producers of popular culture will go to great lengths to mold their products to reflect the audience beliefs and values” (p. 3). In other words, popular culture is reflective in nature. Therefore, unsurprisingly, the popular culture of the United States after 9/11 captured the popular public image of Muslims as often accompanied by suspicion, hatred, and marked with “toxic social representations” (Sirin & Fine, 2008, p. 11). Reflecting these popular beliefs and values, most popular culture products after 9/11 demonize Muslim Americans and construct a false identity of them.

Muslims appear in the products of American popular culture bearing traits that come from stereotypes that picture them as violent, obsolete, backward or as enemies. The movie *Iron Man* (2008), for instance, displays the bigoted stereotype that Muslims are bomb-carrying terrorists who are so violent that they kill each other. The movie even opens with a band of Muslim terrorist killing a group of young American soldiers. Once Muslims were ignored and invisible, now the spotlight is on them, but not from a good angle. Furthermore, globalization, that eliminates the borders between nations to exchange information and commodities, helps spread these images and stereotypes beyond America. Being part of the popular culture in America, the comic book industry and its superheroes were affected by the repercussion of 9/11 on the nation's sentiment about Islam. However, comic book publishers responded to this phenomenon from a completely different angle by tackling issues regarding the chaos in the Islamic world and creating minor Muslim characters and inserting them into their existing series publications.

After the attack on September 11th, 2001, amongst the ensuing hostility against Muslim Americans, Marvel Comics, one of the most prominent comic book publishers in the United States,

introduced several Muslim characters, most of which are female. Just one year after 9/11, Marvel introduced Dust, a member of the X-Men, who donned a *niqab* with only her eyes showing. Another Muslim member of the X-Men is Monet Yvette Clarisse Maria Therese St. Croix. Marvel also created the character Faiza Hussain, a British Muslim of Afghanistan descent, who works as a medical doctor and goes by the codename Excalibur. These female Muslim superheroes, however, have never been given major significance like their non-Muslim counterparts. The latest of these Muslim superheroes is Ms. Marvel, whose alter ego is a Muslim Pakistani-American 16-year-old female named Kamala Khan. Emerging as the first solo female Muslim superhero headlining her own series, Ms. Marvel was a breakthrough in her own right, especially when her appearance is seen in the context of the sundry stereotypes about Islam, its association with terrorism, and the assumption that Islam treats women as dainty, weak creatures second to men.

The appearance of Ms. Marvel as a leading character in her own series in the comic book industry has marked a new stage in the history of American superheroes. She emerged and broke the stereotypes that have long been

associated with superheroes and Muslim Americans. A member of the Muslim diaspora in the United States, the character presents a new face of the Muslim Americans that are often seen in negative views overshadowed with misperception, prejudice and ignorance.

This paper seeks to reveal the reason why this series is substantial in the struggle of Muslim immigrants to survive as a minority group in the United States. Exploration and observation will be conducted on the social and cultural backgrounds that compel the emergence of Ms. Marvel as a headline for the latest Marvel Comics' series. The understanding of the American Muslim immigrant identity resulting from this research can be used to understand similar phenomena concerning other minority groups in the United States or in different contexts.

Challenges in Being "American"

After the attacks on September 11, 2001, when Muslim terrorists hijacked and crashed passenger planes into the World Trade Center and the Pentagon, Muslims were intensely scrutinized and prejudiced against. From this point on, it had been a popular

view that Islam was an evil, dangerous and deadly religion. Some American Christian leaders even took an extreme measure and invited their followers to join their crusade against Islam. Abdo (2006) mentioned two prominent Christian figures, Franklin Graham and Robert A. Morey, who have publicly declared a crusade against Islam (p. 77).

In other words, the 9/11 attacks put American Muslim immigrants on the spotlight as 'the enemy'. As Sunaina Maira (2004) explains in her journal article "Youth Culture, Citizenship and Globalization: South Asian Muslim Youth in the United States after September 11th", after the 9/11 attacks, the prevailing sentiment in American society was that "somebody had to pay" (p. 219). Unfortunately, that "somebody" was Muslims. Moustafa Bayoumi (2011) in his article "Between Acceptance and Rejection: Muslim Americans and the Legacies of September 11" stated that Muslims were "the latest villains in the grand nativist epic about the downfall of the United States" (p. 18). Muslims are, therefore, not only the enemy but also a threat to the United States comparable with Communism during the Cold War.

This popular sentiment was manifested in widespread political

racism and racial and ethnic profiling against Muslims and people of Middle Eastern descent, which was intensified by the mass media. Stemmed from the practice of political racism, “a series of legal, cultural, social, and psychological threats challenged Muslim Americans’ status as citizens, their personal security, psychological well-being, social relations, and public life” (Sirin & Fine, 2008, p. 11). Along with the demonization of Arabs and Muslims in general, Islamophobia, “the irrational fear of Muslims” or “a form of prejudice akin to racism and anti-Semitism that should be resisted” (Curtis, 2009, p. xiii), emerged as a popular attitude against Muslims.

The increasingly harmful and prejudicial social representation combined with the tension between Muslim Americans and non-Muslim Americans, topped with the prevailing sentiment that all Muslim immigrants residing in the United States, regardless of their countries of origin, were considered “the enemy”, resulted in a harsh blow for the American Muslim immigrants. In turn, this led to the reinvention, or rather the separation, of two cultural identities as “Muslim” and “American”, which means that Muslim immigrants were no longer identified by their ethnicity or home culture. They are not

identified by the American society as the monolithic Muslim community, an enemy and a threat to the United States. Morally and socially excluded despite the fact that they are also citizens of the country, American Muslims “were suddenly perceived as a potential threat to U.S. safety” (Sirin & Fine, 2008, p. 1).

To describe this phenomenon further, Sirin & Fine (2008) pointed out that Muslims “became the designated ‘others who had to be watched, detained, and sometimes deported, in order to save ‘us’” (p. 1). Forgetting that American Muslims were part of the United States, the majority of American society was inclined to allow whatever measure to save themselves from this dangerous ‘other’. They began to construct a formation of identity based on the binary opposition of the progressive, rational, logical, civilized, and peaceful ‘us’ and the backward, irrational, uncivilized, and violent ‘they’, from which most of today’s negative stereotypes against Muslims stemmed.

At the same time, a notion that one cannot be a good Muslim and a good American appeared. The Muslim community, which before the 9/11 attacks was content with living low profile and invisible,

blending into the American society, was suddenly put on the center stage (Abdo, 2006, p. 17). They were increasingly discriminated, against, harassed, and scrutinized. The so-called War on Terrorism fueled vile racist behavior against them. As a result, Muslims were forced to choose either to leave aspects of their native culture and religion and become 'American' or stay 'Muslim' and be considered as one of 'them', the terrorists. They were pressured to give up their identity either as Muslims or as Americans. Sirin & Fine (2008) elaborated on this matter:

In the fall of 2001, these young people and their families were ejected from the national "we." ... 9/11 indeed marked a rupture in their identity negotiation process. They underwent two kinds of cultural disruption. First they were placed under suspicion, socially and psychologically, within the nation they considered "home." ... Varied forms of discrimination and surveillance now penetrated their communities, social relationships, and self-consciousness. (p. 7)

Furthermore, Abdo (2006) also discussed this phenomenon, as she explains that:

Gone was the general sense of benign neglect that had largely shaped the Muslim American experience for decades. Overnight, mainstream America had imposed a stark choice on Muslim believers everywhere: disavow key aspects

of your faith and culture, or risk being lumped together with the September 11 the militants. (p. 114)

This phenomenon led to the moral exclusion of American Muslims, as the U.S. Muslim minority was not completely successful in reconciling the differences between the seemingly opposing American and Islamic values.

Assertion of their social and political identity was deemed of utmost importance for these Muslims as they were urged by how they were targeted as supporters of terrorism and were treated accordingly. Abdo (2006) explained that one of "the most important factors in crystallizing the rise in Muslim American pride and collective identity was the passage, and selective enforcement, of the 2001 USA Patriot Act" (p. 83). The struggle for identity is a manifestation of these Muslim immigrants' demand that the United States government and society accept Muslims in the United States as they would Christians, Jews, and other religious groups in the United States.

However, asserting and negotiating identity were (and still are) particularly challenging matters for children of Muslim immigrants who were born and raised in the United States. On the one hand, it is difficult for them to identify themselves with their home culture and home countries, as they have never experienced either one first-hand. On the other hand, it is also problematic for them to identify themselves as 'Americans', because white Americans distinguish them as the 'Other' based on their color, race, and faith. Nevertheless, they think of themselves as

Americans. They were born in the United States, and they are raised in the United States. The United States of America is their home. However, as Sirin & Fine (2008) pointed out, “Muslim youth coming of age in the United States found themselves to be cast simultaneously as citizen and alien, terrorized and terrorist” (p. 12). This so-called home alienates and antagonizes them. The people sharing this home refuse to be likened to them.

Ms. Marvel as an Icon of Integration

Superhero comic books are cultural artifacts that are created and consumed “within the web of their culture” (Kukkonen & Haberkorn, 2010, p. 244). In order to understand them and what they stand for, it is important to examine the cultural context from which they emerge. Superheroes have continuously demonstrated their relevance to the society. Their stories have reflected the history of American culture and society. As Mercier (2008) pointed out, superheroes “have battled real-world figures including Adolf Hitler, tackled controversial topics such as racism, and provoked discussions of cultural shifts within America” (p. 22). Through superheroes, comic books become “a unique medium through which social and political issues have been addressed” (Khan M. , 2013). Sean Carney (2005), in his journal article “The Function of the Superhero at the

Present Time”, explained that the transformation of the function of the superhero “from its origins as ideological myth, as popular symptom of closed, ideological consciousness, the superhero has been reinscribed with a hopeful ambivalence which transforms it into a symptom of history” (p. 101).

Historically, superheroes have always been a reflection of the society in which they were created. Examples of superheroes who fulfilled this function include Superman, who was a symbol of justice during the Great Depression. Captain America also fulfilled this function when, during World War I, he became a symbol of patriotism and a hero who was able to literally punch Adolf Hitler in the face. Iron Man, the Hulk and the Silver Surfer reflected the political tension of the United States in the 1960s. Spider-Man represented the revolutionary youth culture in the 1960s. Their strong involvement in American culture and society has substantiated their position in the American national consciousness (Mercier, 2008, p. 38).

Fulfilling her social function as a comic book superhero, Kamala represents a cultural and historical phenomenon in the United States, where signs of awareness and acceptance of

American Muslim immigrants have begun to grow. She is also a medium through which Muslims, immigrants, and people of minority groups can be heard. She represents the change in the way Muslims are represented and understood in the United States.

Ms. Marvel negates the myth that Islam prevents strong identification with American values and beliefs. The series shows that by adopting a pluralistic identity, Kamala, the main character, can balance her identity as Muslim and American. Indeed, she is of Pakistani descent, but she was born and raised in the United States of America. She grew up surrounded by American cultures and values that influence her as she negotiates her identity as an American. Being an American teenager does not prevent Kamala from practicing her religion. Likewise, being a Muslim does not prevent Kamala from participating in the American culture.

Ms. Marvel carries a different image of Islam countering the prevailing image by which Islam is understood in the United States. In the comic book series, Islam is treated as something that should not estrange or alienate Muslims from the larger society. This is shown in the portrayals of

Muslims that are equally capable of competing at work or in education. The mosque, one of the most important symbols of Islam, is also shown as a flexible institution that is willing and capable to adapt to the American setting as a process of negotiating Islam's position in America. Being Muslim is not everything for the Muslim immigrants portrayed in the comic book series. Like many other Americans, Muslims also care about the society. Kamala's being a superhero represents her involvement in the American society, as she becomes an agent in protecting the society from villains that seek to destroy or conquer it.

The exercise of Muslim women's pluralistic identity in the American environment appears in other characters throughout the series, as illustrated by Figure 1 (Wilson, *Side Entrance*, 2014, p. 12):



Figure 1. *Appearances of veiled women* (Wilson, *Side Entrance*, 2014, p. 3 & 12)

The first image in Figure 1 shows two women wearing headscarves among the crowd of Jersey City. The second image depicts one girl wearing the headscarf

among the female Lacrosse athletes in Kamala's school. Although these characters are unnamed, their appearances mark Muslim women's integration in the American culture. The figure conveys the message that wearing the headscarf will not be an obstacle. For instance, the Muslim Lacrosse athlete can still participate in this indigenous American sport even though she wears a headscarf. What she does is adjust her values and personal belief into the culture – while all of her teammates wear sleeveless shirts and tight miniskirts, the Muslim athlete wears long sleeves and a maxi skirt. The images in Figure 1 signify the fact that while participating in the American society and culture, Muslims can still exercise their faith. Indeed, Muslims will look different, but it does not mean that they are less capable than their non-Muslim counterparts are.

Ms. Marvel shows that in general, children of Muslim immigrants, who were born and raised in the United States, show a better ability to integrate into the American society. Kamala and children of Muslim immigrants her age serve as a representation of this generation, as indicated by their active participation in the American popular culture. One of the illustrations of the integration is the Muslim member of the Lacrosse team at Kamala's school that can be seen in Figure 1. She is depicted as wearing a headscarf and a uniform adjusted to the Islamic codes. On the one hand, this illustration shows the school's tolerance of its Muslim students, or, in this case, athletes, who want to practice their religion. In addition, it also shows that the American teenagers, especially those on the team, accept this unnamed Muslim athlete and have no problems with having a Muslim among

them. On the other hand, it also shows a process of ethnic integration in the school and a process of identity negotiation on the Muslim's part, combining identity as a Muslim and a student of an American public school, and a member of American society participating in American culture.

Another representation of the children of Muslim immigrants in the United States who have integrated themselves in the American culture is shown in Figure 2 (Wilson, Side Entrance, 2014, p. 5).



Figure 2. The girls attending weekly youth lecture (Wilson, Side Entrance, 2014, p. 5)

Figure 2 shows the atmosphere behind the partition of the mosque during the weekly youth lecture. Like the Muslim Lacrosse athlete, the girl on Nakia's left represent how Muslim immigrant teenagers are integrated in the American culture. As the Lacrosse athlete follows the Islamic dress code while also playing an indigenous American sport, the girl at the mosque is shown wearing a headscarf, attending an Islamic youth lecture at the mosque while, like many other American teenagers today, playing with her mobile phone. These teenagers fluently switch and combine the discourses of the American culture with those of their religion and home culture.

Kamala herself shows the ability to switch and combine the seemingly opposing discourses of the American culture and her religion and home culture, as she herself is an embodiment of the combination

between Pakistani, Islamic, and American cultural styles. She eats *pakora*, drinks *chai*, wears *shalwar kameez*, and attends the mosque's lecture while being technology-literate, a superhero fan, a student in an American institution, and a fanfic writer. Other than her being a fanfiction writer, Kamala is shown to be a fan of popular movies in the following excerpt:

Kamala: [caption] Okay, this is where I admit that I've only ever snuck out twice before in my life. Once when I was **ten**, just to see if I could actually get down the tree in **one piece**. And then once freshman year to see the midnight showing of **Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows** with Nakia and Bruno. (Wilson, *All Mankind*, 2014, p. 15)

From the excerpt above, it is obvious that Kamala is a really big fan of the Harry Potter series. Despite the fact that her parents are strict and say they will not allow Kamala to leave the house to watch a movie at such a late hour, she snuck out of her house to see the last installment of the franchise. Kamala also mentions that she was joined by Nakia. Considering that the movie is one of the most popular young adult movies and one of the highest-grossing films of all time¹, Kamala's eagerness to participate in this global popular phenomenon signifies her integration in Western culture.

Kamala's 'Americanness' is further demonstrated by her reference to Taylor

¹ http://www.imdb.com/title/tt1201607/business?ref_=tt_dt_bus

Swift, a celebrity popular in today's American popular culture. Furthermore, Kamala often uses American slang terms. When she arrives at the Circle Q just to see a masked man carrying a gun and talking to Bruno, her first thought is, "Oh my God. Somebody's trying to **stick up** the Circle Q" (Wilson, *Side Entrance*, 2014, p. 16). Instead of using the word "rob", Kamala uses the slang "stick up". Subsequently, the number 911 is the first solution that comes to her mind when witnessing the armed robbery. 911 is the most important emergency service in the United States. This number is well-known, even in countries other than the United States due to the numerous occasions on which the number is mentioned in American popular culture products. The number itself is important in the United States as it provides a sense of security in the case of emergency. However, after remembering that she has super powers, Kamala decides to help Bruno herself as she equals herself with 911, or rather, the concept that 911 offers—security for all Americans.

Kamala's ultimate declaration of her integration in to American society can be seen in the following excerpt:

Kamala: This guy thinks he can threaten us where we **live**? **Ms. Marvel** has a message for him... This is **Jersey City**. We talk loud, we walk fast, and we don't take any **disrespect**. Don't mess. (Wilson, *Urban Legend*, 2014, p. 19)

Seeing that Jersey City is under attack by an unknown villain, Kamala as Ms. Marvel appears publicly in the middle of a crowd and declares her allegiance to Jersey City, warning the villain not to "mess" with the

people of Jersey City in their own home. It is important to note that when referring to the Jersey City community, Kamala uses the inclusive pronoun “we” to emphasize her cohesion in the social group that is the people of Jersey City.

