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Indonesia as a Counter to American
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THE EMERGENCE OF LOCAL COFFEE SHOPS IN INDONESIA AS A COUNTER TO AMERICAN CULTURE HEGEMONY

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ABSTRACT

After winning World War II, the United States (US) tried to spread its hegemony in almost all aspects, including culture. Starbucks has become the biggest MNC belong to the US that spreads western culture in Indonesia. Starbucks, with its 326 outlets in Indonesia, has brought its new value to Indonesian society. In this paper, the writer would like to analyze the response of Indonesians in dealing with the cultural hegemony that Starbucks brings as the representation of the American culture. This paper uses library research as the data collection method and qualitative method in analyzing the data. The writer analyzes this case by applying the circuit of culture theory, which consists of 5 aspects: production, consumption, regulation, representation, and identity. The writer will focus on how local coffee shops adopt the management and production process from Starbucks applied in their coffee shops. The creativity of Indonesians has made new cultures are quickly adopted. The advent of Starbucks in Indonesia had stimulated the establishment of local coffee shops that are not less competitive with Starbucks as the giant coffee shop corporation. The local coffee shops can give a unique experience in enjoying a coffee just like Starbucks with its “Starbucks Experience”. The local coffee shops also can provide not only coffee, but also other products that might take the interest of customers. The local coffee shops are able to imitate, and modify Starbucks concept in local versions.

Keywords: *Starbucks; circuit of culture; production; local coffee; coffee culture*

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INTRODUCTION

In the modern era, coffee culture has become the way of life among the community, including young people, both in developed and developing countries. In Indonesia, coffee culture has become a trend among young people, where the culture of coffee is used as an instrument for young Indonesian just to meet friends, family, or even do homework and assignment. In addition, the development of coffee culture in Indonesia had become one of the driving factors for many developed countries such as the US, to establish coffee shops in developing countries such as Indonesia. Coffee shops owned by developed countries such as the US usually serve coffee, tea, or other types drink, and also provide snacks and foods such as French fries, cakes, pastries, bread, donuts and pasta.

Not only that, the US coffee shop also provides adequate facilities for coffee connoisseurs, cozy room with air conditioner and most importantly can access free WiFi. The existence of free WiFi that makes young people willing to linger at the coffee shop just to get free WiFi (Hashim, Mamat, & Halim, 2017). For price issues, of course coffee shops from the US put up prices that are high enough to just drink coffee. However, some young people are willing to pay dearly for higher quality (Hashim, Mamat, & Halim, 2017). In other words, with many facilities offered by the US coffee shops, it certainly becomes an attraction for consumers. Especially among young people to have a coffee in the US coffee shops. It indirectly thrives the culture hegemony of US through coffee culture.

Based on this, it can be seen that the US is indeed a country that has power to build an empire under its power through aspects that can control the world, as well as the coffee culture. The culture of coffee looks trivial but has a big impact. In this case, the US spreads and implements its influence through coffee culture to the world, especially Indonesian, despite the current increasingly multipolar power in international world. One of forms of expansion through the coffee culture from the US is the emergence of international coffee shop owned by the US called Starbucks. Starbucks is used as a business opportunity and an instrument to spread the influence of US culture hegemony. Starbucks is international coffee corporation that focuses on products and the development of a variety of flavors.

In Indonesia, Starbucks was first opened in 2002 at Plaza Indonesia, Jakarta. As January 2018, Starbucks outlets in Indonesia has grown to 326 outlets in 22 cities (Starbucks Indonesia, 2018). With so many Starbucks outlets in Indonesia, it makes the US easier to spread and instill coffee culture to make it popular in Indonesia. Currently, drinking coffee at Starbucks is considered as a lifestyle for people in urban areas, such as Jakarta. Indeed, Indonesian are used to drink coffee. But the style in enjoying coffee has a lot changed. Previously, not all ages like coffee, the typical coffee lovers are men ages 20-60. That is because the coffee is pure, only added with sugar so that men drink coffee to get rid of drowsiness. However, Starbucks has changed that mindset. After the advent of Starbuck, coffee can be enjoyed by everyone both men and women from all ages, even kids. This is because the variants of coffee are very various, not pure as before. It is mixed with other substances such as

milk, fruit, chocolate so that the image of coffee has expanded the customers of coffee and can be enjoyed anytime.

Indonesian who visit Starbucks are not only for coffee, but they want recognition for being a cool or an up-to-date person. This is a real proof that coffee has become a lifestyle. According to du Gay in the circuit of culture theory, the cultural production does not only refer to products that are traditionally related to literature, film, and music but also anything that is intentionally made with a specific meaning or purpose when circulated. These products can be superficial, as coffee (du Gay, Hall, Janes, Mackay, & Negus, 1997). Coffee is software in influencing young people to create a new lifestyle, while Starbucks is the hardware in delivering that mission.

As time goes by, the presence of Starbucks was precisely the driving factor for the growth of the local coffee shops industry in Indonesia. Local coffee shops are increasingly established due to an increase in coffee consumption. In fact, the local coffee shops are in a high demand. Many local companies or individuals establish local coffee shops with various uniqueness and a large scale of promotion. In addition, more shops provide modern coffee makers that can make the best taste of the coffee (Farokhah & Wardhana, 2017).

With the rapid growth of local coffee shops in Indonesia it also paves the way for the advancement of Indonesian local coffee productions. Indonesian coffee which is already well known has a distinctive taste, such as Gayo coffee, Toraja coffee, Flores coffee, Luwak coffee and others. In other words, the rapid growth of local coffee shops

in Indonesia also contributes to develop the industry in Indonesia and that means that the presence of multinational coffee shops from the US does not always become a boomerang for Indonesia. On the contrary, the presence of Starbucks in Indonesia has become the driving factor for the development of local coffee shops. The rapid development of the local coffee shops become the main instrument to counter the culture hegemony from the US. This phenomenon also indicates Indonesian subtle resistance to the culture hegemony that the United States is trying to build through the coffee culture in Indonesia. Based on the information above, this research is conducted in order to analyze how Indonesians response to the American culture hegemony brought by Starbucks. Through this research it can be understood how the presence of local coffee shops in Indonesia can also be an instrument to counter the US culture hegemony. The results of this research are expected to provide information and understanding about the impact of the United States culture hegemony through a coffee culture that does not always have a negative impact.

In order to understand the phenomenon on the emergence of local coffee shops after the advent of Starbucks in Indonesia, the writer has to use theory or concept which is relevant to this issue. In this paper, the writer would like to use Circuit of Culture theory. Circuit of culture is a series of five cultural processes used to interpret a text or cultural artifact (du Gay, Hall, Janes, Mackay, & Negus, 1997). If a part of the process is felt to be sufficient to reveal the meaning of a text or cultural artifact, then it does not need all the processes applied. This theory was made by Paul du Gay and Stuart Hall in 1997 to observe Walkman. There are five aspects

in the Circuit of Culture, but the most relevant one with this paper is production aspect. Hall in his book has stated that the process of production focus on entering into business and economic world.

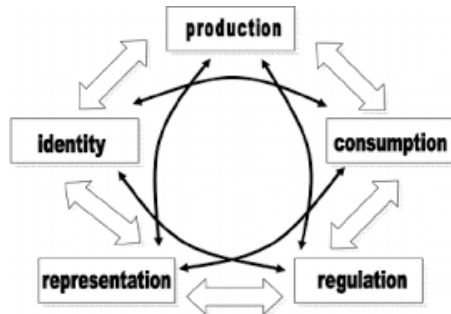


Figure 1. Circuit of Culture Model (Hall, 1997)

Du Gay also stated in his book that the “production of culture” does not only refer to the products that traditionally related to literature, film, and music, but also any goods that intentionally made with particular meanings and associations when they are produced and circulated. The product can be banal, such as coffee (du Gay, Hall, Janes, Mackay, & Negus, 1997). In their research, du Gay classifies three kinds of cultural products: the Walkman, cassettes, and music (du Gay, Hall, Janes, Mackay, & Negus, 1997). The Walkman is categorized as “cultural hardware” while the music is “cultural software”. It is the similar case with the discussion in this paper, in which coffee shops as “cultural hardware” and coffee as “cultural software”.

Related to the production of culture, it can be explained that Starbucks as the trendsetter in making style of enjoying coffee. In Indonesia coffee used to be seen as commodity for export or edible substance that contains high caffeine, well-known by its effectiveness in relieving drowsiness. Coffee was also only enjoyed by oldies or men who work in blue-collar sectors such as truck

driver and construction workers. Coffee was also typically consumed in the morning. But after the advent of Starbucks, coffee is promoted to be consumed by people in all age range started from kids to oldies. This is because the coffee variants offered are various and have been mixed with several substances like cream, fruit, and milk. This invention has expanded the consumer of coffee.

In the following discussion, it will be revealed the production aspects that have shifted the “coffee culture” in Indonesia starting from the process of coffee making using particular tools and the setting of very convenient place that has pushed coffee to be more as lifestyle. Therefore, it is very relevant to use the production aspect of Circuit of Culture since the production consist of making the thing, inventing it, fabricating it, reproducing it, marketing it, distributing it, and paying for all the workers or labors.

DISCUSSION

Coffee culture is defined as the shifting of Indonesian in enjoying coffee from habit to become lifestyle. Café culture is part of shifting culture that previously Indonesian have coffee in Warung and home but now mostly have coffee in café (coffee shops). The culture of coffee is a transcultural meeting because of the culture that spreads from one region to another (Farokhah & Wardhana, 2017). In this case, the culture of coffee brought by foreigners meets local cultures. Similar to the culture of coffee at Starbucks, which is brought and distributed by the US, it meets the culture in Indonesia that really likes to consume coffee. The character of Indonesian people also who tend to like

gathering or just meeting old friends. The combination of cultures in Indonesia who like to consume coffee and like to gather with friends makes the culture of coffee at Starbucks grows and even becomes a lifestyle for the Indonesian.

However, the cultural development of coffee at Starbucks does not always have a negative impact on Indonesia. The coffee culture in Starbucks slowly encourages the interest of the coffee industry activists in Indonesia to innovate more. Seen today, more and more local coffee shops are emerging in various cities in Indonesia. Local coffee shops that develop in Indonesia have many variations, including coffee shops that are made for the purpose of drinking coffee and coffee shops are made not only for the purpose of drinking coffee, but also for the purpose of supporting lifestyle. The coffee shop has innovations starting from the type of coffee served, the atmosphere of the place, internet facilities and adequate parking. With the many innovations issued by local coffee shops in Indonesia, the prices offered are not expensive. Conversely, the price of coffee in local coffee shops in Indonesia is quite cheap, especially coupled with adequate facilities like the multinational coffee shop of the US, Starbucks. This is because some people, especially young people in Indonesia, have made coffee a part of life. In other words, local coffee shops in Indonesia are intended by various groups; upper, middle and lower.

There are three factors that influence Indonesia to accept the coffee and café culture. *First*, basically, Indonesian are fond of coffee, that has become an effective drink to stay awake more with the high caffeine substance inside it. This can be defined as

local culture meets foreign culture that resulted in the mixed culture. *Second*, the nature of Indonesian who like to gather with friends and family in the spare time. The sense of family in Indonesia is very high. The coffee shops are very comfortable to become venue for any events, therefore Indonesian choose coffee shops to gather. *The last but not least*, this phenomenon also can be seen from globalization perspective, the transition from traditional into modern society. Internet era also drives people to look for place which provided Wireless Fidelity (WiFi) to do the task or just connect with people in social media.

There are several indicators adopted by local coffee shops from Starbucks:

1. Cozy place

Warung Kopi in Indonesia is used to have simple place, only a room filled with men drinking coffee. But after the advent of Starbucks, the Warung Kopi are replaced by coffee shops with cozy room that provides enough space for a lot of people. The table are arranged beautifully and artsy. Students also can stay there longer because it provides electric plug for ones who want to keep the battery of their laptop and smartphone full.

2. Facility

Warung Kopi does not have any facility. But coffee shops have sufficient budget to make the customer want to stay longer. The main facilities are WiFi and air conditioner. The air conditioner keeps the room cool and very comfortable. The WiFi is really wanted by people who do not have internet connection in their house.

3. Management

Local coffee shops adopt the system of Starbucks both inside the shop and the recruitment process of the labor. The labor is trained well so that instead of serving coffee, the barista is also friendly to the customer. The customer comes to the counter for ordering, the name is written, when coffee is ready, the barista will call the customer's name. The system is also similar to Starbucks in which the coffee can be ordered for either dine in or take away.

4. Cooperation

In attempt to make the shop being visited by more people, the shop usually makes cooperation with start-up delivery companies such as Gojek and Grab that provide take away system for the customer.

5. Promotion

Local coffee shops just like Starbuck use social media and website to promote their discount and new menu or variant. Indeed, social media plays a huge role in making people stay updated. Almost everyone in Indonesia use smartphone.

6. Smoking area

To make the customer more convenience, local coffee shops that have a large space create separate room for smoker and non-smoker. It contains value of high tolerance toward customer who do not smoke.

7. Parking Area

The coffee shops owners realize that mostly Indonesian bring their own vehicles when visiting the place, therefore, the place should provide sufficient parking area to the convenience of the customer. The parking

area is also kept by parking man who is ready to assist.

8. Coffee variants

Types of coffee variants inspired by Starbucks:

a. Espresso

Espresso is produced by extraction on coffee beans that have been through the grinding process. It needs an espresso machine to mix the coffee. This coffee is served fast. Making this espresso-style coffee began to be known in Italy.

b. Latte

Latte is coffee that combines espresso with milk. Most baristas say that the ideal ratio between coffee and milk is 3:1. The amount of coffee used is more than milk. Latte only has a small amount of thin foam on the surface of the coffee.

c. Cappuccino

This is the reverse of latte. The comparison between coffee and milk in a cappuccino is 1:3. This type of coffee blend is identic with the appearance a lot of foam on the surface and the taste is smooth and sweet. Cappuccino is mostly favored by coffee lovers who want to enjoy a light coffee because more milk in it.

d. Frappe

Unlike most other coffee, frappe is made using cold water to make an ice coffee. Frappe is made from instant coffee, water, sugar, and ice cubes.

e. Mochaccino

The word mocha comes from an original coffee from Yemen called Mocha. Mochaccino comes from a mixture of espresso with chocolate and milk. The target of this coffee is chocolate lovers.

According to this, then with the presence of Starbucks in Indonesia, the local coffee industry in Indonesia also experienced improvisation because it made Starbucks the benchmark. The following are indicators that make local coffee in Indonesia undergo improvisation:

1. Larger space (not in mall, airport, or hotel)

The space of local coffee shops is generally larger than Starbucks. Some coffee shops are not located not in the downtown, it is located in the uptown. But the customers are willing to visit those places due to the ambience and the uniqueness of the concept. Some shops have garden concept in which customers enjoy coffee in an open space. Therefore, the large space is an advantage for the shops to develop the café concept better than Starbucks. Therefore, the customers are able to enjoy more than cozy place, but also peculiar thematic place.

2. Unique concept

While Starbuck provides comfortable place to sit, local coffee shops facilitate people for hangout. The unique concept consists of various ideas such as making the room exactly like in the office, provide bookshelf with various books inside, educating people

by inviting them to the tea plantation, provide coffee lab to facilitate customers on how to make the coffee by themselves, and others. Indeed, Indonesian are very creative. They can create an artsy yet educative places. Some places are considered having sociopreneur concept that dedicated to the society. Moreover, the driven factor for customers to visit the places is photography and blogging for interesting contents in both social media and websites.

3. Lavatory

Not all Starbucks provide lavatory for the customer, only ones in the center of cities. But the local coffee shops are able to provide comfortable lavatory so that the customers are willing to stay a whole day there.

4. Hospitality

Starbucks have barista to only serve the coffee, but some local coffee shops are willing to teach the customers how to make coffee they want. It has the transparency on what the barista put inside the coffee to make it good. It also spread the ability of barista to the customer so that the customers might be interested to open their own coffee shops someday.

5. Price

Starbucks which located in airport, mall, and hotel sure they spend a lot of money for paying the taxes. While local coffee shops they are located not in public places so that they can sell coffee with a reasonable price. Starbucks is very expensive so that some people come there for pride, not for coffee.

Table 1. The Comparison of Price for One Variant in Starbucks and Some Local Coffee Shops

| Name of Coffee Shop | Price of Cappuccino |
|---------------------|---------------------|
| Starbucks | Rp. 46,000 |
| RuangSeduh | Rp. 35,000 |
| Armor Kopi | Rp. 25,000 |
| One Eighty Coffee | Rp. 24,000 |
| 7 Speed Coffee | Rp. 30,000 |

(Sources: accessed through official websites, <https://www.starbucks.com/> ,<https://manual.co.id/directory/ruang-seduh/>, <https://kumparan.com/@kumparanfood/5-kedai-kopi-unik-yang-wajib-kamu-kunjungi-ketika-berlibur-ke-bandung> , <https://manual.co.id/directory/7-speed-coffee/>)

6. Live music

In addition to coffee, Indonesian also loves music. Local coffee shops have a special stage for the musician so that the customer can enjoy the music. They love to invite famous artists to take interest of the customers.

7. Game tools

To make the shops feels homey, they provide game tools such as bridge card, uno card, scrabble, and others. It takes the interest of

young people who want to do activities with their friends or colleagues.

By looking at the development of local coffee in Indonesia, Indonesian coffee shops indirectly transformed from traditional to modern coffee shops. When it comes to coffee culture, Indonesian used to enjoy coffee in Warkop (Warung Kopi), but globalization as the driven factor spreading different way in enjoying coffee. Some aspects that shift the coffee culture in Indonesia can be explained in the following table:

Table 2. The Differences among Warkop (Warung Kopi), Coffee Shops, and Premium Coffee Shops in Indonesia

| Differences | Warung Kopi | Local Coffee Shops | Premium Coffee Shops |
|----------------------|--------------------------------------|--|---|
| Glass | Porcelain glass | Porcelain glass, cup | Plastic glass, paper glass |
| Facility | - | WiFi, Air Conditioner, plug, live music, game tool, lavatory, smoking area | WiFi, Air Conditioner, plug, smoking area |
| Coffee making method | Normal brew (stirring using a spoon) | Espresso machine, French Press, Vietnam Drip, Percolator | Espresso machine, Pour Over |
| Topping | - | Whipped cream, foam, sugar, milk, syrup, chocolate | Whipped cream, sugar, cream, syrup |

Source: Meliala, Raden Roro Atiah Sekararum Dewanti. 2017. *Tingkat Konsumsi Kopi Berdasarkan Pendapat, Usia, dan Harga di Kota Depok*. Skripsi Universitas Islam Negeri Syarif Hidayatullah.