Another negation of the notion that Islam is un-American is also apparent in the way the Ms. Marvel series builds a new image of Islam that contests the binary dynamic of ‘us’ versus ‘them’ that has long been used by the Western society to understand the religion. While Islam is widely considered the religion of terrorism, *Ms. Marvel* shows that Islam is a religion of peace. While Islam is considered incompatible with core American values, and therefore cannot adapt to the American setting, *Ms. Marvel* shows that in the negotiation of identity, Islam is able to integrate into the American setting.

In the previous section of the discussion, it has been revealed that Nakia’s decision to wear a headscarf is an exercise of individualism and subjectivity, rebuking the notion that being Muslim can pose major obstacles to integrating into American society. Similarly, Kamala also uses an Islamic teaching in the form of an ayah taken from the Quran to reconstruct the image of Islam as a violent religion and the enemy of the state into a peaceful religion. When seeing Zoe almost drowning, Kamala hesitates about whether or not she should use her newfound powers to save Zoe. However, after remembering an ayah from the Quran, Kamala resolves to save Zoe, and from then on, uses her power to help people. The following excerpt contains Kamala’s motivation to help Zoe based on the Quran:

Kamala: [caption] There’s this ayah from the **Quran** that my dad always quotes when he sees something **bad** on TV. A fire or flood or a bombing. “Whoever kills one person, it is as if he has killed all of mankind—and whoever **saves** one person, it is as if he has **saved all of mankind.**”

Kamala: Embiggen!

Kamala: [caption] When I was a little kid, that always made me feel better. Because no matter how bad things get...there are always people who rush in to **help**. And according to my dad...they are **blessed**.

(Wilson, *All Mankind*, 2014, pp. 9-10)

Kamala uses an actual, authentic ayah from the Quran as a motivation for her to use her newly gained superpowers to help others. This ayah is used to counter the bad images and stereotypes against Islamic teachings. In addition, by using this ayah as a motivation for Kamala to save one of her white, all-American schoolmate, the scene demonstrates Kamala’s loyalty to the American society, and a sign that she is part of America. Kamala’s reference to the ayah rebukes the ‘us’ versus ‘them’ dynamic and the binary opposition commonly used to define Islam.

Kamala also reveals that Yusuf always quotes this ayah “when he sees something bad on TV”, such as “a bombing”. This ayah serves as an evidence that Islam is not a religion of violence, as the holy book itself instructs its believers to help others and strongly warns its believers against murder. Yusuf’s quoting this ayah hints at his disapproval of violent acts of terrorism

like a bombing. This is also a means used by Yusuf to teach his children the value of peace. Representing American Muslim immigrants who often have to face prejudice in relation with terrorisms, Yusuf affirms that he is on the same page with every American who condemns terrorism, for Islam teaches that killing another person is un-Islamic.

Furthermore, Kamala says that her father used to teach Kamala this ayah while telling her that there will always be someone helping “no matter how bad things get”. Seen from her age when this series first came out, Kamala was about 3 years old and Aamir was 8 years old when the 9/11 attacks happened. Therefore, it can be concluded that the height of the prejudice and negative sentiments against Islam resulting from the aftermath of the 9/11 occurred during her childhood. Teaching this value to his children, Yusuf was imparting a sense of security that they were not alone, that people are kind and will readily help each other in times of need, regardless of religion.

The discussions above are essentially a stand on how Kamala represents the struggle of American Muslim immigrants to resist the violent image of Islam resulting from the aftermath of 9/11. Picking an ayah from the Quran as a reason for her to use her powers for good, Kamala is making clear that Islam is, at its core, a peaceful religion. This counteracts the prevailing allegations that Muslim extremists kill in the name of religion. Kamala’s rationale also subtly implies that the different interpretations of the Quran influenced by cultural systems and/or personal sentiment is the reason for the distortions in the practice of the religion

often apparent in the militant versions of Islam. Thus, as an American, Kamala will inevitably interpret the teachings of Islam in the American context.

The fact her religion is not the sole thing that defines her makes Kamala relatable for her non-Muslim readers. Islam is just a part of her identity as a child of immigrants who is trying to find her place in the United States. The series diffuses this image by portraying clearly Kamala’s relationships with her friends and family facing problems that are universally found in the lives of American teenagers, such as curfew, seeing boys, and detention. Children of minority groups can also relate with Kamala in the sense of inferiority that Kamala expresses at the beginning of the series.

It is a common phenomenon in literature that characters who are not white usually feel a strong desire to be white. This phenomenon has become an issue in Maya Angelou’s *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings* and Toni Morrison’s *The Bluest Eye*. The main characters in these novels have experienced a phase in their life where they feel a strong desire to become white. Kamala is no different. Before embracing her identity as Pakistani-American, Kamala always felt inferior to her white classmates. She is willing to take extreme measures in order to feel integrated and be accepted by her peers. She defies her parent’s rule, she feels frustrated that her ethnicity prevents her from being “normal”, and she turns into Carol Danvers right after she receives her super powers.

However, Kamala’s power to transform into anything she wants represents flexibility. As Maryam Jameela (2014)

argues in her essay, “Kamala’s very superpower is a manifestation of racial issues, religious issues and, amongst other things, issues that come with being an immigrant”. Although she can transform into virtually infinite forms, she chooses to use her power to save people and gives up transforming into her idol, the original Ms. Marvel. In the end, Kamala negotiates her place in the United States and embraces her home culture that makes her different without erasing it.

What makes her even more relatable is the way she is portrayed. Unlike strong, female superheroes before her, Kamala’s body and sexuality are not objectified. She is not the image of perfection as many female superheroes before her were. Being brown, she does not meet the Eurocentric standards of beauty. Her physique does not meet the common athletic and busty female superheroes. Unlike Superman or Batman, Kamala is not a larger-than-life superhero. Quite the opposite from that, Kamala, like Spider-Man, is a down-to-earth character and an every-man hero. Despite the novelty of her characters, Kamala has successfully secured her position among the ranks of Marvel Comics’ major superheroes. Historically, superheroes that cannot reflect the general mood of its society have always failed to be accepted by its readers. DC Comics’ Prez Rickard, for example, is the first teenage President of the United States. His series got cancelled abruptly because, as the readers cannot relate to the character, Prez failed to spur interest. Even Superman, one of the most popular superhero characters of all time, has experienced a similar fate as Prez because it was difficult to fit him in a post-Great

Depression period, where his message was no longer relevant to the American society.

However, Kamala represents the voice of today’s youth of America comprised by many minority groups. Following the tradition of Spider-Man, or Peter Parker, Kamala is a social outcast and unpopular. Both heroes initially intend to use their powers to impress people around them, and eventually both realize that having these powers mean that they have responsibilities to do good for other people. This archetype of superhero offers an illusion of empowerment. For children of immigrants, this illusion is influential because they experience a similar sense of not belonging in the society. As a child of immigrants herself, Kamala is using superheroes as a means of assimilation and building a sense of belonging by being a superhero fan and a fan fiction writer. More than anything, she represents the cultural theme of the United States itself—multiculturalism and plurality. This is one of the reasons that children of minority groups feel that the character represents them.

Considering Kamala’s gender, ethnicity, and religion, she is an unusual character and there were always possibilities that the American society could not accept Kamala. In order to ease Kamala’s way into the world of comic book superheroes, her creators put Kamala in the vacant position of Ms. Marvel instead of making a name for herself. Therefore, although at certain points Kamala is different from the majority of American comic book superheroes, she still follows the archetype of American superheroes.

Kamala as a character is comparable to many other mainstream superheroes before her. She is a good girl with strong moral codes. She becomes a superhero with a strong motivation—in Kamala's case, the motivation is represented in an ayah taken from the holy book of Islam. She uses her powers to fight crimes, save people, and protect the society. Most obviously, she wears a costume to hide her identity.

Compared with the costumes of other superheroes, Kamala's costumes are similar in many aspects, as seen in Figure 3 (Wilson, Side Entrance, 2014):



Figure 32. The cover of the third issue of Ms. Marvel (Wilson, Side Entrance, 2014)

Fitting the traditional superhero costume prototype, Kamala does not cover her hair with a headscarf as a Muslim girl, and her costume is rather tight, resembling the Spandex of other superheroes' costumes. Although "flags were raised by some conservative Muslims saying her body was visible" (Dev, 2014), the choice of costume reflects Kamala's identity as a pluralistic American. As discussed in the previous chapter, the bright color scheme is similar with the costumes of A-list superheroes such as Spider-Man, Captain America,

Captain Marvel, Superman, Wonder Woman, etc. Incidentally, this color scheme is similar with the color scheme of the flag of the United States. Kamala's symbol as Ms. Marvel, a yellow lightning bolt, is similar with the symbol of Carol Danvers' Ms. Marvel. Like many other superheroes, Kamala wears a pair of combat boots and a mask. Her scarf is worn like a cape, and she wears bangles like Wonder Woman does.

Kamala's characteristics are a hybrid resulting from negotiating her identity as a Pakistani woman who is an American superhero. However, her creators keep the mainstream superheroes characteristics in order to make sure that she is not seen as too foreign. In doing so, they are securing a place for Kamala in Marvel Comics' readership. Benita Amalina (2015), in her research entitled *Fighting for Women Existence in Popular Fiction: A Study on American Espionage Movies "Salt" and "Zero Dark Thirty"* finds that a similar strategy is also used in the development of the main characters of the movies she studies. She observes that generally, female characters in spy movies are either sidekicks, victims, sexual objects, or 'damsels in distress' characters. However, in *Salt* and *Zero Dark Thirty*, the female characters are the main characters, who are depicted as strong, intelligent, and independent. Nevertheless, there are still remains of the stereotypes of the female characters' role in general, including feminine looks, compassionate nature, and relationship-driven motivation. Amalina (2015) argued that this is a marketing strategy employed by Hollywood production houses in order to gain an audience. Therefore, it can be concluded that this strategy is employed to attract

both the progressive society that supports feminism and opposes women's objectification and the common society that is still influenced by patriarchal values.

An audience analysis shows that Ms. Marvel has become an icon of inclusivity in the American society. In an interview, Sana Amanat, the editor of the series reveals, "the novel became a matter of pride among the American-Muslim community" (Dev, 2014). Letters from readers have called *Ms. Marvel* a positive advertisement of a Muslim female superhero. She represents the "constant battle between the culture of [children of immigrant's] heritage, and 'western ideals'"² (Wilson, All Mankind, 2014, p. 22). Reviews have numerously praised her for bringing the issue of "cultural, religious, and sexual identities expressed together in a classic American comic series,... featured as principal characteristics of an American superhero" (Ahmad, 2013). The A.V. Club acclaimed *Ms. Marvel* as one of the best comics of 2014 (O'Neil & Sava, 2014).

So influential is Kamala Khan as a superhero, she has also become an icon of tolerance and acceptance in reality. In early 2015, blogger Pamela Geller through her organization the American Freedom Defense Initiative, purchased advertisements spaces on the Municipal buses in San Francisco and filled it with anti-Islam messages. The advertisements equates Islam with Nazism and spreads the message that the Quran inherently teaches

² Excerpt taken from a letter sent to Marvel Comics by a reader named Yamini Marley.

its believers to hate Jewish beliefs. Then, anonymous street artists overlaid the advertisement with pictures of Kamala Khan in her Ms. Marvel costume, campaigning against racism, bigotry, and Islamophobia with taglines such as "Stamp Out Racism", "Free Speech Isn't a License to Hate", "Calling All Bigotry Busters", and "Islamophobia Hurts Us All". (Adlakha, 2015; Ratcliffe, 2015; Whitbrook, 2015; Farnham, 2015; Letamendi, 2015)

Figure 4 (Adlakha, 2015) shows a picture of the graffiti put over the racist and cruelly offensive advertisements:

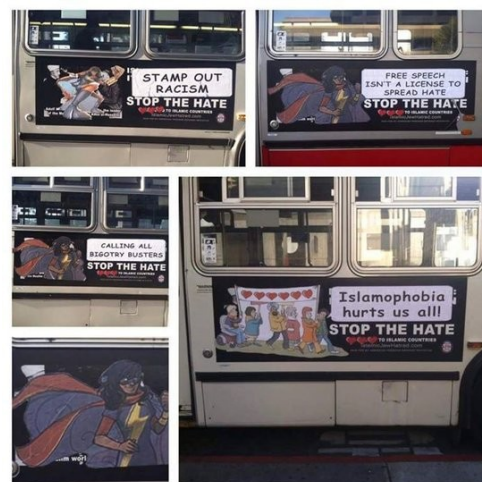


Figure 43. *Ms. Marvel fighting bigotry in advertisements on San Francisco's buses* (Adlhakha, 2015)

The incident serves as an evidence of the significance of Kamala Khan for American Muslims. Evidently, Kamala Khan as Ms. Marvel has embodied a notion of racial equality and inclusivity in the American society. It is evident in the fact that the superhero has been used as a weapon to fight bigotry against Islam, which is a value that Ms. Marvel as a superhero is promoting.

Ms. Marvel's immediate success and popularity is an evidence of the shift of paradigm in the larger American society. The series communicates who American Muslim immigrants are in an American idiom, through an indigenous genre of American popular culture, the superhero comic book. Kamala's popularity reflects the changing image of Muslims in the predominantly Judeo-Christian American society. She reflects the American society's acceptance of Muslims as a part of the United States.

Conclusion

The struggle for identity is triggered by conflicts. Conflicts, on the other hand, are created by the interest or the abuse of authority, which results in the driving force that motivates an asserting of certain identities. Such phenomenon is the essence of the struggle of American Muslim immigrants' in asserting their identity in American society.

Ms. Marvel's significance in the struggle of Muslim immigrants to gain American identity lies in its role as a medium of communication for the under-represented American Muslim community. The superhero Ms. Marvel herself has become so ingrained in the American popular culture that she has become a symbol of integration and an icon of racial equality and inclusivity. She counters the prevailing

negative sentiments and stereotypes against Islam, and negates the 'us' versus 'them' dynamic that has become a center in the animosity towards Islam.

Furthermore, this study discovers that Kamala Khan is a widely acclaimed superhero despite her being of Pakistani descent and a Muslim. As a product of popular culture that reflects the values and beliefs of the society, the *Ms. Marvel* series suggests a shift in paradigm in the American society itself. Through its acceptance of the new Ms. Marvel, who defies the traditional standards of superheroes, American society shows that it has started changing the prevailing sentiments against, and it is beginning to adapt to the idea that Muslim immigrants are members of their society.

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FIGHTING FOR WOMEN EXISTENCE IN POPULAR ESPIONAGE MOVIES *SALT* (2010) AND *ZERO DARK THIRTY* (2012)

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Abstract

American spy movies have been considered one of the most profitable genre in Hollywood. These spy movies frequently create an assumption that this genre is exclusively masculine, as women have been made oblivious and restricted to either supporting roles or non-spy roles. In 2010 and 2012, portrayal of women in spy movies was finally changed after the release of *Salt* and *Zero Dark Thirty*, in which women became the leading spy protagonists. Through the post-nationalist American Studies perspective, this study discusses the importance of both movies in reinventing women's identity representation in a masculine genre in response to the evolving American society.

Keywords: American women, hegemony, representation, Hollywood, movies, popular culture

Introduction

The American movie industry, often called and widely known as Hollywood, is one of the most powerful cinematic industries in the world. In the more recent data, from all the movies released in 2012 Hollywood achieved \$ 10 billion revenue in North America alone, while grossing more than \$ 34,7 billion worldwide (Kay, 2013). In the same year, three Hollywood movies; *Marvel's The Avengers*, *Skyfall*, and *The Dark Knight Rises* reached \$ 1 billion mark in the international box office. In 2013 alone, there were three movies that reached \$ 400 million domestically in the U.S. box office; *The Hunger Games: Catching Fire*, *Iron Man 3*, and *Frozen* in which the latter two reached the \$ 1 billion mark worldwide.

The financial success and continuous power of this industry implies that there has been good relations between the producers and the main target audience. The producers have been able to feed the audience with products that are suitable to their taste. Seen from the movies' financial revenues as previously mentioned, action movies are proven to yield more revenue thus become the most popular genre. Because of profitable reception, the producers are commonly inclined to create similar products to maintain a 'mutual' relationship. In other words, what audience wants is revealed through the existed and existing 'popular' products.

Nachbar and Lause (1992) elaborated the deeper level of coherence from the mutual relationship, that "[producers] will go to

great lengths to mold their products to reflect the audience beliefs and values” (p. 3). This implies that Hollywood movies are in fact “mediums” to see the underlying cultural values within the American society. In terms of popular movies, we can see how most of the released movies have been men-centric. It is visible through the characters, especially the protagonist. Almost all movies listed in the top 100 all-time box office are attributed to masculinity. Take example from these most popular movies; commercially successful *Avatar* (2009), *Marvel’s The Avengers* (2012), the *Pirates of the Caribbean* series, *The Dark Knight* (or *Batman*) series, the *Star Wars* series, *Spider-Man* series, *Transformers* series, *Iron Man* series, and *The Lord of the Rings* series; or the critically acclaimed and award-winning movies *The Shawshank Redemption* (1994), *The Godfather* trilogy, *Schindler’s List* (1993), *Inception* (2011), *Fight Club* (1999), *American History X* (1998), *Casablanca* (1942) and *Forrest Gump* (1994). All of these movies put men as the leading characters, with only a small number of female characters. Some of the women were mostly considered as ‘supporting characters’, as in most cases, be simply the love interest of the men.

According to data from the movie website Vulture, less than 50% of mainstream movies featured women in the leading role from 1989 to 2013 (Dobbins, 2013). New York Film Academy (NYFA) also had a take in exploring gender equality in film. From the top 500 movies from 2007 to 2012, they discovered that only 30.8% of speaking roles were for women characters, 10.7% movies featured a gender-balanced cast, and 32.5%

of women in the movies were depicted with some nudity or sexual scenes (Zurko, 2013).

Movies with women as the leading characters were usually categorized in the more specified genres such as drama, romance, comedy, etc. These genres are more restricted compared to those which feature male characters. The genre is usually called “women films”, and is made based on the women’s perspective about the lives of women. Since there is a correlation between the movie and audience, a specified theme and genre of a movie means narrowing the audience demographic as well. This is explained by Abrams and Hogg (1990), who stated that people from particular social communities or identity groups seek out particular “messages” which support their social identity. This statement is also supported by Harwood’s (1997) reasoning, that selecting particular choices in media viewing is a form of social identity gratification (Fischhoff, Antonio, & Lewis, 1998). Thus, the “women films” are particularly attractive to women because the movies share themes common to women’s lives; these female audiences can also easily identify themselves with the characters in the movies.

The stereotyping of women in movies—especially in the “women films” or “women genre”—is still based on the traditional assumption that women have always been in a smaller scope. Particularly, as history claimed, in the domestic area. The roles for women are limitedly related to motherhood, household, daughter, inter-women relations, and being a wife or girlfriend.

One of the most apparent gender biases in Hollywood is the depiction of women in the spy genre. This genre has been considered as exclusively male-centric, because almost all spy movies have male protagonists. It can be seen from the beginning of the spy movie trend, particularly from the 1930s until 1950s when British director Alfred Hitchcock has moved to the U.S. He has directed numerous spy movies such as *The Man Who Knew Too Much* (1934), *The 39 Steps* (1935), *Secret Agent* (1936), *Foreign Correspondent* (1940), *Notorious* (1946), and *North by Northwest* (1950). These classic productions have become the archetypal spy movie narrative, where a male spy with exceptional intelligence and physical strength leads the narrative, along with one or more supporting sidekicks, while the women are present either as his love interest, victim, or a vicious spy. Such apportions of role instruments are still used in the more modern spy movies.

This is why usually only the leading male spy character becomes an icon. Starting in the 1960s, the James Bond franchise became a hype, even until now—from *Dr. No* (1962), *From Russia With Love* (1963), *Moonraker* (1979), *A View To A Kill* (1985), *Golden Eye* (1995) to the most recent *Quantum of Solace* (2008) and *Skyfall* (2012). In the 1990s, new spy characters were introduced and instantly became commercially successful; Ethan Hunt in the *Mission: Impossible* series (1996, 2002, 2006, and 2011), and Jack Ryan series *The Hunt for Red October* (1990), *Patriot Games* (1992), *Clear and Present Danger* (1994), *The Sum of All Fears* (2002), and *Jack Ryan: Shadow Recruit* (2014). The 2000s was the birth of

the character Jason Bourne in the Bourne series *The Bourne Identity* (2002), *The Bourne Supremacy* (2004), *The Bourne Ultimatum* (2007) and *The Bourne Legacy* (2012). The trend of franchising the spy movies is a proof that the audience is highly interested in this genre. What makes the spy movies more intriguing than the usual action movies is that, “[p]art of the appeal of the spy genre, everyone agrees, is not only the nonstop action and the high-tech tools, but the derring-do spy heroes are often called upon to demonstrate” (Corbett, 2005). This is proven from the box office revenue from each series, as they each grossed over \$ 200 million in the U.S. alone.

The spy genre also shows specifically the political activities of espionage operated by government agents. An action movie could revolve around an ordinary man, but this does not apply to spy movies. The leading character of spy movies is always depicted as a professional, most often a federal agent dealing with international issues. This field of work is commonly attributed to men, with the concept of foreign relations having been reinforced by masculinity as it involves masculine issues (Cohn, 1987); international politics, security, arms races, or nuclear issues. This is the main reason why spy movies have been preconditioned to have a male leading character. The female characters in spy movies, however, are still depicted to be secondary, as supporting characters similar to the previously mentioned character stereotypes.

Compared to other genres, particularly action, there has been a gradual expansion of women in leading roles and at the center of the narrative. *Alien* (1979), *Red Sonja*

(1985), *Blue Steel* (1990), *Thelma and Louise* (1991), *Barb Wire* (1996), *La Femme Nikita* (1991) are some of the most popular women-led action films of the 1980s and 1990s. These films caused a significant shift in how female characters are portrayed in action films, because the women lead the plot and do not only become the supporting characters of the hero. This trend continued in the 2000s, with female leading action films being franchised by the Hollywood studios. *The Hunger Games* (2012-14), *Resident Evil* (2002, 2004, 2007, 2010, 2012), *Charlie's Angels* (2000 and 2002), *Underworld* (2003, 2006, and 2012), *Tomb Raider* (2001 and 2003) and *Kill Bill* (2003 and 2004), all portray women as the lead within the action narrative, and they are equipped with the same capability as the male characters and are out of the domestic sphere. Each of them have to fight to survive, and even to save others. These characters also “retain certain key characteristics that maintain their acceptability as female heroines and reaffirm male characters’ masculinity and that of male viewers” (Tung, 2004).

However, starting in summer 2010, spy movies with women as the leading characters began to surface. The first movie, *Salt*, was released in 2010 starring Academy Award winner Angelina Jolie. Jolie portrays a CIA agent Evelyn Salt, who is convicted of being a sleeper Russian agent. This accusation leads to tumultuous events for Salt, in which her husband is kidnapped and the FBI starts to hunt her. The second movie is titled *Zero Dark Thirty* (2012), with a female character named Maya who is depicted as the key player in the Osama bin

Laden hunt. Portrayed by Golden Globe winner Jessica Chastain, Maya is an exceptional CIA rookie who is assigned to locate bin Laden’s whereabouts. Seen from the premises alone, these movies do conform to the universal formula of spy movies in which the leading characters are professionals and the films involve U.S. foreign relations. Having led by female characters, these movies are not particularly toning down the spy movies ‘experience’ involving action sequences and thrilling sensations; as they live up to it. Although the numbers of female characters are not comparable to that of the male characters in both movies, Salt and Maya are at the center of the narratives. This is what discerns *Salt* and *Zero Dark Thirty* from the other popular spy movies where female characters are subverted. In other words, these characters have broken the gender exclusivity of the spy genre.

Salt and *Zero Dark Thirty* are chosen to be the primary objects of analysis in this research because of the similar substance in constructing women’s identity within the narratives. The essential difference of how both spy movies depict women identity as the leading character is interesting to examine, because this genre has been conveyed as restricted to male protagonists since earlier developments and because leading women characters are seemingly limited to the “women movies”. Thus, the construction of women’s identities in these movies can be viewed as an act of countering the hegemony of patriarchal values.

As the American culture and society have been affected by the ever evolving ideas and movements regarding women's issues, women's representation in popular culture is considered just as important. This is one of the many continuations in women's rights movements, which have expanded in the 21st century. Women's representation in American popular culture has been conceived to be unjust and inadequate in terms of numbers and depiction. Popular culture here is put into attention, because there is a mutual relationship between the society and the industry of popular culture, in which the products are reflecting the cultural values that exist in the society. Moreover, it is the easiest product that people could apprehend as it is made palpable for everyone. If it is not properly representing women, then that is unquestionably how people would perceive the conception of women for certain lengths of time.

Methodology

From the perspective of post-nationalist American Studies, women's issues in American society also becomes one of the issues priorities. Post-nationalist American Studies sees that there is an evident oppression by the dominating society towards minority groups-by race, ethnicity, religion, gender, sexual orientation, etc.-which leads them to social marginalization. This brings out the importance of expanding topics within the new American Studies as a critic to the on-going cultural hegemony by the dominant class through the different perspective of the marginalized. Rowe (2000) explained,

The new American Studies tries to work genuinely as a comparatist discipline that will respect the many different social system and cultural affiliations of the Americas. [...] this new comparative approach stresses the ways different cultures are transformed by their contact and interaction with each other. [...] With very different histories of responding to ethnic and racial minorities, as well as of constructing gendered and sexual hierarchies, these different Americas also help foreground the multilingual and multicultural realities of social life and economic opportunity in any of the Americas. (pp. 24-25)

In this case, the representation of women in Hollywood movies is oppressed by the dominating culture of the masculine. The depiction of women in the most popular movies are limited. They are usually the secondary or supporting characters, often victimized, and only take the lead if it is specifically a "women movie". This stereotype has been gradually debunked as the expansion of women leading roles in action movies has started to flourish; but it is more interesting when they have reached the seemingly restricted spy movies. The researcher sees the release of *Salt* and *Zero Dark Thirty* as a resistance towards the existing and dominating male culture in popular fiction.

This research will be conducted in qualitative methodology as it is mainly a literature study which relies heavily on

library research. Creswell (2009) explained about qualitative research method in the book *Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative and Mixed Method Approaches*:

Qualitative research is a form of interpretive inquiry in which researchers make an interpretation of what they see, hear, and understand. Their interpretations cannot be separated from their own backgrounds, history, contexts, and prior understandings. After a research report is issued, the readers make an interpretation as well as the participants, offering yet other interpretations of the study. (p. 212)

The researcher will interpret the data in a subjective manner using this mode of interpretation under the paradigm of post-nationalist American Studies to analyze and answer the proposed research questions.

This research will rely on two types of data; primary and secondary data. The primary data for this research will be taken from two American spy movies; *Salt* (2010) and *Zero Dark Thirty* (2012). The secondary data is comprised of written materials; which includes books, journals, articles, reports, websites, online articles, or interviews; audiovisual materials especially video interviews which will be obtained from the library and online sources. All data that has been collected will be selected in relevance to the research topic and will be put into catalogues of sub-topics. The main sub-topic catalogues will be divided into; American spy movies, women's identity in American

spy movies, and American society which includes the Hollywood industry. These supporting materials will be used simultaneously to explore deeper understanding of the main research topic.

In accordance with the theoretical framework, the data will be analyzed with the theory of representation to answer the proposed research questions. The main objects of this research, American spy movies *Salt* and *Zero Dark Thirty*, will be treated as the medium which communicates sub-texts that can be seen through the post-nationalist American Studies perspective. Images, scenes, and dialogues within these movies act as the main 'language' which will be interpreted. Before entering the main analysis, the historical overview of American spy movies will be explored. Furthermore, the common formula of narratives and depiction of women's roles in American spy movies will also be explained. The data will be taken from books, journals, and articles which discuss the relevant topic.

The main analysis is to interpret the main objects particularly in how and why these movies depict particular women's identity. The found data from both movies will be the first signifier, which will be compared to the woman roles as well as the central male protagonist in the previous spy movies in order to find significant differences or similarities. After the comparison, production analysis will be conducted to reveal the factors which support the depiction of women's identity in these movies. Production analysis views popular culture products through the industry itself, which seeks the ideas and values that have

influenced the producers, public taste and the ongoing trend within society. For production analysis, secondary data will be utilized which is taken from articles and interviews with the people involved in the making of both movie productions (e.g. executive producers, directors, actors, screenwriters, the production studio, etc.). Additionally to see the trend and public taste in society, other secondary data will be utilized and taken from box office revenue and the public reception of the movies. This secondary data will be processed and will act as the signified. The found signified here functions as the second layer of interpretation, which is the main values, ideas, concepts, or reasoning behind the signifier that is derived from the images, dialogues, and scenes found in selected movies. These will be further elaborated in order to reveal sign, the broader concept which justifies the construction of both signifier and signified. Thus, sign will be the main finding of this research.

Discussion

Reinventing Women's Identity in American Spy Movies

Spy movies *Salt* and *Zero Dark Thirty* embody a representation of opposing women's identity. Seen from the surface, the leading women characters Salt and Maya are seemingly defying and negating the common roles of women in spy movies. But after being scrutinized very closely, it can be seen that they also celebrate the stereotypes attributed to women. Both of these opposing side also represent different realities and values.

The reinvention of women's identity was supported by the filmmakers, in which they are aware of the lack of women in the spy genre and that they are women. It is rare for women to be involved in spy movie projects especially in directorial, writing, or starring roles. They mostly work as make-up artists or in the wardrobe section. This is why in the previous spy movies, women's depiction was restricted. They are either innocent, merely a sidekick, love interest, or vicious femme fatale and they are often treated as victims or as sexual objects. In *Salt* and *Zero Dark Thirty*, women were actually present to construct the identity of the woman character.

Rejecting Women's Objectification

There is one commonality of women's roles in American spy movies: the women are always depicted to be physically beautiful. This does not only apply to the innocent roles, but to the women from the vicious side as well. Their outfits are mostly revealing, in which they usually show off their shoulders or legs. Even the more tomboy characters are still shown to wear tight t-shirts or tank tops combined with a pair of short pants. Despite the intelligence or strength they already have, their physical beauty is what also helps them the most when they carry out their mission in the narrative.

This could be related to the psychonalysis concept of *male gaze*, which was written by Laura Mulvey in her essay *Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema*. According to Mulvey (1985), women in Hollywood movies are merely the "bearer of meaning, not maker of meaning" (p. 834). The

statement is derived from the function of women in the patriarchal society, in which men take control and define the political structure within the society. This rooted idea has been already unconsciously reflected in the film making process, where the term *male gaze* has been popularized since then. Beauvoir (1949) pointed out about the role of women,

[...] she is simply what man decrees; thus she is called 'the sex', by which is meant that she appears essentially to the male as a sexual being. For him she is sex – absolute sex, no less. She is defined and differentiated with reference to man and not he with reference to her; she is the incidental, the inessential as opposed to the essential. He is the Subject, he is the Absolute – she is the Other. (p. xxii)

Referring to Jacques Lacan's psychoanalysis theory in identifying women as merely "the sign of sexual differences" in the society, Beauvoir further asserts that the society itself is 'male' and that woman "cannot think of herself without man". This resonates to that of patriarchal society in which the men define what women are and are not; and what women should and should not do. In other words, the men construct the culture of women in almost every aspect, in this case including the popular culture. As exhibited in movies, women are merely the 'sweeteners' on the screen, the sexual objects to be looked at. Mulvey (1985) also explained that a movie functions "to reproduce as accurately as possible the so-called natural conditions of human

perception" (p. 838), thus also reasserting the basic perception in the patriarchal society.

Mulvey offers two treatments towards women that are commonly found in classic mainstream Hollywood productions. The first one is scopophilia, which is related to the pleasure of looking or watching. Influenced by Freud's concept of scopophilia in *Three Essays on Sexuality*, this is where people "take other people as objects". Through this concept, women are transformed to be the satisfying objects by beautifying their physical builds. This treatment is common in the spy movies as most women are always physically beautiful or sexually appealing. The second one is constituted from the ego thus related to narcissism, in which there is a ratibility and identification of the objects on screen and the spectators in real life. In the more extreme level, this could be associated with sadism on screen, commonly portrayed with scenes of investigation, punishment, or forgiveness.

Such objectification is nowhere to be found in *Salt* and *Zero Dark Thirty*, as Salt and Maya are the leading role. These women spies are the subject of the narratives. They are the ones carrying the story and take control of their destiny by being decisive instead of following the common formula of spy movies where they follow the male characters. In the depiction, Salt and Maya are depicted as being physically strong, intelligent, independent, and decisive. This opposes the previous women's roles in spy movies, in which they are helpless victims or love interests. Instead, they possess the

same characteristics as the male protagonist for exhibiting violence by killing or torturing, being unemotional and cold-hearted. The idea of subverting the women's roles is debunked through these characters.

Although Salt and Maya come close to being depicted as femme fatale, they are not positioned to be the antagonist or villain. They are also not depicted to ooze sexuality as femme fatale by wearing revealing dresses. Instead, they represent modern professional women by mostly wearing office attires. While Salt mostly exhibits her physical strength for her survival in numerous action scenes, Maya makes a fight for her credibility with her fierce personality and intelligence. Unlike femme fatale characters, their actions and decisions are not merely based on personal motives. They put the interest of the international security before their own. They prove their loyalty to the nation. And this is what the protagonist spy should do. These characters carry out the fundamental elements which usually embedded into the good male spy character, the hero, who saves the people and saves the nation. He solves the problems in the narrative, and so do Salt and Maya. They are applauded for being the noble knight and not merely being yielded as the innocent victims or villainess who deserve to be punished.