The table above shows the transformation of coffee shops in Indonesia from traditional into modern one. Local coffee shops indeed adopt many aspects from Starbucks, but it turns out that local coffee shops can better improvise with the concepts they make because local coffee shops have a venue that was deliberately made for a café. From the table in terms of facilities, local coffee shops provide more facilities than the premium coffee shops because their venues are spacious, not limited. They are even able to provide lavatory, game tools that are very fun for groups to do when they are together. They provide live music with popular song they present.

The point is that the local coffee shops have more freedom to create a café according to the concept they really want. Because they are not franchise and they do not have the obligation to report to the center corporation, not affiliated with any multinational corporation. Based on the table, there are various types of coffee shops that are developing with all the facilities offered by each coffee shops. In addition, the table also shows that now Indonesian people tend to prefer coffee shops that are not premium types because the coffee shops provide a unique and comfortable atmosphere. Indeed, Starbucks is a premium type of coffee shop, but the atmosphere at Starbucks is somewhat monotonous because Starbucks is more in public places. In other words, local coffee shops in Indonesia are developing from the Starbucks concept and that means local coffee shops in Indonesia can fight the culture hegemony that has been spread by the United States. In addition, in today's digital era, Indonesian local coffee shops can easily carry out large-scale promotions on social

media to introduce their coffee shops that are not inferior to Starbucks.

According to du Gay in the Cultural Circuit theory, coffee culture is a cultural product of the type of cultural software. The cultural phenomenon of coffee at Starbucks is not a serious threat to Indonesia because the phenomenon is only as a cultural shift towards a positive direction. Conversely, the coffee culture can be a software for Indonesia because it can bring up local coffee shops in Indonesia which are far better innovations. If the US produces Starbucks coffee shops to disseminate culture hegemony to Indonesia, then Indonesia can also produce local coffee shops to maintain the Indonesian coffee culture and create a great coffee industry. The more local coffee shops in Indonesia, the more local coffee production will increase and this will have an impact on the prosperity of coffee farmers. Those are 4 most favorable coffee shops in Indonesia with unique concept:

1. Ruang Seduh

RuangSeduh means Brewing Room. RuangSeduh is located in Jakarta and Yogyakarta. Ruang Seduh has a very unique concept in which the customers can make their own coffee. The following is written in Ruang Seduh website:

Think of Ruang Seduh like a guide for dummies on how to make your own cup of coffee. In this café, coffee enthusiasts will be presented with a non-intimidating guide by baristas without feeling like an actual dummy (Manual, 2015).

It looks like a lab with an interior that is stripped of colors. When the other cafes served the ready one, Ruang Seduh teaches the customer how to make it and what goes into it. Other cafes do not involve customer,

the customer just goes to the counter to order then sit pretty. This cafe provides different yet unique way so that the customer can have experience in making a tasteful cup of coffee. Eventhough there is no exact science in preparing portions of cup of coffee, but everyone can make it with the help of the baristas.

2. Armor Kopi

This Coffee Shop has a very unique concept. This is located in the Great Forest Park Djuanda Dago, Bandung (Kumparan, 2017). The specialty of this Coffee Shop is the hot coffee because the weather there is cold. Therefore, coffee lovers can enjoy hot coffee in a cold condition. The view of this Coffee Shop also become the main interest for the customer because the café is located in the middle of the forest. This Coffee Shop is truly using “back to nature” concept.

3. One Eighty Coffee

This Coffee Shop is located in Geneca Street No.3, Bandung (Kumparan, 2017). This Coffee Shop is the one which provide the way to enjoy coffee in “relaxation” concept. What is unique about this place, every visitor is required to take off his feet to be able to soak his feet in the pool. The customers will have the real relaxation with this way of enjoying coffee. After finishing the coffee, the customers will feel fresh and ready to go back to work with a new spirit.

4. 7 Speed Coffee

This Coffee Shop is located in North Kemang Street No.1, Jakarta (Manual, 2015). The name “7 Speed Coffee” is dedicated for local cycling and skating communities. The commitment is manifested in the decorations of the place which is full of skateboard and

some bicycles. Skateboard desks are transformed into menus and the door handles are in form of bicycle bars. A BMX bike sits neatly at the back of the room serving as a backdrop to the gently-illuminated space (Manual, 2015). In this place, costumers can enjoy their coffee with a fresh air and possibly the occasional skateboard stunts from a group of skaters which become the special attraction only in this coffee shop.

By looking at the four examples of local coffee shops, it can be seen that the presence of Starbucks in Indonesia has opened up great opportunities for the coffee shop industry in Indonesia. The coffee shop is not only as a place to drink coffee, but also as a coffee drinking experience associated with social life (Yuliandri, 2015). In other words, the culture of drinking coffee has become part of the lifestyle and if someone has not visited the local coffee shop that provides sufficient facilities, then she or he will look less in association, especially for young people.

CONCLUSION

Based on the explanation above, it can be concluded that the response of Indonesian in dealing with the US culture hegemony is a resistance through actions. The action conducted by Indonesian is establishing their own coffee shops that are similar to Starbucks and even with a better concept. Indonesian adopts the management and system of Starbucks to be implemented in their coffee shops and can make several new innovations. It can be proven that the production of a multinational coffee shop like Starbucks does not always have a negative impact on Indonesia. On the contrary, the presence of Starbucks makes a cultural shift

in coffee in Indonesia where previously only coffee was only consumed in the morning or evening and was only enjoyed by parents or people working in the field. However, slowly the culture of drinking coffee is identified with a coffee shop that has a comfortable place and contains coffee flavors, as well as providing a lifestyle for the people of Indonesia. With the coffee culture shift, it will also develop the local coffee shops industry which has innovated more than what Starbucks does. With the development of the local coffee shop industry, it also promotes coffee farmers and promotes Indonesian coffee products. In other words, aspects of cultural production mentioned by du Gay that have shifted the coffee culture in Indonesia, starting from the process of making coffee that uses sophisticated tools and a comfortable place which is the cultural driving factor of coffee used as a lifestyle.

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**WONDER WOMAN (2017):
AN AMBIGUOUS SYMBOL OF FEMINISM**

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ABSTRACT

Wonder Woman is a popular fictional character who promotes the idea of an independent and powerful woman. Her name is glorified as she is assumed that she changes to the idea of the world being solely led and dominated by men. A remake film released in 2017 brings this popular character back into the silver screen. Despite being highly anticipated, not everyone supports Wonder Woman as an ideal symbol for women's empowerment as dreamed by the feminists. Instead, the perception directed to Wonder Woman is divided into two lenses. One side believes that Wonder Woman is in line with the idea of feminism. In contrast, the other believes that she is the ideal example of a character who conforms to the standard set by patriarchal ideology. In investigating this idea, this paper applies Kate Millett's concept of "personal is political" and how men and women's roles in society have been passed down to the younger generation. The discussion illustrates that patriarchal power has infiltrated the character of Wonder Woman. Therefore, Wonder Woman becomes an ambiguous symbol when used for the women empowerment movement.

Keywords: *ambiguous; feminism; film; patriarchal power; Wonder Woman*

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INTRODUCTION

Taking setting of time during World War I, Wonder Woman (Jenkins, 2017) tells a story about Diana Prince, the Wonder Woman, who is searching for a god called Ares. Ares is jealous of humanity and then he leads humans to destruction. At the same time, Zeus has created the Amazonian living in the Themyscira, also called as the Paradise

Island, to protect the human from destruction orchestrated by Ares. The Amazonian is a race of women warriors hidden from the men's world where the great war (World War I) has consumed human and created despair for everyone. To keep the balance in human life and avoid Ares to create destruction, Paradise Island is hidden and protected from the men's world. However, it all changes when Steve Trevor, a US pilot captain and

also a spy, enters the area of the Paradise Island by mistake when the magic shield camouflaging the area of the Paradise Island weakens. Captain Steve Trevor eventually becomes Diana's love interest and accompanies her in searching for Ares who is in the men's world. Diana, now taking the role as Wonder Woman, is willing to hunt Ares and kill him, so that the great war could end.

Wonder Woman (Jenkins, 2017) is a superhero film based on a comic published by DC Comics and firstly appeared in 1941. The popularity of Wonder Woman as a comic character makes it was adapted to a television series portrayed by Lynda Carter in 1975-1979. Carter's Wonder Woman was successful in shifting girls' idol from blonde-haired and blue-eyed Barbie to a brunette-haired and dark-eyed Wonder Woman which at the same time sets a new beauty standard for the girls and promotes the outstanding quality of an ideal woman: self-reliant; independent; and powerful. Therefore, Wonder Woman, created by psychologist William Moulton Marston, is often associated with the feminism movement which proliferates in the middle of the twentieth century.

When Wonder Woman was only a comic character, she appeared on the first issue of Ms. Magazine in 1972 underneath a banner "Wonder Woman for President" (Kilkenny, 2017). Ms. Magazine is an American feminist magazine founded by feminists Gloria Steinem and Dorothy Pittman Hughes. Thus, the appearance of Wonder Woman in Ms. Magazine in 1972 implied how the hero became a symbol for the second-wave feminism. Ms. Magazine featuring Wonder

Woman has become an influential moment until present days.

In 2016, United Nations *recruited* the fictional character Wonder Woman to be "an Honorary Ambassador for the Empowerment of Women and Girls on 21 October 2016, in support of Sustainable Development Goal 5 – to achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls" (United Nations, 2016). The United Nations believes that Wonder Woman has been recognized across the globe for her commitment to protecting the others as depicted in her comic, television series, and film. She is the model for women and girls' empowerment in the world. What is done by the United Nations shows how Wonder Woman has great influence because she can convince a prominent world organization to believe in the values that she brings.

The use of Wonder Woman in the past makes the remake film in 2017 was highly anticipated by many people. Now being portrayed by Gal Gadot in the twenty-first century, the new Wonder Woman film continues the legacy of the character from the twentieth century. Gal Gadot's Wonder Woman (Jenkins, 2017) still portrays similar quality as set by Lynda Carter. Even though the new film adaptation is slightly different from its original character portrayed in the comic, Gal Gadot's Wonder Woman still becomes a symbol of women empowerment.

Wonder Woman serves two sides of a contrasting idea which in one hand illustrates the idea of feminism, but on another hand, her character shows the contradictory idea. How people perceive her is split in two. On one side, Wonder Woman is glorified among its audience, both feminists like in the 1970s and

the non-activist. This fictional character is also well-accepted by the audience because of the personal quality she promotes. Her character shows how equality for women should be. Her beauty is accompanied by her heroic traits: powerful, self-reliant, and independent. However, on another side, Wonder Woman has a side that backlashes the idea of feminism. The controversy of Wonder Woman is also indicated how some people sent a petition to the United Nations to remove Wonder Woman as its honorary ambassador only around two months after Wonder Woman was appointed to the “job” (McCann, 2016). They basically objected to the idea of Wonder Woman being UN ambassador because they believe that Wonder Woman is unfit since they believe that she reflects the men domination in her characterization which makes her not suitable to represent the empowerment for women and girls across the globe promoted by UN.

Therefore, this paper is going to investigate the ambiguous side of Wonder Woman who brings the concept of women empowerment and men domination. To investigate how Wonder Woman becomes an ambiguous symbol of feminism, this paper is going to apply Kate Millett’s feminist criticism which also explores the men domination as discussed in her books.

Women have been regarded as the second-class group in a structured patriarchal society. They are treated as a mere object, rather than an equal partner to the men who are the subject in a society that believes in a patriarchal system. Patriarchal ideology is seen as a concept for a feminist. This ideology starts from the biological difference between men and women, then exaggerated by social and cultural practice and it becomes

a social construction. Sultana (2012, p. 3) stated that this ideology:

exaggerates biological differences between men and women, making certain that men always have the dominant, or masculine, roles and women always have the subordinate or feminine ones... The patriarchal system is characterized by power, dominance, hierarchy, and competition. So, patriarchy is a system of social structures and practices in which men dominate, oppress, and exploit women.

The position of men and women has rooted in society for years and it shapes what is perceived to be *normal* and *abnormal* in society, like the role of men and women. In the beginning, the division differentiates men and women because of their physical or biological difference, but then this difference is extended to the social and cultural role of men and women. Then, it is stretched again to the unequal position of men and women. There is a power relation that determines the hierarchy of men and women in society. As a more dominant group, men of the patriarchal society set women as their subordinates.

A problem occurs because the man-made hierarchy mentioned above results in how women are treated unfairly in various aspects of life, like politics, economy, cultural and social life. The unfair treatment directed to women here is because they are physically and psychologically women. For example, it is shown by how women in the United States of America had no right to vote before 1920 and how women got lower wages compared to men when doing the same job in the middle of the twentieth century. This inequality has a reason, which is:

Individuals living in the United States today are encouraged to believe that

(only) white men are fully human; and because (only) white men are fully human, society is organized around their needs, reality is seen from their perspectives, their attributes are seen as most valuable and productive, and they (naturally) dominate politics and culture. (Becker, 1999, p. 23).

Thus, the feminism movement is born to fight for justice and equality for the dominated, oppressed and exploited women. This idea supports what Simone De Beauvoir described in her *The Second Sex* (1949): that women have been treated as lower than men ever since in the biological level which is believed that women are 'incidental' and passive being (p. 35) also since the beginning of the patriarchal days, men have held women to be in the state of dependence and established her as the Other (p. 159). As it is continued for a long time, men glorify their domination, and women are oppressed to stay passive and dependent. Then, it shapes how men and women have a certain role in society. The role difference becomes pervasive and becomes the norm. Inequality and mistreatment for women, as a result, proliferate.

Kate Millett, an American author, is one of the prominent feminist figures who put the foundation of American feminism, specifically for the second wave movement through her book entitled *Sexual Politics* which is published in 1970. In her book, there are two important ideas. First, Millett established the ground theory of "the personal is political" which later is adopted as the slogan of second-wave feminism. Men as the ruling class consider the problems of women are personal, therefore they exclude it from political analysis (Grant, 2013, p. 33). While at the same time, women's *personal* problem has happened for a long period. The

problem of inequality and mistreatment towards women should have been a concern for society. In fact, the *personal* problem is neglected, and it establishes the male supremacy. It emphasizes that what happens on a personal level is a reflection of how a bigger structure works politically. It is well described in women's disadvantageous position in the market, male-center-ed marriage, the portrayal of women in the advertising and entertainment industry, and how women's psyche seen by clinical psychology (Hartmann, 1981, p. 13).

The next important point is how Millett analyses patriarchal power. She believes that the power of men has been institutionalized. The domination of men is socially constructed. She stated that "sexual politics obtains consent through the "socialization" of both sexes to basic patriarchal politics with regard to temperament, role, and status" (2000, p. 26). The institutionalized patriarchal power manifests in how young girls and boys have been socialized to their *normal* temperament, role, and status, where the boys whose masculine personality is the superior one and the girls whose feminine personality as the inferior one. Women are raised and socialized since childhood to accept patriarchal values and norms. It makes women's conformity or submissiveness to the established system appears to be natural, whereas it is actually forced by the men domination, not natural. Men set the standard of what is classified as normal for society. The men's standard manifests in how women are pictured in many conditions. Men take a bigger role in leading and shaping society by claiming that it is their role to be active in public affairs, dealing with politics and economics whereas women are tied to do household chores. Even in a family, women

do the house chores and raise the children under the husband's shadows that are in a higher hierarchy.

DISCUSSION

After visiting the ideas of feminism as described by Millett, investigating Wonder Woman (Jenkins, 2017) as a symbol of feminism becomes a more thorough discussion. It is true that Wonder Woman serves the desired set of traits of the ideal woman: self-reliant; independent; and powerful. But at the same time, we need to recognize her as a character of popular culture that her attraction lies in the promise of the utopian dream of the American collective desire (Storey, 2006, p. 9). Wonder Woman is the imagination of the ideal women desired by the audience who wish for equality for women because, in reality, it is difficult to have the personality and position that Wonder Woman promotes. In simpler words: because it exists in the film, it means that it does not really exist in reality.

“Personal is Political” in Entertainment Industry

In real life, it is difficult to be like Wonder Woman because the ideology of patriarchy is still pervasive in almost anywhere across the globe. Like what Millett stated about personal is political, it also refers to a small thing in our daily life that is actually a reflection of political ideology, including how women are portrayed in the entertainment industry. When Wonder Woman is approached, it is found that despite how symbolic Wonder Woman is, “contemporary television presents women as “desirable” whenever they engender one of three traditional female archetypes: nurturer, vixen, or victim” (Wright, 2003, p. 40). This

is because the idea of women—people who are needed to be consoled—has rooted in a patriarchal society. Even a fictional character has unconsciously influenced by at least one of those female archetypes. As a nurturer, a woman is associated with motherly quality that is intuitive and caring, like the willingness to assist someone, protect the loved ones, and saving lives. This archetype also includes the tendency for women to develop by their domestic function: caring for the family by doing household chores and cooking for the family. A vixen archetype refers to the female trait which is associated with short-tempered, emotional, aggressive, and do not think deeply before doing something. Then, the victim archetype covers the idea that the female character in the entertainment industry, including film, must have endured oppression by a more dominant character. These archetypes interestingly exist in Wonder Woman as portrayed by actress Gal Gadot by its film remake released in 2017.

The first archetype of Gal Gadot's Wonder Woman shows the nurturer archetype. Even though she is portrayed as a superhero, she is embedded with a motherly trait. She intuitively cares about people's suffering because of the war. It leads her to bravely engage herself in a battle after talking of a helpless mother carrying her baby in a war zone. She sacrifices herself to make a progress in the battlefield ignoring the danger she might receive. Being a superhero who is caring may be a usual trait possessed by a superhero promoting a just world for people. However, in a patriarchal society, women are associated with domestic affairs: being a mother and a wife. These domestic roles turn to be problematic in patriarchal society because women who are mothers or wives are

set to be dependent on men (the husband and father) in the family. By this, women or wives are put into a secondary position to the men or husband. This concept actually has existed a long time ago since the colonial period of America. Porterfield stated that the authority within marriage in Puritan family, husbands should rule the wives and wives should be: dependent on their husbands, subject to the men's will as justified by religion (1992, p. 20). The idea of inequality between men and women in a family problematizes the portrayal of Wonder Woman.