Women's Identity Construction by Women Filmmakers

The changing gender role represented in *Salt* and *Zero Dark Thirty* is reasonably affected by the changing society as well. Women's representation especially in popular culture, has been recognized as a

social matter from the feminist point of view. According to the book *The Female Gaze: Women as Viewers of Popular Culture*,

[...] it is here, from popular culture – soaps, sitcoms, the tabloid press, women's magazines, mass-produced fiction, pop music, etc. – that most people in our society get their entertainment and their information. It is here that women (and men) are offered the culture's dominant definitions of themselves. It would therefore seem crucial to explore the possibilities and pitfalls of intervention in popular forms in order to find ways of making feminist meanings a part of our pleasures. (Gamman & Marshment, 1989, p. 2)

By "the culture's dominant definitions of themselves" it is quite easy to assume that the popular culture still adopts the common social culture which is patriarchy. This patriarchal values are what construct the image and identity of women in the popular culture. The construction does not necessarily based on the actuality of women's identity, because of the consideration of women as the Others. Thus, the scarcity of women as subjects in popular culture is one of the main issue in feminism.

The patriarchy dominance can be seen from how American cinema seems to favor the male gaze as previously mentioned in Laura Mulvey's psychoanalytic explanation. The main assumption is that only the male spectators can identify themselves to the narrative. This is caused by the underlying values that either subtly or obviously stated

in the narratives, which the male spectators consider 'normal'. Irigaray (1998) argued through the psychoanalytic view that the female subjectivity "has always been theorized within masculine parameters" (p. 549).

Becoming the subject in a movie will affect the whole perspective of the narrative. When it is led by a woman, every sense in the narrative will be according to the subject. Shoos (1992) explained that as woman takes over as the subject, the "female perspective [...] may emerge as a function of narrative, character, genre, [...] etc., and they may have an impact on women's reception of these [fictions] texts" (p. 220). The feminists address this problem under the notion of identity politics, in which subjectivity is "historically situated, de-centered, fragmented, and non-unitary in order to compose solidarity movements based on political affinities, which could foster political coalitions for social transformations" (Alvarez, 2008, p. 4). This notion is mostly used by the oppressed identities based on race, religion, or gender. By noting Simone de Beauvoir's "Other"-ness concept of women, this affirms that patriarchal society is what defines the subjectivity of women, which is often construed as the "liege". The representation of women in *Salt* and *Zero Dark Thirty* therefore allow the viewers to see the male dominated genre through the perspective of women, as they claim the role of subject in the narrative.

Different from other spy movies, the women behind the scenes were vocal and held significant position in the productions of

Salt and *Zero Dark Thirty*. Amy Pascal, the co-chairman of Sony Pictures – the studio which brought *Salt* – suggested that the leading character of *Salt* should be a woman as soon as actor Tom Cruise who was signed to play the titular role left the production. She stated she wanted to make a 'female spy movie', and immediately called Angelina Jolie to offer the role. Jolie accepted the role, and she was reported to be involved during the character construction. Besides reportedly being eager to do action stunts by her own, Jolie also suggested a lot of things regarding the gender change, including the characterization and plot changes by seeing them through a woman's perspective.

Zero Dark Thirty has Kathryn Bigelow who holds a directorial position. Bigelow is personally interested in making war-themed dramas, as she previously succeeded in obtaining The Academy Award for Best Director for her work in *The Hurt Locker*. After the historical event of Osama bin Laden's raid and death, Bigelow intended to make a movie adaptation of it. She and her screenwriter Mark Boal did an investigative research about who was involved during the process of the bin Laden hunt until the execution of the compound raid. After finding out that a female CIA agent had a prominent role in the mission, Bigelow and Boal decided to bring this up as the central subject and main character of the movie. Oscar nominated actress Jessica Chastain was cast to play the agent which was subsequently fictionalized as 'Maya'. Despite the heavy military and political theme of this movie, Bigelow wanted to emphasize more about Maya's struggle as a young woman agent and her process in locating bin Laden. Bigelow also stated that

Maya's tough mentality and intelligence are important to show in the narrative, hence the characterization of an intelligent and independent woman.

The explanations show that in order to properly represent women's identity in movies, actual women's perspectives are required in the process of identity construction. In the other hand, it shows how the American society, particularly Hollywood industry, has evolved and that there is resistance towards the misrepresentation of women in the industry.

Commodifying Traditional Women Stereotypes

The reinvention of women identity in both spy movies, however, is accompanied by contradictory characteristics. Despite the strong, intelligent, independent, and problem solver depiction, typical women's stereotypes are still displayed in both characters of Salt and Maya. There are three female stereotypes identified in both characters.

a. Living up to the Myth of Beauty

First stereotype in the movies is that both Salt and Maya are still depicted as feminine. Their femininity can be seen from their long hair, feminine clothes, and lean slender bodies. Salt is depicted as having long blonde hair, while Maya has long red hair. There are scenes where they wear ladies clothing; for example Salt wears a baby blue suit and skirt to the office. Maya mostly wears dark colors and trousers, but she still wears accessories such as a soft grey shawl

and earrings. The physically strong Salt is not particularly depicted athletic or muscular. Like Maya, she is lean and slender. These three traits are what women are expected to be in society, which means they are still living up to the myth of beauty.

Generally, those are the certain standardized physical appearances of women. Long hair is the common tangible identifier of a woman. In addition to bringing out femininity, women with long hair also represent "softness" which can "pacify the enemy" (Slade, 1987). Women with longer hair represent the value of traditional femininity, which men would see as "soft" or "weak", thus considering them to be less threatening.

Both characters also wear clothes with colors that represent femininity. In the earliest scenes, Salt wore a light grey suit with a skirt. Maya often wore suits and trousers, but still oozed femininity with her choice of soft colors. Upon executing her mission, Salt changed outfits into a more comfortable one (e.g. trousers, jeans) but the pastel coat, soft blue ushanka hat (the Russian fur cap with ear flaps), still represents femininity. During the violent interrogation and torture scenes, Maya is present wearing a long-sleeved yellow shirt, and then a grey blazer and a soft baby blue veil. Their choices of colors are rather neutral, but not particularly 'masculine colors' either.

The appearance of their overall body is lean and slender, the ideal type of 'woman's body' in society. This shows how the most popular women's industries, beauty and

fashion, are still restrictedly showing the beautiful and tall-and-skinny models. These are the figures displayed in billboards, magazines, and advertisements. Physical beauty is considered important to the point that it is common for the society to label people as “physically attractive” or “physically unattractive” (Berscheid & Walster, 1974, p. 181). For women, there is always the need to look beautiful, because it affects how they are treated by people. Such physical standards would not be actually available if society celebrated women’s individuality. In most cases, the effort of trying to look beautiful is an objective in order to get attention from the men, thus it is considered “an expression of power relations in which women must unnaturally compete for resources that men have appropriated for themselves” (Wolf, 1991, p. 12).

Salt and Maya could be strong and highly intelligent but still they are depicted to be physically beautiful. These characters represent the beauty that are accepted by both men and women. The physical embodiment of these characters rely heavily on the actresses who portray them, Angelina Jolie and Jessica Chastain. Besides being acclaimed actresses, both are considered to be ‘Hollywood beauty queens’. This term is usually attributed to actresses that are popular not only from their acting talent, but because of their relationships with other industries, particularly fashion, beauty, and the showbiz entertainment industry. Jolie and Chastain have been endorsed as the face of popular fashion brands; Louis Vuitton and Yves Saint Laurent, respectively. They appear not only in movie-related media (e.g. *Variety* or *The Hollywood Reporter*), but

also general entertainment media such as fashion magazine *Vogue* and celebrity magazine *People*. It is common for them to be featured in the ‘Best Dressed’ list or ‘Most Beautiful’ list, which has nothing to do with their acting career.

This type of depiction is also apparent in action movies with female lead characters. For example, the women in *Charlie’s Angels* (2000) who were all depicted to be strong and independent but still physically attractive. Katniss Everdeen in *The Hunger Games* (2012), is a portrayal of a tomboy as she takes care of her family in the absence of her father. She is skilled in hunting and in survival like men. However, she still keeps her long hair, despite the masculine traits.

American popular culture has been permeating this standard of beauty through television, movies, books, and especially women’s magazines which circulate within female audiences. Fashion which is considered to be the most feminine industry has been deemed exclusive for the tall and/or skinny women because these attributes represent the standardized body type. It is rare to see voluptuous or overweight models gracing the advertisement billboard throughout the United States, because the society has been tainted by the idea that lean or skinny means beautiful. This is what American women have been perceiving, and they indulge themselves in this beauty standard. The worst part is that there are prevalent cases of eating disorders occurring among teenage girls because of their obsession with looking skinny like “supermodels in the magazines”.

b. Affectionate as the Ideal Feminine Trait

The second stereotype is affectionate personality, shown in several scenes. While the masculine theme is inevitable in common spy movies, as it involves violence, a touch of woman's affection is presented in bringing the heart of a story. Portrayal of an innocent and pure woman who is victimized—and even sometimes terminated—has been prevalent in spy movies, to represent the morals of the protagonist spy. Both *Salt* and *Maya* represent this soft side although the narratives revolve around assassination and torture.

In a critical condition, *Salt* is seen calling her husband on the phone and addressing him with terms of endearment like 'honey' and 'sweetheart'. Under the pursuit of the FBI, *Salt* also manages to secure her dog to her neighbor. *Maya* is assigned to seek information from CIA detainees, and is shown to be appalled by the torture methods used by her male peers. She then proceeds in the investigation in her own way, with a proper face-to-face interview. To most detainees, she does not yell nor use physical contact. In fact, she promises to not kill one of them if they want to cooperate. In real life, these are the traits commonly possessed by women. In any circumstances – either normal, critical, or emergency – women are required to be the ones who soothe, nurture, and offer "intimate understanding" (Eckert & McConnell-Ginet, 2003, p. 35). Men are "more expected to judge, to offer advice and expertise, or to "figure out" mechanical problems" (p. 39), and also usually in charge of the 'rough' part. Men are accustomed to doing all the jobs that require strength, as

opposed to the gentleness of women. Affectionate is the opposite of the mentioned roughness, so women are naturally put into the more "wholesome, sweet, and ultimately submissive" position compared to men (Wilkinson, 1984, p. 8). In patriarchal society, they become the 'ideal traits of women', because men are believed to take control in every circumstance.

Seen from the audiences perspective, placing such acts of affection in a violent narrative will evoke sentiments from the viewers toward the female characters. The outlook of having a pure heart and innocence makes the characters sympathetic thus easy to be loved. In the traditional spy movies, the role of innocent women characters – which are often victimized – is to evoke such sympathy from the audience. Any sentimental values in fiction are a "bodily act" which "radically contracts the distance between narrated events and the moment of their reading, as the feelings in the story are made tangibly present in the flesh of the reader" (Sanchez-Eppler, 1993, p. 100).

In addition to the softness and gentleness of affectionate women, these traits also represent submissiveness that is appealing to men. This kind of characteristic gives more authority to men, as they can exhibit their masculinity without any threat. It also guarantees the men's dominance over women, which is only apparent when it is paired with the feminine (Schippers, 2007, p. 91). In the other hand, this also subverts the feminine because it represents 'compliance' and not individual independence. In romantic relationship, it is

common for men to seek such quality in their partner to complement their imposed roughness culture and also to manage their superior position to the feminine.

c. Being Relationship-Driven

The third stereotype is that woman is relationship-driven. There are scenes of flashbacks involving Salt and her husband during critical scenes, which implies that Salt is thinking about him. She turns to defy her Russian spy organization after they killed her husband, and reminisces about the day of their wedding when she sees his dead body for the last time. The conversation between Maya and Jessica revolves around relationships. Maya states that she does not date, implying that her job prevents her from doing so, although Jessica who has the same profession is married and has children. Maya dedicates a decade of her life to carrying this mission, but then after she finally concludes, she becomes overly emotional after the pilot asks her where to go – simply because she does not have anyone to love and a ‘home’ for a long time. These scenes imply that the women’s ‘connectivity to the world’ is still primarily focused on relationships. The seemingly dependent nature of women is possibly because,

women’s sense of self is more “connected” to the world than men’s. This is supposed to mean that women are more focused on relationships than men, and more nurturing and cooperative; men supposedly define themselves as “separate”, avoiding relationship for the sake of independence and tending to be violent and

competitive. (Forbes, 1997, p. 140)

What’s more relevant to the movies, is that even though women have attained promising careers, their lives are not yet complete if they do not have any partners, either a boyfriend or husband. It is because even in today’s society, including women, it is still believed that traditional women life goals: marriage, motherhood, and housekeeping are considered the most important and fulfilling (Cullen, 1980, p. 73). This theme and idea is also still prevalent in contemporary American popular culture where women take the lead as the main characters. In television, it is represented by the 1990s HBO series *Sex and the City*, which tells about four career women who are financially independent, but are still searching for the things that they crave the most; love. The leading character, Carrie Bradshaw, is depicted as living her dream as a writer in upstate Manhattan. Her success brings her capability to possess material wealth which most women desire; a nice apartment, privilege to access exclusive places in New York, and the secondary but most sought after needs; clothes, shoes, and bags by famous fashion designers. The main idea of the series, however, is not about how Carrie deals with her professional life, but her quest in ‘finding true love’. This is also the same common idea in popular literature especially chick lit. Like *Sex and the City*, this is the literature targeted towards women. It also tells stories mostly about successful modern career women who are looking for a life partner. Sophie Kinsella, one of the most prolific chick lit authors, uses this theme in her books. The leading character is usually

ambitious and a workaholic, often able to obtain success in her career, but she still finds something missing as she does not have a boyfriend or husband.

Importance of Stereotyping in Popular Movie Identity Construction

Embedding stereotypes in to the movies is one of the easiest ways to attract society in order to show the “universal language and culture”. In the structuralist and semiotic views, society is likely drawn to products which “speak their language” as well. Thus, the stereotypes in the movies are used to obtain large audiences which eventually can be proven by the box office charts. Finklestein (2007) explained that the mainstream movies mostly visualize stereotyping of certain identities,

In mainstream film, for example, codes are repeated to the point where they seem natural; blondes are beautiful, the young are guileless and truthful, muscular men are heroic. Slowly these associations are standardized and audiences become complicit in maintaining them. [...] Businessmen, intellectuals, the criminal and the mentally deranged have all become recognizable through standardized insignia. A woman in neat, pale clothing represents a mother; a man in a suit, white shirt and knotted tie is a policeman or doctor; a man in a dark shirt and bowtie is suspect. (p. 7)

The universality of the spy movie formula, which is still sustained in the modern

productions, could represent the ‘language’ of the society culture itself. It could represent how the society is rooted in patriarchal systems coming both from the filmmaker and audience. Hence, the traditional values of women are almost always depicted in the movies through the traditional binary opposition.

Generally, the producers of popular culture process and absorb the values of society in their products. They are “aware of receivers’ predispositions [...] [and are] professional, [...] often a member of a ‘team’ of experts” (Hinds, Motz, & Nelson, 2006, p. 66). If such ideas and values have been rooted in the society, it is coherent if the product of popular culture represents the same thing. There should be compensations in constructing a reinvented female character in a masculine genre. Thus, the depiction of stereotypes about women in the movies acts as the “compliance to patriarchy” in which the women are still “oriented to accommodating the interests and desires of men”, a concept that is still considered relevant in popular culture (Cornell & Messerschmidt, 2005, p. 848; Cornell, 1987, pp. 184-185). It would be risky to the filmmakers to alter these values in the movies, as they would likely lose viewers. Although movies are fiction, the aspect of probability and relatability are also important factors to draw in the audience.

A distinct comparison can be seen through another spy movie titled *Haywire* which was released in 2011. Similar to *Salt* and *Zero Dark Thirty*, the movie has a woman as the leading spy protagonist. Directed by award-winner Steven Soderbergh, the story follows

an operative agent Mallory Kane, who is framed by her own boss and is selected to be a target of killing. Kane is assigned to a false mission in which her working partner tries to kill her. After being blacklisted she has to defeat the director of the place where she works. Unlike *Salt* and *Zero Dark Thirty* whose leading characters possess both stereotypes and countertypes of women, Kane completely embodies the 'masculine woman'. She is physically athletic and well-built, with short black hair, and tomboy outfits. While critics expressed major praise for Kane's characteristics which celebrate the individuality of women and defy the stereotypical characteristics of women, the movie was not considered a commercial success. It only grossed \$ 18,942,396 in the U.S., while the budget exceeded \$ 20 million even though it received a wide release status, and was played in 2,439 theatres nationally, almost the same number as *Zero Dark Thirty*¹.

The depiction of women in *Haywire* does not seem to favor the beliefs and values accepted by the society. Patriarchal society does not believe that a woman should be masculine and rough; they believe that women represent virtue and gentleness. As previously mentioned, the symbolic representation of virtue and gentleness can be embodied in a slender and delicate physical appearance. Salt and Maya do have this depiction, but not Kane. Salt and Maya evoke sympathy, but not Kane. This further implies that society still accepts the

¹<http://www.boxofficemojo.com/movies/?id=haywire.htm>

stereotyped depiction of Salt and Maya rather than the more individualized portrayal of Kane.