The idea of “women are dependent” to men is seen through how Wonder Woman is portrayed as having love interest with Captain Trevor. Even though their love story is not well developed because Captain Trevor sacrificed himself, this aspect becomes unnecessary in building Wonder Woman's image as a desired future woman of America. The existence of this love narrative reminds us that Wonder Woman is *only* a woman who longs for man's love. Captain Trevor's sacrifice also indicates the idea that even a Wonder Woman needs (to be dependent on) a man's help. It seems that the man character has more power provided by his knowledge of how the world runs. He knows a better strategy to stop greater destruction. He thinks logically too, less emotional than Wonder Woman herself who is tied to her desire to kill Ares, her enemy.

The second archetype manifested in Wonder Woman is the vixen archetype which is shown by how eager she is in searching for Ares even though she has no clue about how Ares looks like or where Ares is. She decides to follow Captain Trevor to go to the men's world where the great war is taking place. One real example of the vixen archetype

possessed by Wonder Woman is that when she aggressively attacks General Erich Ludendorff because she believes that he is Ares in disguise. After killing him, she witnesses that the war is still going and the production of deadly gas used to mass killing is still running. Then she realizes that General Erich Ludendorff who she has killed is not Ares. He is only a man whispered by Ares to do mass destruction to human life. What happens in this scene shows how aggressive Wonder Woman in getting Ares.

From one perspective, being vixen is like another level of being a courageous individual. Being *aggressive* is often associated with the absence of smart and careful thinking prior to the action taken. It is not an intelligent or wise choice that is taken in a critical battle. Instead, what motivates Wonder Woman is an emotional urge, even though she has a good purpose: to end the war. This is a drawback of her heroic action and makes her an ambiguous symbol of feminism. At first, the feminist believes that Wonder Woman puts an end to the idea that women are “less capable than men of controlling their emotions and making moral judgment dispassionately” (Bein, 2017, p. 120). But what happens in the Wonder Woman film remade in 2017 backlashes the feminist's thought. Emotional move dominates Wonder Woman's battle in the film whereas she has the basic concept as an intelligent woman since she is portrayed as someone who has read books and trains to combat on her regular basis. It implies that the knowledge she has gained no wisdom and the training she received lacks in tactical strategy. On the contrary, the strategy is offered by Captain Trevor, the lead man actor, and Wonder Woman could not establish a tactical action. It indirectly

convinces the audiences: that the lead man character is better on the battlefield.

Besides, Wonder Woman looks so awkward and insensitive in the new environment of the men's world. Even though it is her first time going to the men's world, attaching this cluelessness becomes a drawback to the idealization of Wonder Woman as an ideal woman. She looks like a clueless person and she seems to have no prior knowledge about the men's world even though she has read a lot of books according to the earlier scene when Wonder Woman just left the Paradise Island with Captain Trevor. This is not surprising because, in a patriarchal society, women are considered as individuals who use emotion more than their thinking. According to the patriarchal dichotomy of men and women, women are emotion driven. This indeed backlashes the idea of women for feminist because it emphasizes women as flawed individuals who is inappropriate to have a certain role.

The third archetype is the concept that a woman character is a victim who is pitied, but at the same time becomes her driving force to excel her potential. Wonder Woman becomes the victims because of the bitter history of the past fight involved Zeus, her mother, and Ares which then caused a prophecy for her; the death of her aunt and love interest. She needs to end the war which she did not start. In the Wonder Woman film 2017, it is told that she is a demigod, the child of Zeus, even though in the comic, Aphrodite is the one who creates Wonder Woman and the rest of the inhabitant of the Paradise Island. Because Wonder Woman is the child of Zeus, she is given a task to kill Ares to bring balance to the world. At first, she has no idea that she is the child of Zeus and a half-sister to Ares.

The truth has been hidden by her mother because her mother, Queen Hippolyta, the Queen of the Amazonian, is afraid to let Wonder Woman fight Ares. The pitied side Wonder Woman is stressed by the death of her mentor that is considered as a great loss for the heroine, but before she could deal with her grief, she must follow Captain Trevor to hunt Ares down. In addition, at the end of the film, Wonder Woman also losses her love interest, Captain Trevor, who assists her in stopping Ares. This is suffering that she must endure.

This narrative conforms to the notion that either men or women have their position. Once women move from their designated position, they would have a bad experience because of it. It implies that being an independent woman in a patriarchal society somehow guarantees her to suffer. Besides, how courageous and independent women are, they are under the domination of men. As Sultana stated that "men always have the dominant, or masculine, roles and women always have the subordinate or feminine ones" (2012, p. 3). Women follow the vision of the men who are considered as the ones who *give* a chance to women to be active in the community. Whereas, women are merely *given* the opportunity to empower themselves. This is another evidence that women in the Wonder Woman film are under the power of men. Women play a role as an object while men are the subject.

Institutionalized Patriarchal Power as Manifested in Wonder Woman's Appearance

As explained by Millett, patriarchal power has been institutionalized. It has manifested in Wonder Woman's appearance.

Wonder Woman was firstly created by a man, psychologist William Moulton Marston. Even Marston portrays Wonder Woman as how the future ideal woman should be, the way he defines *woman* could not be separated from his point of view as a man. He sees the future woman should be independent because an independent woman in a patriarchal society is not the norm. According to De Beauvoir,

the independent woman—and above all the intellectual, who thinks about her situation—will suffer, as a female, from an inferiority complex; she lacks leisure for such minute beauty care as that of the coquette whose sole aim in life is to be seductive; follow the specialists' advice as she may, she will never be more than an amateur in the domain of elegance. (1989, p. 646).

This idea believes that independent woman is regarded as a flaw in the society, they are the Other, therefore it is *normal* to expect that the independent woman will suffer when being in a solid patriarchy society. In response to the inequality problem, Marston then created Wonder Woman, who he sees as the future ideal woman. But how he portrays Wonder Woman is still in accordance with men's standard: male gaze. Becker believes that "most heroines are thin and beautiful" (1999, p. 22).



Figure 1. Left to right: The Flash, Superman, Cyborg, Wonder Woman, Batman, Aquaman (Justice League, n.d.)

It also applies to Wonder Woman's appearance. To make it clear, the poster in Figure 1 clarifies how superheroes and superheroine are seen and expected by the audience. Figure 1 portrays Wonder Woman when she joins the Justice League, after the death of Superman. With Batman, she recruits The Flash, Aquaman, and Cyborg to fight the villain.

The most noticeable difference among these superheroes is their costume. All of the superheroes covering their skin, their body, arms, and legs to get fully protected when engaging in a battle, but Wonder Woman, the only superheroine, wears a more revealing costume: off-shoulder top and a short skirt, plus a pair of boots. Indeed, the way she dresses is in accordance with the Amazonian culture where she comes from. But a question should be directed to the creator of Wonder Woman: why do Wonder Woman and the rest of the inhabitant of Paradise Island who is all women dress that way? They are all warriors. They train to combat on a regular basis. A more protective armor should help them in defending themselves during a battle.

What happens in the portrayal of Wonder Women above is what Millett calls as institutionalized patriarchal power. The patriarchal ideology, as a dominant ideology which has been striving for years in many institutions like religious institution, political and economic institution, affects how a fictional character like Wonder Woman is born. It indicates that the male gaze is prominent in the creation of Wonder Woman. According to a male gaze, women are sexual objects. Laura Mulvey, a film critic, "emphasizes that the act of *looking* is an important factor of the male gaze, stressing that the scenario most often involves the

man *looking* and the female being *looked at*" (Caffrey, 2020, n.p.). It covers three stages of the male gaze: the gaze of the person who creates the image; the characters within the work; and the gaze of the audience. In Wonder Woman's instance, she is created by Marston, a man who has manifested the concept of women according to the patriarchal ideology. Wonder Woman dresses to be an object seen by men's point of view. Her curve, arms, and legs are visible to satisfy what is expected by men. Thus, a revealing costume is put on Wonder Woman and her fellow warriors living in the Paradise Island and women warrior's costume that is revealing their body is considered *normal*, as Millett said that this kind of *normal* has been socialized to the young children since they are little.

The Otherness of Wonder Woman is highlighted by Wonder Woman's ancestry. Portraying Wonder Woman as the child of Zeus indicates that she is no human. In other words, she is the Other even though she promotes the idea of empowered women. It distances her with real women in real life. In fact, women are regarded as the Other in a patriarchal society. Again, it confirms the concept of "women are the Other".

CONCLUSION

Wonder Woman (Jenkins, 2017) at a glance looks like a character that promotes the idea of feminism because she is a figure who is independent, self-reliant, and powerful (the ideal woman according to the feminism idea). Historically, she is given a role to promote women's empowerment. It makes her understandable when being associated with women's empowerment.

Kate Millett believed that personal matter reflects a political issue existing in a certain society. It includes entertainment. In entertainment like film, the characterization of the men and women in it is determined by the dominant ideology. In the case of Wonder Woman, the dominant ideology is patriarchy. The creation of Wonder Woman confirms the standard set by men in patriarchal ideology. These series of flaws in Wonder Woman's portrayal indicate how she conforms to the concept of ideal woman according to the patriarchal ideology: women are inferior; women are the Other. Millett also believes that the role of men and women have been socialized to young children. Then, they grow up understanding what is regarded as normal for men and women in accordance with the dominant ideology which has been socialized to them since young. As a result, they will unlikely object the definition of normal in their surroundings. Whereas, the "normal" here is subjective, following the standard of the dominant ideology which is patriarchal.

The analysis above shows that Wonder Woman backlashes the idea of feminism. If she is used to symbolizing the effort to achieve women's equality, then this symbol becomes an ambiguous symbol of feminism. Therefore, Wonder Woman could not provide a holistic portrayal of ideal woman longed by feminist, a character that is fully independent of the oppression of the men domination which has been socially structured. Instead, Wonder Woman is an example of the structured patriarchy ideology.

Patriarchal ideology has infiltrated almost every aspect of our life. It includes in the creative production of a film like Wonder Woman. In the production of a film, a dominant ideology in society influences the

creative process, then the product produced reflects that ideology. Even though the latest Wonder Woman film was released in 2017 when the feminism movement has made massive progress in fighting against women inequality, women are portrayed as the second-class group and more inferior compared to men. It also applies to women when they become the main character of the film. At the same time, the men counterpart is portrayed to have a higher quality which can be explicit or at least implicit. Thus, we need to be able to carefully analyze the characters in a film to really understand the ideology behind a certain film.

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EXPLORING THE DYNAMICS OF SECESSIONIST SENTIMENTS IN ALASKA

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ABSTRACT

This article explores the dynamics of secession in Alaska, a state within the United States of America. Alaska has been an integral part of modern American history when it was admitted as the second-youngest state after Hawaii in 1959. The territory was initially purchased by the United States from the Russian Empire in 1867 due to the latter’s concern of the expected British invasion. Putting the colonial narratives aside, Alaska is also a home of the Indigenous Alaskans with distinct identities compared to the European settlers. Viewing this contested history, combined with controversies leading to the inclusion of Alaska to the United States proper, one might assume that Alaskans might possess a higher sentiment of self-determination compared to the rest of Americans. However, despite those backgrounds, secessionism is not a salient issue in Alaska. Therefore, the author explores why the support for Alaskan secessionism is relatively unheard of despite the disputed history of the state. Using Hechter’s model of secession (1992), the author proposes that Alaska has been experiencing a relatively low level of secessionist sentiment due to (1) a low level of group identification among the Alaskans themselves, (2) a weak regional party, (3) a high level of economic dependency on the host state, and (3) an unfavorable institutional environment for secessionist sentiments to be advanced. The research concludes by suggesting that secessionism in Alaska is not a favorable choice due to every limitation it faces.

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INTRODUCTION

The global landscape is ever-changing. If we look into every political map since the dawn of history, we can examine that borders are dynamic and never static. This case also occurs to states which we regard as “ancient”

such as Greece, Ethiopia, and China. In the past, borders are defined by conquests, dynastic marriages, as well as commercial exchanges (Mayall, 2016).

Since the dawn of the Westphalian system, the world has witnessed the era where

nations have their own border and their own political sovereignty to take care of their own affairs without any foreign interventions. Not only that, but this Westphalian system has also designed in such a way to make those particular states governed by a government from a nation which represents the constituents, hence the concept of the nation-state. The concept of nation-states, therefore, brings us to the debate on nationalism. Primordialists argue that nations are given. This means that nationalism is a natural occurrence, and the border of current nation-states are consistent since the beginning of time with only little changes. On the other hand, there is also the camp of modernists, who believe that nations are recently invented and, thus, politically constructed (Anderson, 1991; Gellner, 1983).

The rise of nationalism in the 19th century has brought a new trend toward the Westphalian nation-state system. States were not regarded as the private possessions of the dynasty anymore, rather, sovereignty had to be transferred to the people. As the result, states cannot survive without the consent of the people as the nation (Mayall, 2016). The aforementioned background brings us to a new problem when states try to exercise its power upon its population to create a single identity as a nation. However, this not to say that such attempts are met with no resistance. In some states, particularly the heterogeneous ones, the problem with divided loyalty is not a rare occurrence. In China, for instance, some Uyghur populations of the Xinjiang Autonomous Region are reluctantly accepting their status as the Chinese citizens and instead see themselves as the “East Turkestan” people, citing their proximity with the Turkic nations (Lee, 2006). In post-colonial states, the problem can also be more troubling. Most

post-colonial states’ identity is built upon the shared history of being colonized, differing from the primordial assumption that their states were naturally given and had already been established since the beginning of time.

There is a number of ways in fulfilling such national self-determination, one of which is through secession. The term itself originates from the Latin words “*se*” meaning “apart” and “*cedere*” meaning “to go” (Pavkovic & Radan, 2014). As a political move, secession has an aim to create a new state on a territory which advocates it. Technically, defining secession is a more complex matter. Pavkovic and Radan (2014) offer two contrasting views in defining secession. One definition stipulated by Crawford (2006) saying that secession is “the creation of a state by the use of threat of force without the consent of the former sovereign” (p. 375). On the other hand, a more moderate definition by Radan (2008) offers that secession does not necessarily need a use of force, as it only needs to be understood as “the creation of a new state upon territory previously forming part of, or being a colonial entity of, an existing state” (p. 18). The latter definition suggests that secession can occur even with the consent of the host state, leading to the consequence that secession is not a rare phenomenon.

This article is going to discuss a case of secessionism in Alaska, a state of the United States of America. In the following sections, the author shall begin with clarifying the theoretical background used in this article. Next, this article will discuss the brief background of Alaska before diving into the case through each point laid by the theoretical background to explore the dynamics of secessionism in Alaska.

Secession is a force of change which can alter the course of international relations. It brings new states, autonomous regions, and even insurgent groups to existence. However, the scholarship on secessionism has just emerged recently with a demand to understand the logic behind such activity. Wood (1981), for instance, pinpoints how the development of an explanatory framework in explaining secession had been lacking behind despite it being an important political phenomenon.

In the 1960s and early 1970s, political scientists became so engrossed in the study of transnational politics and the evolution of supranational ‘communities’ that they were unprepared for the explosive proliferation of movements aimed in the opposite direction. Thus, in the early 1980s, despite the achievements of a few comparative studies, a general explanation remains to be given of how, when, and why ‘things fall apart’ in increasing numbers of contemporary states (p. 107).

Today, there have been different theoretical frameworks in observing secessionism. However, secession is not a condition which can be analyzed through a one-size-fits-all toolkit. Researchers have attempted to analyze this phenomenon through several lenses. Hoeffler (2006) sees secession through the economic lens, for instance. For them, economic preconditions can bring a causal explanation why do groups decide to secede from their host state. On the other hand, scholars like Radan (2012) and Kohen (2006) observe secession as a product of the international law dynamics. For the sake of simplicity, the author chooses a framework which can integrate several important aspects of secession. Therefore, this research is based on the work of Hechter

(1992) in his article *The Dynamics of Secession* (1992). His model is useful in forecasting under what conditions do secession tendencies occur.

Hechter begins with arguing that the decision to secede is a matter of rational choice. He offers two factors which can lead to the act of secession. First, there should be a collective decision from the population to secede. Second, there needs to be a leader which can translate such demands into a political move to secede. In order to be rational, Hechter adds, the cost of seceding from the host state should be negative compared to the benefits.

In Hechter’s conception, the dynamics of secession can be determined through four aspects.

1. The establishment of collective agreement about what constitutes a “region” as well as their common interests.
2. The establishment of collective actions, such as the willingness of the regional population to form social movements and political parties in order to advance their common interest.
3. The social bases. This aspect is to determine whether or not the region is better off with the host state. Economic dependency is a good, but not limited to, variable to determine this. Regions with a high level of dependency are more inclined to stay within the union.
4. The decision of the ruler. Secession can only occur when the rulers of the host nations agree to relinquish the sovereignty of their respective regions. This means that one should look into the

perception of the host state regarding any possibility of secession.

To answer those points, at least there are three important data need to be collected. First is the data on the region's population in regard to the issue of secession. Second, we also need to examine the socio-economic indicators of the studied region. Last but not least, Hechter also suggests finding data relevant to factors leading to decision makers' choice with respect to secession. While the first and the third kind of data are not always available in all cases, the second data is usually abundant.

DISCUSSION

The state of Alaska is unique in many ways. Alaska is the 49th state of the United States, making it the second last to be admitted in the union. It ranks first as the largest state in terms of area, with 665,384 miles square of land mass. Despite being the largest state in terms of area, Alaska is also the most sparsely-populated American state with only 738,068 people inhabiting it ("Alaska Population 2018," 2018). Geographically, Alaska is peculiar as it is not contiguous to the rest of the United States proper, a trait it shares with the state of Hawaii.

The history of Alaska is also filled with complexity. Long before the colonialization by the Russian Empire in the 1700's, Alaska had already been a home to the indigenous Alaskan such as the Inuits and Eskimos with their own cultural characteristics. Once the Russian came, the region had then turned into a center for the fur trade, where the indigenous Alaskans were reportedly being exploited as labor workers (Essary, 2008). However, in 1867, the Russian Empire sold

Alaska to the United States which led us to two possible explanations: the first is the inability to control the budget needed to manage Alaska as their region, another one is a possibility that the Russians did not want risk Alaska to fall into the hands of Britain. In 1868, the United States finalized their purchase of Alaska by paying Russia 7.2 million dollars.

As the region was incorporated in the late nineteenth century, the twilight of the American expansion, its process of integration lacks behind other regions which had originally been incorporated earlier. Its natural features, as well as its historical backgrounds, have made Alaska's image to be known as the exotic territory located at the far-north, underdeveloped, wild, and distanced from the hustle of the mainland United States. Such imagery is reinforced through its nickname as "The Last Frontier" of America (Haycox, 2002).

Alaska's status in the United States had experienced several changes. From 1867 to 1884, Alaska was regarded as the military district of the United States under direct supervision from the federal government. In 1884, the First Organic Act granted Alaska with civil officials which were appointed by the federal government. In 1912, the Second Organic Act had enhanced the status of Alaska even further by turning it into an organized territory with its own legislature rights to pass laws. However, Alaskans still saw minimum benefit from those agreements. A Statehood Bill had then offered to the federal government in the same year with the ratification of the Second Organic Act. However, Alaska's quest for statehood was not realized until 1958 through an election whose agenda is to elevate the status of

Alaska from territory to state. The election went in favor of the statehood, thus establishing the status of Alaska as the 49th state. However, that did not signify the end of the debate, as some groups regard that the election was flawed. Joe Vogler, a prominent Alaskan secessionist, argue that Alaska should have been given an option to secede from the United States. His advocacy led to the creation of the Alaskan Independence Party (AIP) in 1973. The creation of AIP marked the beginning of contemporary debates on secessionism in Alaska.

With those backgrounds, Alaska would be an interesting case study in examining how the dynamics of secessionism occur within a post-colonial region with such contested identity. There might be some questions regarding the problem with its self-determination tendencies, especially whether contemporary Alaska serves as a ripe ground for secessionism to emerge. Secessionism itself is not a new issue in Alaska, as there has been reemergence regarding this issue in the last decade. The following sections of this article will analyze the case by dissecting the points offered by Hechter.

Group Identification

The first topic through which one should begin is seeing the group identification within the region. This relates to how the constituents of the region perceive themselves, which is an important departing point if we are to use the modernist's assumption on nationalism which sees national identity as constructed or imagined. Secession begins when a group of people, or "nations", start believing that they belong to the different community than those which rule their host nation. In order to know that,

we should understand what constitutes the distinctively "Alaskan identity".

The Alaskan demographic today is quite plural. As per 2017, the United States Census Bureau reported that five major racial groups in Alaska are whites (65.8%), native Alaskans (15.3%), Hispanics (7.1%), Asians (6.5%), and blacks (3.7%). Superficially, it seems that the "Alaskan identity" is not a strong driver here, as the native Alaskans comprise less than one-fifth of the total population. Moreover, "native Alaskan" is not a monolithic term since it comprises different ethnic groups like the Inuits, Eskimos, and Aleuts with their own cultural and linguistic differences. Even if those groups belonged to one single identity, there has been no observable instance of an ethnic-motivated secessionist movement in Alaska. This initial analysis disproves the argument that Alaskan secession is based on primordial sentiments.

Essary (2008) finds that there are generally two reasons why the native Alaskan did not push for independence. The first one is a problem with Alaska's postcolonial history. During its history, Alaska had been exposed to two foreign powers: Russia and the United States. The long-standing existence of foreign settlers in Alaska had made native Alaskans not organized as one entity. This problem also can be found from the legal perspective. In 1867, when the transfer of jurisdiction from Russia to the United States was finished, The Treaty of Cession regarded the native Alaskans as the "uncivilized tribes". However, in 1871, Washington decided to end the use of treaties as the basis of the relation between the federal government and the native tribes (Langdon, 2016). This, to some extent, had made the process of self-identification lagged behind.

Second, it turns out that the mobilization of the native Alaskans is more motivated by civic rather than ethnic reason. When faced with issues such as inequality or underdevelopment, native Alaskans will resort to arguments about civil rights rather than using a collective Alaskan identity. Therefore, it can be said that the basic group identification among the titular native Alaskan has been extremely low.

Collective Actions

After understanding how the group identification in Alaska occurs, the next step is to understand whether such identifications lead to further collective actions. The mere existence of a group identification does not automatically turn into a demand to withdraw from a union. From the previous section, we observe that ethnic argument does not fit into the case of Alaska. This aligns with Hechter's argument that primordial logic brings little explanation on how secessionism varies in empirical terms.

In Alaska, secessionism is led by the AIP as the sole party which advocates secession. AIP emerged as a social movement called the Alaskans for Independence (AI), founded by Joe Vogler in 1973. He founded this movement under the basis that the United States government violated the 1958 Statehood Bill by not granting rights to vote to the Alaskan people. He also objected the federal control upon the resources in Alaska. Therefore, once again, Vogler's intention was to create a civic movement rather than using a "native-first" rhetoric to advocate the interests of the Alaskans.

In 1984, AI evolved into AIP. According to its official website, the AIP claims to be the only party that is "entirely composed of

Alaskans, staffed by Alaskans, and financed by Alaskans...not affiliated with any political party on a national level". AIP sees that the 1958 Statehood Election was flawed. According to them, Alaskans were denied a right to vote in the statehood. Therefore, they actively advocate another vote on secession with four alternative options which consist of:

1. Remaining a territory, a status possessed by Alaska prior to the 1958 Statehood Election.
2. Becoming a separate and independent nation.
3. Accept Commonwealth status, thus putting Alaska on the same level with Puerto Rico and the Northern Mariana Islands.
4. Become a state or maintaining the status quo.

Accordingly, AIP does not necessarily push for independence. Rather, they play within the corridor of democracy to offer a voting agenda for the Alaskans so they can decide their fate for themselves. AIP views that 1958 was "corrupt" and the residence "was not given proper choices". AIP's main concern is that the federal government know little about what Alaska really needs. The assumption is based upon the concern that Alaska had long been experiencing colonialism, leading to exploitation of important resources. Through their website, AIP claims that their movement is entirely civic as opposed to ethnic, saying that the support "comes from a coalition of native Alaskans and white and black working people who primarily reside in rural Alaska" (Collet, 2006).

Despite the Alaska-first agendas, AIP remains a fringe party in Alaskan politics. Alaska has long been known as a “red” state where the majority of the population support the Republican Party (Leip, 2016). As per 2018, AIP’s registered voters are recorded to be 17,118 or equivalent to 3.16% of total voters in Alaska (“Numbers of Registered Voters by Party within Precinct Date 07/03/2018,” 2018).

Social Bases

A region is more likely to secede when the constituents think that they are able to sustain themselves in the absence of the federal government. This point signifies that the less a certain region is dependent on others—particularly the host state—the more favorable is the condition of secession for the region. is the next case which we are going to analyze. In former sections, we have seen that the Alaskan economic accounts only a little among all the American states. To analyze this section, we will need to observe the economic performance of the state.

The Alaskan economy is highly dependent on the mining sector, particularly oil. Despite that, Alaska’s contribution toward the federal Gross Domestic Product (GDP) is relatively low compared to other states. In 2017, Alaska contributed only 52.79

billion US dollars, 46th among all American states (“GDP of the United States in 2017, by state,” 2018).

The Alaskan economy is extremely dependent on the primary sector. According to the Alaska Economic Report (2017), comparing trends from the first and second quarters from 2013-2017, non-manufactured commodities such as raw fish, crude oil, and metal ores account most for the Alaskan export. On the other hand, manufactured commodities “make up 87 percent of imports to the state” (p. 3).

Other than that, it is apparent that Alaska is highly dependent on federal income. From the tables below, which are retrieved from Goldsmith (2010), federal sectors account for approximately 35.3% of total employment in Alaska. On the other hand, the central government is also accountable for 39.8% of the total residential personal income. This indicates that there is a high level of dependency toward the central government in Alaska. Therefore, according to Hechter’s model, this kind of condition does not provide a fertile soil for secessionists to maximize their agenda. Petroleum sectors, which are regarded as the main internal economic driver for Alaska, only comes second with 31.2% for total employment and 29.8% for resident personal income.

| | Employment | | Resident Personal Income | |
|----------------------------------|--------------|--------------|--------------------------|--------------|
| | Thousand | Share | Billion \$ | Share |
| TOTAL | 377.3 | | \$24.94 | |
| FEDERAL | 133.3 | 35.3% | \$9.93 | 39.8% |
| Non Defense | 73.7 | 19.5% | \$6.19 | 24.8% |
| National Defense | 59.6 | 15.8% | \$3.75 | 15.0% |
| PETROLEUM | 117.6 | 31.2% | \$7.44 | 29.8% |
| Production | 51.48 | 13.6% | \$3.45 | 13.8% |
| State/Local Revenues | 52.9 | 14.0% | \$2.71 | 10.9% |
| Permanent Fund & CBR | 13.3 | 3.5% | \$1.29 | 5.2% |
| TRADITIONAL RESOURCES | 49.3 | 13.1% | \$2.41 | 9.7% |
| Seafood | 38.7 | 10.3% | \$1.77 | 7.1% |
| Mining | 8.5 | 2.3% | \$.54 | 2.2% |
| Timber | 1.9 | .5% | \$.94 | .4% |
| Agriculture | 0.15 | 0% | \$0 | 0% |
| NEW RESOURCES | 50.0 | 13.3% | \$2.35 | 9.4% |
| Tourism | 41.5 | 11.0% | \$1.83 | 7.3% |
| Air Cargo | 7.8 | 2.1% | \$.48 | 1.9% |
| Other Manufacturing and Services | 0.66 | .2% | \$.04 | .2% |
| PERSONAL ASSETS | 27.0 | 7.2% | \$2.80 | 11.2% |
| Retirees | 20.8 | 5.5% | \$2.18 | 8.7% |
| Non-Earned Income | 6.2 | 1.7% | \$.62 | 2.5% |

Source: Institute of Social and Economic Research

Table 1. Economic Drivers of Alaska (2004-2007)

| | Billion \$ |
|----------------------------------|------------|
| FEDERAL SPENDING | |
| Non Defense | \$4.07 |
| National Defense | \$2.13 |
| PETROLEUM | |
| Production | \$1.57 |
| State/Local Revenues | \$1.29 |
| Permanent Fund & CBR | \$.98 |
| TRADITIONAL RESOURCES | |
| Seafood | \$.73 |
| Mining | \$.26 |
| Timber | \$.05 |
| Agriculture | \$0 |
| NEW RESOURCES | |
| Tourism | \$.83 |
| Air Cargo | \$.23 |
| Other Manufacturing and Services | \$.02 |
| PERSONAL ASSETS | |
| Retirees | \$1.71 |
| Non Earned Income | \$.48 |

Table 2. Core Income for Economic Drivers (2005-2007)

Those numbers tell us that the collective actions conducted by AIP fall short due to high dependency to the central government. This, to some extent, can explain why does the support for AIP, or secessionism, remains low in Alaska. However, this claim still needs to be tested in further researches. This preliminary observation can conclude that the

point of the social base for the Alaskans remains unfavorable for secession.

On the other hand, other secessionist states of the United States such as California or Texas excel in this aspect. The former accounts for 2,746.9 billion US dollars, the primary contributor of the American GDP in

2017; the latter comes second, contributing 1,696.2 billion US dollars toward the United States' GDP ("GDP of the United States in 2017, by state," 2018). This shows how Alaska is currently lacking so far behind, thus making it harder for them to unilaterally demand secession.

The Decision of the Ruler

Lastly, we need to examine how is the attitude of the host state toward general secessionist sentiments within its borders. Whether or not a host state is willing to accommodate secession sentiments is a matter of importance in this case. The results may vary among different countries, Hechter notes that there are three mechanisms to cope with secessionist demands that can be done by the host state.

First, the state can offer incentives to the secessionist groups. This is done in the expectation that the group would eventually abandon their desire to secede. This can be done through development projects or resources which can enhance the quality of the region without necessarily losing the sovereignty over it. Second, states can also offer constitutional reforms. This second solution is a more costly one as it involves the host state to allocate more resources in order to curb secessionist sentiments within its borders. This can be done through granting more autonomy to the regions which seek to secede. This instance can be found in cases like Quebec (Canada) or Aceh (Indonesia) which have been enjoying a higher degree of autonomy following demands to secede. Lastly, states can also exercise repression toward secessionist groups. Even though it is not the most favorable choice under democracy, it can be

used as the last resort when the two initial moves failed to end secessionism. However, Hechter argues that this move is the costliest one because of its relations to several factors, namely geography, military capacity of the host state, and the third-party involvement in the repression.

The constitution of the United States does not specifically mention the right to secede. In the Articles of the Confederation, however, it does include a subtle reference that the Union is "perpetual". After the Civil War, the Supreme Court of the United States has declared that such "perpetual union" is to be refined to form "a more perfect union" (Stampp, 1978). The tragic history of the Civil War has made it theoretically impossible for states to withdraw from the United States. Rob Vischer also adds that "there are certain background premises that make our system of government possible, and one of them is the union is permanent" (in DeRusha, 2012). This last point shows again that Alaskan secessionism would possibly meet impending conditions. This time is due to the host state skepticism in approaching any possibility of secession.

CONCLUSION

This research is intended as a preliminary observation regarding the dynamics of secessionism in one of the states of the United States, Alaska. The author chooses Alaska as a litmus test as it is a region which displays a degree of secessionist sentiments.

Using Hechter's model on secession dynamics, the author pinpoints several important points which can explore how the dynamics of secession is going so far in Alaska. From the discussions, we can

conclude that among all the four points offered by Hechter, none signals positively toward the dynamics of secession in Alaska. First, despite the existence of the native Alaskans, it does not contribute positively toward group identification because of the disorganized nature of the population. Second, we can also see that while collective actions have been translated into the creation of AIP, the party remains insignificant to push the demand of secession due to the lack of popular support among the Alaskans themselves. Third, through analyzing the social bases of the Alaskan people, we can eventually understand that Alaska is highly dependent on the host state, thus making independence less favorable. Lastly, through observing the attitude of Washington toward secession, we can see that secession has never been a viable option in the United States as the constitution regards secession as an illegitimate action.

The author realizes that there are many limitations to this study. However, through the discussed case study, we would be able to observe secession through a more systematic lens. This is not to say that secession will never happen in the studied region, but it can serve as a forecast on how things will be going under different empirical examples. Finally, the author hopes that this study can contribute positively toward the development of studies on secession.

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**DESIRING DOMINATION:
A POSTFEMINIST STUDY ON THE LYRICS OF
LANA DEL REY'S *ULTRAVIOLENCE* ALBUM**

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ABSTRACT

Feminist movements are said to have served their purposes and achieved equality, empowerment, and emancipation for women. America thus enters the era of postfeminism. A redefined image of independent and free-spirited yet feminine women is brought through popular cultural products, creating a shift in the view of 21st century American women, one of which can be seen from their response toward male domination. It is expressed in the lyrics of songs compiled in Lana Del Rey's *Ultraviolence* album. This study employs descriptive qualitative method by treating the lyrics with the same approach as poetry. The data are in the form of language features, such as words, phrases, clauses, lines, and verses related to women's response to male domination. McRobbie's notion of double entanglement allows this study to borrow the feminist concept of male domination. There are five male dominating conducts found in the lyrics: 1) marginalization in "Sad Girl"; 2) subordination in "Shades of Cool", 3) stereotype in "The Other Woman"; 4) physical and psychological violence in "Ultraviolence", sexual violence in "Fucked My Way Up to the Top"; 5) domestic workload in "Old Money". Meanwhile, the women's response toward male domination is expressed in "Brooklyn Baby". The progressive postfeminists approach male domination differently from the conservative feminists. The female speaker of the lyrics comprehend that her men's conducts are dominating her, yet she receives them with a manner full of desire. For her, every relationship has the luxury to define their own rules as long as there is a consensual agreement from both parties involved.

Keywords: *domination; lyrics; postfeminism; postnational; women*

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INTRODUCTION

Throughout his entire campaigns as the United States presidential candidate, Donald Trump often made insults to his opponent, Hillary Clinton, and to women in general. During the election, a video leaked showing him and TV host Billy Bush talking vulgarly about how Trump treat women and their bodies upon possessing power as a wealthy celebrity (Drum, 2016, par. 1). The video caused fury from public, and critics deemed such action as sexual assault. Surprisingly, Trump won, which meant that a substantial number of women voted for him, since female voters made up more than 50 percent of the electorates (Golshan, 2017, par. 3-7). Petersen (2016, par. 8) interviewed Trump’s female supporters and discovered that they did not take all of his insults or allegations into consideration. One of them even said she would be worried if her husband did not talk or behave in a manner similar to Trump’s.

The above evidence illustrates that there is a shifting view on the 21st century American women. Women prior to this generation would have raged over any sexist comments. Yet, young women seem to consider sexism as just the way men are, if not as a thing of the past (Pomerantz, Raby & Stefanik, 2013, pp. 185-7). A question then arises. Is it a backlash toward feminism? Feminist movements fought gender inequality, and it is safe to say that the battle has been won. Now that women have access to education and occupation, they do not care anymore about degrading remarks. Women thus enjoy their individuality that they no longer feel the need to unite. This condition bears to mind the term ‘postfeminism’.

According to Genz&Brabon (p. 3), postfeminism is a contemporary movement that

works both as the death and the reincarnation of feminism. It exposes young women to an image of women with an extensive sense of independence and an elevated freedom and/of choice, while still upholding feminine qualities, such as fashion, makeup, physical fitness and beauty pampering. Women thus continue to be under the male gaze. Yet, instead of being a victim, they get pleasure and take advantage from it. This lately found comprehension of women is brought out through popular culture.

Unlike its former petitioner that used institutionalized activism as platforms to spread its message and serve its purpose, postfeminism has utilized popular culture. Popular cultural products have been an effective means to promote the image of emancipated postfeminist women, while at the same time destructing the conservative tenets of feminism. Such products depict women’s emancipation in individual capacity, such as personal independence and sexual liberation. Postfeminist popular culture, from fashion, film, fiction, magazine, music to TV show, become the ruling influence on women’s development.

American popular music passes postfeminist values targeted at the scene of young women. Popular music reflects the shifting characteristics of a particular generation. Popular songs, the musical and lyrical elements, are a medium of expression of the youth experience (Plasketes, 2002, pp. 613-8). Musicians then pay more attention to lyrics, writing them to have more meanings and messages. From emotional ballads as personal outlets to counterculture anthems as complaints, song-lyrics can spin any political and social discourses. Traditionally, love lyrics sell. A female songstress singing softly love lyrics is more appealing to mass audience,

including men, than those of 'Girl Power' anthems. A fitting example of such songstress is Lana Del Rey.