Depictions of stereotypes (and countertypes) in fictional worlds become sets of "valuable indicators of attitudes and feelings which are very real-beliefs and values held quite deeply and sincerely by the audience, not only by the author" (Nachbar & Lause, 1992, p. 240). In this case, figures of strong women are proven to be not well-accepted although they do challenge the traditional gender roles and stereotypes. Mencimer (2001) observed that although action heroines have been appearing, the skepticism will not go away as "women are still only allowed to be violent within certain parameters largely prescribed by what men are willing to tolerate" (p. 18). So when an author or producer creates a certain characterization of a particular gender, for example, it will be based on what the majority of the society (audience) favors.

In this case, audience becomes the major player. As a product of popular culture, the main idea of a movie comes from the society (audience) and that the product will be targeted toward the audience (society). This is the systematic nature of popular culture which will decide whether a product is successful or unsuccessful. In the movie industry, box office and awards shows accolades become the main targets of the filmmaker. In order to obtain these targets, the filmmaker must first and foremost consider the values rooted in the society, and what the audience wants. Since the American society is patriarchal, they tend to favor the patriarchal ideas and concepts.

Conclusion

Obtaining commercial success is the rooted ideology of the filmmaker. In the mainstream movies, the aim of substantial content is subverted below commercial success. What is more important for the studio is the workability. For example, in a book-to-movie adaptation, some parts of the books can be deliberately passed on or modified into something else if they are not workable. 'Workability' here refers to the audience or people's reception. Compared to the previous spy movies, the female identities in these movies have improved because of the involved producers who emphasized the women subjectivity. However at the same time, the characters still depict stereotypes of women. The importance of keeping stereotypes is to please people by fulfilling what they want to see. Compared to another spy movie *Haywire*, in which the woman identity is depicted to be overly masculine, both *Salt* and *Zero Dark Thirty* were massive successes. *Haywire* did not do well at the box office although it was released in the same number of theatres as *Zero Dark Thirty* and received positive reviews from critics. Apparently, the leading character in *Haywire*, Mallory Kane, as well as the actress who portrayed her, Gina Carano, are not quite what people expect a woman to be. Carano does not have the feminine appearance like Jolie and Chastain, in fact she is a martial artist with a muscular and athletic build.

Relating back to the popular culture mechanism seen from the women's identity

construction in *Salt* and *Zero Dark Thirty*, it is palpable how the Hollywood filmmakers have already seen the facts, which is change of trends in society. In order to obtain success through their creations, they look at these facts to adapt. This is where they deliberately entangle the "old ideas" with the "new ideas" to go in line with the current values in the society. The main reasoning is to obtain success: to be well-received by society (audience), and further to gain commercial profits.

Thus, the construction of the women's identity in *Salt* and *Zero Dark Thirty* is not based on the role instruments where they become the subject of spy movies based on the perspectives of women. The construction is based on the function of the women's identity, particularly for commercial purposes. The dual nature of the identity is to attract a wider audience; those who defy the traditional women's identity (progressive feminists), and also those who celebrate such traditionalism and even stereotypes (the common people of patriarchal society).

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A TRANSNATIONAL STUDY ON AMERICAN HEGEMONY OF INDONESIAN MALE TEENAGERS THROUGH SMACKDOWN

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Abstract

SmackDown is one of the most phenomenal products of U.S. popular culture. It goes beyond its geographical borders to broadcast in each house in other countries. It caused several deaths and injuries to Indonesian children during 2006 followed by the banning of the program from airing nationally. It began re-airing through TV cable in 2011 and fanbase communities were established in three major big cities in Indonesia, which are Yogyakarta, Bandung, and Jakarta.

This research represents the perception of SmackDown among Indonesian male teenagers ages 15-17 and its effects as well as the power of SmackDown over them. It uses a mixed method of quantitative and qualitative methods in a grounded research under Transnational American Studies related to hegemony and popular culture. The analysis of the data that are collected through quantitative method uses the semiotic approach that links the sign, signified, and signifiers to the reality by comparing it to the American perception based on the published journals, thesis, or dissertations to Indonesian perception from interviews and group discussions with fanbase members, students from three private high schools and athletes of amateur wrestling.

This research reveals that hegemonic masculinity that constructs gender in society is shaped through the broadcast of SmackDown in Indonesia. It is seen from the performance that justifies violence, portrays the ideal body for men and positions women as inferior to men. Meanwhile, the SmackDown itself engages the audience by manipulating the reality in order to blur the line between fantasy and reality. The blurred lines give the audience a sense of pseudo-ideology which puts fantasy as their reality. Gender construction is pseudo-ideology to the society.

Keywords: SmackDown, hegemony, popular culture, transnational

Introduction

The modern era has a phenomenal impact on our culture and it is getting worse. Poverty gives birth to social delinquencies and the culture of corruption to our government as well and it comes down to all staffs. It has resulted in a big gap between the government and the Indonesian, which the people get poorer and, on the contrary, it makes the people that run the government get richer. Those rich people are identical with the use of products that come from other countries especially America. It is a proof to our culture that we are ideologically

colonialized even though we are in the modern era. We are no longer proud enough of our domestic products to use them. It enables us to be colonialized in the area of economy, and politics that causes our disability to determine our identity. The habit of using imported products had been begun when we lose our battle in a way of ideology wise. Our mindset assumes that those imported products are way better than the local ones. Actually, our local products have the same quality as imported ones but our habit in using them is due to the pride and prestige that comes to our society. This indicates our hegemonized society. Our devotion to using imported

products is an ideology colony that is determined as cultural hegemony by Antonio Gramsci (Ives, 2004).

Indonesia has been hegemonized by the West specifically through Americanization in all aspects (Willett, 1989). This ideology hegemony is done by the cultural products; music, fashion, technology and even food. The fashion style has its effects on the Indonesian youth altogether with the music genres and fast food not to mention beverages, cigarettes, and media. The progress of technology that produces new cultural products in the society is in accordance with some elements in Indonesia society that preserve its local culture; the way they eat, etc. These new cultural products are shared through the media that plays its role to communicate them to a larger scale of society. The products that are produced and involved in the mass media by a large numbers are called mass culture and popular culture (Strinatti, 1995). The example of pop culture including fashion style, Hollywood films, fast food and beverages color our daily life. Using the mass media to transmit these products has been helped by the group of people who are called trendsetters, who are usually celebrities make these products even popular. Pop culture is a set of generally available artifacts: films, records, clothes, TV programs, modes of transportation, etc (Strinatti, 1995, p. 22).

The most famous *sportainment* in the U.S. is professional wrestling. The great success of this show is because it shows the complete package that professional wrestling offers; it has dramatic scenes, is understandable, and has novel situations that presents interesting characters, and most importantly it has a low production cost (Assael & Mooneyham, 2010). The success of WWE hegemonizes the local audiences in countries besides the U.S. The WWE main office in Connecticut decided to open offices in London, Munich, Tokyo,

Singapore, Dubai, Shanghai, Mumbai, and Mexico City according to the data presented on the WWE corporate website. These trends need a deeper study on transnationalism and cultural hegemony because they affect the culture and patterns of youth culture, which have been exposed to the existence of media and internet.

The effects of *SmackDown* in Indonesia can be seen in analysis of the 14 February 2014 when Ustadz Hariri did the same moves as seen in *SmackDown* to attack the engineer during his speech in Bandung¹. It was not shocking enough remembering that Indonesian children had become the victims of the effects of *SmackDown* in recent years. As reported, there was a 9-years old boy died after imitating the moves performed in the show with his friends. Another report also claimed that injuries; broken bones and concussion were experienced by children all over the country. The data shows that *SmackDown* can affect the psychology of its viewers, more importantly children, because it portrays violence, mocking, and swearing. The recent research from LIPI done in 2007 concluded that television programs airing violence caused damages to the morality and culture of children who were not supervised by their parents (Hanim, Muchtar, Rochmawati, & Astuti, 2007).

Experiencing the deadly effects of *SmackDown*; deaths and injuries to children, makes this research examining the effects on youth that were recently exposed to digital media relevant. Besides, this research will discover on the reasons why *SmackDown* gained its popularity and why it hegemonizes the audience.

1

<http://www.tempo.co/read/news/2014/02/13/058553778/Injak-Kepala-Orang-Ustad-Hariri-Menyesal> Retrieved on 15 February 2015

Methodology

This research is under Transnational American Studies using grounded research, which examines the effects of a cultural product originally from the United States, which goes beyond its geographical borders to another country. The qualitative research method is then used to present the analysis of the data in this research. Primary data has been collected using quantitative method since this is a new research topic in Indonesia and also because the object of this research is perceptions. The focus group has been then chosen as the method used to gather the data. This is also an inquiry process to gain an understanding of social phenomenon or humanity issues (Creswell, 2009). It allows the researcher to draw a complex, big, and holistic picture, analyze words per words, report the view of the informant, as well as do the research in a natural setting. A qualitative analysis makes data collection using open-ended types of questions so that it can reveal new phenomenon or understanding. So, a researcher can explore, look in a glance, explain, or interpret part or the whole phenomenon being examined. This method could raise a new fact towards lines of phenomenon, which can then be used to negate or support the existing theory.

There are two kinds of data used in this research, primary and secondary data. The primary data is the result of focus groups and interviews with members and non-members of the *SmackDown* fan community. The students of the three private schools are treated as the non-member of fans community as well as the amateur wrestlers of West Java centralized training. They range 15-19 years old. Meanwhile, the secondary data is gained through the journals, thesis, dissertations, and published articles that are in the same topic area of perceptions, effect, violence,

or professional wrestling which are used to enrich the data and support the analysis.

Collecting the data had few steps. First, the researcher composed some questions that were used as a questionnaire to guide the focus group. The questions were collected through collecting, reading and observing the *SmackDown* performance as well as the journals or thesis and dissertations that support the finding to answer the research questions. After all the questions are set up, the consent from the Indonesian government is sent altogether with the research proposal and instrumentations. Conducting the focus group was easier to complete for the members of the fan community since they had a fixed schedule of gathering and they were welcoming to the researcher. Meanwhile, for the schools, the researcher had to arrange the proper date to conduct the focus group and interview. The interview questions are the continuity of the questionnaire, which enabled the interviewees to answer freely because it uses open-ended types of questions. It comprises of questions about how they see *SmackDown*, their perception about male and female wrestlers, why they watch television program, and their behavior or suggested idea after watching the program. The researcher asked the questions in detail without luring them into specific answers. Interviewees were chosen based on their ability to speak up in the focus group and their position in the group, e.g. the leader of the classroom, the leader of the fan community, the A students, and those who are looked up to by the others. They were chosen because their position as a leader could portray the domination towards the sub-ordinated person in the same group. All the talks and answers done in the focus groups and interviews were recorded and then transcribed. The interpretation will use thick description as presented by Ponterotto (2006) which is the development of Denzin's method to unite the thought of Geertz from

anthropological area and philosophical, Ryles. According to Ponterotto (2006),

A thick description does more than record what a person is doing. It goes beyond mere fact and surface appearances. It presents detail, context, emotion, and the webs of social relationships that join persons to one another. Thick description evokes emotionality and self-feelings. It inserts history into experience. It establishes the significance of an experience, or the sequence of events, for the person or persons in question. In thick description, the voices, the feelings, actions, and meanings of interacting individuals are heard. (p. 261).

Analyzing a phenomenon using thick description should be able to draw and interpret the social actions done by the respondents contextually. As a result, thick description should be in accordance with thick interpretations of the social actions so that it leads to the thick meaning in the research results to reach the understanding of the respondents (Ponterotto, 2006, p. 261).

Again, according to Ponterotto (2006), data analysis is the process of reducing large amounts of collected data to make sense of them. During analysis, data is organized and reduced through summarization and categorization to make patterns and themes in the data so that it could be identified and linked. The data is collected and then it is categorized and clustered into some criteria to ease the interpretation of the data during analysis. Categorizing and clustering the data helped the researcher to know which kind of hegemony or what groups of Indonesians are negating the hegemony. It was then compared with the perception of American viewers under the same category to analyze the background of the perceptions that occurred.

Findings

The hegemonic masculinity that is revealed under this study is that violence and aggression have become the main characteristics of being masculine as portrayed in the performance. Even though it is depicted through tricks or camera playing, the audience seemed to buy it as reality. Man is considered as competitive since SmackDown mostly pits man against man in physical combat. Seen from the ideal body shape portrayed by the performers, informants in Jakarta, Bandung and Yogyakarta agreed to muscularity and body fat is not their concern as opposed to female standpoint. The use of substantial drugs; fat burner, mass gainer or amino to increase the metabolic system, is popular among men. Gym stations in these areas are filled with men lifting weight to pump their muscle. Females who sign up for gym memberships are always seen in the studio joining aerobics, pilates, or yoga. They are not fans of lifting weights because their ideal body is thin with less fat and muscle. Therefore, this hegemonic masculinity leads to gender construction and popular culture products shape it. In addition to that, the idea of female fights are not accepted in Indonesia.

SmackDown is creating the illusion of violence without causing irreparable harm to one's self or opponent. Mazer (1998) asserted, "much of wrestling's appeal comes from the 'immediacy of improvisation'" (p. 26). "Improvisation occurred within a rehearsed framework" and "performances created the impression of spontaneity" because the action unfolded differently in each performance (Brockett, 1984, p. 119). Wrestlers must learn to give and receive signals that cue specific moves or a series of moves. Punches, kicks, and slaps do land, but they rarely land with full force. It is helped with the camera tricks. One uses the handheld camera to capture the expression of the

suffered wrestlers when the moves are executed. The wrestlers' take-and-give and signal-reaction with the camera tricks are supported by vocal effects to create the dramatic experience in the ring.

Their viewers are mostly male between the ages of 18-36 and this becomes a dominant aspect in this demographic of the two countries: America and Indonesia, for having the culture of violence based on the violence portrayed in every show. Evidence of America's preoccupation with the culture of physical violence is pervasive and can be found in virtually all of the entertainment as well as in the sports industry. The original sport from America that is football portrays the violence because it is a contact sport where many of the players tackle each other. The physical and body contact of each player clearly states that this violence attitude can win anything and achieve its goal. Further, the sky-rocketing sport Mixed-Martial Arts named Ultimate Fighting Championship (UFC) depicts the blood and body combat in a locked cage. It pits man against man and even woman against woman, which started in 2013 when Ronda Rousey became the defending belt in Bantamweight Women Division. She also appeared during the WrestleMania XXXI and the storyline enabled her to fight against Stephanie McMahon. The TV show rating in the U.S. also placed the series that involves physical violence at the highest rank. This rank is downloaded from the Nielsen's website. It is a private company that measure national TV viewing using Nielsen's People meter technology to electronically capture all viewing from their nationally projectable sample of panelists.

American society is violent not because of guns but basically because of the attitudes of Americans. When Europeans first came to the Americas, they thought that they had discovered a new world. Instead they found a land already inhabited by people with

their own ways of life (Slotkin, 1985). Violence was in their souls and Americans in our present time have inherited it. Violence pervades this culture. Americans not only engage in violence, they are entertained by it. As stated by Adi (2001), "violence also appears in literary works which American literature always portrays in the discussion of factual events from recent time" (p. 87) Meanwhile, Indonesia also has the culture of violence but it is in the form of symbolic violence. Symbolic violence gains its popularity through media in Indonesia. It is not only depicted in *sinetron* but also through another form of media; news, music, slapstick comedy, and talk show. According to Piliang (2003), "symbolic violence comes up to the audience in forms of distortion, misleading, faking, and comedy" (p. 149) and it is found in the news portraying that media is a tool for elites to control the society as seen in news coverage and *sinetron* or what is known as electronic cinema. Therefore, the difference in culture between America and Indonesia about physical violence and symbolic violence is based on their history and popular culture products. Besides, the patriarchal system in Indonesia puts this symbolic violence as a clear example of gender construction.

Professional wrestling also puts muscularity as a symbol of masculinity. This televised professional wrestling show combined with all the aspects in it become part of an elaborate performance of gender, which prescribes what it means to be a man and what it means to be truly masculine. This tends to support the hegemonic ideal. Media images and messages may influence viewer perceptions of the body and may encourage viewers to internalize body image ideals. Furthermore, the exposure to idealized media body images may prompt social comparison whereby viewers compare their own bodies to the ideal and assess whether or not they measure up. Media images and messages that promote the male ideal body as big, strong and

muscular therefore have important implications. It contributes to body image dissatisfaction among men and boys as it does among women and girls. Moreover, men who are dissatisfied with their bodies may be driven to attain the ideal and consequently may engage in behaviors that could potentially contribute to poor health such as eating disorders, excessive exercise, and abuse of substances including body supplements; fat burners and mass gainers. This indicates that the ideal male's body type is about muscle and it is different from the female's ideal body type in relation to the one. Women think that lean and athletic is good but they seem to have another reason for choosing that criteria because they emphasize health. Indonesian women always get advice from their parents about *bibit*, *bobot*, *bebet*, which emphasizes good health and genes are the most important aspects for them to have if they want to marry a respectable man.