Lana Del Rey is an American singer, songwriter and recording artist, who was getting exposure in 2011 for her sensational "Video Games" music video. Her rising fame was continued by her debut *Born to Die* (2011), peaking at #2 on the US *Billboard 200*. The album birthed hits like "Born to Die", "Blue Jeans", "Dark Paradise" and "Summertime Sadness." In 2012, she released a mini album *Paradise*, with singles like "Ride", "Blue Velvet" and "Burning Desire." Based on these albums, Del Rey has been criticized for being an anti-feminist. She remains unaffected by the criticism and continues recording her upcoming album (Savage, 2012, par. 40-50).

The release of her third studio album, *Ultraviolence* (2014), invigorates the image of tragic glamour and melancholia in Del Rey's lyrics and becomes her first album to reach #1 in the US (Caulfield, 2014, par. 1). The album is composed of eleven bleakly nuanced ballads, namely "Cruel World", "Ultraviolence", "Shades of Cool", "Brooklyn Baby", "West Coast", "Sad Girl", "Pretty When You Cry", "Money Power Glory", "Fucked My Way Up", "Old Money" and "The Other Woman." Del Rey divulges about a woman who is highly obsessed by her love for a man that she becomes dominated. Other people might think the relationship is unhealthy, while conservative critics would have considered it as an anti-feminist expression because woman should not love their men more than they love themselves.

Ultraviolence, with its provocative song titles and lyrics, has been ascribed as a

postfeminist text. Prior pursuing a musical career, Del Rey wanted to be a poet; she studied philosophy at Fordham University. Only after her uncle taught her six guitar chords, she turned her poem into song-lyrics. According to Sadie (p. 85), lyrics are a form of literary text that bears resemblances to poetry. Similar to poems, lyrics contain sound pattern as well as expressive and subjective thoughts and feelings uttered in first person point-of-view. From this understanding, the lyrics of the songs compiled as an album can be studied using the same approach as poetry (Holman & Harmon, 1992, p. 422). While Del Rey both as the singer and songwriter can be placed as the poet, the woman singing in the songs can be treated as the female speaker of the poems. Therefore, this study aims to answer: How does the female speaker desire male domination expressed in the lyrics of Lana Del Rey's *Ultraviolence* album?

This study is conducted under the discipline of American Studies, with the viewpoint of Post-nationalism. Rowe in *Post-national American Studies* (pp. 11-3), states that the study of Post-national study criticizes the previous American Study concepts that emphasize only on "American Exceptionalism" as distinguishable national identity and its role in spreading American cultural imperialism. The study of Post-national thus insists to include the different voices that have been previously excluded despite the fact that they are historically vital to the social, political and economic development of American culture. Women are one of the many excluded communities in the American society, and Women Studies is acknowledged by post-nationalist American Studies. The progressing ideas regarding to women concerns have affected the American culture and society. The agitation of women, known as feminist

movements, can be tracked back historically to time when they fight for gender equality, followed by several feminist movements, expanding the demands of rights to vote, higher education, professional works and domestic affairs.

Since these movements now have served their purposes, America is said to enter the era of postfeminism. The image of postfeminist American women is largely represented in popular cultural products, such as in the lyrics of Lana Del Rey’s *Ultraviolence* album. Explained by Angela McRobbie (2009), postfeminism is a theory that surfaces as:

a new kind of anti-feminist sentiment. Elements of feminism have been taken into account, ... these elements are then converted into a much more individualistic discourse, and they are deployed in this’ new guise, particularly in media and popular culture, but also by agencies of the state, as a kind of substitute for feminism. These new and seemingly ‘modern’ ideas about women and especially young women are then disseminated more aggressively, so as to ensure that a new women’s movement will not re-emerge (p. 1).

On one hand, postfeminism attempts to restore the spirit of pre-feminist time, as young women distinguish themselves from the extreme, man-hating feminism, which is correlated with out-of-date and unglamorous women. On the other hand, postfeminism draws on the feminist ground and its achievements for giving women equality, empowerment and emancipation. This ‘double entanglement’ crystallizes into an anti-feminist endorsement of female individualization (McRobbie, p. 2; Harris, p. 13; Tasker & Negra, p. 8). Are defined interpretation of freedom and independence, such as individual choice, physical liberation and sexual pleasure, is embodied.

Young women are constructed with a mindset of having unlimited choice and ultimate right in making decisions about their body and other personal matter and in any way they see fit, as long as they understand the consequences and there is no outside pressure. It results in ‘a new form of sexual contract’ between men and women (McRobbie, p. 12). If a woman enjoys the bondage, domination, sadism and masochism (BDSM) like Anastasia Steel in E. L. James’ *Fifty Shades of Grey* (2011), then she is allowed to have it. In their subordinate or dependent position, women have long been deemed particularly malleable or even ‘docile subjects’. Rather than the sexualized women portrayed as a victim, postfeminism argues that being dominated is a form of sexual liberation (Gill, pp. 8-10; Bellafante, p. 58). This standpoint contradicts the feminist opinion of such enjoyment as male domination. According to Fakhri (pp. 12-3), male domination exists in most parts of the world in many different happenings, but mostly characterized as these five conducts:

- Marginalization, or alienation, is one face of domination that banishes women to join the public realm that can take place in relationship, marriage, society or culture (Fakhri, p. 15). Women must stay at home, thus cannot participate in social life and have access to public facilities. Marginalization can cause economy extinction.
- Subordination is the superior position of men over women. Men are considered physically, mentally and intellectually more capable than women (Fakhri, p. 16). Therefore, women become the second-class group in society, and then are objectified. Subordination toward women

can result in self-esteem and self-confidence deprivation as well as the powerless feeling.

- Stereotype is a set of characteristics with negative tendency to govern what women can and cannot do or be (Fakih, pp. 16-7). This domination is fostered to justify gender expectations, forcing women to behave in a normative way by following the stereotypes ascribed for them. A negative effect of stereotype is shown when a woman faces sexual abuse, she tends to get blamed because stereotypically the intent of a woman who dresses up and puts makeup on is to attract men.
- Violence is the most apparent kind of domination. It is done by attacking or invading physical, mental and sexual integrity (Fakih, p. 17). There three kinds of violence: physical violence is absolutely visible violence through many attacks that may cause bodily harms, such as slapping, choking, biting, hitting, and kicking; psychological violence, or emotional abuse, is any nonphysical behavior or attitude designed to control, punish, or isolate another person through the use of humiliation or fear, resulting in psychological distress, such as verbal assault, isolation from certain group, ridicule, or the use of intimate knowledge for degradation (Fakih, pp. 17-8), and sexual violence is any unwanted sexual act, comment or attempt to obtain sexual act, directed against a woman's desire using coercion by any person regardless of their relationship to the victim, which can destroy women's dignity, including rape, marital rape, sexual harassment and incest.

- Workload for men and women are differentiated with the man work outside of home, while the woman take care of the house, children, chores and men's need all by herself. This way, women are tied from social and intellectual occupation (Fakih, pp. 75-6). Relationship and marriage as a gender relation disguise this domination for men's benefit, while women suffer from accumulation of emotional labor.

Furthermore, McRobbie's double entanglement, allows a postfeminist analysis to borrow the earlier feminist concept, stating that postfeminism believes in the "co-existence of neo-conservative values in relation to gender, sexuality and family life, with processes of liberalization in regard to choice and diversity in domestic, sexual and kinship relations" (p. 256). McRobbie herself has done it in "Post Feminism and Popular Culture: Bridget Jones and the New Gender Regime." She finds that besides the sexual freedom, city parties, rights to drink, and smoke and economically independence, Bridget still wants to pursue dreams of romance, find a suitable husband, get married and have children (p. 12).

From this understanding, this study treats lyrics of songs compiled in Del Rey's *Ultraviolence* as poems by employing Fakih's concept of male domination but analyzing it through postfeminist perspective. In doing so, the personal choice is given to women as to how they response to male domination. Additionally, the precise album from which the lyrics are taken is the CD released by UMG Recordings in 2014 for North American market. This study then uses descriptive qualitative method. The data are in form of language features, such as words, phrases, clauses, lines and verses related to women's response on male domination.

DISCUSSION

The shifting view of the 21st century American women toward male domination is expressed on the lyrics of songs compiled in Del Rey’s *Ultraviolence* album. A postfeminist reading on the lyrics treated as poems connotes to the condition of a female speaker who is in a relationship with an alpha male figure. The female speaker’s story is about the happenings on her relationship told throughout the entirety of the album. According to a music critic Richardson (par. 4-5), *Ultraviolence* is a cohesive concept album, which tells a comprehensive and flowing story from the beginning of the album to the end.

Upon either listening to the songs or reading the lyrics, one conveyed feeling is a scrofulous and despairing overromanticisation of desire and domination. In no particular order, each song and its lyrics in the album reflect the man’s dominating conducts to the female speaker and how the she responds to them. The female speaker is consumed by her love for the man that she becomes inferior in the face of her man’s superiority. She is under the male domination in a voluntary and passionate manner. It can even be said that the woman is desiring the domination from her man. Deriving from the double entanglement of postfeminism, man’s dominating conducts in the lyrics are analyzed by borrowing the feminist definition on male domination. Fakih’s notion on five forms of male domination can be found in *Ultraviolence* album.

Marginalization of women can be grasped in the song “Sad Girl”. The female speaker’s life is limited by her man because she is not allowed to participate in the public

sphere. Her social mobility is handicapped; thus, she cannot leave home and go to any place she wants. However, she does not seem to mind. She even attempts to justify her choice to other women. Verses such as “Being a mistress on the side / It might not appeal to fools like you / Creepin’ around on the side / Might not be something you would do” and “Being a bad bitch on the side / Might not appeal to fools like you / Creepin’ around while he gets high / It might not be something you would do” clearly show that she does not mind at all being a ‘mistress’ and a ‘bitch’. The former means the caretaker of a house, while the latter refers to a woman who is worthless besides for sexual pleasure (Hornby, 1995, pp. 214-504). The female speaker must stay at home waiting for her husband, and be by his side when he does. Feminists would argue that mistress is the female equivalent of ‘mister’, while ‘bitch’ is often addressed unjustly to strong-willed, assertive women.

As the result of marginalization, the female speaker is blinded about what is happening outside of her cloistered world. She thinks that the way her man treats her is something worth jealous at. She calls other women fools and warns those who are trying to knock some senses into her. She defends her choice of being in a relationship with a man who is putting her aside. Lines “Watch what you say to me / Careful who you’re talking to / I’m on fire, baby” demonstrate how deeply in love she is. She conveys gossipers to mind their own business and forbids them from telling she is thinking and behaving foolishly because she will be offended. Postfeminism believes such action to be an invasion of individual freedom (Jolles, 2012, p. 44). As a consent adult, she is allowed to have personal preferences.

The female speaker continues claiming that she is a lucky woman because her man is strikingly good-looking and masculine. Lines “But you haven’t seen my man / You haven’t seen my man / You haven’t seen my man / You haven’t seen my him” and “He’s got the fire and he walks with it / He’s got the fire and he talks with it” can be indicated as an attempt of justification. She supposes other women will understand her choice when they lay eyes on her man and realize they are not as lucky as her. The repetition means that she wants to intensify that her man is a man of quality and virility. She even feels proud for her ability to seduce such man because it is an honor to be in a relationship with him, despite the fact that her man might feel differently. However, as the song title suggests, the female speaker is feeling sad. As much as she tries to cover up her true feeling by proclaim her proudness to other women, she cannot escape the sadness because all she does is lounging at home, marginalized from the public realm. Nevertheless, she realizes that it is the consequence of falling in love with a man like him.

Another consequence is **subordination**, which is strongly felt in “Shades Of Cool”. The female speaker is subordinated by her man, in term of being objectified. As an object, her feeling and opinion are disregarded for the sake of his ego. More background about her good-looking man is revealed in the following verses. “My baby lives in shades of blue / Blue eyes and jazz and attitude / He lives in California too / He drives a Chevy Malibu” and “My baby lives in shades of cool / Cool heart and hands and aptitude / He lives for love, for women, too / I’m one of many, one is blue” bear an ample understanding of the man. He is a Caucasian man who lives California with a rather laid-

back and carefree lifestyle. He is not interested to be attached to anyone or anything, besides drugs, cars and women. This secular worldview holds him back from having a committed relationship or a long-term employment. Meanwhile, the reference to color blue connotes that he has cold-hearted attitudes.

Contrary wise, all of these above characteristics are what appeal and attract the female speaker to the man. She fully realizes that she is merely one of his many possessions, thus she does not demand to be his priority. She still loves him and cherishes any moment she spends with him. Verse “And when he calls / He calls for me and not for you / He lives for love, he loves his drugs / He loves his baby too” obviously signifies that she is not the only woman in his life. She is aware that she is one of many women he is seeing, and that he will never love her as much as she loves him. Nevertheless, she always feels grateful every time he sees her, because it means that she is preferable than his other women, and she is proud of it. In this case, a competition among women to win the man’s love can be sensed.

Furthermore, the female speaker is conscious that she will not be able to break down her man’s emotional barrier. She cannot change him and make him settle in a committed relationship with her. Lines “But I can’t fix him, can’t make him better / And I can’t do nothing about his strange weather” and “But you are, are unfixable / I can’t break through your world / ’Cause you live in shades of cool / Your heart is unbreakable” display the female speaker’s sensibility in not trying to change her man and his carefree life. Feminism is set on determination of fixing men, such as to make them treat women more

equally, respectfully and faithfully. Moreover, such effort is done in motherly manner and adult men are known to resist being mothered again (Pickhardt, par. 6-7). As a postfeminist woman, the female speaker knows better than to do try fixing her man. Instead, she lets him and his ‘strange weather’ be. The phrase refers to his moodiness of how cold he can be to her, even in the warm Californian sunshine.

Stemming from marginalization and subordination of women, women have limited, if none at all, life outside of home. While men become the breadwinner, women must take care of the family needs, child rearing and house chores. The female speaker’s **domestic workload** is exemplified in “Old Money.” The title implies that she comes from an established family, which does not require her to work. She then stays at home like a housewife. Verses “The kids were young and pretty / Where have you been? Where did you go? / Those summer nights seem long ago / And so is the girl you used to call / The queen of New York City” and “The power of youth is on my mind / Sunsets, small town, I’m out of time / Will you still love me when I shine / From words but not from beauty / For reasons unknown to me” describe her boredom for waiting at home handling domestic affairs, as well as worry about losing affection from her man. She is afraid that her man is not interested in her, especially as they are growing old. Although she still has the same personality, wit, and humor, she will no longer be young and beautiful, and lose her charm, faded from being the house caretaker.

Her apprehension becomes worse because she feels like her man is leaving home too often and abandoning her. Verse

“But if you send for me, you know I’ll come / And if you call for me, you know I’ll run / I’ll run to you, I’ll run to you / I’ll run, run / I’ll come to you; I’ll come to you / I’ll come, come, come” shows how bad she longs to be with her man. After all of her errands are done, she waits anxiously at home for her man. When he finally comes, she will run to him with open arms. To ease her anxiety, she depicts a nostalgic scene. Verses “Blue hydrangea, cold cash divine / Cashmere, cologne and white sunshine / Red racing cars, sunset and vine” and “My father’s love was always strong / My mother’s glamour lives on and on” are employed as reminiscent of true love she witnesses in the past. She uses imageries to symbolize her parents’ golden era, indulging their happy memories. She hopes that her relationship with her man will be everlasting like theirs. Unlike feminism which is anti-stereotypical housewives, postfeminism gives absolute freedom for women to choose what her roles are in a relationship or marriage, including to be a stay-home, non-working mother because being a mother is already a job (Lagerway, 2016, p. 1).

Additionally, **stereotypes** towards women have a rather negative tendency, since the positive ones have been reserved for men. Stereotype degrades women position and diminishes their opportunity. The example of women’s stereotype can be seen in “The Other Woman”. The female speaker assigns a set of stereotypes regarding her appearance and attitude. Verses “The other woman finds time to manicure her nails / The other woman is perfect where her rival fails / And she’s never seen with pin curls in her hair anywhere” and “The other woman enchants her clothes with French perfume / The other woman keeps fresh cut flowers in each room /

There are never toys that scatter everywhere” completely ascribe characteristics as a standard of how ideal women should be. Women’s stereotype is based on their femininity works as a binary opposition to men’s masculinity. Conservative feminists suppress their femininity by refusing to wear girly clothes and makeup. For them, it is a source of weakness, and men inferiorly stereotype them for it (Kaplan et al., p. 722).

As a postfeminist woman, the female speaker regards femininity as a physical asset and encourages other women to use it at their benefit. Women thus can possess power over men because men’s desire for women’s body make them helplessly inferior (Bellafante, 1998, p. 58). She then says to other women that if you want to keep your men in your arms, you must act like you are the other women or a mistress. You must always take care of your body and keep your house clean and smell nice. This way, men will not get bored of you. Verses “And when her old man comes to call / He finds her waiting like a lonesome queen / Cause to be by her side / It’s such a change from old routine” and “But the other woman will always cry herself to sleep / The other woman will never have his love to keep / And as the years go by the other woman / Will spend her life alone, alone” exhibits stereotypical compulsions towards women. The female speaker sincerely lives up to this stereotypical standard. She suggests other women to patiently wait and passionately attend to their men’s need. According to Prabasmoro (p. 2), women must arouse men by being wild and naughty on bed, like a personal prostitute for her man. That ploy is the only way to keep men satisfied and ensure them stay away from having a mistress. The female speaker probably appears to be in a dominated

position of the relationship, but she actually takes advantage from it.

As the result of male domination, women often face violence. **Physical violence**, which causes the bodily injuries, and **psychological violence**, which emotional harms, are told in “Ultraviolence”. The female speaker’s experience of being in a relationship with a violent man is showed in the verse “This is ultraviolence / ultraviolence / ultraviolence / ultraviolence / I can hear sirens, sirens / He hit me and it felt like a kiss / I can hear violence, violence / Give me all of that ultraviolence.” This title of both the song and album is a combination of two words. The word ‘ultra’ means extreme or extremely, while ‘violence’ means actions intended to hurt people (Landau, 2000, pp. 243-61). The phase ‘ultraviolence’ thus expresses an extreme violence, to the extent that she needs an ambulance to save her life.

In addition, the female speaker tries to draw a fine line between the pains from loving hard and getting beaten. As elaborated in the lines “Heaven is on earth / I will do anything for you, babe / Blessed is this union / Crying tears of gold, like lemonade,” she is abusively and repeatedly beaten by her man, yet she receives that willingly. Although she might seem like a punching bag, both she and the man take the violence as an expression of love, in this case a sour yet sweet kiss. She understands that love never goes effortlessly because there will always be sacrifices and compromises, which can be felt in lines “Cause I’m your jazz singer / And you’re my cult leader / I love you forever/ I love you forever.” She thus strives to enjoy the sadism from her man that she might eventually turn into a masochist as she begs him to give her more violence. This elucidation contradicts

the feminist stance on healthy relationship, which is strongly against domestic violence. Meanwhile, postfeminism promotes an individual right of freedom for woman to do anything she desires to achieve sexual pleasure, without no pressure or force.

Furthermore, the psychological violence is expressed in the verses, such as “He used to call me DN / That stood for deadly nightshade / Cause I was filled with poison / But blessed with beauty and rage” and “He used to call me poison / Like I was Poison Ivy / I could have died right there / Cause he was right beside me / Jim raised me up / He hurt me but it felt like true love / Jim taught me that / Loving him was never enough.” It is apparent that the female speaker suffers psychological violence from her man, in form of verbal abuse. She is blatantly parallelized with deadly nightshade and poison ivy. The former is a highly poisonous plant, while the latter is a plant that causes a rash if it is touched, and they symbolized deception, danger and death (Boddy-Evans, par. 8). The parallelization is clearly a degrading remark attributing her as a dangerous creature whom shall be kept at distant. Her man’s verbal abuse obviously causes her an emotional breakdown, yet she thinks of it as a small price to pay for affection, and she endures. All of physical violence, emotional invalidation and power imbalance, she remains adoring her dominating abuser. The more violent he is, the more love she gains.

Another kind of violence is done sexually. It is when a woman receives an unwanted sexual act or remark from a man. According to the Advocates for Human Rights website, feminist activists explicate that sexual harassment is not a way to express sexual desire, but rather is a means by which

men declare power over women through threat or acts of violence, the perpetuation of gender stereotypes and economic control (par. 5). Hence, women often face sexual hostility, in the workplace as a manifestation of power relation. The female speaker’s tale about **sexual violence** described in “Fucked My Way Up to the Top.” The verse “I fucked my way up to the top / This is my show / I fucked my way up to the top / Go, baby, go” apparently illustrates her effort to succeed in music industry. In climbing up the social ladder to get to the position she wants, she has to face the phase of being sexually harassed. When a high-powered studio mogul makes sexual advances, she seizes the moment as a stepping-stone for her musical career.

Different from feminist perspective, postfeminism does not presumptuously victimize women who are involved in a sexual advance and emplace them as sexual objects. They are sexual beings free to use their body in any way they desire, including as an asset to improve their lives. It means that any case of sexual advance is a two-way street, and women should also be considered as the decision maker (Rich, 2015, par. 5). These following lines verify this intent “Life is awesome, I confess/ What I do, I do best/ You got nothing, I got tested/ And I’m best, yes/ Lay me down tonight in my linen and curls / Lay me down tonight, Riviera girls” and “I’m a dragon, you’re a whore / Don’t even know what you’re good for / Mimicking me is a fucking bore to me / But babe / Lay me down tonight in my diamonds and pearls / Tell me songs at night about your favorite girl.” The female speaker is thus able to enjoy the pleasure of life. She proudly proclaims her accomplishment from capitalizing her sexuality, while other girls are stupid by not

doing so. Her liberated attitude is the embodiment of the absolute women's liberation proposed by postfeminism.

Following this new perspective of woman's liberation, disputes from conservative feminists upsurge. Insisting its values on gender equality between women and men, they strongly resist and repudiate male domination over women. However, as a 21st century American woman, Del Rey's view on how **women's response** to men's dominating conducts should be has shifted. Her idea of a true feminist is "a woman who feels free enough to do whatever she wants" (Lafarge, 2014, par. 5). She thus rebuttals to conservative feminists whom read her lyrics on *Ultraviolence* as anti-feminist through "Brooklyn Baby." The female speaker's relationship is criticized by feminists for being unhealthy and ill-suited. These following verses express her awareness of postfeminist position in the eye of feminism.

They say I'm too young to love you / I don't know what I need / They think I don't understand / The Freedom land of the seventies / I think I'm too cool to know ya / You say I'm like the ice I freeze / I'm churning out novels like / Beat poetry on Amphetamines
They say I'm too young to love you / They say I'm too dumb to see / They judge me like a picture book / By the colors like they forgot to read / I think we're like fire and water / I think we're like the wind and sea / You're burning up, I'm cooling down / You're up, I'm down / You're blind, I see

The female speaker is judged by the feminists because she is too innocent and foolish to see how toxic both the man and the relationship are. Failing to see the relevance of feminism, she is said to deviate from its value. In fact, she realizes her man's

dominating conducts as well as his obnoxious emotional state, which enables her to balance him. For her, every relationship has the luxury to define their own rules as long as consensual agreement from both parties involved. Postfeminists then argue that they understand how feminism worked in the early period of its emergence. As the time goes by, the changing condition of woman demands the renewal of woman movement.

Unfortunately, this renewal does not continue the conservative perspective, but rather counterclockwise it. The differences of their stances cause the crash of the two activists. The conservatives tend to be rigid in gaining the goal of gender equality. They become more critical of men's claims to power and domination (Aronson, 2003, p. 904). While the progressives prefer to be more casual in promoting women's freedom and most importantly do not alienate man. Accordingly, the progressive generation bears new movement that appropriate to be applied for their era. Verse "I'm talking about my generation / Talking about that newer nation / And if you don't like it / You can beat it / Beat it, baby / You never liked the way I said it / If you don't get it, then forget it / Cause I don't have to fucking explain it" explicitly demonstrates this generation gap of women. The female speaker assumes that it is fine if the conservatives might not understand how the progressive generation approaches male domination. For them, it is the personal choice of the conservative feminists to make decision upon the issue.

CONCLUSION

The feminist movements are said to have served their purposes and achieved equality, empowerment and emancipation for women.

America thus enters the era of postfeminism. A redefined image of independent and free-spirited yet feminine women is brought through popular cultural products, creating a shift on the view of 21st century American women. The lyrics of songs compiled in Lana Del Rey’s *Ultraviolence* album express women’s response on male domination.

McRobbie’s notion on double entanglement allows this study to borrow the feminist concept of male domination. The female speaker of the lyrics comprehend that her men’s conducts are dominating her, yet she receives them with a manner full of desire. There are five male dominating conducts found in the lyrics: 1) marginalization in “Sad Girl”; 2) subordination in “Shades of Cool”; 3) stereotype in “The Other Woman”; 4) physical and psychological violence in “Ultraviolence”, sexual violence in “Fucked My Way Up to the Top”; 5) domestic workload in “Old Money”. Meanwhile, the women’s response toward male domination is expressed in “Brooklyn Baby”.

The way progressive postfeminists approach male domination is different from the conservative feminists. From the postfeminist perspective, every party in a relationship has the freedom to define their own domestic rules as long as consensual agreement. Women also have the personal right to circumscribe her role and position in any relationship she is in. The shifting response toward men’s dominating conducts embraces the progressive postfeminism values to uphold the individual liberation to be oneself and has the final decision over their own choice.

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BANGTAN SONYEONDAN (BTS) AS NEW AMERICAN IDOL

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ABSTRACT

South Korean pop songs or colloquially K-pop has spread globally. America also has a massive impact on this K-pop wave phenomenon. America now gives its enormous attention to the Bangtan Sonyeondan group or BTS group because this K-pop group is prevalent and becomes the new idol in America. In the beginning, K-pop is not successful, but until BTS comes and becomes a global sensation there. This paper tries to analyze which factors enable BTS to be the new idol in America. The writer uses a qualitative method to conduct the data and reception theory from Stuart Hall in the analysis. This analysis results in BTS, as the most popular K-pop group in America nowadays, has two factors that enable them to dominate American fans. The first one is through their androgyny physical appearance that redefines American traditional macho masculinity. The second one is through messages in their songs that raise social issues and mental health problems, helping their fans survive in their harsh lives.

Keywords: *BTS; decoded; encoded; k-pop; reception theory*

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INTRODUCTION

South Korean popular music (known colloquially as K-Pop) is a musical genre that incorporates various styles. Actually, K-pop constitutes the hybridity or combination between modern Korean style in performance such as visualization, dance move, fashion, and talents from the idol with Western sound and African-American influence such as Hip-hop, R&B, Jazz, disco, etc. (Leung, 2012, pp. 2-3).

From the beginning K-pop was not really successful in penetrating America especially in North America until singer Park Jae Sang or his stage name as PSY made his song booming in some countries, "it penetrated America, K-pop was successful in North America because of "Gangnam Style" song from PSY" (Dal, 2008, p. 405). After this success, other K-pop groups such as Big Bang, Super Junior, Girls Generation, EXO, and lately BTS start their debut in America.

Recently, the K-pop group that has a massive success in penetrating the American music market is "Bangtan Sonyeondan" or BTS. BTS is a boy K-pop group that debuted in 2013. There are seven members of this group. They are RM or Kim Nam Joon as the leader and main rapper, Kim Seok Jin as visual and sub-vocalist, Suga or Min Yoongi as a lead rapper, Jung Ho Seok or J-Hope as rapper and dancer, Park Jimin as sub-vocalist and dancer, Kim Taehyung as sub-vocalist and dancer, and Jungkook as the golden youngest member or "golden maknae" in Korean because he is the multi-talented person as the main vocalist, dancer and also sometimes rapper. At the beginning of their journey, being a boy group in South Korea is tough. It is because they are from a small entertainment label named Big Hit Entertainment. Commonly, in South Korea, if a K-pop group is from a small entertainment label, it is impossible for the group to compete with other groups from big and notable entertainment labels such as the so-called big three entertainment as YG Entertainment, SM Entertainment, and JYP Entertainment. They were ignored for two years because of it and almost banned their group. However, they still tried to stay together in reaching their dreams as singers. Finally, they achieved their dream through hardship and showed their talent by performing and winning in Billboard Music Awards as *Top Social Artist* and *Top Duo Group* category.

This K-pop boy band group started entering the Billboard chart through their song "I Need You" released in 2015. After their first step entering the Billboard music chart Hot 100, their next songs improve extremely into the first number on iTunes chart, such as DNA in 73 countries in the world (IPac, 2017, December 20). Their performance also helped their success and their win in *Billboard Music*

Awards in 2017, 2018, and 2019 as *Top Social Artist*, which back then was won by Justin Bieber from 2011 until 2016. From their first performance in 2017, they started to be the global phenomenon and they started to be invited in many variety-shows in America, such as *Jimmy Kimmel*, *The Ellen Show*, *Good Morning America*, and others. Besides performing in many talk show and awards in America, BTS also won some awards category such as *Top Social Artist (2017, 2108, 2019)* and *Top Duo Group category (2019)* in Billboard Music Awards, *Favorite Social Artist*, *Tour of the Year* and *Favorite Top Duo or Group Pop/Rock* in American Music Awards, *Fan Fave Duo or Group (2018)*, *Best Boy Band (2018 and 2019)* and *Best Fan ARMY (2019)* in iHeartRadio Music Awards, etc. They are also successful with their world tour "Love Yourself" and "Speak Yourself" in America recently. It can be seen from their ticket that has been sold out in few minutes in tickets sales such as in Oracle Arena, Oakland; Staples Center, Los Angeles; Rose Bowl Stadium, Los Angeles; City Field, New York; Metlife Stadium, New Jersey; and Soldier Field, Chicago (*BTS World Tour 2018-2019*).

Based on Stuart Hall, traditionally, the process of communication is circulated between the sender/message/receiver. The sender here is the producer or the encoder that produces a message and has his own assumption about the audience as the receiver or the decoder; "They draw topics, treatments, agendas, events, personnel, images of the audience, 'definitions of the situation' from the wider socio-cultural and political system of which they are only a differentiated part" (Hall, 1973, p. 387). A message then can be defined or has an effect when it has been perceived as a meaningful discourse and meaningfully decoded by the audience. That de-code has

effects such as influencing, entertaining, instructing, or persuading with complex perceptual, cognitive, emotional, ideological, or behavioral consequences. However, in decoding a message, it has a different response from the audience.

There are four stages of the communication process which are the crucial and distinctive moment in determining whether the message can be fully decoded by the audience or not. They are production, circulation, distribution/consumption, and reproduction stage (Hall, 1980, p. 117). The first stage is the production stage. It is where the encoding message takes place. The producer encodes the message by drawing the society's dominant ideologies, such as the dominant beliefs and values. The second stage is the circulation stage. It is the manner how the message is transmitted. How the circulated message influences the audience's receptions. The third stage is the distribution or consumption stage. This is the decoding/interpreting process toward the message by the audience which is a really complex process. The last is the reproduction stage. After the audience has decoded or interpreted the message based on his or her experience, belief, and value, he or she gives a reaction after consuming the message in this stage.

In the decoding process, there are three types of reception of the audience. First is dominant or preferred reading. It is when the audience accepts the message clearly and the same with the purpose of producer encodes if the audience is in the same culture. Thus, the message theme is relevant to the audience. The second is negotiated reading. This reading is when the audience accepts what the producer encodes through the text or message partially

and the audience has her or his view in decoding the message. The audience can have different culture but they try to accept what the producer wants to deliver via text or message. However, this attempt is done only when it can still be accepted by their ideological thought. The last one is the oppositional reading. This reading occurs when the audience rejects the preferred reading and creates their own meaning of the message or text because of the different cultures, beliefs, and values. It occurs when the theme of the message is controversial (Hall, 1973, pp. 13-19).

This analysis tries to disclose the audience reception on BTS—as Korean boy group—impact in American society. It means that this analysis using a transnational perspective that studies America by looking beyond its border. Transnational perspective offers the crossroads result in the process from historical roots of multidirectional flows of people, ideas, good, social, political, cultural, etc. As Fishkin stated that this crossroad might be “outside the geographical and political boundaries of the United States as inside them” (2005, p. 22).

DISCUSSION

The Appealing Appearance of BTS Members to the American Audience

It is a fact that the competition among the idol group in South Korea is very tight. Once someone becomes an idol in a boy group, they have to maintain appearance because this is the priority seen by fans preceding the talent and the work. Their first debut event is when they attended and performed at Billboard Music Awards. They are found attractive in America because of their different physical appearance and they also redefine American masculinity. In that event, they wore a black suit with accessories such as necklace, ring, and earrings

(as seen in Figure 1), and lately, they still raise the biggest fan in America with their song



Figure 1: BTS Red Carpet at Billboard Music Awards (Shearer, 2017)

In their song concept and performance, they can wear pink suits, accessories such as ring, necklace, and earring, even makeup and they also have no beard, flawless skin, and small face while American masculinity traditionally deals with macho-masculine such as in Marvel's heroes movie. They leave the typical "toxic masculinity" which is associated with "suppressing emotions or masking distress," "maintaining an appearance of hardness" and using "violence as an indicator of power," as conceptualized by *the New York Times*" (Pham, 2019). If a man does not possess those characteristics, it can be concluded that he is feminine or weak in western culture. In contrast, according to CedarBoughSaeji, a Korean culture professor at Indiana University Bloomington, in Korea, there is a term named "kkonminam" means "flower boy" which refers to "androgyny" where a young man who gives more attention with grooming and fashion. If a man is called "kkonminam" so he will be happy because it is a compliment.

In America, neither young guys nor the western pop stars apply makeup. It makes BTS' appearance more attractive, although it is girly. It can be seen from the rise of their fans'

"Boy With Luv" ft. Halsey in the very feminine atmosphere (as in Figure 2).



Figure 2: BTS Music Video Ft. Halsey "Boy With Luv" (Big Hit Label, 2019)

fandom there. For instance, Marlena. She is one of BTS fans. She tells Style Caster (style news, fashion trends, and beauty tips platform): "I found them more appealing. There was more effort behind their outfits. There was more thought into how they looked, whether it's their styling or their makeup. I didn't see it as a weird thing at all" (Pham, 2019). Thus, there is a change in seeing the typical traditional masculinity in American society today, especially the young generation who really falls to BTS' attractive appearance.

The Attractiveness of BTS' Story to American Audience

BTS constitutes seven members and some of them write and produce the songs. Being idol in South Korea means they have to be able to dance and sing but it is not a priority that the idol has to be able to write and produce the songs. In contrast, BTS, from the beginning, have their self-produced songs mostly by RM, Suga, and J-Hope. They are BTS song lyricists and producers. However, the rest of the members also have the solo songs that they write mainly in the "Wings" album released in 2016 which told about their feeling at that time, especially their struggle to pursue their dream

as singers and idols in South Korea. Their songs are based on what they experience in their life.

In the first album, they were in the high school era so it was about them being teenagers that experienced love and did not know about their dreams (*Skool Luv Affair*). Then in the next album, it is mostly about their dream that seems too hard to reach and support each other to achieve it (*The Beautiful Moment in Life part 1 & 2*). They also share their hardship to accept themselves and recently, they release their acceptance about themselves in their album (*Love Yourself and Persona*). They write and share their own story how they reach their dreams and accept themselves.

BTS also promotes the ‘Love Myself’ campaign that aims for anti-violence and self-confidence in collaborating with UNICEF and becoming a youth representative at the United Nations. Their fans in America fall into BTS because of the way BTS members share their stories through good music and the right message mostly criticizes social issues such as social pressure and depression. There are so many lyrics about it such as in *Am I Wrong* song where “BTS call out socially unconscious people, confronting that the world is going crazy in the lyric “If what you see on the news is nothing to you... you're not normal” and *The Last* song by Suga,” he addresses mental illness in a frank and honest manner which is uncommon in K-pop. The lyric is “On the other side of the famous idol rapper stands my weak self, it's a bit dangerous/depression, OCD, they keep coming back again from time to time” (SBS Pop Asia HQ, 2018).