The blurred lines between fantasy and reality become invisible through the rising of popular culture, which shapes the society into its pseudo-culture. SmackDown could manipulate its audience to gain more profit and make wrestling as their idea of life. Reality manipulation depicted in SmackDown comprises in putting the performance as if it is a legitimate sports combat, which has an arena, referee, rules and a championship. During its airing, sports channels become the only ones to broadcast this male soap opera. Its manipulation consists of its pre-determined outcomes so that it has narrative scripts including the choreographed moves within the circle. As stated in the analysis that male wrestlers' bodies are mostly athletic with big muscles and height supported with the open-ness, their athleticism is merely a cover to legitimate the sport itself even though sportsmanship is not highly valued. SmackDown is a world of politics, a battle between good versus evil. This means that

good does not always win and winning can be achieved by any means necessary. On the contrary, other combat sports like boxing and amateur wrestling, highly value sportsmanship and emphasize that the most determined and strategic athlete will win the competition.

Immortality is also presented in SmackDown. A wrestler who got bumped, body-slammed, thrown with ladders, table or chair, is able to fight back and even could do the same to another wrestler in following week. These supernatural creatures become immortal and it is different with the UFC or boxing in which blood, broken bones, and even concussions often occur accurately showing human nature. Mostly, SmackDown fans would not watch UFC or boxing because they do not want to be presented mere-human traits. Besides, SmackDown is targeting a new audience which is children by changing their program category into PG rated content. It means that they need to raise their profit because children, who love to watch live events should be accompanied by their parents. In addition to that, children are more interested in buying the merchandises such as T-shirts, hats, or mini figures of the performers.

In order to evoke a strong reaction from the crowd, a wrestler will attempt to speak to a deeply held social value with his characters as stated by Mondak (1989) analyzing the shows of the World Wrestling Federation during the late 1980s. He argued that the rise in the popularity of professional wrestling during the Reagan administration was related to the general rise in patriotic sentiment that occurred at the same time. He told the story of the Iron Sheik, a World Wrestling Federation wrestler, who portrayed a middle-eastern stereotype at a time when the Iranian hostage crisis was fresh in the minds of the American public. The lurid sagas played out for fans in the wrestling ring mesh with the ongoing sagas on television, in the movies, celebrity

gossip and the news where 'real life' stories allow each news report to become a mini-drama complete with a star, a villain, a supporting cast, a good-looking host and a neat, if often unexpected, conclusion. It makes the whole nation can sit in rapt to watch this professional wrestling show on TV. It simply reflects the reality that actually has been made by the media through advertisements, online news, magazines, or even social media. Life, real or contrived, rather than simply invention, provides the fodder for entertainment. The problems of existence are, through the medium of entertainment, domesticated and controlled. We measure our lives by those we follow on the screen or in the ring. We seek to be like them. We emulate their look and behavior. We escape the chaos of real life through fantasy. We see ourselves as the stars of our own movies (Mondak, 1989).

As the popular culture has immersed in our daily lives, its nature to blur reality from fantasy can now clearly seen. The producers go to great lengths to mold their products to reflect the audience's beliefs and values (Nachbar & Lause, 1992, p. 3). In television's obsession with reality, ordinary people are showcased as actors and mundane situations as drama ask members of society to see themselves as though on television. This is not the same thing as being virtual, but rather occupying a feedback loop 'live.' This is a shift in terms of how the society understands ideas such as simulation and spectacle; a shift that emphasizes, not the disappearance of reality but rather a reversal of how the problem is posed. Crandall (2003) put the situation cogently, "the reality of representation is substituted for the representation of reality. That is, authenticity arises less from the authenticity of reality per se than the authenticity of the means by which reality is portrayed" (p. 7).

Media supports this 'kayfabe' in the world of professional wrestling. They would portray the characters in and out of the ring and would not cover their personal life. As seen in the media coverage of The Rock, he would not get media attention as Dwayne Johnson when he still worked with the WWE. However, after his contract was finished, his acting in Hollywood got the media blow up and he started to go by his name, Dwayne Johnson. The company itself banned the feud wrestlers in a ring to appear together in public in order to keep the kayfabe within the world of professional wrestling. Yet, recently, the company deviated from its rule, putting social phenomenon into their storylines; childhood trauma, jealousy, and lifestyles including alcoholism or male-gazing towards women.

Use of the term fan community has most often been used to describe a group of people, often geographically dispersed who nevertheless connect around SmackDown text (Ford, 2007, p. 24). Several fans explicitly acknowledged this mode of engagement as a driving force for their continued interest (Ford, 2007, p. 25). As observed especially at these local venues with monthly or weekly events, wrestling fans have regular meetings to sustain relationships. When fans act as performers or as critics, they often do so simultaneously to emphasize their standing within the community, so that fan involvement and other modes of engagement are implicitly also about this formation of community. Based on the observation during the *nonton bareng* of WrestleMania XXXI in Yogyakarta and Bandung, fans often moved around seats or used intermission time to go across the venue to say hello to other fans they spotted. Many of them seemed to group together to become a 'cheering section' for favorite performers and from the reaction of the other fans, seemed to inhabit that same section of the building on a regular basis. They do this face-to-face social

action because they are in the same place but whenever they go home, the internet and phone applications would be the means to create the social embeddedness. According to Nindyasmara (2015), social embeddedness by joining a group with the same interest is important and it is treated as a mode of survival for the individual².

The establishment of Tough Enough and Broken Skull's Challenge gave hope to the fans and the audience that they could be one of the superstars in the ring which give them a sense of engagement that they could become like their idols with millions of dollars in income. Tough Enough is a reality show that auditions 'commoners' and gives them a chance to make their dreams come true to be performers with a contract with WWE valued at \$25,000. Each week, a participant is eliminated by the viewers through online voting. In the past, the dream life of a superstar was as far as imagination and nowadays reality TV shows make it real making the lines between fantasy and reality become invisible.

Indonesian fans joined the fan community or fansbase, held their regular meeting once per month to watch the live events or Pay-per-View videos. They gathered in a local venue and interacted with other wrestling enthusiasts. They did not often have this occasions because they could discuss the storylines or weekly matches through social media; Facebook, Twitter,

2 Nindyasmara, K. (2015). Negotiation of Identity in Diasporic Literature: A Case Study in Amy Tan's *The Hundred Secret Senses* and Leslie Marmon Silko's *Ceremony*. Unpublished thesis. American Studies program, Faculty of Cultural Sciences, Universitas Gadjah Mada, Yogyakarta.

and Kaskus. They gathered because they felt that they are the same, they shared the same values of honoring SmackDown as their identity differed from other Indonesians who mostly liked soccer. Social media plays an important role in shaping the culture of the society. They can change their face-to-face interaction into a-click away interaction through gadgets. Americans tend to be effective and efficient regarding social contact which they do not see each other often. For Indonesians, it was a daily basis to get together in the same place with others to chat or share their daily life as seen in *gotong royong* or *kenduren* culture. This means that pseudo-culture was already immersed into their pseudo-ideology.

Conclusion

Sport is a human endeavor that was and still is associated with predominant male participation and masculinity and is reflected throughout the sports media. The ratio of sports coverage in the media clearly reveals that whilst men appear to be losing their monopoly over the world of sports, they are still leading in securing the attention of the sports media (Szabo, 2004). If and when women are depicted, they are portrayed in stereotypical feminine roles (Wigmore, 1996), emphasizing beautifully proportionate and conditioned bodies, posing in an erotic or sexually available way. The representations include more than just bodily features but also personal characteristics such as modesty, obedience, and chastity (Hargreave, 1994, p. 160).

Popular culture manipulates the 'needs' into 'wants' as a formative 'attacking' of aspects of the society and blurs the distinction between them. If 'needs' should fill the blank space in the human's biology, popular culture often convinces the society that 'wants' are actually what human's need. Popular culture does not merely reflect society's heart and soul but

manipulates them (Nachbar & Lause, 1992, p. 7). Because Americans view reality through glasses tinted in red, white and blue, it means that other nations should do the same. The cultural biases then occurred when the indigenous culture was cleansed by the globalization through popular culture. As seen in the changing form of social embeddedness in Indonesia, these youths shifted their behavior from face-to-face social contact into a-click or a-tweet away to meet and have the social bonding with the others.

The media has a big influence in shaping the society into whatever the editor, producers and writers want it. This is creating the pseudo-ideology of the audience as a reflection of the company vision – the more profit they gain, the more they create fantasy and make it real to the audience. Thus, it intrigues the ideology of fans who willfully want to be the spectators and critics. The Indonesian fans who gathered in their fanbases believed that whatever was presented in the performance was their identity. Ethnic culture which symbolizes the Indonesian culture is shifted into American culture which portrays the communality through digital apps and ends in the rise of pseudo-ideology of Indonesian youth. (Ives, 2004).

The hegemonic masculinity which constructs gender roles that emphasize dominance over inferior women is shaped through popular culture. Meanwhile, SmackDown is one of the phenomenal American popular culture products that are introduced to Indonesian culture and have changed its culture into a pseudo-culture that roots to the ideology of Indonesians. The informants in these three cities react almost the same to the airing of SmackDown which helps to show the conclusion that this gender construction is pseudo-ideology.

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**NEGOTIATION OF IDENTITY IN DIASPORIC LITERATURE:
A CASE STUDY ON AMY TAN'S *THE HUNDRED SECRET SENSES* AND
LESLIE MARMON SILKO'S *CEREMONY***

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Abstract

Negotiation of identity has become an important issue because its never-ending process always relates to conflicts, differences and similarities. Chinese Americans and Native Americans are two distinct diasporic communities amongst other ethnic group in the U.S. As minorities, they experience prejudice, discrimination and exclusion from mainstream American culture and society. This research aims to reveal the negotiation of identity of Chinese Americans and Native Americans which is reflected on their literature. Literature is seen as the record of diasporic experience of both ethnic groups.

This research is qualitative conducted under Post-Nationalist American Studies. Post-colonial, hegemony and representation theories are used to help the process of data analysis. The primary data is taken from *The Hundred Secret Senses* written by Amy Tan and *Ceremony* written by Leslie Marmon Silko. The secondary data are taken from books, journals, and internet sources.

The finding of the research shows that Chinese Americans and Native Americans negotiate their identity by choosing or combining competing values. The construction of identity is done through the reenactment of ethnic root and the adaptation to mainstream American cultural values. Sense of belongingness, history and socio-cultural background become the determining factors of identity negotiation. In brief, they construct hybrid identity to survive and to counter American hegemony. Compared to Native Americans, Chinese Americans are more blending to mainstream American culture. However, both novels depict their hybrid identity.

Keywords: identity negotiation, diasporic literature, diaspora communities, hegemony, hybrid identity

Introduction

The United States of America is one of many countries in the world with very heavy migration and diaspora issues, and even Kennedy (2008) stated that, “the USA is a country established by immigrants” (p. 1). Additionally, Bradbury & Temperly (1998) explicated that, “America is a nation that is profoundly mixed ethnically, geographically, socially-sustained and changed by constant waves of immigration from an ever changing range of sources” (p. 20). In short, the USA is the meeting point of immigrants

and diasporic communities from all over the world each having a social and cultural background. This statement marks that migration and diaspora issues have been deeply embedded in US society since the establishment of the nation.

Each diasporic community indeed has their own cultural products mirroring each identity, culture and experience, such as music, dance, literature and other works of art. Of those cultural products, it is diasporic literature that can easily be found in bookstores, libraries, or even on

television. This literature can be studied to dig out immigrants' experiences. The question that can be raised is how can a literary work be regarded and studied to dig out the experience of diasporic societies if it is fiction? Although a literary work is considered fiction, it has mental facts that are developed from their thought. Their thought is without a doubt the product of what they experience as diasporic societies. Therefore, diasporic literature is the embodiment of diasporic societies' experiences and thought. Hence, the theme of diasporic literature usually lingers on the issues of immigration and diaspora themselves such as discrimination, cultural differences, stereotypes, struggle to gain success in American society, and identity negotiation. The literature itself mirrors a particular diasporic society experience. This study aims to reveal the negotiation of identity in two diasporic communities through their literature, particularly novels. *The Hundred Secret Senses* written by Amy Tan, a Chinese American and *Ceremony* written by Leslie Marmon Silko, a Native American, will be used as the objective materials of this research.

Chinese-Americans are one of many immigrant populations that seek their fortune in the U.S. Chinese-Americans represent the second largest racial minority group as well as the oldest Asian-American group in the U.S. The first waves of Chinese migrated to the U.S. in the early 18th century "to make their fortune in the California Gold Rush" (Chang, 2004, p.4). However, their dreams were replaced with the reality of building the transcontinental railroad as indentured labors, as well as being victims of prejudice and discrimination because of

their 'bizarre' physical features and odd cultural traditions. Being indentured labors receiving extremely small wages, it was impossible for them to return to China so they had to work hard to earn a living. However, Chinese diasporic communities nowadays have become one of the most successful immigrant communities in the United States so the term "model minority" (Chou & Feagin, 2014, p.1) is attached to them.

While Chinese have been excluded and discriminated against in U.S. society, they have been able to survive and have become one of the most successful immigrant groups in the U.S.A. In contrast, there is a diasporic community which seems to be declining and never far from a poor and miserable life. That community is Native Americans. Since the European conquest, Native Americans have been victimized due to their culture and way of life which is considered primitive. It means that until today, Native Americans, despite their long tenure in America, are still the object of prejudice, discrimination and mockery. Moreover, their life in reservations today, with minor facilities and technology, makes them even more excluded from American society. They have become the forgotten, the "vanishing race", the "poorest of the poor" (Parillo, 1985, p. 217). In brief, their existence in U.S. society is not admitted.

As mentioned earlier, diasporic communities as 'others' must position themselves in American society by taking a position, by negotiating contrasting and competing cultures. In the contemporary U.S. with its diverse diasporic societies, the quest of identity becomes extremely crucial. As a crucial and universal issue,

identity quest becomes the central theme in diasporic literature. Following and responding to the changing of American social, political and cultural nuances, the diasporic writers from each diasporic community produce diasporic literature, for example *Ceremony* and *The Hundred Secret Senses*, which are part of the genre of contemporary American fiction.

Both novels are chosen to be the material object because of the same essence which is the quest for identity embedded in the characters behavior building the storyline. Both novels have the same strong degree in delivering the émigrés and the Natives' cultural heritage and how it mingles with American cultural values. These ethnic groups are interesting and important to study because both ethnic group suffer from harsh discrimination but the Chinese have become as successful immigrants while the Natives, in contrast, are denigrating. Since each of them come from different cultural backgrounds, the construction of each identity must be different from each other and relates to their survival ability in American culture and society. Furthermore, the result of identity negotiation becomes the counter discourse of American hegemony. Due to these reasons, this research aims to explore the attempt of identity negotiation experienced by Chinese American and Native Americans as seen in *Ceremony* and *The Hundred Secret Senses*. From the perspectives of American Studies, the study of Chinese-Americans and Native American along with their literature is included in the issues of migration and diaspora. The issues of migration, diaspora and imperialism are covered by Post-national American Studies.

Since the issues of diaspora and negotiation of identity cannot be separated from each other, the study is conducted to reveal the identity negotiation experienced by Chinese Americans and Native Americans as seen in *The Hundred Secret Senses* and *Ceremony* and to find out the determining factors of identity negotiation and the survival aptitude of both communities.

Methodology

This research is qualitative research in which the interpretation is based on what “they [the researcher] see, hear, and understand” (Creswell, 2009, p. 212). This research is also inductive research under the paradigm of Post-nationalist American Studies. There are three processes in this research. The first step is collecting data. The primary data are taken from *The Hundred Secret Senses* and *Ceremony*. The secondary data is taken from internet sources, academic journals, books, and any materials related to identity negotiation. Therefore, the primary data and secondary data are read simultaneously to gain a deeper understanding of the topics. The second step is to make a categorization of the data collected based on the cultural tradition of both diasporic communities which is then connected to the context of hegemony, postcolonial studies and representation. The third step of the research is analyzing the data. To analyze and interpret the data, descriptive qualitative approach within the paradigm of constructivism is utilized. Creswell (2009) points out that “Interpretative research, with the inquirer typically involved in a sustained and intensive experience with participants... inquirers explicitly identify reflexively their

biases, values, and personal background, such as gender, history, culture, and socioeconomic status (p. 214).

Creswell's explication affirms that descriptive qualitative approach is closely related to interpretation. This interpretation is conducted under Post-nationalist American Studies concerning on representation, U.S. hegemony and Postcolonial paradigm. The representation theories are used to examine and evaluate the diasporic literature as the primary data. The use of representation is to connect the mental evidences found in the novels and the reality of diasporic communities in U.S. society. These theories are employed collaboratively to discover and reveal the answers to research questions.

Findings

Both Chinese-Americans and Native Americans negotiate their identity by choosing, selecting, and combining cultural values they encounter as the diasporic communities in the U.S culture and society. Both novels show that the diasporic communities construct their identity through the reenactment of ethnic roots and by adapting to mainstream American cultural values. The reenactment of ethnic roots is done through sustaining spirituality, strengthening social relations and positioning diasporic women in American society. The adaptation of American cultural values is done through some process that takes more than one or two generations.

Compared to Chinese-Americans, Native Americans are more obvious in the reenactment of ethnic roots and identity. Native Americans more clearly reject

American values. For Native Americans, the reenactment of ethnic roots means reclaiming the tradition of the past which existed before the European conquest. Meanwhile Chinese-Americans are more moderate, meaning that they do not entirely reject mainstream American values. Most Chinese-Americans combine Chinese values and American values but few of them still adhere to their ethnic identity.

In sustaining spirituality, Chinese Americans only use the concept of ethnic belief and combine it with rationality. Native Americans try to return back to the essentials of their ethnic beliefs. It can be said that in the realm of spirituality, Chinese Americans are more hybrid than the Natives. This blending as a result of negotiation of identity is interesting because "It is significant that the productive capacities of this Third Space have a colonial or postcolonial provenance... but on the inscription and articulation of culture's hybridity" (Bhabha, 1994, p. 38). This is also similar with what Clifford states; that diasporic consciousness is "entirely a product of cultures and histories in collision and dialogue" (Clifford 1994, p.319).

Sustaining spirituality in both diasporic communities functions as the survival mechanism in rational society. Spirituality attached to irrationality is used to counter mainstream American values. Thus, the exposure of ghost narratives, reincarnation, storytelling about witchcraft, hunting practices, food and chants as traditional ways of healing are presented in Chinese and Native American literature to show Western perceptions about them such as that they are irrational, unscientific,

primitive, pagan, uncivilized, and exotic. These attributes function to indicate that diasporic communities are the 'Other.' It can be said that even literature shows that there is a White domination toward the diasporic communities as pointed out by Gandhi (1998) as "Colonial textuality in Said's terms produced the 'Orient' can, thus, be read as a rehearsal for militaristic and administrative domination" (p. 143). It legalizes that the use of ethnic heritage which is undermined by the Whites is to voice out the diasporic experiences, the Western domination towards diasporic cultures and societies. It can also be said that the diasporic communities are being hegemonized by mainstream American culture and societies.

However, by sustaining spirituality, the diasporic communities are able to counter the hegemony. That is why spirituality of Chinese-Americans and Native Americans also become the mark of identity of each diasporic communities. In other words, this literature becomes the counter discourse of diasporic community. The diasporic communities as 'Other', as subaltern, as those who are thought to be submissive to Western power, in fact, are able to voice their experiences, able to resist and counter the dominant power of the West through their discourse. This is the same with what Spivak (2006) stated, "subaltern can actually speak" (p. 35).

The second means in constructing identity by reenacting ethnic roots is done through social relation. Strengthening social relations is considered important as a way of surviving in individual American society. In the social spheres, *The Hundred Secret Senses* and *Ceremony* represent that the attitudes of Chinese-Americans and

Native Americans are similar. Both of them give primary allegiance to their ethnic identity which values social embeddedness rather than individuality.

Therefore, for Chinese-Americans, it is important to keep the strong family ties to support them. As explained earlier, to strengthen family relations, the Chinese eat together and support each other. That is why, in the U.S., since the beginning of the Chinese first wave of immigration until today, there are many Chinese American organizations ranging from family, clan and kinship organizations that support each other both mentally and financially. By having family and people from the same racial and cultural background to support individuals, Chinese-Americans are more confident to live in the U.S in which individualism as White American values is considered to be a standard Gramsci (1999) stated that "the tradition of strong individual personalities in whom the vocation of work had reached its greatest intensity and strength..." (p.601). In other words, the exposure of the disagreement of divorce, mean that having good marriages and strong family ties are used to express Chinese diasporic experiences in the U.S. and to build their self-confidence so that they are able to survive in American culture and society. Besides, it marks the difference between them and White Americans so that it strengthens their identity as Chinese Americans.

It is rather different to Native Americans who do not only value family ties. Native Americans also value people relationships within certain tribal group. In the Post-colonial context, the concept of family and tribalism in Native American society is indeed considered primitive and irrational

since for the West, every individual is given rights to do anything he/she wants to do without giving special attention to others. Moreover, the power of reason given to every individual underlies that he/she is able to do anything alone. On the contrary, in tribalism, individuals must be responsible for other members of the tribe and believe in the power of the greater spirit that guides the life of the tribe.

The function of describing such family and tribal life in the novel is to preserve Native American culture, tradition and worldview everywhere they go. It is not to hinder or forbid Native Americans from leaving the reservation to seek a better life because nowadays many of them live in the city and mingle with the white people. The purpose is to remind them that their individual existence is always attached to family, tribe and universe since it determines their survival. It emphasizes that as a Native American, a person cannot only rely on oneself. If they do so, they have lost their own existence, because they negate family, tribe and cosmic existence, whereas individual existence is part of those three. By clinging to this belief, Native Americans are able to build their self-confidence and use it as survival mechanism in American culture and society in which the stereotype of Native American inferiority and extinction is difficult to erase. In short, strengthening social relations between individual, family and tribe is the survival mechanism of Native Americans when living in individualistic America.

Hence, it can be concluded that the function of strengthening social embeddedness is as a survival mechanism in an individual society. They strengthen

their social relations by maintaining their close relationships with friends, family and communities within their tribe, sub-tribe and clan. Diasporic communities are objects of prejudice and discrimination. They are seen as the 'Other' and often excluded from the mainstream American society. That is why, strengthening social relations becomes an important thing to do to support each other, spiritually, mentally and financially. It helps them a lot in living in the individual society. These social relations embody their ethnic identity, the identity of the East which differentiates it from the West. This is essentially the same with what Geertz (1960) highlighted in *Religion of Java* when he states, "at the ultimate level of experience there is no individuality because the more advanced one is spiritually, the more one has a genuine fellow feeling for others,...the health of society is dependent upon the right relationships between the various groups" (p. 333).

The importance of social relations is, thus, one of the central Eastern values which are strengthened by the diasporic communities in U.S. society. The Chinese give emphasis on people relations as the foundation of compassion and humanity, while Native Americans put greater stress on the wholeness of the relation between individual, family and tribe as the requirement for balancing the cosmos. These ethnic-based social relations help the diasporic communities to build self-confidence so that they are able to compete with their White counterparts. Furthermore, it marks their difference from the Whites, in literature as well as in real life that it strengthens their identity, as Chinese-Americans or as Native Americans. Essentially, this is what is

actually underlined by Brah (1996) that “diaspora space is the point at which boundaries of inclusion and exclusion, of belonging and of otherness, of ‘us’ and ‘them’ are contested” (p. 209). Due to the fact that both Chinese-Americans and Native Americans in the realm of social relation give primary adherence to their ethnic tradition, it can be said that principally their sense of belonging regarding social embeddedness is more related to their ethnic tradition than it is for mainstream Americans.

The third means in negotiation of identity through the reenactment of ethnic roots is by repositioning the status of diasporic women in order to pursue gender equality. Both novels are written by diasporic women. Both novels show that diasporic women are strong, hardworking, and diligent but also motherly and caring. The analysis reveals that in repositioning diasporic women’s status, Chinese-Americans rejected mainstream Chinese perspective that undervalues women as weak, dependent and fragile. Instead, they chose to define their women status by claiming rare Chinese sub-ethnic values which see women’s status as equal to men. On the contrary, Native Americans exhibit Native American perspectives in seeing women as respectful human beings. They see that honoring women is as important as honoring Mother Earth. The function of this reenactment is to erase the stigma that diasporic women, particularly Chinese-American and Native American women, are seen as weak, unable, and inferior to White men, White women and others in their own community. Both of these diasporic groups position themselves in American society by attending higher

education, by participating in un-domestic spheres and having well-paying jobs.

What can be highlighted from Chinese-American and Native American women’s status in society is that they reject patriarchal systems attached to American societies. In this regard, Chinese Americans reject mainstream Chinese perspectives about how to treat women. They select rare Chinese culture which sees women as hard workers to build their identity as Chinese-Americans who view women as warriors. In contrast, Native Americans reject the Western patriarchal system and give primary allegiance to their ethnic tradition in honoring women to construct their identity as spiritual and non-violent. Both Chinese-Americans and Native Americans reenact their perspective of women as hard workers, warriors and agents of survival and existence to build their self-confidence and to construct their identity as diasporic communities, whose women are able to stand for the communities’ survival in American culture and society. The reposition of diasporic women status is to pursue equality.

The reenactment of ethnic roots through sustaining spirituality, strengthening social relations and repositioning diasporic women’s status are important to building the self-confidence of diasporic communities. Having been rejected and excluded from U.S. society drives the diasporic communities to develop an inferiority complex. By reenacting ethnic root, they are able to expel the inferiority complex and restore self-confidence. In addition, ethnic roots which are considered irrational, underdeveloped, and uncivilized by the mainstream American society are used as counter discourse. Through ethnic

roots, they strengthen their identity as diasporic communities, which differs them from the Whites. In the realm of literature, it is also used to define the identity of diasporic literature that distinguishes them with mainstream American literature. In short, ethnic roots reenactment is the reaction of diasporic communities towards American hegemony. It can also be said that it becomes the means of fighting against the hegemony through literature.

While the reenactment of ethnic root is used to define their identity as diasporic people which are different from mainstream Americans, being adapted and integrated in American society is also to construct their identity as Americans, which distinguishes them from their ancestors. In encountering mainstream American cultural values, diasporic communities do not directly and easily succeed. There is a process that must be faced by them. The initial process in encountering mainstream American cultural values is resistance. The following process of adaptation is negotiation.

The resistance towards American values is experienced by older generations of Chinese immigrants and the Native American Elders who still tightly hold on to their ethnic cultural origin. This resistance is also the embodiment of the failure in adapting to American cultural values. The later stage of adaptation is negotiation. In this process, the diasporic communities begin to realize the importance of American values as a survival mechanism. The motivation for adapting to these values cannot be separated from the history of immigrants and colonization. This shows that Chinese-Americans as immigrants have an easier

time adapting. On the contrary, Native Americans as the victims of the U.S imperialism needs more time to adapt. Both novels reflect resistance and negotiation towards mainstream American cultural values.

Adapting to American values is a way of achieving financial success and equal opportunity. It is achieved through the struggle to become fluent to speak English, attending higher education institutions, enjoying material comfort and gaining equal opportunity. By being able to achieve these four things, diasporic communities become highly valued in American society. It enables them to lessen or erase their traumatic experience of being excluded and discriminated against as inferior races. Besides, it also builds their self-confidence in living in U.S. society and makes them feel that they are also part of American culture and society. The capability and strong willingness in adapting to mainstream American cultural values also develops their sense that they belong in the U.S. It marks their identity as Americans. In short, their identity is no longer stable and rooted in pure ethnicity but in a series of processes.

Both novels demonstrate the experience of diasporic communities in relation with English language as the product of American culture. If the exposure of the importance of English in *The Hundred Secret Senses* is used to show the acceptance of how important English is for Chinese Americans to achieve financial success, the exposure of the importance of English in *Ceremony* is used to describe that the ability to speak English fluently is important for Native Americans. It is also to present that finally Native Americans

are able to negotiate the western education system.

In the realm of literature, Native American literature now uses English. There are some words that use Native American language only to give emphasis to special meanings related to cultural beliefs, but all the narratives are written in English. This finding proves what Ghandi (1998) states that “the language used by these writers’ sets up, albeit inadvertently, an implicit hierarchy between imperial structure/ language/ culture on the one hand and indigenous process/practice/ experience on the other”. This shows that Native Americans now are more assimilated to American culture” (p. 175). What can be underlined is that there is a hybrid identity as stated by Gilroy (1993) that the identity of diasporic people cannot be separated from their experience in the homeland as well as in the host land. This shows that all literature which is produced within the meeting of competing cultures, the culture of the dominant and the culture of the oppressed signify hybridity as described by Ashcroft *et al* (1989) that “all postcolonial literatures are cross-cultural” (p. 39) or “postcolonial text is always a complex and hybridised formation” (p. 110). Thus, the hybrid identity drive the diasporic communities to form a hybrid literature. The literature produced by them is part of the diaspora experience [which]... is defined, not by essence or purity, but by the recognition of a necessary heterogeneity and diversity; by a conception of “identity” which lives with and through, not despite, difference; but hybridity (Hall, 1990, p.244).

For the immigrants, the motivation in achieving success cannot be separated

from their first motivation to leave their homeland in seeking for better future in the U.S. For the natives, the motivation to be more open and adaptable to American cultural values also improves their poor and miserable condition caused by U.S. imperialism. American cultural values which focus attention on achievement and struggle of the individuals become the driving force of diasporic communities to struggle for success. These values are rather different from Eastern cultural values, as the East places social status higher than individual achievement. In Eastern culture, if a person has high social status he/she inherited from his/her parents, he/she is more honored than those who struggle hard and achieve something good individually. On the contrary, a person is honored because of his/her struggle and achievement. From the analysis of the data, it can be concluded that the chance of Chinese Americans to achieve financial success is bigger than Native Americans since Native Americans tend to adhere to inner success or spiritual rather than financial success.

Financial success and material comfort cannot be separated from the history of the establishment of the U.S. itself. These two values are the embodiment of what Americans called “upward mobility” (Potter, 1954, p. 53). Every person has an equal opportunity to develop his/her potential and must struggle hard to achieve success. If a person struggles to move toward a better position, they contribute something valuable to the society. From this, it can be concluded that the American society they now belong to, will always move upward, if everyone struggles for success. It shows a sense that everyone does contribute to the development and

progress of American society. If the country is prosperous, then the citizens will be prosperous as well. This builds a strong feeling of belonging in the U.S.

To sum up, both of diasporic communities construct their identity by also embracing mainstream American cultural values. However, there is a process in adapting to those values. The initial stage of adaptation is resistance. The depiction of resistance towards American values shows that the first generation of Chinese immigrants and the elders of Native Americans still want to preserve their cultural origin. For them, embracing American values means the destruction of their ethnic heritage. Meanwhile, the later generation of immigrants and the Native American younger generations perceive that integrating to mainstream American values is important for their survival. Being integrated into American society and adapting its customs means building their self-confidence and making them feel American. In addition, it is significant to embrace those values to revitalize their cultural heritage. Their effort in persevering their cultural heritage by embracing mainstream American values shows that they are American diasporic communities. Thus, adaptations to American cultural values are also part of identity construction since this process is always continuous and ever changing, as Hall (1990) pointed out, "Cultural identity is a matter of 'becoming' as well as of 'being'.... It is not something which already exists...they undergo constant transformation...they are subject to the continuous 'play' of history, culture, and power" (p. 225).

The strong willingness of Chinese-Americans in adapting to mainstream American cultural values often drives people to define Chinese-Americans as 'model minorities'. They become the minorities that are able to meet American life standards. In contrast, Native American emphasis on preserving and restoring their cultural values leads people to see them as the "poorest of the poor" or "the vanishing race". This definition cannot be judged as the result of identity construction of both Chinese Americans and Native Americans. If the notion of model minority or vanishing race is connected to the analysis, it can be concluded that it is only part of prejudice and discrimination. We cannot judge all Chinese Americans as model minorities or Native Americans as the vanishing race. What can be highlighted from the analysis in constructing identity through diasporic literature is that they are adapting to American culture and integrating to American society as a survival mechanism. The existence of diasporic literature also embodies the construction of diasporic identity, as Chinese or Native and as Americans.

Conclusion

To sum up, the negotiation of identity of Chinese Americans and Native Americans which is reflected in *The Hundred Secret Senses* and *Ceremony* is done by selecting, choosing or combining, competing and conflicting cultural values. It means that there are some values that they reject and some other values they accept. Both novels depict that the reenactment of ethnic roots is more exposed, while the adjustment to American values is also shown but is not emphasized. In other

words, both Chinese Americans and Native American celebrate their ethnic identity. However, they also appreciate and accept some American values. It shows that their identity is a hybrid identity which is also constructed from their hybrid consciousness. It is this diasporic identity a hybrid identity which makes them survive in American society. In order to survive, they must preserve their ethnic heritage and at the same time adjust to American culture and society. This marks the diasporic literature characteristic that makes them different from both mainstream American literature and pure ethnic literature. It can be said that diasporic literature is the symbol of diasporic existence, the sign of diasporic survival in the U.S. culture and society and the product of cultural hybridity defining hybrid identity. What can be underlined from this research is that the existence of diasporic communities in the U.S. blurred the Americanness of America. The U.S. identity will not be as exceptional as before. The endless process of identity negotiation of diasporic communities in the U.S. marks the viability of the Post-nationalist Era.

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STEREOTYPING AFRICAN AMERICANS' RACIAL IDENTITY ON VALERIE MARTIN'S *PROPERTY*

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Abstract

This study is intended to analyze the persistence of African American stereotype in the contemporary slavery-themed novel authored by Valerie Martin, *Property* (2003). Valerie Martin is a white author, who seems to have changed the slavery discourse, but the stereotyping of African Americans is still there and built in a new form of stereotyping. Postcolonial analysis showed that the stereotyping of African Americans as 'other' existed in direct stereotyping and indirect stereotyping. Direct stereotyping is that the author directly uses the pejorative language and symbols in forming the African American character, meanwhile indirect stereotyping is the author using the shift of discourse that seemed worthy in describing the African American character, but in the same time it affirms the stereotype of the African American identity as inferior still exists, even in the so-called Post-racial era in the United States.