These are what their fans (called ARMY) said about their music lyrics. First, came from their fans in City Field concert on 16th

November 2018 through MTV news interview. Edison Zheng, ARMY:

I started listening to BTS last summer and I was infatuated with the choreography, I just decided that I wanted to try dance. And now like two years later I'm obsessed with them. I'm a teenager and I struggle with a lot of emotional stuff, like personal problems. Music nowadays, it's cool, and it's good, but there is nothing like BTS. It directly talks to a teenager. Depression, anxiety, social problems, all that, I suffer from, I deal with. Every day at my high school, during lunch period or gym, I would go upstairs to this empty room, and I would dance there for 45 minutes to an hour, every single day (MTVNews, 2018, 05:29-06-06).

Emy Ibarra, founder of US BTS ARMY (fan club):

To me their music is everything. It came at a point in my life when I did not know who I was as person, I did not know what I wanted to do with my life, but to have these boys just come out be like, hey, it's okay, you'll figure it out, don't worry about it, just do you and do the best that you can, was really, really great (MTVNews, 2018, 06-06:06-24).

Second, a fan who signs a petition in change.org website to Big Hit Entertainment and Powerhouse Life which asks BTS to perform in Southeast USA said that she wanted this K-Pop group to perform there because this K-pop group has helped her in a hard time.

I'm signing because i am a hard core BTS fan. I am 54 years old and it has been my dream the last three years to see BTS in concert. My daughter loves BTS also and I would love to be able to attend a BTS concert with her. I love these boys with all my heart. And their music has pulled me through some really hard times. I have watched all their videos since their debut and pray that I will get to see them in person. They are very considerate of their

fans. It is easier for us to go to Atlanta Georgia than any of the other concerts. Please bring them to Atlanta for their southern fans too (Elliot, 2018).

From what they admit as fans, it can be seen that only BTS can get their attention than the other K-pop groups. It is because BTS has their style in delivering their authentic message that they experience from their life through their music which raises a different issue as K-pop idol brings commonly about love. Thus, it can be seen that BTS is like the savior, the hero who helps them survive with their social problems and mental illness since it is a big issue in America. If it is related to the mental health issue, in America, anxiety disorders are the most common mental illness. It affects 40 million adults in the United States, 18 years old and older (18.1% of the population) every year (Anxiety and Depression Association of America, n.d.).

Depression, in general, about 1 out of every 6 adults will have depression at some time in their life. It affects about 16 million American adults every year. Commonly, anxiety disorders often go hand in hand with depression. People who have anxiety disorders struggle with intense and uncontrollable feelings of anxiety, fear, worry, and/or panic, and people who have depression show more than just feeling down or having a bad day. It is a sad mood that lasts for a long time and interferes with everyday life (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, n.d.).

CONCLUSION

BTS, as the new generation of K-pop group from South Korea, has become the new American Idol and has had a massive impact in America. Their good acceptance in this country has changed the perception of a part young

generation in seeing masculinity in America and the view of K-pop culture itself through their androgyny appearance. In traditional American masculinity, males have to be macho but because of BTS, they redefine this masculinity with their flower boy appeal. Moreover, through their songs which lift about social problems and mental illness issue, they also become a hero and savior to give their fans strength in combating these issues, which is a crucial problem in America, especially in the young generation and adult.

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RACISM IN THE LAST DECADE OF HOLLYWOOD COMEDY MOVIES

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ABSTRACT

The United States is considered to have entered the post-racial era in the 21st century, where racial preference, discrimination, and prejudice towards minorities, such as African Americans, are supposed to no longer exist. As one of the media that reflected American society, Hollywood movies tried to eliminate the discussion on race and racism. It can be seen in Hollywood movies that begin to eliminate the negative images and stereotypes of African Americans. However, it does not mean that racism vanished from the Hollywood movie industry, especially in comedy movies. Comedy movies are one of the genres that often involve African-American actors and actresses. Their stereotypes are also commonly used to make humor in the narrative. Therefore, this genre is closely related to racism. However, comedy movies in the last decade, such as *Evan Almighty* (2007), *Wild Hogs* (2007), *Meet Dave* (2008), *The Maiden Heist* (2009), *Last Vegas* (2013), *Someone Marry Barry* (2014), and *Going in Style* (2017), are not showing any racism on the surface. By using Interdisciplinary as the approach, this research attempts to see how Hollywood presents racism in comedy movies, especially in the last decade. The representation theory is employed to interpret the images, scenes, and dialogues from seven selected comedy movies concerning racism. Meanwhile, the theory of humor is used to find out how racism makes humor occur through African-American characters. The finding of this research indicates that negative images and stereotypes of African Americans are still sustained in Hollywood movies. These depictions are shown covertly. Meanwhile, overt racism indicates that the African American characters are used to make humor occur in comedy movies.

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INTRODUCTION

Action or adventure and comedy movie are two top genres that most often feature the African American actors. There were only 25.9 % underrepresented racial/ ethnic groups' characters in action or adventure genre and 26.4 % in comedy genre across the 100 top movies of 2007, 2010, 2014 and 2016 (Smith et al., 2017, p. 25). Although the number remains small, comedy is one of the genres that involve many underrepresented racial/ethnic groups, one of which is African American. The number of African American within the comedic sphere is much larger than in any other genre (Mitchell, 2005, p. 5). African American involvement in comedy has started from minstrel show through the Blackface characters. The aspect of African American life such as their physical appearance, the way they dress, their vernacular language or even their culture is displayed as a joke for White audiences. Around the 1970s and 1980s, many African American characters appeared on the American primetime television which dominantly on comedy program (Ford, 1997, pp. 266-267). Situation comedy program booming at that time which makes the image of African American attached to the comedy. African American stereotype become the important part of comedy because it does not only help to establish instantly recognizable character types, but such character traits and stereotype-based jokes also constitute a source of humor (Park, Gabbadon, Chernin, 2006, p. 158). Thus, it can be said that comedy is one of the genres that is closely related to racism.

However, in the 21st century which is a post-racial era in the United States, racism becomes irrelevant to appear in Hollywood

movies. Therefore, Hollywood has rarely displayed the elements of racism such as racialization, prejudice, and discrimination in its movies including in comedy genre. This can be seen from seven Hollywood comedy films released last ten years which are *Evan Almighty* (2007), *Wild Hogs* (2007), *Meet Dave* (2008), *The Maiden Heist* (2009), *Last Vegas* (2013), *Someone Marry Barry* (2014), and *Going in Style* (2017). The colorblind actors exist in those movies which makes there are no significant differences of the characters based on race. African American actors also get the role as the main characters and supporting characters that also have an important role in those movies, not just the cameo appearance. On the surface, no racism is visible. However, that does not mean these movies do not contain any racism. Therefore, these seven movies are chosen to be the main sources of data in this research to examine the racism in Hollywood comedy movies. This research focuses on examining how Hollywood comedy movies represent racism and analyzing how humor represents racism through the characters of African American.

This is inductive qualitative research which mainly focuses on library research. John W. Creswell explains in his book *Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative and Mix Method Approaches* (2009):

Qualitative research is a means for exploring and understanding the meaning individuals or groups ascribe to a social or human problem. The process of research involves emerging questions and procedures, data typically collected in the participant's setting, data analysis inductively building from particulars to general themes, and the researcher making interpretations of the meaning of the data. (p. 4)

The purpose of this study is to find out how Hollywood represents racism in the 21st century comedy movies. Since movie is a part of popular culture which encompasses the everyday life of people and society, thus inductive qualitative research is appropriate to be applied because it will provide a deep analysis seeing how Hollywood represents racism.

Furthermore, qualitative research is also known as an interpretive study which means that this research requires an interpretative activity in order to help the researcher gain a better understanding of the object that being studied. Creswell (2009) explains that:

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. (p. 176)

From the explanation above, the researcher makes an interpretation from the data. The data is divided into two categories: primary data and secondary data. The main source of data in the research are taken from the last decade Hollywood comedy movies: *Evan Almighty* (2007), *Wild Hogs* (2007), *Meet Dave* (2008), *The Maiden Heist* (2009), *Last Vegas* (2013), *Someone Marry Barry* (2014) and *Going in Style* (2017). These selected movies are chosen to examine how Hollywood represents racism in comedy movies. The secondary data consist of written materials which include any books, journals, articles, research papers, e-books, e-journals and other movies that can support the analysis in this research. These secondary data complete the information about racism in Hollywood comedy movies. These primary and secondary data are watched and read

closely to build a deep understanding of the topic in this research.

This research uses Interdisciplinary as the approach to analyze the data. Theory of Representation will be used to gain a deep analysis of the representation of racism in Hollywood comedy movies. The main data in this research are the dialogues, scenes and images from the Hollywood comedy movies in the last decade which are: *Evan Almighty* (2007), *Wild Hogs* (2007), *Meet Dave* (2008), *The Maiden Heist* (2009), *Last Vegas* (2013), *Someone Marry Barry* (2014), and *Going in Style* (2017). These movies are used as a medium to interpret racism through dialogues, scenes, and images which serve as the language. Furthermore, humor is considered as a device that has the potential to strengthen racism. Thus, the Violation theory of Humor will be used to reveal racism in humor towards the role of African Americans from these selected comedy movies.

DISCUSSION

The representation African American in 21st century Hollywood comedy movies began to vary. They are not only becoming the antagonist or supporting characters, but also the main characters even with the positive images. However, it does not mean there is no any racism, especially in comedy movies. In the 21st century, Hollywood comedy movies tend to deliver racism covertly. Meanwhile, racism that overtly represented tends to make humor occur. It will be explained in the points below.

The Logic of Humor

Comedy is a genre of movie which is designed to produce the laugh of the

audiences. It means through the comedy they can enjoy the humor, feeling amused and entertained. Sen in her journal *Humor Analysis and Qualitative Research* (2012) states that humor primarily consists of jokes (spoken or written words) and action (describable through words) which elicit laughter or generate merriment (p. 1). Filmsite (n.d.) explains that in order to create humor, comedy movie usually exaggerates the situation, the language, action, and characters which created from the observation of the deficiencies, foibles, and frustrations of life, providing merriment and a momentary escape from day-to-day life. Thus, it can be said that humor in comedy created from the things that experienced in the daily life. As Neale and Krutnik state in his book *Popular Film and Television Comedy* (1990) that:

...comedy was for centuries the most appropriate genre for representing the lives, not of the ruling classes, of those with extensive power, but of the 'middle' and 'lower' orders of society, those whose power was limited and local, and whose manners, behavior, and values were considered by their 'betters' to be either trivial, or vulgar, or both. (p. 12)

It can be said that comedy genre usually presents a lighthearted story about the everyday life of common people and humor in the narrative comes from the uncommon things that should not happened in certain situation.

Most of the comedy movies can be enjoyed by all ages. The narratives also usually give a certain message such as the value of family and friendship, love, and so on. However, sometime comedy movies use the controversial things as the material to create humor such as the sexual orientation and race. Since this research focuses on racism, thus the discussion will focus on

racial representation, in this case African Americans, in Hollywood comedy movies.

In the 21st century, those stereotypical characters of African Americans slowly disappear. Johnson in his thesis *Race and Representation in Friday Night Lights* (2012) states that the representation of race in the contemporary setting is handled more suggestively, indirectly, and implicitly which reflects the new ways of thinking about race that is prevalent in the 21st century (p. 100). It means that Hollywood tends to not present racial differences between the characterizations of white people and the other minority society such as African American. It also means that the old stereotypes of African American are no longer displayed in the Hollywood movies since it is not relevant with the current condition in the society. Stereotypes, however, is something important in the comedy movies. Park, Gabbadon, and Chernin in their journal *Naturalizing Racial Differences Through Comedy* (2006) state that stereotype help to establish instantly recognizable character types and such character traits and stereotype-based jokes also constitute a source of humor. Comedy movies also sometimes invert the stereotypes to generate humor (p. 158-159).

Although the old stereotypes of African American are rarely depicted explicitly in the 21st century Hollywood movies, it does not mean that African American characters are portrayed as a more positive character. The representation of African American, in fact, is still related to the negative characterizations. Besides the characterizations of African American, humor in Hollywood comedy movies also takes part in representing racism. To examine the representation of racism in

the 21st century Hollywood comedy movies which related to the humor, Veatch's Violation theory is employed. He explains that there are three necessary and jointly conditions for humor perception. First, Violation (V) which is the condition where the perceiver has in mind a view of the situation as constituting a violation of a subjective moral principle. Second, Normal (N) which is the condition where the perceiver has in mind a predominating view of the situation as being normal. The last one is Simultaneity which is the condition where

the N and V understanding is present in the mind of the perceiver at the same instant in time (Veatch, 1998, p. 163-164). Necessary means that if one of the conditions above is absent, then humor perception will also absent. Jointly sufficient means that if all of the conditions above are present, then humor perception will also be present.

Furthermore, Veatch proposes the three-level scale of how strong perceiver can perceive humor which can be seen in the table below:

| Level | Logic | Commitment | Perceiver | | |
|---------|-------------|------------|-----------|-------------|------------|
| | | | Gets it | Is offended | Sees humor |
| Level 1 | Not-V | None | No | No | No |
| Level 2 | V and N | Weak | Yes | No | Yes |
| Level 3 | V and not-N | Strong | Yes | Yes | No |

Table 1. The three scale of how strong perceiver can perceive humor as proposed by Veatch

The table above shows the level of the strength of the perceiver's affective to the violation and normal condition in humor. The amount of 'normal' information in a joke is important and can have a strong and profound influence on how the perceiver will experience the violation (Mulder & Nijholt, 2002, p. 6). Level 1 shows that if a person feels lack of the attachment to the violation, thus there is no reaction to the joke. It is indicating a normal condition. Level 2 shows that when a person can see the presence of violation but at the same time the violation sees as it is normal, it makes humor occur in that situation. Then, Level 3 shows that when violation predominates and the normality is

absent, thus this situation is pure a violation, not a humor. It can be said that the interpretation of violation needs to be matched by the interpretation of normality in order to make humor occur. Even something that quite offensive or threatening can be made into funny if the joke is told well enough by someone who feels safe which makes the other also feel that it is normal (Veatch, 1998, p. 178). In other words, according Violation theory humor occurs when a person can see the presence of violation and at the same time the violation sees as it is normal. Thus, in order to understand the humor, the Violation theory suggest to discovering the principle which

being violated or a situation that might seem normal in order to get the interpretation why a certain condition is considered being funny which make humor occur.

A Sign of White Supremacy

Gillborn states in his journal *Rethinking White Supremacy* (2006) that white supremacy is conceived as a comprehensive condition whereby the interests and perceptions of white subjects are continually placed center stage and assumed as 'normal' (p. 318). Ansley in *White Supremacy (And What We Should Do about It)* (1997) states that:

By "white supremacy"... I refer instead to a political, economic and cultural system in which whites overwhelmingly control power and material resources, conscious and unconscious ideas of white superiority and entitlement are widespread, and relations of white dominance and non-white subordination are daily reenacted across a broad array of institutions and social settings (p. 592).

In the other words, white supremacy emphasizes the superiority of white people which make them dominate other races. White people enjoy the privilege of being White without any racial hatred.

White supremacy also related to the concept of the chosen people; a term proposed by John Winthrop. He uses this term to express a concept of belief that Puritans are the chosen people of God. They were chosen to fulfill the task of being an ideal Christian community for the world. Therefore, God will provide protection for His chosen people. In his sermon in *A Model of Christian Charity* which delivered in the Arbella ship on the way to the New World,

Winthrop (1989) says that "For we must consider that we shall be as a city upon a hill. The eyes of all people are upon us" (p. 41). The words "city upon a hill" illustrate that Puritans are in the highest position from the others which indicates that white people are the chosen one who is better, stronger and higher. This concept is still attached to white people until today which makes them always have a privilege as being Whites in the United States.

Although Hollywood movies no longer discuss race and racism due to the social condition of American society today, there is a possibility that Hollywood comedy movies tend to portray White as a more positive character than African American. The roles of African American in Hollywood comedy movies can be considered as the representation of equality between white people and African Americans. African American often depicted in the interracial friendship with Whites. This depiction is common in the 21st century Hollywood comedy movies. It is considered as one of the best ways to involve African American characters in comedy movies because the depiction of interracial friendship will eliminate stereotype and racial differences between Whites and African American characters. This interracial friendship between Whites and African Americans can be seen in *Wild Hogs*, *The Maiden Heist*, *Last Vegas*, *Someone Marry Barry* and *Going in Style*. All of these movies tell the story about the friendship of four or three men who became the main characters.

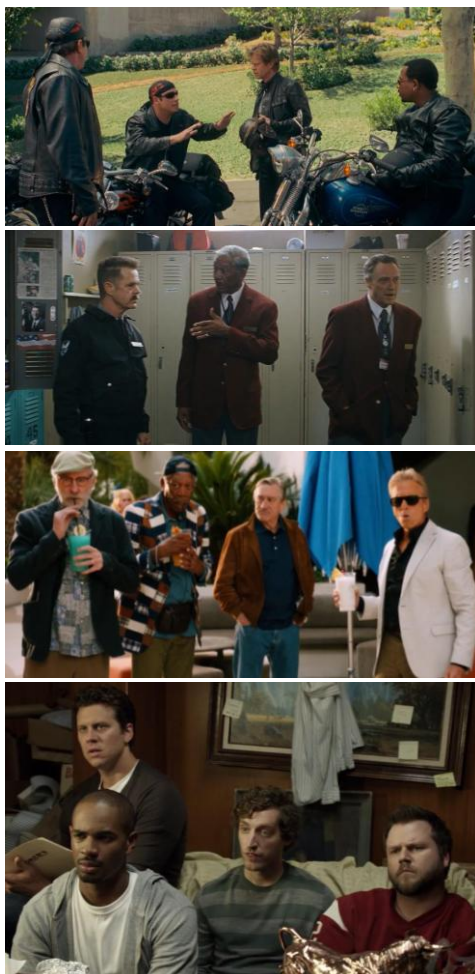
Among that friendship, there is only one African American. Two or three White characters are not equal to an African American character. Nittle in his article *Why*

Interracial Friendships are Rare among Both Children and Adults (2017) states that in reality, most Whites do not have African American friends. Interracial friendship relatively uncommon in the United States because the society remains racially stratified which make difficult for the public to form cross-race relationships. Furthermore, Park, Gabbadon and Chernin in their journal *Naturalizing Racial Differences Through Comedy* (2006) state that the conventional narrative that shows the interracial friends, where the characters of different races develop trust and friendship, can be seen as an imaginary utopia in which racial differences do not matter (p. 159).