Keywords: Representation, Stereotyping, Identity, Race, African American

Introduction

Simmels (Smith, 1980) defined the stereotyping as a process of putting people or objects into categories and judgments based on specific traits. There are two sides in stereotyping individuals or groups; a giver of stereotypes (assessing) and the one given the stereotype (assessed), resulting practically in a group distinction between "us" and "them." "We", here, refers to a dominant group and they consider themselves as the superior ones, besides "they" refers to 'other' who are outside of the dominant group (out group) or vice versa. The basis of such different categorization is a character or specific traits, for example; color, behavior, customs act, gender, and ethnicity to a particular group of people (Liliweri, 2005, p. 208). The formation of stereotypes based on race was originally known as the concept of biological differentiation, then turned into a social construction to legitimize superiority of certain races.

In defining "difference" and "the Other," Stuart Hall underlines two things. First is the question of the distinction and otherness has an important role in the elucidation. Both differences were ambivalent, can be positive and negative. Both of these are important for the production of meaning, the formation of the language and culture for social identity and nature of the self as a distinct subject, and, at the same time, it is also a threat, dangerous, negative prejudice, cleavage, and aggression against "The Other." What should be remembered is that the ambivalence of the character of "difference," particularly on the legality of the division, in fact, could lead to imperialism and racism towards those who are considered different (Hall, 1997, p. 224).

In the African American case, the basis of the formation of stereotypes is that then has implications for the labeling of the overall attributes of the black race. African Americans are a group of immigrants in

the United States from Africa. Africa is a continent that often connoted black (black earth) and the black man (Thomas, 2002, p 145). 'Black' later became a marker of physical identity for the African Americans whose significance continued to be constructed. The identity of "black" then became the basis for the formation of stereotypes as well as prejudice and discrimination in the United States. Black is contrasted with White and this has built an association that refers to the unequal racial segregation, in which the White man is idealized as the standard of human superiority, while Black is the opposite of it.

The problematic case appeared in *Property* (2003) in which an African American woman is a household slave in the home of a White family and is described as beautiful, with the appearance of light-skin, a slight build, and excellent posture. It contrasts to the image of black women described in historical sources, as well as in the representation of the past eras fictions. In the previous fictional representations, the image of black women as servants in white homes was identical with the figure of Mammy-fat, black, big, and unattractive.

At first glance the novels showed that there was a tendency for the author to change the old image of African Americans as the ugly people, but the changing of image did not reflect the change of attitude towards the black identity, it just reinforced and strengthened the superiority of whites. African American women could be defined as beautiful when they appeared similar to white women in relation to skin and posture. Regarding this fact, Said (1978, p. X) stated that there are efforts to establish the "legitimacy" of the superiority of the colonizers (white) to the inferiority of the colonized culture (black). He warned that the cultural hegemony as an endless practice continues in colonial discourse. As part of the colonial

discourse; race, ethnicity, or social class in a community of people who have been colonized in the institution of slavery, African Americans, have a tendency to always be marginalized, isolated, read, and controlled by imperialist invaders and colonial descendants, even though the era of slavery and segregation has ended. Ashcroft, Griffith, and Tiffin (2003, p. 2) stated that a postcolonial community that is characterized by liberation or independence movement can still become a subject of the dominance of neo-colonialism subtly or overtly, and independence has not solved this problem totally. The Growth of the new elite in an independent community is often supported by neo-colonial institutions, by developing of internal division based on discrimination of race, language, and religion and the sustainability of unequal treatment of the community (indigenous/minority) in the community that is occupied or controlled. Thus, it could then be explained that the post-colonial is an ongoing process of resistance and reconstruction.

Methodology

Based upon such description, this study then used the theory of postcolonial proposed by Edward Said (1978) as a means of analysis. The concept of Orientalism on how the White Author constructs Black characters in the contemporary slavery-themed novel, *Property*. Just like Western colonialism in the East, the "internal colonialism" in the enslavement of African Americans in the United States since the year of 1619, has raised the long lasting problem, even in the aftermath of the Human Rights movement, especially in the construction of its identity. As a subject who experienced slavery in the era of antebellum, the construction of African American's identity must be continually investigated. George Lipsitz (Rowe, 2000, p. 9) argued

that the use of postcolonial studies in American Studies is important to examine the discourse of marginalization and nationalist resistance movements, for example, the Black Power movement in the model of “internal colonization” as a transnational political alliances. Lipsitz (Rowe, 2000, p. 9) urged people to continue to scrutinize the active awareness of the legacy of “internal colonialism.” So, the use of postcolonial framework in this study is important to use in tracing the legacy of racism in fiction, particularly in works written by White authors. The inquiry of the stereotyping of African Americans in contemporary slavery-themed fiction could give a comprehensive understanding about the features of United States as multicultural states.

Discussion

The analysis shows that the attached image of Black characters still refers to the white standards. It can be seen in the construction of physical appearances, intellectuality, and temperamentality in this novel. The summary of the finding is displayed on the following table.

The images that constructing the stereotypes of African Americans

White	Black	Stereotyping
Beautiful	Ugly	Physical
Smart, Intelligent	Illiterate, uneducated class	Intellectual
Civilized	Uncivilized	Temperamental

Based on the binary opposition analysis, there are three aspects that are used to construct the stereotypes of African American identity in this novel; physical, intellectual, and temperamental appearances. Each of them will be explained in subtopics below.

Physical Stereotyping

In White (colonizer) discourse, the ideal image of beauty refers to the criteria of White people; white skin, blond hair, blue-eyes, and slim or slender-bodied (Thompson, 2006, p. 44; Hall, 1995, pp. 249-257). It is become the standard and preferred of ideal beauty. African American women and men in Western society may find themselves idealized to the standard of beauty or compared to White as the symbol of ideal beauty and what is viewed as attractive and desirable. The doctrine of the beautiful woman as synonymous with blond hair, blue eyes, and Caucasian features has been implanted to hegemonize American thought for hundreds of years.

There are two implied symbols that are used in *Property* to define the black appearances. The first is by using the direct symbols that referred to the stereotype of African Americans and the second is by indirect symbols. The direct symbols can be seen in the use of pejorative language and animal symbols, like dog, monkey, bug eyes, and nappy hair, as labels used for the low creature. Here, the African American characters are pictured as ugly people, as expressed in the following

I had Sarah in my room all morning with the baby she calls Nell, a dark, ugly thing, but quiet enough. He hates the sight of this one. It's too dark to be his, or so he thinks, though stranger have happened, and everyone knows a drop of negroe blood does sometimes overflow like inkpot in the child of parents who are passing for white, to the horror of the couple and their children as well. (Martin, 2003, p. 6)

The way and attitude of white female leading character in describing the black

character, Neal, in the above excerpt is a reflection of the formation of Black stereotypes as ugly, bad, and low in the white people's minds. Neal, an African American child, actually got hybrid blood from the white father and black mother, but he is considered has degraded the white genes of his white father. As indicated by Neal & Wilson (1989) that, "the mixing blood of Negro and White in racism ideology viewed degrading whites genes, not only in the context of biologically, but sociologically either" (as cited in Wulandari, 2014, p. 99). This is why mulattoes, in the past eras, were not accepted or acknowledged in the white community.

The second illustration of the stereotyping of African Americans' physical appearance can be seen in the shift of Black female appearances representation. *Property* (2003) explicitly represented the perfectness of the black female appearances through Sarah. It is expressed in the following excerpt.

"This is Bam," my husband said. I nodded, turning to Sarah. I knew who she was, that she was my aunt's wedding gift. Her appearance was pleasing, tall, slender, light-skinned, neatly dressed, excellent posture. Her hands were folded over her apron. She acknowledged me with something between a bow and a curtsy, but she wasn't looking at me at all. She was looking past me, with an expression of sullen expectation, my husband (Martin, 2003 p. 20).

The concern of the characterization of the Black female in the above excerpt is actually not addressed to the shift in its representation, but in the ideology of the shift. The illustration of the shift is still in the cycle of the White image, that is a Black female is considered beautiful when

her appearance is similar to Whites'; light skinned, neatly dressed, tall, and slender. This means that, the character of Black female who is described as fat and black skinned is still kept considered ugly. As Neal & Wilson (1989) stated that, "*light-skinned* appearances marked the mixed blood of Caucasian genes in Negro blood, that also could effect the appearances of Black descendants" (p. 323). It is clearly shown that the White author uses the spectacle of white colonialism in creating the new appearance of African American women in her novels. However the definition of beauty continues to refer to the White standard. It deals with Babha's (1994) concept, called *fixity*, which is that "the colonizer strengthens the colonial discourse by emphasizing and proclaiming the excellent features of their own identity and culture repeatedly" (p. 82). This strategy determines the other as it is visualizing the colonial power. They are similar with the dominant white character, similar in physical appearances, as if they are the same.

Intellectual Stereotyping

In much of the literature about, African Americans from the antebellum period are imaged as "*beasts*". *Beast* is a symbol of an animal, which marks two things in African American characters; those are, the social class as well as the quality of self. One of the qualities refers to the intellectuality aspect; that is, African Americans are represented as an illiterate and uneducated race. The image of beast is then strengthened through the persuasion of science in the nineteenth century in Darwin's theory *On the Origin of Species* (1859) (Mellinger, 1992, p. 416; Frederickson, 1987, p.159). In the subchapter of *The Preservation of Favoured Races in the Struggle for Life*, Darwin captured the human intellectuality of the era. Aryan Whites' affirmed themselves as superior intellectually factor among the human races. The Black was

considered as a distinct species and merely a degraded version of the human species that had a low intellectual ability. Mellinger (1992) observed that this view was sustained in popular consciousness up to the early twentieth century. He traces the stereotyping of African Americans through discussion of the fact that the African descendants continued to be illustrated as a degraded human species through popular post cards in the twentieth century. The broken English they spoke, their facial features, and specific behavior legitimated the stereotype of the low intellectuality of African Americans.

In *Property* (2003) the stereotyping of African Americans' intellectuality can be seen in the use of pejorative language, such as watermelon head, the description of face and jaw, as well as the absence of education symbols, their way of thinking, their attitude, and language use.

The author uses the following model for characters in the novel: "*watermelon*, face and jaw marked the unbrained men, as well as their confused expressions, *simplemindness*, and *strangeness* (Mellinger, 1992, p. 424). These characterizations presented through Sarah, Delphie, Walker, and Cook on *Property* (2003). They are not only described uneducated, but also cannot think rationally, and seem backward. They live dependent on whites. This novel states that African Americans cannot stand living in the occident condition without Whites, they are just fulfilled by living as slaves in the household and on the plantation because they just have physical power, not an intellectual sphere.

My Husband murdered...I hardly knew whether to laugh or cry. It was as if i had been in a foreign country, a land where madness was rule, and returned to find nothing changed but my own understanding. I glance at Delpine,

she looked dismayed, though her features were composed in an approximation of servility. She's worried about what will happen to her now, i thought. We all are. Every minute of every hour. Mr O'Maley stood waiting for my response. He was worried i might have gone mad and he would have to deal with it "I know it," I said calmly, to his obvious relief, "I was there." (Martin, 2003, p. 122).

Another aspect to represent the lower intellectuality of African Americans in the novel is through the language use. The mixed pattern of Gullah dialect and English is considered to be broken English and it is viewed as a mirror African Americans' intellectual quality. The language use of African Americans' character can be seen in the following excerpt,

"Is this one yours, Missy?" The Captain asked me.

"He a little yellow monkey," the wounded man said.

"He don want no bread, "the wonded man observed.

"What his name? The ca[ptain asked to me

"Walter" I said

"Tell him to stop that noise," he said. I Shrugged.

" He don hear, Sarah said.

"Where is this devil done clipped my Crow? The Captain asked (Martin, 2003, p. 110).

The word 'Missy' instead of 'Mistress' in the above excerpt shows the uniqueness of African American English (AAE) usage, but it is considered to be Broken English in the white people perspectives. We can see that some words like gerunds or present continuous predicate are missing letters at the end. For example, the word walking was written without the 'g', and became walkin', don't became don', even in the stances expose more words like "sur" instead of sir, mah for my, lak for lack, huah for who, mo' for more. Some words from African American English actually have enriched the glossary of English vocabulary, for example, we can see the words like dunno and outta, actually come from AAE words.

However, the appearance of Gullah English in this novel is not used to be unique, although it is indeed unique, but it is to show the class of African American intellectuality. The English Gullah used in this novel is expressed through the African Americans character in the plantation and household as well as among the runaways. It is different from the mulatto man's mode of speaking, Mr. Roget, who speaks the English standard's, described as gentle, intellectual, and talented. It means that the stereotype is that Gullah English is used by an uneducated and illiterate class of people. It also indicates that the way Gullah English is viewed can put it off from the consciousness of its native speaker as a cultural identity.

Stereotyping of Temperamental

In the discourse of slavery, the issue that was spread out by the racists and slavery supporters when dealing with the emancipation of African American slaves was the temperament of slaves. Two kinds of stereotyping that dealt with mentality were docile and amiable when enslaved, and, ferocious and murderous when freed (Frederickson, 1987, p. 57). One

implication of these opinions was the raising of the image of African Americans as uncivilized and backward people that affected their way of living. Their way of life and style in Africa when discussed in America dealt with their wild behavior and attitude in society. This kind of behavior was considered negative, and was a warning to not emancipate them; first, because, they could not be productive without whites' guidance and surveillance; second, there was a concern that they could create a dangerous environment for the community, especially for the white community. Mellinger (1992) inclined that "African American is viewed as lacking in emotional control and moral constraint, domestic violence, drinking, references to cannibalism, gambling, servitude to Whites, as well as references to sexual libertinism and references to flatulence" (p 425).

The representation of black (tempera) mentality in *Property* (2003) mostly can be seen in description of the runways behavior, and some household slaves also caused problems in the white family. It is as reflected in the following excerpt,

They just want to murder as many of us as they can," he said. "They don't think further than that." In New Orleans, i had heard of an American lady who discovered her maid attempting to poison the entire household by lacing the sugar with arsenic. What benefit would her mistress's demise be to her, since she would only be sold again, perhaps to a more severe mistress? It puzzled me. "I suppose it is just the numbers," I said (Martin, 2003, p. 101).

The stereotyping of African Americans as a source of criminality still exists in this novel. It is described as a product of uncivilized and backward society that had been embedded in African American since

they were in Africa. Every kind of evil resulted without thinking about what made it exist, and the White people directly judged the African Americans' uncivilized character as the product of the savagery brought from Africa. This prejudice then brought unequal treatment in court of justice even no need for justice. This criminal behavior is represented in the characters of bad Buck and Jazebel in American fiction and popular culture (Bogle, 1971; Worsley, 2011). This stereotyping existed when the clash occurred either in the North or in the South. In this case, when the clash occurred and white people died, black people were blamed as the murderers of the white. Based on this allegation, Black people were stereotyped as murders, and this was embedded in the image of African Americans for a long time. It also can be seen in the White films; *Birth of the Nation* (1915) and *The Green Mile* (1999). The role of Black characters in those novels shape the stereotype of *Buck* that according to Bogle (1973, p. 10) is characterized as big, strong, violent, prone to betrayal, over sexed, and wild. Even, *The Birth of The Nation* successfully raised a White mob's hatred and anger and caused them to attack African Americans without reason in that era.

Dealing with such description, Nachbar & Lause (1992) stated that:

Stereotypes are "standardized conception of image of a specific group of people or objects" and that this standardized conception is "held in common by the members of a group [...] Popular stereotypes are images which are shared by those who hold a common cultural mindset – they are the way a culture, or significant sub-group within that culture, defines and labels a specific group of people" which are the "direct expressions of

beliefs and values"..... Stereotyping in society functions to categorize, as it is "[...] create classifications of individuals (pp. 236- 238).

From this excerpt, we can point out that such stereotyping of African Americans in *Property* (2003) comes from the values that exist in society. The recent American mainstream kept categorizing people based on common cultural mindset, even when it entered the post-racial era. Dealing with the idea that literary works are a reflection of the society, the content of the novel would mostly reflect the same values in society. The main objective besides meeting audience interests is also to legitimate the dominant class in the society. This is why the author of fictions will go to great lengths to mold their fiction to reflect the audience beliefs and values. It is also pointed out that the legacy of slavery still exists in contemporary fictional, though it is modified to represent a more gentle mode of expression. As Alberth Memi (Bonnilla-Silva, 2006) stated, "there is a strange kind of enigma associated with the problem of racism. No one, or almost no one, wishes to see themselves as racist; still, racism persists, real and tenacious" (p. 1).

Conclusion

This study concluded that *Property* (2003) is considered to have changed the mode of slavery discourse, specifically related to the fact that the author tried to represent the image of African American's in a better light. However, the perfectness shown in the representation of Black characters affirmed that the standard of human superiority is still the White character. The author smartly combined the story of slavery by fusing it with the historical context and modern context based on the eyes of White authors. This novel represents the worship of black characters, but at the same time, they are also ignored

and marginalized. In fact, the stereotyping of African Americans as the 'other' in contemporary white novels still persists, representing them as negative and inferior.

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