Figure 1. Interracial friendship in *Wild Hogs*, *The Maiden Heist*, *Last Vegas*, *Someone Marry Barry* and *Going in Style*

The character of African American also presented in the interracial marriage which can be seen in *Someone Marry Barry*. Interracial marriage between African American and White indicates that there is a shifting of attitude and behaviors toward the minority people in the United States. The presence of African American is eventually accepted by Whites which show that there is no more racial preference among them. Hollywood tends to present it in a love affair between African American and White. As Troy states in *Are Interracial Relationships Over Represented in Film?* (2012) that there are far more interracial couples in movies than there are African American couples and further the interracial couples most often depicted as African American with White. However, the number of African Americans who married White in the United States is the fewest. Kellogg in his article *The Changing Face of Seeing Race* (2011) states that according to the government survey, the marriages between African American and Whites are slowly growing and remain relatively rare. In 2010, just 0.3 % of White men in marriages were married to African American women and just 0.8 % of White women in marriages were married to African American men. By contrast, 2.1 % of White men in marriages were married to Asian or Native American women and 1.4 % of married White women had an Asian or Native American spouse. Both of these depiction



shows that African American characters in comedy movies are used to represent the equality among the society which in fact, it turns the opposite.



Figure 2. Interracial marriage in *Someone Marry Barry*

Since all of these movies are directed by White directors, there is a tendency for them to represent African Americans as the lower-class characters. This representation can be seen from the differences occupations in the roles of African Americans and white people. According to Boundless in *The Lower Class* (2016), the lower class basically refers to the society at the bottom of the socioeconomic hierarchy. That society is generally had low education, low income, and low status jobs. Based on that explanation, the lower-class characterization of African American in Hollywood comedy movies can be considered as the character that plays as the lower-class workers. It can be seen in *Wild Hogs* (2007) through the character of Bobby, starred by Martin Lawrence, who works as plumber.



Figure 3. Bobby works as a plumber in *Wild Hogs*

Furthermore, Gates (2016) states that there are two nations within African America based on the problem of income inequality. It is not between African American and white

people, but between African American haves and have-nots. Lower class and middle-class African Americans are differentiated by their economic and social status. Middle class African Americans are those who more educated and have better jobs. It can be seen in *Last Vegas* and *Someone Marry Barry* where the African American characters are depicted as the working men. However, in the United States, both lower- and middle-class African Americans are still considered as the lower-class society due to the fact that their economic prospects are worse than Whites.



Figure 4. Middle class African American in *Last Vegas* and *Someone Marry Barry*

The lower-class character of African American also can be seen in *The Maiden Heist* and *Going in Style*. Both of these movies are feature African American characters as the thief. In the United States, the image of African Americans is still associated with the crime. Revise Sociologystates in *Social Class and Crime* (2016) that crime is committed by the lower social class, those with an unskilled background. This act can happen because they had fewer opportunities to achieve material success through legitimate means. Thus, the criminal characters of African

American can be considered that they are depicted as the lower-class society.

Charles: You know, we don't have to let them leave. I mean, if we're serious, we can just make them ours.

Roger: What are you saying?

Charles: What do you think I'm saying?

Roger: I'm not sure. For a second, I thought you were suggesting that we steal the paintings.

Charles: And if I am?

Roger: We're security guards. We're supposed to stop crime.

Charles: You don't think this is a crime? Do you know how far Denmark is?

Roger: I don't know, Charlie. We're not thieves. And besides, you and me...I don't see how we could do it (*The Maiden Heist* 00:12:12).

Furthermore, a happy ending story is the important formula in the comedy genre. As Neale and Krutnik explain in their book *Popular Film and Television Comedy* (1990) that "A comedy is not just 'light' and 'amusing', it is marked also by a 'happy ending' and by its concern with the representation of 'everyday life'. This has always been considered an important aspect of comedy" (p. 11). It shows that besides the funny element, which is the main core of the comedy genre, the happy ending is also important. The happy ending is created as the result of the conflict in the narrative that appears at the end of the story.

There is a tendency that happy ending mostly experienced by Whites characters in the comedy movies. It can be seen in *Evan Almighty*, *Meet Dave*, *The Maiden Heist*, and *Someone Marry Barry*. These movies somehow give a depiction that white people are the one who deserves the happiness. The privilege of being Whites that makes the White characters becomes the one who

considered worth having the happy ending. Although the characters of African American cannot get the happy ending exactly like the characters of White, nobody will question about that. This is further reinforcing by the fact that these movies directed by White directors, which make Whites' privileges are more obvious.

All of the explanation above can be considered as the covert racism. The characters of African American also used to represent the equality among the American society in the form of interracial friendship and interracial marriage. In fact, the number of interracial friendship and interracial marriage between African Americans and Whites in the United States are remaining low. This depiction is considered as the pure violation. Since the normal situation is absent, thus there is no humor that can occur. African American also tends to be represented as the lower-class characters such as plumber, office workers and criminals. Meanwhile, the characters of White are depicted get their privileged as being Whites by own the happy ending. These depictions considered as the normal condition since the American society does look that way. The violation is absent which makes there is no humor that can occur.

It is different when racism is overtly represented which tend to make humor occur in comedy movies. White supremacy makes the character of white people become the superior. Thus, in order to make humor occur, the characters of African American are positioned as the inferior. It is related to the Superiority theory of humor. According to Veatch, Superiority is understood as the humorous condition that happens when someone is responsible for a moral violation

and the perceiver is not. Then, this condition meets for having the feeling of superiority (Veatch, 1998, p. 188). Scheel in her article *Definitions, Theories, and Measurement of Humor* (2017) summed up several definitions of Superiority theory in humor from some expert. She concludes that superiority in humor is the result of disparagement, blunders, and foolishness of another person. People will feel fun, which tends to ridicule, of someone's misfortune or someone who deviates from a given norm (p. 14). Those acts mentioned before can be considered as the violation from a normal condition which makes humor occurs (V) but it does not involve the perceiver (N) which makes the perceiver safe from being violated and feels superior. This kind of humor can be seen in *Wild Hogs* (2007), *Last Vegas* (2013), and *Someone Marry Barry* (2014).

In order to understand the humor, Violation theory suggests to discovering the principle which being violated or a situation that might seem normal from a certain condition. The second option is considered appropriate to be applied in understanding the humor in *Wild Hogs*, *Last Vegas* and *Someone Marry Barry* relating to superiority. All of these movies are mainly focus on the friendship between four people, only one of them is African American. The characters of African American in these movies tend to be depicted as the inferior characters. In fact, it is a general depiction of how African Americans are treated in the society.

Bobby was ridiculed as being a plumber and he also admitted that it was the worst job in *Wild Hogs*. Meanwhile, Desmond became the unemployment because of the fault of Barry in *Someone Marry Barry*. Archie was suspected cheating by the floor manager

named Alan when he actually won in fair and square when playing Blackjack in *Last Vegas*. Their misfortune and foolishness can be regarded as the violation (V). In the other side, the audiences are not involved in this situation and they do not feel any adverse effects from the misfortune and foolishness of the characters of African American in these movies which can be regarded as normal condition (N). Since the general idea of superiority theory is that people will laugh about the shortcomings of the others, thus the misfortunes and foolishness of the characters of African American are meant to create humor that can entertain the audiences. The audiences who enjoy these humors have the feeling of being superior.



Figure 5. Bobby was ridiculed for being a plumber in *Wild Hogs*

Absurdity and Incongruity of Humor in Hollywood Comedy Movies

According to Veatch, Absurdity and Incongruity is understood as a condition where normality and violation of the accepted order of things are simultaneously juxtaposed to generate humor, absurdity and incongruity are certainly present, since "It's okay", and "It's not okay" are incongruous, and believing them both to hold true of one situation is at least apparently absurd (Veatch, 1998, p. 185). This kind of humor can be seen in *Evan Almighty* (2007) and *Meet Dave* (2008). Both of these two comedy movies mainly focus on the miraculous character, God and alien. Absurd and incongruous humor also can be seen in *The Maiden Heist* (2009) and *Going in Style* (2017). Both of these two comedy movies mainly focus on the thievery act. The characters of African American in these movies are taking part in making humor in the narrative.

God in the form African American man in *Evan Almighty* is considered as the violation (V) of the common depiction of God which mostly depicted as male and White (N). The conventional portrayal of God, which is male and White, is considered as the pious God that cannot do such the weird things. As Freedman in his article *Mr. Freeman, You Look Divine* (2003) explains the goal of Steve Oedekerk, the screenwriter, and Tom Shadyac, the director, to cast Freeman is to present God as more personal, less generic and pious. Thus, it can be said that the violation portrayal of God in this movie, in this case African American actor plays as the character of God, is meant to entertain the audiences.

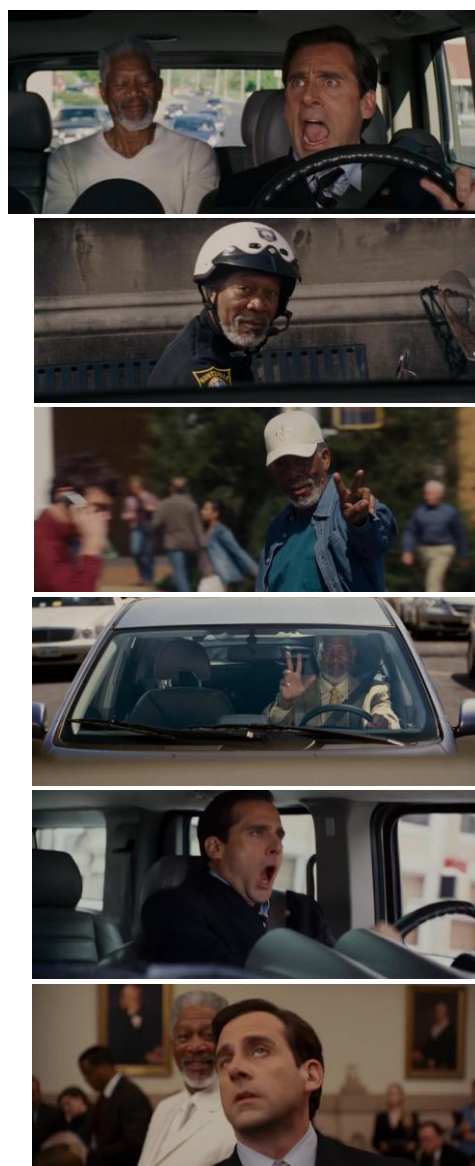


Figure 6. Evan frightened by the presence of God in *Evan Almighty*

Meanwhile humanoid alien in the form of African American man in *Meet Dave* is considered as the violation (V) of common depiction of humanoid alien which often depicted as white people or African Americans in costume or different skin color (N). This character of alien is represented physically as African Americans. However, his behavior is not like the normal humans in general, he has Chinese name, speaks with the standard of American English and he also shows the reversal of stereotypical of the

African Americans and White people. None of those things are emphasizing his identity as the African Americans. Therefore, a mismatch between the physical appearance with the names, attitudes, and behavior of African American character with his cultural identity as African Americans makes the alien characters which played by African American actor in this film can create humor.



Figure 7. The way Dave walk, smile, shake hands and eat ketchup as an alien in *Meet Dave*

Afterwards, the criminal characters of African American in *The Maiden Heist* and *Going in Style* which holding a cotton candy, bring cat, jump into the basket of electric bicycle and using the mummy costume during the thievery act are considered as the violation (V) of the common depiction of the

criminal characters of African American which mostly depicted as the offensive, violent, and considered as the threat characters to others. Stereotypes help to establish instant recognizable characters types. In order to create comedy, sometimes stereotypes need to be inverted (Park, Gabbadon, and Chernin, 2006, pp. 158-159). It can also happen when the features of a certain stereotype are exchanged in reverse. Therefore, the depiction of the criminal characters of African American as explained above can create such humor. It can be said that the violation portrayal of the criminal character of African American is meant to create humor that can entertain the audiences.



Figure 8. Charlie and Willie's appearance as the criminal character in *The Maiden Heist* and *Going in Style*

Meanwhile, covert racism that represented through the miraculous characters of African American tends to not make humor occur. In comedy movies, Hollywood begins to bring the new characterizations of African American. One of them is Magical Negro, a character that has magical powers. With this power, Magical Negro served as the helper for the White characters. This character can be seen in *Evan Almighty* through the character of God. God in this movie is starring by Morgan Freeman, an

African American actor. His role as the character of God begins in *Bruce Almighty* which continues in this spin-off movie. The character of God in this movie is an old man with divine power in the neat white clothes.

God in the form of African American man makes this character indicates that African Americans actor is given a new characterization with a positive image. In the real life, God is always in the highest position which is above the human. Then, the character of God which played by African American actors in this movie indicates that this role makes African American lies in the top position of social strata in society. Meanwhile most of African Americans are usually portrayed as being in the lower social strata below the Whites. Laybourn, Goss and Hughey in their journal *You're Either One of Us or You're Not* (2016) state that "Some scholars conceptualize the racial landscape as a multilayered racial hierarchy or racial continuum wherein other racial groups may act as honorary whites or be triangulated between whiteness and Blackness" (p. 554). The quotation above explains that in the American society, white people always at the top of the racial hierarchy and African American is often delineated at the bottom. However, the character of God in this movie put African American in the higher strata with divine power that can rule white people. This characterization is something new for African American role in the movies since they are always portrayed as the oppressed society. However, this role serves as the Magical Negro character. The main purpose for Magical Negro character is to assist the White character, to help White character discover and utilize their spirituality and to offer a type of "folk wisdom" used to resolve White's dilemma which becomes the main

focus in the movies (Glenn and Cunningham, 2009, p. 138). In *Evan Almighty*, the problem of Evan becomes the main focus in this movie and the character of God will help him to face and solve his problems.

Another role for African American in the 21st century Hollywood comedy movies is the aliens. It can be seen in *Meet Dave* (2008). The alien in this spaceship described as the tiny humanoid creature. They are led by a captain who has the responsibility to control the spaceship as well as the alien crews who operated the spaceship. The spaceship is depicted as an African American man dressed in a neat white suit. Both Captain and spaceship alien is starring by Eddie Murphy. The character of the captain of the alien spaceship is described as the supreme leader who has the power to control all of the alien crew in that spaceship. He is a firm and responsible leader. This characterization is something new for African American role in the movies since there are not many African American who becomes a leader in the United States. However, the character of Captain of the aliens implies that African Americans can be a great leader only in a small sphere. They are also still considered as the others to the white people. Both of the miraculous characters of African American are considered as the pure violation. Since the normal situation is absent, thus there is no humor that can occur.

CONCLUSION

In sustaining racism in comedy movies, Hollywood presents it covertly and overtly. Covert racism in the seven selected comedy movies in this research shows that African Americans are given more positive characterization through the miraculous

characters such as the character of God and Captain of a group of aliens. However, the character of God is considered as the loyal servant for white people. The character of Captain of aliens shows that African Americans can be a great leader only in a small sphere. They are also still considered as the others to the white people. The characters of African American also used to represent the equality among the American society in the form of interracial friendship and interracial marriage. In fact, the number of interracial friendship and interracial marriage between African Americans and Whites in the United States are remaining low. Both of this depiction is considered as the pure violation. Since the normal situation is absent, thus there is no humor that can occur.

African American also tends to be represented as the lower-class characters such as plumber, office workers and criminals. Although African American characters are depicted as the lower class and middle class based on their economic status in the selected comedy movies, their class structures remain the same as the lower class in American society in general. Meanwhile, the characters of White are depicted get their privileged as being Whites by own the happy ending which can be considered as the white supremacy. This is further reinforcing by the fact that these movies directed by White directors, which make Whites' privileges are more obvious. These depictions considered as the normal condition since the American society does look that way. The violation is absent which makes there is no humor that can occur.

Overt racism in the seven selected comedy movies in this research shows that African Americans characters are used as the

violation in order to make absurd and incongruous humor occur. The character of God is presented in the form of African American old man, while the common depiction of God in Hollywood movies is in the form of White man. The character of humanoid Alien is presented in the form of African American man, while the common depiction of the humanoid alien in Hollywood is in the form of White man. The criminal characters of African American are presented as the innocent people who unfamiliar with the criminal acts, while the common depiction of the criminal characters of African American in Hollywood is portrayed as offensive, violent, and dangerous person. All of the violations in these depictions are meant to create the characterization of African American that can entertain the audiences.

The characters of African American also used as the violation in order to make humor occur that related to superiority. Bobby, who was ridiculed as being a plumber, also admitted that it was the worst job in *Wild Hogs*. Desmond became the unemployment because of Barry's fault in *Someone Marry Barry*. Archie was suspected cheating by the floor manager named Alan when he actually won in fair and square in *Last Vegas*. This misfortune and foolishness of the African American characters can be considered as the violation (V) of the normal condition that meant to create humor to entertain the audiences. The audiences who enjoy these humors from the misfortune and foolishness of African American characters have the feeling of being superior. Overt racism that can be seen in all of the depiction of African American above shows that the characters of African American are used to make humor occur in the narrative.

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GUIDELINES FOR AUTHORS

The editor of Rubikon Journal welcomes article submissions in accordance with the following guidelines:

1. Articles have not been published or accepted for publication, or are being considered for publication elsewhere. In addition to the manuscript, a written statement should be attached which clarifies that the article is original and does not contain any elements of plagiarism.
2. Types of article suitable for publication include the following; research report (laboratory, field, archives), conceptual ideas, studies, theory applications.
3. Articles are written in Indonesian or English (preferable) using academic language along with standard academic writing structure and composition. Manuscripts are typed 1,15 spaced in a quarto paper size (A4), between 6000-7000 words in length including references, pictures, and tables.
4. Article should be in essay form which includes:
 - a. title (15-20 words),
 - b. author's name (without academic degree) with an e-mail address and institution's name,
 - c. abstract in English (150-200 words for each) which includes research problem, methods and result,
 - d. keyword in English (5-7 words),
 - e. author's personal information and e-mail address,
 - f. introduction (without subsection, 2-3 pages) which includes background, objectives, methods, and literature reviews/theoretical construct (if needed) of research. The introduction section ends with an emphasis on items to be discussed,
 - g. discussion,
 - h. conclusion, and
 - i. references.
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 - a. book being reviewed should be newly published (within the last one year for books in Indonesian and two years for books in other foreign languages),
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Reid, A. (2011). *Menuju sejarah Sumatra: Antara Indonesia dan dunia*. Jakarta: Yayasan Obor.

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